DON JUAN IN HELL: A KEY

TO READING SHAW

APPROVED:

James Brown
Major Professor

Marian J. De Shazo
Minor Professor

E. S. Clifton
Director of the Department of English

Robert B. Toulouse
Dean of the Graduate School

DON JUAN IN HELL: A KEY TO READING SHAW

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Harry S. Hanks, B. A.

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CHAPTER I

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF DON JUAN IN HELL

> There is a studied theory of Creative Evolution behind all my work; and its first complete statement is the third act of Man and Superman. It is the faith of Butler and Bergson.[1]

The individual just beginning a study of the works of George Bernard Shaw may feel that the quotation above is an oversimplification of the rather complex problem of analyzing Shaw's plays. However, the statement is accurate enough, and if any misunderstanding exists, it is probably due to the use of the phrase "theory of Creative Evolution." Shaw believed completely in the philosophy of Creative Evolution, and he relentlessly applied its doctrine to all fields of human pursuits.

Since Shaw claims that the third act of Man and Superman is a complete commentary on his philosophy, this thesis is a revealing of the philosophy demonstrated in the Dream Scene, and it is an intensive study of the third act based upon a reading of the play. Critics have made such applications and comparisons in the past, but none of these studies are

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[1]Bernard Shaw, Sixteen Self Sketches (New York, 1949), p. 160.

thorough enough in treatment and examination to demonstrate that the Dream Scene is actually a "complete statement" of Shaw's philosophy.

A study of Man and Superman might well most informatively begin with a brief discussion of the history and background of the play.

During the first years of the century, Shaw spent his afternoons in the committee rooms of the St. Pancras Vestry and the Borough Council, dealing with the political problems of the time. His mornings during this period, however, were devoted to the writing of Man and Superman.[2] When he finished writing Man and Superman in 1903, he offered the work to John Murray for publication. Murray refused to publish the play on the grounds that it was too radical and was written with the sole intention of upsetting established traditions and opinions. Fortunately, Shaw had the means to publish the play himself.[3]

The play was given a copyright performance on June 29, 1903, at the Bijou Theatre in Bayswater, London, immediately following its publication. No program or cast is recorded.[4]

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[2]Hesketh Pearson, G. B. S.: A Full Length Portrait (New York, 1950), p. 198.

[3]St. John Ervine, Bernard Shaw: His Life, Work and Friends (New York, 1956), p. 367.

[4]Theatrical Companion to Shaw, compiled by Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson (London, 1954), p. 84.

The play was overlooked by the producers in England for some time, probably due to the excessive length of time required to enact the entire production.[5] Once the producers realized that the third act could be eliminated without hampering the continuity of the work, the production of Man and Superman became feasible, and the first production, by the London Stage Society, was at the Royal Court Theatre in London on May 21, 1905.[6] Despite almost universal opinion that the play would not be successful, the Vedrenne and Barker production was so well received that the play was immediately taken into the repertory.[7] In this production Grenville-Barker, who played the lead role of Jack Tanner, was made up to resemble a youthful Bernard Shaw, complete with beard.

It was not until the twenty-third of October, however, that Man and Superman appeared on the evening bill of the Royal Court Theatre.[8] The third act of the play was omitted in this Court Theatre production with this explanation:

> There will be no Mendoza, no brigands, no Don Juan, no hell, no statue of the Commandant: in short, no

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[5]Ervine, op. cit., p. 368.

[6]Maurice Colbourne, The Real Bernard Shaw (New York, 1949), p. 154.

[7]Archibald Henderson, Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet (New York, 1932), p. 433.

[8]Ibid., p. 444.

> third act, though the fourth act will be numbered as the third for the occasion. The play will be found quite long enough for a single sitting without them, and, what is more to our purpose, quite complete in all essentials without them, and, of course, much more rapid in its action and concentrated in its interest.[9]

A program analysis by Shaw appeared on the program at the Royal Court Theatre on June 4, 1907:

> As this scene may prove puzzling at a first hearing to those who are not to some extent skilled in modern theology, the management have asked the author to offer the Court audience the same assistance that concert goers are accustomed to receive in the form of an analytical programme.
>
> The scene, an abysmal void, represents hell; and the persons of the drama speak of hell, heaven and earth as if they were separate localities, like "the heavens above, the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth." It must be remembered that such localizations are purely figurative, like our fashion of calling a treble voice "high" and a bass voice "low." Modern theology conceives heaven and hell, not as places, but as states of the soul; and by the soul it means, not an organ like the liver, but the divine element common to all life, which causes us "to do the will of God" in addition to looking after our individual interests, and to honor one another solely for our divine activities and not at all for our selfish activities.
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> Hell is popularly conceived not only as a place, but as a place of cruelty and punishment, an heaven as a paradise of idle pleasure. These legends are discarded by higher theology, which holds that this world, or any other, may be a hell by a society in a state of damnation: that is, a society so lacking in the higher orders of energy that it is given wholly to the pursuit of immediate individual pleasure, and cannot even conceive the passion of the divine will. Also that any world can be made a heaven by a society of persons in whom that passion is the master passion--a "communion of saints" in fact.

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[9] Theatrical Companion to Shaw, p. 84.

In the scene presented to-day hell is this state of damnation. It is personified in the traditional manner by the devil, who differs from the modern plutocratic voluptuary only in being "true to himself": that is, he does not disguise his damnation either from himself or others, but boldly embraces it as the true law of life, and organizes his kingdom frankly on a basis of idle pleasure seeking, and worships love, beauty, sentiment, youth, romance, etc., etc., etc.

Upon this conception of heaven and hell the author has fantastically grafted the XVII th century legend of Don Juan Tenorio, Don Gonzalo of Ulloa, Commandant of Calatrava, and the Commandant's daughter Doña Ana as told in the famous drama by Tirso de Molina and in Mozart's opera. Don Gonzalo, having as he says, "always done what is customary for a gentleman to do" until he died defending his daughter's honor, went to heaven. Don Juan, having slain him, and become infamous by his failure to find any permanent satisfaction in his love affairs, was cast into hell by the ghost of Don Gonzalo, whose statue he had whimsically invited to supper.

The ancient melodrama becomes a philosophic comedy presented to-day, by postulating that Don Gonzalo was a simple minded officer and gentleman who cared for nothing but fashionable amusement, whilst Don Juan was consumed with a passion for divine contemplation and creative activity, this being the secret of the failure of love to interest him permanently. Consequently we find Don Gonzalo, unable to share the divine ecstacy, bored to distraction in heaven; and Don Juan suffering amid the pleasures of hell an agony of tedium.

At last Don Gonzalo, after paying several reconnoitering visits to hell under color of urging Don Juan to repent, determines to settle there permanently. At this moment his daughter Ana, now full of years, piety, and worldly honors, dies, and finds herself with Don Juan in hell, where she is presently the amazed witness of the arrival of her sainted father. The devil hastens to welcome both to his realm. As Ana is no theologian, and believes the popular legends as to heaven and hell, all this bewilders her extremely.

The devil, eager as ever to reinforce his kingdom by adding souls to it, is delighted at the accession of Don Gonzalo, and desirous to retain Doña Ana. But he is equally ready to get rid of Don Juan,

> with whom he is on terms of forced civility, the antipathy between them being fundamental. A discussion arises between them as to the merits of the heavenly and hellish states, and the future of the world. The discussion lasts more than an hour, as the parties, with eternity before them, are in no hurry. Finally, Don Juan shakes the dust of hell from his feet, and goes to heaven.
>
> Doña Ana, being a woman, is incapable both of the devil's utter damnation and of Don Juan's complete supersensuality. As the mother of many children she has shared in the divine travail, and with care and labor and suffering renewed the harvest of eternal life; but the honor and divinity of her work have been jealously hidden from her by Man, who dreading her domination, has offered her for reward only the satisfaction of her senses and affections. She cannot, like the male devil, use love as mere sentiment and pleasure; nor can she, like the male saint, put love aside when it has once done its work as a developing and enlightening experience. Love is neither her pleasure nor her study: it is her business. So she, in the end, neither goes with Don Juan to heaven nor with the devil and her father to the palace of pleasure, but declares that her work is not yet finished. For though by her death she is done with the bearing of men to mortal father, she may, as Woman Immortal, bear the Superman to the Eternal Father.[10]

Robert Loraine produced the play in New York at the Hudson Theatre on September 5, 1905, and enjoyed considerable success. Loraine disdained the example of imitating Shaw set by Grenville-Barker in London and suffered no lack of success through his choice. By October 2, 1905, the play had broken the record income of the Hudson Theatre by netting $10,885; in the subsequent weeks the production netted between eleven thousand and twelve thousand dollars per week.[11] The play went on tour in March, 1906, after a

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[10] Theatrical Companion to Shaw, pp. 89-90.

[11] R. F. Rattray, Bernard Shaw: A Chronicle (New York, 1951), p. 164.

run of unbroken performances.[12] Loraine was interested in producing the third act also, but he was unable to play the "Hell Scene" until June 4, 1907, when he played the role of Don Juan in the scene's initial appearance at the Royal Court Theatre.[13]

The play was first presented in its entirety by the Travelling Repertory Company at the Lyceum Theatre in Edinburgh on June 11, 1915. It was first presented in its entirety in London by the Macdona Players at the Regent Theatre, King's Cross, on October 23, 1925.[14]

The dream scene of Man and Superman is an elaboration upon a short story which Shaw completed on August 1, 1887.[15] This short story, titled "Don Giovanni Explains," contains the basic concepts of heaven and hell which are presented in the dream interlude, but the philosophical concepts are not as well developed in the story as in the play. The story is of an incident which happens to a young and pretty woman who addresses the reader and describes herself:

> I am fond of dress, dancing, and lawn tennis, just as you thought. I am also fond of good music, good books, botany, farming, and teaching children, just as you didnt think. And if I am better known about

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[12]Henderson, Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet, p. 435.

[13]Colbourne, op. cit., p. 155.

[14]Theatrical Companion to Shaw, p. 84.

[15]Rattray, op. cit., p. 61.

> our place as a beauty and a flirt than as a botanist or a teacher, it is because nobody will admit that I have any other business in the world than to make a good marriage.[16]

The young lady had been to see the opera "Don Giovanni" and was returning home late at night on the train, when the ghost of Don Giovanni appeared in her compartment. Don Giovanni then related to the young woman the series of events which led up to his death: his suit of Doña Ana, the duel in which he killed Ana's father, his flight from the authorities, and his subsequent death at the hands of the statue of Don Gonzalo.[17]

Don Giovanni then explained to her what hell is like. The description of hell is very similar to that given in the dream scene:

> Suffice it to say that I found society there composed chiefly of vulgar, hysterical, brutish, weak, good-for-nothing people, all well intentioned, who kept up the reputation of the place by making themselves and each other as unhappy as they were capable of being. They wearied and disgusted me; and I disconcerted them beyond measure.[18]

The Devil in the short story was placed into the dramatic work almost without change. The Devil is anxious for Don Giovanni to leave hell just as the Devil in the drama is anxious for Don Juan to leave hell; and the reasons which

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[16]"Don Giovanni Explains," The Collected Works of Bernard Shaw (New York, 1932), VI, 95.

[17]Ibid., pp. 102-112. [18]Ibid.

> . . . he had only wished me to go to heaven because he honestly thought--though he confessed he could not sympathize with my taste--that I should be more comfortable there; and, second, that my coming into his set really was a mistake. . . .[19]

The gulf between heaven and hell is also the same:

> . . . he did not detain me at all, and demanded whether anybody or anything did or could prevent me from going where I pleased. I was surprised, and asked him further why, if hell was indeed Liberty Hall, all the devils did not go to heaven. I can only make his reply intelligible to you by saying that the devils do not go for exactly the same reason that your English betting men do not frequent the Monday Popular Concerts, though they are as free to go to them as you are.[20]

Even the analogy to illustrate the barrier between heaven and hell is the same.

The story of the dream interlude of the third act in Man and Superman had therefore been in Shaw's mind for at least fifteen years prior to the writing of his philosophical play.

One of the peculiarities of the third act of Man and Superman is that it is possible to perform it independently of the remaining portion of the play. Shaw perhaps constructed the play in this manner because of its excessive length, which required almost four hours for the play's complete performance:

> G. B. S. recognized that there must be reason even in the production of plays, and Man and Superman was so written that the third act could be detached without causing the play to bleed. This is a peculiar fact about it. The first, second and fourth acts form a complete play in themselves. The third act is a

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[19] Ibid. [20] Ibid.

> philosophic interpolation which may be, and occasionally has been, performed by itself. The third act's detachability would seem to show that the play is not an organic whole; and the fact that it does not bleed when its substantial part is amputated, arouses the suspicion that it has no blood to shed. But these reasonable suspicions have no foundation in fact. The singular quality of the play is that it remains a complete play when it has suffered what in any other play would be mutilation. This being so, the critic may wonder whether the third act is superfluous, and find it in fault on the ground that it merely adds bulk to the play's body. But this also fails to be the fact. As a piece of craftsmanship, Man and Superman is probably the most remarkable comedy that has ever been written.[21]

The performance of the third act alone is somewhat like chamber music,[22] and in fact Shaw utilized some of the principles of opera in the technique shown in the Dream Scene:

> As a lad Shaw acquired a thorough knowledge of Don Giovanni, its entrancing strains, the beauty of its form, the perfection of its structure. In later life, he maintained that the lesson he thus learned from Mozart, of the value of fine craftsmanship, was the most important feature of his education, although of an entirely informal character. From that experience stemmed Shaw's most original contribution to dramatic technique: the operatic ideological play. With the use of rhythmic dialogue and characters distinguished by voice tones as in opera (soprano, alto, contralto, tenor, baritone, basso, and intermediate tonal grades), Shaw creates a new type of drama. His comedy of this type (compactly presented in The Dream in Hell scene from Man and Superman) is not an opera, operetta, or musical drama, but a play, comedic in character, presenting the clash of ideologies, in rhythmic prose at different levels of tonality.[23]

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[21] Ervine, op. cit., p. 368.

[22] Joseph Wood Krutch, "Why Not 'Methuselah'?" Theatre Arts, XXXVIII (June, 1954), 24.

[23] Archibald Henderson, Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century (New York, 1956), p. 733.

In addition to these characteristics, the play has other qualities which are outstanding. The Dream Scene is a drama of ideas; there is no physical action, no story, no scenery, and no stage properties. The characters are not meant to be believable, and as a result, they are completely consistent in their expressions. The Dream Scene presents no conflict of thoughts within a character; instead it presents the conflicts of thoughts of one character with the thoughts of other characters. The characters are spokesmen for the concepts of philosophy in which they believe, and since they must in this respect remain consistent, they are allowed no traditional development of character nor any inner realizations or revelations. The revelations of the scene are accomplished by the more or less successful rebuttals of the protagonist, Don Juan, to the proposals set forth by the other characters. The entrance and exit of the characters are accomplished simply by the appearance or disappearance of the individuals. The story, if it may be called such, is nothing but the process of Don Juan's explaining why he wishes to leave hell. The characters are not caricatures of contemporary individuals, and the criticisms in the scene are not reflections of contemporary social difficulties. Shaw makes every effort to make the time, location, characters, and ideas of the Dream Scene as universal as the philosophy which he expounds in the piece. The action

of the scene is contemplative action in which Juan attempts to refute the Devil's unrealistic and escapistic philosophy. The fascination which the scene has is the fascination of the heated debate.

As a result of its characteristics and effect, the play may be approached on three levels: (1) the level of the interpretation of the characters; (2) the level of the ideas expressed in the dialogue; and (3) the level of the philosophy of Creative Evolution which serves to place the first two levels into a context and thus provide a unifying element, or binder, for the entire structure. The next three chapters present these three approaches, showing the interrelations of the three levels and demonstrating their increasing interpretive power.

CHAPTER II

INTERPRETATION OF CHARACTERS

In his essay "The Quintessence of Ibsenism," Shaw maintained that in an imaginary community of one thousand persons organized and living in the manner of the British subjects in the later years of the nineteenth century, the population would break down into three groups: philistines, idealists, and realist. Seven hundred of the inhabitants of this imaginary community would find the British family arrangement completely satisfactory to them; whereas, two hundred and ninety-nine would find it a failure. The former group Shaw called the philistines; the latter group he called idealists; and the sole remaining individual in the community he termed realist.[1]

The Philistine

Although Shaw borrowed the term "Philistine" from Matthew Arnold, he apparently was not worried as much as Arnold at the numerical superiority held by that group. Arnold considered the Philistines the main enemy to enlightenment, but Shaw considered them secondary to the

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[1]"The Quintessence of Ibsenism," The Collected Works of Bernard Shaw (New York, 1932), XIX, 30.

idealists in the impediment of progress.[2] The Philistine, composing the bulk of any social order, accepts established conditions without demur or misgiving. He is not the individual who pioneers new ideas or theologies, nor is he the individual who consciously fosters the old ideas.[3] The Philistine regards the revolutionist, the reformer, and the philosopher as mad men.[4] Shaw uses the Philistine in all of his plays as a buffer between the arch enemies--the idealist and the realist. In every such situation the Philistine assumes an attitude of disinterest in the theses presented in the play by the realist. Whenever Shaw seemed to believe that the audience might lose interest in the theme, the Philistine intervenes with an inconsequential remark which serves to rebuke the audience by driving home the embarrassing resemblance between the attitude of the Philistine and that of the observer. The general attitude of the Philistine is summed up in Adam's speech at the closing of the final play in the pentateuch Back to Methuselah:

> I can make nothing of it, neither head nor tail. What is it all for? Why? Whither? Whence? We were well enough in the garden. And now the fools have killed all the animals; and they are dissatisfied

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[2]Arthur Netheroot, Men and Supermen (Cambridge, 1954), p. 18.

[3]Archibald Henderson, Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet (New York, 1932), p. 313.

[4]"The Quintessence of Ibsenism," p. 31.

> because they cannot be bothered with their bodies! Foolishness, I call it.[5]

Adam's simple statement shows precisely the Philistine's dilemma which is that nothing is comprehensible to him and all actions have no end other than personal satisfaction and the gratification of selfish desires. Having neither the intelligence to be a pessimist nor the imagination to be an optimist, the Philistine merely lives on from day to day in a blind fashion somewhat akin to an animal; never in any sense is he a leader, but he is always a follower. As a follower, he is the dupe of the idealist, and the idealist is, in turn, forced to follow the conventional codes of morality which are observed by the Philistine majority. The Philistine may be found in any group, any social class, or in any profession since the sole criterion for his classification as such relies strictly upon his intellectual capacity and imagination.

Most critics agree that the characters in the dream interlude represent the basic divisions of mankind which are discussed in "The Quintessence of Ibsenism," but some disagreement exists in the interpretations of each character and the individual category which is represented by each character. Nethercot insists that the Statue is an Idealist:

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[5]"As Far As Thought Can Reach," Back to Methuselah, p. 260.

> It is the idealists like Mendoza and Ramsden, then, that find the atmosphere of hell most invigorating. We might even conclude that all the satisfied denizens of hell are idealists, from the slick robber baron of business to the superannuated reformer whose youthful radicalism has hardened to a middle-aged petrifaction.[6]

But even though Ramsden might have been once a radical, and perhaps even a Realist, there is little reason to assume that he is anything more than a Philistine as he is exemplified by the Statue. Eric Bentley's interpretation seems to be more accurate than Nethercot's:

> The joking conception of Don Juan gives Shaw a spokesman for his ideas of a higher humanity. The joking conception of hell gives him a kingdom for a Shavian Devil. Two more characters are needed--a representative of womanhood to offset Don Juan and yet be complementary to him, and a representative of average mankind--the girl's father will do--to be the willing victim of the devil's arguments.[7]

Since Shaw considers the average man to be a Philistine, it is reasonable to assume that the Statue represents the average Philistine. It may be granted that Idealists find the atmosphere of hell comfortable, but it is worth noting that the Statue suspects that hell is not the most desirable place after all--particularly after Juan has pointed out to him that he indirectly admits that the activities of hell are undesirable:

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[6] Nethercot, op. cit., p. 34.

[7] Eric Bentley, Bernard Shaw (Norfolk, 1957), p. 57.

> DON JUAN. Then may I ask, Commander, why you have left Heaven to come here and wallow, as you express it, in sentimental beatitudes which you confess would once have driven you to cut your throat?
> THE STATUE. [struck by this] Egad, thats true.[8]

Moreover, the Statue is incapable of understanding the meaning of the arguments of the Devil and Juan, but he does understand that the majority of souls are in hell, and he instinctively follows the majority. Just as he was bound to convention upon earth, he is bound to convention in eternity. His love of duty shows throughout his conversation:

> THE STATUE. [seriously] Come, come! as a soldier, I can listen to nothing against the Church.[9]

When Juan insults the army, the Statue reacts instinctively through his sense of honor:

> DON JUAN. Have no fear, Commander: this idea of a Catholic Church will survive Islam, will survive the Cross, will survive even that vulgar pageant of incompetent schoolboyish gladiators which you call the Army.
> THE STATUE. Juan: you will force me to call you to account for this.[10]

And later Juan accuses the Statue of hypocrisy because, as Ana's father, he, knowing that he had played the role of the libertine himself in his youth, attempted to vindicate the honor of a woman. This time, however, the Statue reveals the true reason for his actions:

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[8] *Man and Superman*, Act III, p. 122.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

> DON JUAN. . . . And yet you, the hero of those scandalous adventures you have just been relating to us, you had the effrontery to pose as the avenger of outraged morality and condemn me to death! You would have slain me but for an accident.
>
> THE STATUE. I was expected to, Juan. That is how things were arranged on earth. I was not a social reformer; and I always did what it was customary for a gentleman to do.[11]

In addition to his devotion to duty, the Statue reveals the Philistine's reverential idealization of woman. Juan, after disclosing the selfishness and cruelty of the designing woman, is rebuked by the Statue.[12] But immediately following this criticism, he admits the truth of Juan's disclosure.[13] And finally when Juan attacks the institution of marriage, the Statue is apparently shocked.[14] But later he feels compelled to admit the truth of Juan's argument and even admits that he avoided discussing the truth because he felt it was indecent:

> THE STATUE. I am sorry to shock you, my love; but since Juan has stripped every rag of decency from the discussion I may as well tell the frozen truth.[15]

The Statue is also a pleasure-seeker who will go to great lengths to secure for himself the ultimate in comfort. He considers the atmosphere of hell to be more advantageous than that of heaven. Juan, bored of hell as the Statue is bored of heaven, is told that hell is more desirable than heaven:

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[11] Ibid., p. 116. [12] Ibid., p. 109. [13] Ibid., p. 115.
[14] Ibid., p. 119. [15] Ibid., p. 122.

> THE STATUE. . . . Hell, in short, is a place where you have nothing to do but amuse yourself. [Don Juan sighs deeply]. You sigh, friend Juan; but if you dwelt in heaven, as I do, you would realize your advantages.[16]

He also comments that he cannot ask Juan to go to heaven and be miserable; he can see no purpose or reason for Juan's desire to go:

> THE DEVIL. . . . And now, my friend--I may call you so at last--could you not persuade him to take the place you have left vacant above?
> THE STATUE. [shaking his head] I cannot conscientiously recommend anybody with whom I am on friendly terms to deliberately make himself dull and uncomfortable.[17]

But when Juan finally shows determination to spend eternity in heaven, the Statue is naturally repulsed by the idea.[18]

One of the most prominent qualities of the Statue which make him a Philistine is his unwillingness to try to understand the Realist's philosophy. He makes light of Juan's serious arguments when he should try to comprehend them.[19] He often fails to realize when he is being ridiculed because he cannot see through Juan's subtlety:

> DON JUAN. It is a dig at a much higher power than you, Commander. Still, you must have noticed in your profession that even a stupid general can win battles when the enemy's general is a little stupider.
> THE STATUE. [very seriously] Most true, Juan, most true. Some donkeys have amazing luck.[20]

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[16] Ibid., p. 96. [17] Ibid., p. 98. [18] Ibid., p. 103.
[19] Ibid., p. 104. [20] Ibid., p. 111.

Although he seems interested in the discussion between Juan and the Devil, it is really only a pastime to him. He shows an aversion to any deep contemplation whatever:

> THE STATUE. . . . What I was going to ask Juan was why Life should bother itself about getting a brain. Why should it want to understand itself: Why not be content to enjoy itself?
>
> DON JUAN. Without a brain, Commander, you would enjoy yourself without knowing it, and so lose all the fun.
>
> THE STATUE True, most true. But I am quite content with brain enough to know that I'm enjoying myself. I dont want to understand why. In fact, I'd rather not. My experience is that one's pleasures dont bear thinking about.[21]

Because of his difficulty in following the philosophical discussion, the Statue, more interested in hearing about the famous adventures of Don Juan (perhaps here Shaw anticipated some indifference among the Philistines in his audience), asks Juan to refrain from such elevated conversation:

> THE STATUE. This is extremely abstract and metaphysical, Juan. If you would stick to the concrete, and put your discoveries in the form of entertaining anecdotes about your adventures with women, your conversation would be easier to follow.[22]

He then makes another comment which typifies the Philistine's attitude toward the Realist's efforts to determine any underlying purposes of a universal force and to base a philosophy upon the subsequent discoveries:

> THE STATUE. You might as well have gone without thinking such a lot about it, Juan. You are like all

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[21] Ibid., p. 113.

[22] Ibid., p. 117.

> the clever men: you have more brains than is good for you.[23]

The Statue is also impressed by lofty words and phrases even though he is almost always unaware of their meanings. He seems to be more concerned with the sound of Juan's speeches than of the ideas which they convey. Juan makes a lengthy and eloquent condemnation of the souls in hell, and even though the Statue has been directly admonished in the speech, he fails to notice the affront and comments of Juan's fluency:

> THE STATUE. Your flow of words is simply amazing, Juan. How I wish I could have talked like that to my soldiers.[24]

He is not beyond salvation, however, for he can understand--particularly when the conversations turn to a subject which interests him more. Juan makes a point about marriage, and the Statue recognizes the validity of it:

> THE STATUE. [impressed] A very clever point that, Juan: I must think it over. You are really full of ideas. How did you come to think of this one?[25]

But despite the fact that the Statue can see many of the points which Juan makes, the old soldier is at heart a Philistine, and he follows the Devil's philosophy which leads him down into the realm of the Idealist to indulge in empty and vain pursuits. The audience is left with one final hope of his salvation when he admits while descending

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[23] Ibid., p. 118.

[24] Ibid., p. 129.

[25] Ibid., p. 124.

into the fires of hell, ". . . the Superman is a fine conception. There's something statuesque about it."[26]

The Idealist

The second division in Shaw's hypothetical community is the group of two hundred and ninety-nine Idealists. The Idealist is a hypocrite, afraid and immature; the individual who will go to any absurd extreme to shield himself from the truth; he is, in fact, a person who attempts the art of self-deception.

Ever since Man has achieved consciousness, there have been Idealists. The step from consciousness to knowledge is the ability and courage to face reality and to adjust to that reality in order to establish workable institutions and laws. But courage is not a common characteristic in Man; in fact, only one in one thousand shows courage enough to face unyielding reality:

> For in his infancy of helplessness and terror he could not face the inexorable; and facts being of all things the most inexorable, he masked all the threatening ones as fast as he discovered them; so that now every mask requires a hero to tear it off. The king of terrors, Death, was the Arch-Inexorable: Man could not bear the dread of that. He must persuade himself that Death can be propitiated, circumvented, abolished. How he fixed the mask of personal immortality of the face of Death for this purpose we all know. And he did the like with all disagreeables as long as they remained inevitable. Otherwise he must have gone mad with terror of the grim shapes around him, headed by

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[26] Ibid., p. 135.

> the skeleton with the scythe and hourglass. The masks were his ideals, as he called them; and what, he would ask, would life be without ideals? Thus he became an idealist, and remained so until he dared to begin pulling the masks off and looking the spectres in the face--dared, that is, to be more and more a realist. But all men are not equally brave; and the greatest terror prevailed whenever some realist bolder than the rest laid hands on a mask which they did not yet dare to do without.[27]

The Idealist is the person who will use any method available to preserve the illusions, or masks, which veil the truth. Shaw's attacks upon this group made him an extremely controversial figure during the final decade of the nineteenth century because the Idealists, who erected the romantic masks and idolized duty, had dominated Victorian society for years.[28]

Shaw actually has two definitions for the "ideal." An ideal is a representation of a future possibility, or it may be a pleasant mask placed over an ugly fact. Shaw emphasizes the latter definition in his plays because he believed it to be implied by Ibsen.[29] In addition to defining "ideal" as a word of illusion and deception, Shaw meant by

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[27]"The Quintessence of Ibsenism," p. 28.

[28]Nethercot, op. cit., p. 25.

[29]William Irvine, The Universe of George Bernard Shaw (New York, 1949), p. 142.

"romance" pretence and humbug,[30] and he usually linked the two terms together as having a common purpose--the delusion of mankind.

The Idealists do not have the courage to face the fact that they and their romantic concepts are failures; hence, these individuals try to persuade themselves that their institutions are beautiful, natural, and holy.[31] The "policy of Idealism" is the attempt to force individuals to act on the assumption that ideals are real and "to recognize and accept such action as standard moral conduct, absolutely valid under all circumstances."[32] From his submission to the pressure exerted upon him by the Philistine, the Idealist is moved primarily by a moral generalization.[33]

In "The Quintessence of Ibsenism" Shaw uses marriage as an illustration of an institution which has been masked by ideals. The Idealist maintains that sex morality is related to convention; whereas, in reality, it is related to purpose.[34] But the exposition of the true relationship

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[30]St. John Ervine, Bernard Shaw: His Life, Work and Friends (New York, 1956), p. 238.

[31]"The Quintessence of Ibsenism," p. 30.

[32]Ibid.

[33]G. K. Chesterton, George Bernard Shaw (London, 1909), p. 188.

[34]Edmund Fuller, George Bernard Shaw (New York, 1950), p. 43.

of marriage, as well as any other truth hidden behind the vein of Idealism, will terrify the Idealist beyond measure.[35]

The Idealists in Shaw's dramas have definite characteristics which mark them:

> They are in nearly every case marked by their worship of duty and honor, their talk about self-sacrifice, their devotion to romantic illusions, their search for plausible excuses to extenuate their conduct, the ease with which they are shocked by unconventional or merely perfectly frank ideas and behavior, and the extremes to which they go in their attacks on the nonconformist.[36]

The slavish obedience to duty probably is the greatest mark of the Idealist, and it is this obsession of the Idealist which Shaw admonished so fervently:

> Duty arises at first, a gloomy tyranny, out of man's helplessness, his self-mistrust, in a word, his abstract fear. He personifies all that he abstractly fears as God, and straightway becomes the slave of his duty to God. He imposes that Slavery fiercely on his children, threatening them with hell, and punishing them for their attempts to be happy. When, becoming bolder, he ceases to fear everything, and dares to love something, this duty of his to what he fears evolves into a sense of duty to what he loves. Sometimes he again personifies what he loves as God; and the God of Wrath becomes the God of Love: sometimes he at once becomes a humanitarian, an altruist, acknowledging only his duty to his neighbor. This state is correlative to the rationalist stage in the evolution of philosophy and the capitalist phase in the evolution of industry.[37]

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[35] "The Quintessence of Ibsenism," p. 31.

[36] Nethercot, op. cit., p. 28.

[37] "The Quintessence of Ibsenism," pp. 25-26.

When Man realizes that the sense of duty to himself is greater than the sense of duty to external matters, the tyranny of duty will vanish:

> What! after all that has been said by men of noble life as to the secret of all right conduct being only Duty, Duty, Duty, is he to be told now that duty is the primal curse from which we must redeem ourselves before we can advance another step on the road along which, as we imagine (having forgotten the repudiations made by our fathers) duty and duty alone has brought us thus far? But why not? God Almighty was once the most sacred of our conceptions; and he had to be denied. Then Reason became the Infallible Pope, only to be deposed in turn. Is Duty more sacred than God or Reason?[38]

Marriage and Duty are two examples of institutions which are shrouded in Idealism, and Shaw vigorously preached the reevaluation of the former and the abolition of the latter. In the plays which followed "The Quintessence of Ibsenism" Shaw used other terms which are synonymous with "ideal": conventionalism, idolatry, romance, illusion, traditionalism, and prejudice; all were regarded as the Enemy.[39]

The Idealist is the most dangerous enemy of the Realist, for the Idealist is higher in the evolutional process than the Philistine and possesses a considerable degree of intelligence. The Idealist is capable of seeing the truth, but, rather than admit his own error of fostering false institutions, he will attack the Realist, who is even higher

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[38] Ibid., p. 26. [39] Nethercot, op. cit., p. 5.

in the evolutional ascent, "with a dread and rancor of which the easy-going Philistine is guiltless."[40] The Idealist will insist that everyone, even himself, conform to his static policy of Idealism, and accept the policy without examining its foundations. The Idealist is the primary factor interfering with the progress of mankind.[41] Shaw relentlessly attacked all who would attempt to replace careful investigation with an abstract principle.[42]

The character of the Devil illustrates Shaw's concept of the arch Idealist; he is the leader of the best society of hell. He, like all Idealists, is aware of the problems of life and mankind, but he maintains a defeatist attitude toward the problems and tends to regard them as unsolvable. The result of his escapism is the establishment of the realm of hell. The Devil himself admits that the heavenly temperament is beyond his comprehension; but Juan really seems unconvinced of the Devil's lack of understanding, and suggests the possibility that his attitude is due to something else:

> THE DEVIL. Oh, it suits some people. Let us be just, Commander: it is a question of temperament. I dont admire the heavenly temperament: I dont understand it: I dont know that I particularly want to understand it; but it takes all sorts to make a universe.

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[40]"The Quintessence of Ibsenism," p. 33.

[41]Nethercot, op. cit., p. 4.

[42]Julian B. Kaye, Bernard Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Tradition (Norman, Oklahoma, 1958), p. 42.

> There is no accounting for tastes: there are people who like it. I think Don Juan would like it.
>
> DON JUAN. But--pardon my frankness--could you really go back there if you desired to; or are the grapes sour?[43]

The Devil proposes that the activity of man should be directed to satisfying the appetite of pleasure. Since in hell the satisfaction of the animal appetite is no longer necessary, full attention may be directed to abstract pleasures.

Perhaps Shaw intended to emphasize to his audience that the recognition of the Idealist, the arch sinner, is not so easy as one is led to believe. Juan implies such an idea when he attempts to ease Ana's anxiety after the suggestion that she meet the Devil: "Remember: the devil is not so black as he is painted."[44] Such a statement also implies that the Devil is truly a dangerous adversary since he does not appear as evil as one suspects, and therefore one may be easily swayed by him. Or, on the other hand, Shaw could mean that triumph over the Devil is not so difficult as one would think, i.e., he is not so formidable as is generally believed.

The Devil worships such abstract things as love, joy, beauty, happiness, warmth of heart, true sincerity, and affection.[45] He is a lover of music, but he evidently cannot discern between good and bad music:

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[43] Man and Superman, Act III, p. 100.

[44] Ibid., p. 96.

[45] Ibid., p. 97.

> DON JUAN. Hell is full of musical amateurs: music is the brandy of the damned. May not one lost soul be permitted to abstain?
> THE DEVIL. You dare to blaspheme against the sublimest of the arts![46]

He also shows traces of bigotry, which is not too surprising since the Idealist is the individual who prefers to maintain the existing institutions and believe in them as fundamental truths:

> THE DEVIL. Yes, when the Liberty and Equality of which you prate shall have made free white Christians cheaper in the labor market than black heathen slaves sold by auction at the block.[47]

The Devil, like all Idealists, is enthralled by words, and Juan's comparison of hell and earth is so eloquently done that the Devil asks him also to elaborate upon the glamorlessness of heaven.[48] But the Devil is not so dense as the Statue, who is spellbound by Juan's mere "flow of words"; he is aware of some of the implications and can express disagreement when the necessity for it arises.[49]

Finally, the Devil is a vain, egocentric character who rejoices in his renown upon earth even though he wishes mankind had a better opinion of him.[50] He is extremely interested in his reputation as a gentleman, and he attempts to be as courteous as possible.[51] He reassures the Statue

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[46] Ibid., p. 98. [47] Ibid., p. 109. [48] Ibid., p. 103.
[49] Ibid., p. 129. [50] Ibid., p. 97. [51] Ibid., p. 103.

that the name of the Devil is at the Statue's disposal for the purpose of emphasis.[52] After Juan has concluded his final argument and is about to depart for heaven, the Devil gives a brief summary of his own attitudes:

> THE DEVIL. I know that beauty is good to look at; that music is good to hear; that love is good to feel; and that they are all good to think about and talk about. I know that to be well exercised in these sensations, emotions, and studies, is to be a refined and cultivated being. Whatever they may say of me in churches on earth, I know that it is universally admitted in good society that the Prince of Darkness is a gentleman; and that is enough for me.[53]

Hence, the Devil's ultimate concern is for the opinion of society. To Shaw the Idealist is always concerned primarily with social opinion. This concern is the reason for the Devil's belief that his philosophy will win out over the Realists in heaven by "sheer weight of public opinion."[54] This useless overevaluation of public opinion is the reason for Shaw's adverse reaction to democracy as it is practiced in England and America.

The Realist

The single individual left in the imaginary community of Shaw's is the Realist, the one person in a thousand. The Realist insists upon tearing off the masks which hide reality; he is the highest in the evolutional scale, and the Idealist

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[52] Ibid., p. 113.

[53] Ibid., p. 132.

[54] Ibid., p. 101.

detests him immensely.[55] He is the "man who has risen above the danger and the fear that his acquisitiveness will lead him to theft, his temper to murder, and his affections to debauchery. . . ."[56] But his road is not an easy one: ". . . this is he who is denounced as an arch-scoundrel and libertine, and thus confounded with the lowest because he is the highest."[57] The ones who denounce the Realist are not the ignorant and stupid Philistines, but the literate and cultured Idealists:

> It is from men of established literary reputation that we learn that William Blake was mad, that Shelley was spoiled by living in a low set, that Robert Owen was a man who did not know the world, that Ruskin was incapable of comprehending political economy, that Zola was a mere blackguard, and that Ibsen was "a Zola with a wooden leg."[58]

Finally the Realist loses patience with Ideals and recognizes them as masks which serve only to blind mankind and kill man's instincts and ego, but the Idealist believes that ignorance and suppression of instinct is beneficial because he hates himself and is ashamed of himself:

> The realist, who has come to have a deep respect for himself and faith in the validity of his own will, thinks it idealizing so much the worse. To the one, human nature, naturally corrupt, is held back from ruinous excesses only by self-denying conformity to the ideals. To the other these ideals are only swaddling clothes which man has outgrown, and which insufferably impede

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[55] "The Quintessence of Ibsenism," p. 33.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

> his movements. No wonder the two cannot agree. The idealist says, "Realism means egotism, and egotism means depravity." The realist declares that when a man abnegates the will to live and be free in a world of the living and free, seeking only to conform to ideals for the sake of being, not himself, but "a good man," then he is morally dead and rotten, and must be left unheeded to abide his resurrection, if that by good luck arrives before his bodily death.[59]

Although Shaw insisted that he did not believe in heroes, the realist, as the mouthpiece for the author, invariably portrayed as a much more admirable individual than the other characters in Shavian drama, is a well-recognized hero; and the idealist, or often the Philistine, plays the role of villain.[60]

The realist recognizes the fact that progress can only be made through the repudiation of duty; he knows that every step in social progress is made at the expense of some already established duty, and he trusts to his instinct to guide him unerringly toward the objective of the Life Force.[61] Every realist is a revolutionist, a reformer, and a non-conformist.

Shaw considered every philosopher of note a realist because the philosopher seeks to find the truth behind the universe, and the "artist-philosopher" is a realist in a very special sense: the artist-philosopher is endowed with a passion by the Life Force to seek out beauty and truth

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[59] Ibid. [60] Nethercot, op. cit., p. 51.

[61] Ibid., p. 25.

and present it through his own special medium whether it be poetry, music, painting, sculpture, or drama. It is the objective of the artist-philosopher to raise the general level of the knowledge and understanding of society to a height which will enable the Philistine to see what is necessary to further the true purpose of Life.[62] This objective puts the artist-philosopher in continual conflict with the Philistine.[63]

The artist's medium is a device for enlarging and refining the perceptiveness of society and consequently lifting Life to a higher level of consciousness. The Life Force endows the artist with an impulse which is in itself entirely original, and because it is original the methods by which the impulse is presented by the artist must break the established rules of composition and harmony:

> In a word, it [the work of art] challenges prevalent notions, flouts current prejudices, shocks popular taste and, if it is didactic in tendency, outrages popular morality.[64]

The result of this repudiation of convention is that the life of the artist-genius-philosopher is usually poor, lonely, and brutish.[65] And since the genius is really only one part genius and ninety-nine parts an ordinary man, with a craving

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[62] The Sanity of Art, p. 299. [63] Ibid.

[64] C. E. M. Joad, Shaw (London, 1949), p. 190.

[65] Ibid.

for world esteem and human affection and sympathy,[66] the genius is usually a wretched individual.[67] The genius, endowed with an impulse directly from nature, will pursue his course in spite of any obstacle. Often his impulse to raise the level of consciousness is opposed to Woman's impulse to reproduce; if, then, the genius marries, the result is often tragic.[68]

In the Dream Scene Don Juan is the spokesman for reality. A professed seeker of reality, he is, of course, Shaw's mouthpiece. He is definitely not the prototype Don Juan portrayed by the Spanish monks and writers who, throughout literature, have envisioned him as a libertine scoundrel and a mountebank secretly admired by mankind. The original version of the Don Juan legend is largely disregarded by Shaw in order to give the story the meaning it has in the Dream Scene.[69] Shaw preferred to write a play with a philosophical Don Juan because he believed that such an individual is admirable from the standpoint of moral righteousness as a seeker of the truth rather than a follower of the conventional standards which serve to constrict the natural tendencies of Man:

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[66]The Sanity of Art, p. 301. [67]Joad, Shaw, p. 190.

[68]Preface to Man and Superman, p. xxiii.

[69]Joseph Wood Krutch, "Why Not 'Methuselah'?" Theatre Arts, XXXVIII (June, 1954), 96.

> Philosophically, Don Juan is a man who, though gifted enough to be exceptionally capable of distinguishing between good and evil, follows his own instincts without regard to the common, statute, or canon law; and therefore, whilst gaining the ardent sympathy of our rebellious instincts (which are flattered by the brilliancies with which Don Juan associates them) finds himself in mortal conflict with existing institutions, defends himself by fraud and force as unscrupulously as a farmer defends his crops by the same means against vermin.[70]

Shaw gives his reader another idea of his concept of the character of Don Juan later in the "Epistle Dedicatory to Arthur Bingham Walkley":

> His scepticism, once his least tolerated quality, has now triumphed so completely that he can no longer assert himself by witty negations, and must, to save himself from cipherdom, find an affirmative position. His thousand and three affairs of gallantry, after becoming, at most, two immature intrigues leading to sordid and prolonged complications and humiliations, have been discarded altogether as unworthy of his philosophic dignity and compromising to his newly acknowledged position as the founder of a school. Instead of pretending to read Ovid he does actually read Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, studies Westermarck, and is concerned for the future of the race instead of for the freedom of his own instincts. Thus his profligacy and his daredevil airs have gone the way of his sword and mandoline into the rag shop of anachronisms and superstitions. In fact, he is now more Hamlet than Don Juan; for though the lines put into the actor's mouth to indicate to the pit that Hamlet is a philosopher are for the most part mere harmonious platitude which, with a little debasement of the word-music, would be properer to Pecksniff, yet if you separate the real hero, inarticulate and unintelligible to himself except in flashes of inspiration, from the performer who has to talk at any cost through five acts; and if you also do what you must always do in Shakespear's tragedies: that is, dissect

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[70]Preface to Man and Superman, pp. xii-xiii.

> out the absurd sensational incidents and physical violences of the borrowed story from the genuine Shakespearian tissue, you will get a true Promethean foe of the gods, whose instinctive attitude towards women much resembles that to which Don Juan is now driven. From this point of view Hamlet was a developed Don Juan whom Shakespear palmed off as a reputable man just as he palmed poor Macbeth off as a murderer. Today the palming off is no longer necessary (at least on your plane and mine) because Don Juanism is no longer misunderstood as mere Casanovism. Don Juan himself is almost ascetic in his desire to avoid that misunderstanding. . . .[71]

There is little room for doubt then that Juan is the true Shavian hero; Juan is the man of action. His chief reason for detesting hell is that it bores him. He is, like Shaw, plain spoken and reluctant to hedge on any issue. He accuses Ana of hypocrisy, the Statue of stupidity, and the Devil of duplicity.[72] And he accuses them all of deterring the purpose of the Life Force. He finds their pretentious society boring, and he comments to that effect. Each one of them claims to be unable to understand him, but they all obviously admire him.

Woman

A separate consideration of Woman is necessary because the female of the species is biologically primary, whereas the male is secondary. Shaw represents the beginning of mankind as a woman who sunders herself in order to produce both male and female organisms. Lilith, as the embodiment

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[71] Ibid., pp. xvi-xvii.

[72] Man and Superman, p. 128.

of the Life Force, says in the final play of Back to Methuselah, "I tore myself asunder; I lost my life, to make of my one flesh these twain, man and woman."[73] Woman was given the task of perpetuating life, but Man was given the task of raising the general level of self-consciousness and self-understanding.[74] Almost every woman is endowed with the impulse of nature's purpose, and, as a consequence, almost every woman is successful in obtaining a husband and father for her children. But not every man is endowed with the impulse of nature's purpose for the male sex: only three hundred individuals in Shaw's imaginary community feel any such impulse at all, and only one out of the total one thousand members feels the impulse strongly enough to attempt to follow that impulse in spite of social and legal pressure from the remainder of the group.

Femaleness is, in the creative evolutionary philosophy, more primitive and fundamental than maleness.[75] Woman, in general, is completely preoccupied with the problem of fulfilling nature's purpose for her, and, as a result, she is usually in sympathy with the Philistine because she is not

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[73]"As Far As Thought Can Reach," Back to Methuselah, p. 260.

[74]Martin Ellehauge, The Position of Bernard Shaw in European Philosophy and Drama (Copenhagen, 1931), p. 209.

[75]Joad, Shaw, p. 185; cf. Ellehauge, p. 208.

interested in the intellectual pursuits of the realist.[76] But, on the whole, Man is to Woman merely a means to her purpose, and because Man is necessary instrumentally to the achievement of her purpose, she treats him with utmost care:

> . . . as a soldier takes care of his rifle or a musician of his violin.[77]

> By Heaven, Tavy, if women could do without our work, and we ate their children's bread instead of making it, they would kill us as the spider kills her mate or as the bees kill the drone.[78]

Woman's purpose is not compatible with Man's purpose since Woman incarnates fecundity and Man incarnates "the philosophic consciousness of Life."[79] Man's purpose requires his full attention, and Woman's purpose requires the attention and energies of both mother and father.[80] In the genius Woman meets a purpose which is just as impersonal and irresistible as her own and the incompatible union of the two often results in tragedy.[81] But sometimes Woman may possess the attributes of genius:

> When it is complicated by the genius being a woman, then the game is one for a king of critics: your George Sand becomes a mother to gain experience for the novelist and to develop her, and gobbles up men of genius, Chopins, Mussets and the like, as mere hors d'oeuvres.[82]

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[76] Nethercot, op. cit., p. 78.

[77] Man and Superman, Act I, p. 23.

[78] Ibid., Act II, p. 54.

[79] Preface to Man and Superman, p. xxiii.

[80] Ibid. [81] Ibid. [82] Ibid.

In the pursuit of a father for her children, Woman is completely unscrupulous; she will lie and deceive if it suits her needs in order to discourage undesirable suitors,[83] and she will play on the sexual instincts of men deliberately for the purpose of trapping them into marriage.[84] She is endowed by the Life Force with the ability to trick Man into believing that she shares his enthusiasms, responds to his ideals, and understands his philosophy; but this apparent sympathy is the bait on her hook, and once it is swallowed, she drops the deception and Man, who would reform society, finds himself reduced to the function of breadwinner.[85] Shaw did not mean to imply that Woman is evil or contemptible because of her unscrupulousness; her deception is merely an instrument of the Life Force which enables her to accomplish her mission.[86]

Shaw remarks in the "Epistle Dedicatory" that Ann Whitefield is Everywoman; but every woman is not Ann. Dona Ana, as Ann's counterpart in the Dream Scene, then, is the representative of Woman. Her purpose is to show how the Life Force philosophy is reflected in womankind,[87] and to

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[83] Man and Superman, Act II, p. 53; Act IV, p. 163.

[84] Ibid., Act I, p. 24. [85] Joad, Shaw, p. 188.

[86] Ellehauge, op. cit., p. 213.

[87] George Whitehead, Bernard Shaw Explained (London, 1925), p. 109.

demonstrate the enslavement of woman (as well as man) by the arbitrary social standards which require her to fulfill her natural purposes surreptitiously and at the same time enslave her mate by the chains of social and marital laws.

Ana is a Philistine on the surface, but basically she is, as most women are, a realist in regard to her own purposes. She knows that by using various tricks designed to attract a man, she can obtain a considerable degree of security for herself and for her children. To bait her hook, Woman uses simulated accomplishments, feigns interest in his enthusiasms, and decorates herself to stimulate his sexual desires.[88] Ana's Philistinism appears when she defends such moralistic pursuits as chastity and virtue, but her realistic attitude shows when she tells the three men that idealization is futile:

> ANA. . . . I daresay you all want to marry lovely incarnations of music and painting and poetry. Well, you cant have them, because they dont exist. If flesh and blood is not good enough for you you must go without: thats all. Women have to put up with flesh-and-blood husbands--and little enough of that too, sometimes; and you will have to put up with flesh-and-blood wives. [The Devil looks dubious. The Statue makes a wry face.] I see you dont like that, any of you; but its true, for all that; so if you dont like it you can lump it.[89]

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[88] Joad, Shaw, p. 188.

[89] Man and Superman, Act III, p. 116.

In the beginning of the Dream Scene Ana is an escapist; in hell she seeks the traditional idealistic methods of escaping from reality and its burdens. She seeks happiness above all:

> ANA. Thank you: I am going to heaven for happiness. I have had quite enough of reality on earth.[90]

She also shows concern over her social position because she confuses her station in society with happiness:

> DON JUAN. Patience, lady: you will be perfectly happy and at home here. As saith the poet, "Hell is a city much like Seville."
> THE OLD WOMAN. Happy! here! where I am nothing! where I am nobody![91]

Ana has been duped into religious complacency; she seriously believes that the performance of rituals and rites is the execution of good and righteous living. Juan's calm assurance that she is in hell causes her to realize her error:

> THE OLD WOMAN. [proudly] Hell! I in hell! How dare you?
> DON JUAN. [unimpressed] Why not, Señora?
> THE OLD WOMAN. You do not know to whom you are speaking. I am a lady, and a faithful daughter of the Church.
> DON JUAN. I do not doubt it.
> THE OLD WOMAN. But how then can I be in hell? Purgatory, perhaps: I have not been perfect: who has? But hell! oh, you are lying.
> DON JUAN. Hell, Señora, I assure you; hell at its best: that is, its most solitary--though perhaps you would prefer company.
> THE OLD WOMAN. But I have sincerely repented; I have confessed--
> DON JUAN. How much?
> THE OLD WOMAN. More sins than I really committed. I loved confession.

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[90] Ibid., p. 102.

[91] Ibid., p. 90.

> DON JUAN. Ah, that is perhaps as bad as confessing too little. At all events, Senora, whether by oversight or intention, you are certainly damned, like myself; and there is nothing for it now but to make the best of it.[92]

Ana's difficulty is that she is a hypocrite. She knows full well that her objective in life is to bear children; but she professes to believe in social institutions and moral ideals for which she does not care and in which she does not believe. She prefers to call natural impulses immoral,[93] even though the accomplishment of her purposes is based upon instinct. She knows through experience that by demanding that her mate fulfill his moral responsibilities, she is assuring herself of security. She either cannot or will not conceive of Man as having any purpose other than the fulfillment of her purpose. When confronted with the idea that Man has perhaps another purpose, Ana replies, "Yes: he shirks all his responsibilities, and leaves his wife to grapple with them."[94]

The idealistic concepts of marriage prohibit the fulfillment of both of the purposes of Man and Woman: if Man is reduced to drudging for mere existence for the remainder of his life, he can do little to improve even his own intellectual standards, much less do his share to raise the general level of all intelligence; if Woman gives up her role in life as a mother, then she, too, defeats her natural

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[92] Ibid., p. 88.

[93] Ibid., p. 125.

[94] Ibid., p. 110.

purpose. What, then, is to be done to enable both Man and Woman to successfully accomplish their purposes simultaneously? First, every effort must be made to allow the laborer more leisure time in order to afford him intellectual growth through intellectual pursuits. Shaw believed that socialism is the answer to the need to reduce the amount of work required of the laborer. Second, Woman must be allowed to develop intellectually, also, instead of enslaved by idealistic concepts of motherhood as being a totally unselfish and devoted occupation. State support to the rearing of children, particularly financial support, was Shaw's solution to this problem. But the impersonal breeding of the race was Shaw's ultimate answer both to the problems of Man and Woman and also the problem of breeding the Superman,[95] which is the primary and immediate goal of humanity.

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[95] Man and Superman, passim. (For a discussion of the Superman, see Chapter IV.)

CHAPTER III

IDEAS AND ARGUMENTS IN THE DREAM SCENE

Four general arguments are presented in the third act of Man and Superman, and these arguments incorporate ten key ideas which are embodied in the philosophy of Shaw. These ideas usually permeate more than one single argument and are used to support Don Juan's basic philosophical tenets. Briefly summarized these ideas are (1) that the universe is governed by a vital force which is neither all-powerful nor all-knowing but is striving to become omniscient and omnipotent by means of its own creations, (2) that the intellect is the objective of the Life Force, (3) that Man is the most highly evolved species in the universe, (4) that Man's duty is to further the efforts of the Life Force, (5) that the preliminary goal of the Life Force is the Superman, (6) that the progress of evolution is the progress of the Life Force, (7) that Man can accomplish anything which he sincerely desires, (8) that the Life Force works through the method of trial and error, (9) that right conduct is the working of the individual to fulfill the function which Life has designated for him, and (10) that the Idealist is the arch enemy of the Life Force.

The four arguments in the Dream Scene may be called (1) the discussion of Heaven and Hell, (2) the discussion of the nature of Man, (3) the discussion of the nature of Woman and the purpose of marriage, and (4) the discussion of the Life Force and its spokesman, the philosopher.

Heaven and Hell

The first argument presented in the dream scene is the discussion of heaven and hell. The descriptions of the two ethereal realms are generally agreed upon by the Devil, Juan, and the Statue, and this portion of the scene does not show the conflict of ideas as demonstrated in the other arguments. However, a conflict of opinion does show itself in Juan's desire to enter heaven and in the Statue's decision to become one of the inhabiting souls of hell.

Shaw does not try to depict hell in actuality; at no time during the Hell Scene does he show his audience even a minute view of the domain of hell. In fact, the scene seems to take place in the border regions of Hades rather than within the central areas, and the audience must draw its impression of place from the lengthy descriptions of Don Juan and the Statue. This is the reason for Dona Ana's appearance early in the scene; it is an opportunity for Don Juan and the Commander to explain to her exactly what the differences are between heaven and hell, and once this

is accomplished, Dona Ana becomes an active participant in the following discussions.

Hell, as revealed by Juan, is the activity of earth stripped of the realistic consequences which attend each act. Earth is the combination of heaven and hell; it is the coexistence of the real and the ideal. The situation in the Dream Scene is the separation of the two elements for the purpose of showing that idealism is a useless pursuit since it attempts to ignore reality. Idealism in this sense is almost synonymous with escapism, and hell is pictured as an escape from reality:

> . . . for hell is the home of the unreal and of the seekers for happiness. It is the only refuge from heaven, which is, as I tell you, the home of the masters of reality, and from earth, which is the home of the slaves of reality.[1]

Hell is the alternative offered by the Idealist to mankind, and as it is contrasted to earth, which is held tightly in the brutal grip of reality, hell seems extremely attractive even with the Statue's comment that in hell there is no hope.[2] The hell which Shaw depicts is actually the dream society of the Idealist. Don Juan points this out to Ana when she wonders why she feels no pain if she is truly in hell:

> Because hell, Señora, is a place for the wicked. The wicked are quite comfortable in it: it was made for

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[1] Man and Superman, Act III, p. 102. [2] Ibid., p. 96.

> them. You tell me you feel no pain. I conclude you are one of those for whom Hell exists.[3]

Juan, a Realist, shows himself to be extremely uncomfortable in hell:

> I am not one of the wicked, Señora; therefore it bores me, bores me beyond description, beyond belief.[4]

Characteristically, Shaw strikes out against time-honored concepts and institutions and lets his audience know that the proper method of considering these is with a healthy attitude of reserve and skepticism. When Ana is disappointed because she, a virtuous lady, has been condemned to hell, she demands to know if there is any justice in heaven. Juan tells her that justice is not a heavenly institution:

> No; but there is justice in hell: heaven is far above such idle human personalities. You will be welcome in hell, Señora. Hell is the home of honor, duty, justice, and the rest of the seven deadly virtues. All the wickedness on earth is done in their name; where else but in hell should they have their reward? Have I not told you that the truly damned are those who are happy in hell?[5]

The point which Shaw emphasizes here is that the ancient and traditional institutions greatly valued on earth must function for the purposes of the Life Force or be discarded. If these institutions can be overhauled and made beneficial, then they may be kept; but when they become instruments which serve to retard the evolutional processes, the

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[3]Ibid., p. 89. [4]Ibid. [5]Ibid., p. 90.

institutions become instruments of evil which function, intentionally or unintentionally, to suppress the progress of the Life Force.

Another characteristic of hell is the absence of hope which Shaw feels is so vital to the survival of mankind because hope prevents the reduction of all the accomplishments of the evolutional processes to mere accident. When Ana becomes afraid and decides to pray, the Statue points out that prayer is not only unnecessary in hell, but it is useless as well:

> No, no, no, my child: do not pray. If you do, you will throw away the main advantage of this place. Written over the gate here are the words "Leave every hope behind, ye who enter." Only think what a relief that is! For what is hope? A form of moral responsibility. Here there is no hope, and consequently no duty, no work, nothing to be gained by praying, nothing to be lost by doing what you like. Hell, in short, is a place where you have nothing to do but amuse yourself.[6]

"Duty" as used in this speech is evidently different from that mentioned by Juan earlier when he comments that hell is the home of duty. The Statue probably means duty as an obligation to reality; whereas, Juan means it as an obligation to a social institution.

The barrier between heaven and hell is the same barrier which exists on earth between the pursuits of the realist and the idealist. The Devil discusses the gulf between heaven and hell:

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[6] Ibid., p. 96.

> The gulf is the difference between the angelic and the diabolic temperament. What more impassable gulf could you have? Think of what you have seen on earth. There is no physical gulf between the philosopher's class room for all that.[7]

The Devil also notes that the gulf is not a physical barrier, but a psychological one:

> A mere physical gulf they could bridge; or at least I could bridge for them (the earth is full of Devil's Bridges); but the gulf of dislike is impassable and eternal. And that is the only gulf that separates my friends here from those who are invidiously called the blest.[8]

Explaining further, the Devil uses analogy to demonstrate the differences between the angelic and diabolic temperament:

> Have you ever been in the country where I have the largest following? England. There they have great racecourses, and also concert rooms where they play the classical compositions of his Excellency's friend Mozart. Those who go to the racecourses can stay away from them and go to the classical concerts instead if they like: there is no law against it. . . . And the classical concert is admitted to be a higher, more cultivated, poetic, intellectual, ennobling place than the racecourse. But do the lovers of racing desert their sport and flock to the concert room? Not they. They would suffer there all the weariness the Commander has suffered in heaven.[9]

Following this comment by the Devil, the Statue is quick to point out that one cannot comfortably pursue an activity simply because it is proper; i.e., even though the pursuit of the realist seems more noble, one must engage in activities of reality because he believes in such activities, not

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[7] Ibid., p. 100.

[8] Ibid., pp. 100-101.

[9] Ibid., p. 100.

because he believes it to befit his station in society. Unless one understands why he is working for the Life Force, he will end up being miserable and uncomfortable:

> At every one of those concerts in England you will find rows of weary people who are there, not because they really like classical music, but because they think they ought to like it. Well, there is the same thing in heaven. A number of people sit there in glory, not because they are happy, but because they think they owe it to their position to be in heaven.[10]

Thus heaven contains members who do not understand or believe in heavenly activity just as the body of supporters of creative evolution on earth contains members who do not understand or believe in the purposes of the Life Force.

The purpose of the Life Force is further frustrated by the modern trend to conformity. The Philistine, who formerly followed leaders with foresight and divine inspiration, now has been won over by the Idealists and the numerical weight of those who follow the Idealists. The Statue gives evidence of this trend:

> Why, the best people are here--princes of the church and all. So few go to Heaven, and so many come here, that the blest, once called a heavenly host, are a continually dwindling minority. The saints, the fathers, the elect of long ago are the cranks, the faddists, the outsiders of today.[11]

Following this comment by the Statue, Juan attempts to explain the popularity of hell by contrasting it to earth:

> The earth is a nursery in which men and women play at being heroes and heroines, saints and sinners; but they are dragged down from their fool's paradise by their

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[10] Ibid., p. 101. [11] Ibid.

> bodies: hunger and cold and thirst, age and decay and disease, death above all, make them slaves of reality: thrice a day meals must be eaten and digested: thrice a century a new generation must be engendered: ages of faith, of romance, and of science are all driven at last to have but one prayer "Make me a healthy animal." But here you escape this tyranny of the flesh; for here you are not an animal at all: you are a ghost, an appearance, an illusion, a convention, deathless, ageless: in a word, bodiless. There are no social questions here, no political questions, no religious questions, best of all, perhaps, no sanitary questions. Here you call your appearance beauty, your emotions love, your sentiments heroism, your aspirations virtue, just as you did on earth; but here there are no hard facts to contradict you, no ironic contrast of your needs with your pretensions, no human comedy, nothing but a perpetual romance, a universal melodrama. As our German friend put it in his poem, "the poetically nonsensical here is good sense; and the Eternal Feminine draws us ever upward and on"--without getting us a step further. And yet you want to leave this paradise![12]

Hell, as it is described here is the heaven of the Idealist, and the heaven which Juan describes is the hell of the Idealist:

> In Heaven, as I picture it, dear lady, you live and work instead of playing and pretending. You face things as they are; you escape nothing but glamor; and your steadfastness and your peril are your glory. If the play still goes on here and on earth, and all the world is a stage, Heaven is at least behind the scenes. But Heaven cannot be described by metaphor. Thither I shall go presently, because there I hope to escape at last from lies and from the tedious, vulgar pursuit of happiness, to spend my eons in contemplation--[13]

Shaw implies that the dream world of the Idealist, hell, is attained by individual choice. No set pattern of behavior, mode of living, or ritual of religion can guarantee one that

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[12] Ibid., pp. 102-103. [13] Ibid., p. 103.

he seeks the proper way of life. Juan reassures Ana that she is in hell in spite of her strict adherence to her religious sacraments; in fact, the Statue comments that even the church officials are in hell.[14] Still later it is revealed that some philosophers, artists, and composers are also in hell.[15]

At first glance it would seem that hell is the attainment of Shaw's dream in that the tyranny of the flesh is overcome; but Juan soon shows the error of this illusion since this freedom from the flesh can be attained only at the cost of death, and the objective of the Life Force is to overcome the domination of matter without incurring death. When the Devil points out to Juan that hell offers the delights which man desires without the unpleasant consequences, Juan replies that price is too great:

> Yes, at the cost of death. Man will not take it at that price: he demands the delights of your hell while he is still on earth.[16]

These illustrations show how man on earth is enslaved by reality. Reality and fact dictate the behavior of mankind. Heaven is either in control of reality itself or is in the process of gaining that control; heaven is the Life Force in the sense that it is attempting to solve the problem of the domination by matter of its knowledge-gathering agent

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[14] Ibid., pp. 88, 101. [15] Ibid., pp. 134-135.

[16] Ibid., p. 121.

on earth, the means by which the knowledge is acquired. Heaven is perhaps the vortex or reserve pool of life, or the energy of life from whence Lilith comes in Back to Methuselah. At any rate, Shaw neglects to give his audience anything other than a vague, nebulous idea of what heaven really is. Juan offers no real help by describing the activities there as contemplation because the thing he is to contemplate is vague also. This is the same problem which Shaw has in "As Far As Thought Can Reach" in Back to Methuselah. The audience is told that the ancients spend their time in contemplation, but Shaw offers no explanation or idea of what the object of contemplation is.[17]

If the picture which Shaw paints of heaven is vague and incomprehensible, the concept of hell is vivid and concrete; the souls in hell are without matter, conscience, or ambition; they are stupid, cruel, immoral, vain, cowardly, and servile; they are hypocrites, panderers, and murderers.[18] Their activities are nothing but useless imitations of pleasures which inhabitants pursue upon earth. They are drifters without will, aim, or foresight.[19] The religion of hell is the worship of love and beauty.[20] In short, everything in hell is directed and oriented toward

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[17]Joad, Shaw, p. 197.

[18]Man and Superman, ACt III, pp. 128-129.

[19]Ibid., p. 128.

[20]Ibid., p. 130.

pleasure-seeking; hell is the epicurean's paradise. When Juan uses the term "happiness" in reference to hell, he means only sensual pleasure, but whenever the word is applied in reference to heaven, he means contemplation. For example, when Ana asks Juan if there is nothing in heaven but contemplation, he replies with these words:

> ANA. Oh, do not interrupt with these frivolities, father. Is there nothing in Heaven but contemplation, Juan?
> DON JUAN. In the Heaven I seek, no other joy.[21]

The attitudes and philosophy of the Devil are accepted by the audience as the general overall attitude and philosophy adhered to by those souls in hell since Juan tells Ana that the Devil is the leader of the best society in hell.[22] Later in the scene Juan laments the ability of the Devil to entice the minds of men into following his manner of thought:

> It is the success with which you have diverted the attention of men from their real purpose, which in one degree or another is the same as mine, to yours, that has earned you the name of the Tempter. It is the fact that they are doing your will, or rather drifting with your want of will, instead of doing their own, that makes them the uncomfortable, false, restless, artificial, petulant, wretched creatures they are.[23]

The success of the Devil in winning over the minds of men is exemplified by the complete submission of the Statue to the will of the Devil at the beginning of the scene:

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[21] Ibid., p. 104. [22] Ibid., p. 89.

[23] Ibid., p. 128.

> THE DEVIL. Why, sir, do you not join us, and leave a sphere for which your temperament is too sympathetic, your heart too warm, your capacity for emjoyment too generous?
>
> THE STATUE. I have this day resolved to do so. In future, excellent Son of the Morning, I am yours. I have left Heaven for ever.
>
> THE DEVIL, [again touching the marble hand] Ah, what an honor! what a triumph for our cause! Thank you, thank you.[24]

This, then, is Shaw's hell: a center of idealistic pursuits, dominated by the Devil, who functions primarily to give the audience an idea of the various attitudes which are prevalent in the utopian society of the Idealist. Heaven and hell, as represented in the Dream Scene, compose an analogy to illustrate the basic dichotomy in philosophy as conceived by Shaw, i.e., that of the realistic Life Force philosophy and all the other idealistic and pessimistic philosophies.

The Nature of Man

From the outset of the discussion concerning the nature of Man, Juan declares that Man is the highest achievement of the Life Force and that Man is as yet extremely ignorant. Juan believes that the Life Force is in need of more intellect, and he implies that Man's intelligence is proportionate to the intelligence of the Life Force. In the following passage Juan almost seems to believe that the fate of the Life Force is dependent upon the fate of Man:

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[24] Ibid., p. 98.

> Think of how it [Life] wastes and scatters itself, how it raises up obstacles to itself and destroys itself in its ignorance and blindness. It needs a brain, this irresistible force, lest in its ignorance it should resist itself. What a piece of work is man! says the poet. Yes; but what a blunderer! Here is the highest miracle of organization yet attained by life, the most intensely alive thing that exists, the most conscious of all the organisms; and yet, how wretched are his brains![25]

After declaring the necessity of intelligence, Juan makes another reference to the idea that Man and the Life Force share a common fate:

> But to Life, the force behind the Man, intellect is a necessity, because without it he blunders into death.[26]

The Devil immediately refutes the need for more intellect:

> Did I say, when I was arranging that affair of Faust's, that all Man's reason has done for him is to make him beastlier than any beast. One splendid body is worth the brains of a hundred dyspeptic, flatulent philosophers.[27]

Juan points out that prehistoric species which had powerful bodies and little intelligence have been tried unsuccessfully; thus bodily perfection without a substantial intellectual capacity is a vain objective because insufficient brains prevented these species to enable themselves to survive.[28]

At this point the Devil begins his first earnest attack on Juan's ideas. He delivers a long discourse calculated to show that Man is destroying himself also, not in spite

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[25] Ibid., p. 104.

[26] Ibid., p. 113.

[27] Ibid., pp. 104-105.

[28] Ibid., p. 105.

of his brain but because of it. The Devil's argument is inductive. He claims that the sciences, which are Man's intellectual products, have enabled Man to increase his destructive capacity:

> And I tell you that in the arts of life man invents nothing; but in the arts of death he outdoes Nature herself, and produces by chemistry and machinery all the slaughter of plague, pestilence, and famine. The peasant I tempt today eats and drinks what was eaten and drunk by the peasants of ten thousand years ago; and the house he lives in has not altered as much in a thousand centuries as the fashion of a lady's bonnet in a score of weeks. But when he goes out to slay, he carries a marvel of mechanism that lets loose at the touch of his finger all the hidden molecular energies, and leaves the javelin, the arrow, the blowpipe of his fathers far behind. In the arts of peace Man is a bungler. I have seen his cotton factories and the like, with machinery that a greedy dog could have invented if it had wanted money instead of food. I know his clumsy typewriters and bungling locomotives and tedious bicycles: they are toys compared to the Maxim gun, the submarine torpedo boat.[29]

Here the Devil also accepts Man as the embodiment of the objectives of a universal force, but the Devil, characteristically pessimistic, does not believe the force to be benevolent:

> There is nothing in Man's industrial machinery but his greed and sloth: his heart is in his weapons. This marvellous force of Life of which you boast is a force of Death: Man measures his strength by his destructiveness.[30]

The Devil continues to enumerate his various experiences on earth, and he selects examples which lead him to the conclusion that Man is preoccupied with death because Man is

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[29] Ibid. [30] Ibid.

endowed with both a desire to kill and a sadistic fascination of slaughter:

> Their imagination glows, their energies rise up at the idea of death, these people: they love it; and the more horrible it is the more they enjoy it.[31]

In the concluding portion of his argument he again reiterates his concept of Man and the force behind Man:

> I could give you a thousand instances; but they all come to the same thing: the power that governs the earth is not the power of Life but of Death; and the inner need that has served Life to the effort of organizing itself into the human being is not the need for higher life but for a more efficient engine of destruction. The plague, the famine, the earthquake, the tempest were too spasmodic in their action; the tiger and crocodile were too easily satiated and not cruel enough: something more constantly, more ruthlessly, more ingeniously destructive was needed; and that something was Man, the inventor of the rack, the stake, the gallows, the electric chair; of sword and gun and poison gas: above all, of justice, duty, patriotism, and all the other isms by which even those who are clever enough to be humanely disposed are persuaded to become the most destructive of all the destroyers.[32]

Juan, unimpressed by the Devil's pessimism, informs the Devil that he has been deceived by the mask which Man hides behind:

> Your weak side, my diabolic friend, is that you have always been a gull: you take Man at his own valuation. Nothing would flatter him more than your opinion of him. He loves to think of himself as bold and bad.[33]

Juan declares that Man's basic nature is not malicious and evil but that he is instead only a coward, and he attempts

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[31] Ibid., p. 106. [32] Ibid., p. 107. [33] Ibid.

to hide his cowardice in whatever manner he can, even to the point of facing death itself:

> . . . he is only a coward. Call him tyrant, murderer, pirate, bully; and he will adore you, and swagger about with the consciousness of having the blood of the old sea kings in his veins. Call him liar and thief; and he will only take an action against you for libel. But call him coward; and he will go mad with rage: he will face death to outface that stinging truth. Man gives every reason for his conduct save one, every excuse for his crimes save one, every plea for his safety save one; and that one is his cowardice. Yet all his civilization is founded on his cowardice, on his abject tameness, which he calls his respectability. There are limits to what a mule or an ass will stand; but Man will suffer himself to be degraded until his vileness becomes so loathsome to his oppressors that they themselves are forced to reform it.[34]

Although he agrees that Man is debased by cowardice, the Devil cannot understand how the Life Force can operate through such a base instrument as Man.[35]

Next Juan reveals what he believes to be the saving grace of Man: Man somehow senses concepts or goals which are universal and beneficial to the Life Force, and he rises above his cowardice and emerges a brave and noble creature:

> But men never really overcome fear until they imagine they are fighting to further a universal purpose--fighting for an idea, as they call it.[36]

Juan's support of this hypothesis is also inductive, and he cites as evidence the bravery and recklessness of the

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[34] Ibid., pp. 107-108. [35] Ibid., p. 108.

[36] Ibid.

Crusaders and Saracens. Juan is so confident of his analysis of Man's willingness to further the purposes of the Life Force that he predicts that Man will eventually strive for human perfection:

> When the Spaniard learns at last that he is no better than the Saracen, and his prophet no better than Mahomet, he will arise, more Catholic than ever, and die on a barricade across the filthy slum he starves in, for a universal liberty and equality. . . . Later on, Liberty will not be Catholic enough: men will die for human perfection, to which they will sacrifice all their liberty gladly.[37]

Juan then concludes his argument with a reiteration of his concept of the nature of Man:

> I am giving you examples of the fact that this creature Man, who in his own selfish affairs is a coward to the backbone, will fight for an idea like a hero. He may be abject as a citizen; but he is dangerous as a fanatic. He can only be enslaved whilst he is spiritually weak enough to listen to reason. I tell you, gentlemen, if you can shew a man a piece of what he now calls God's work to do, and what he will later on call by many new names, you can make him entirely reckless of the consequences to himself personally.[38]

Woman and Marriage

The discussion of the relationship between the sexes begins in earnest after Ana declares that Man is irresponsible, and he deserts his wife to further his ideas.[39] This begins a lengthy argument about Man's moral and legal marital responsibilities. During the discussion, Juan points out

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[37] Ibid., p. 109.

[38] Ibid., pp. 109-110.

[39] Ibid., pp. 109-110.

that the original biological uses which Woman has for Man are very limited:

> To a woman, Senora, man's duties and responsibilities begin and end with the task of getting bread for her children. To her, Man is only a means to the end of getting children and rearing them.[40]

Juan then continues to explain the origin of the duo-sex process and the natural purpose of Woman and Man. Woman's purpose is biologically primary, whereas Man's purpose is not:

> DON JUAN. Sexually, Woman is Nature's contrivance for perpetuating its highest achievement. Sexually, Man is Woman's contrivance for fulfilling Nature's behest in the most economical way. She knows by instinct that far back in the evolutional process she invented him, differentiated him, created him in order to produce something better than the single-sexed process can produce. Whilst he fulfills the purpose for which she made him, he is welcome to his dreams, his follies, his ideals, his heroisms, provided that the keystone of them all is the worship of woman, of motherhood, of the family, of the hearth. But how rash and dangerous it was to invent a separate creature whose sole function was her own impregnation! For mark what has happened. First, Man has multiplied on her hands until there are as many men as women; so that she has been unable to employ for her purposes more than a fraction of the immense energy she has left at his disposal by saving him the exhausting labor of gestation. This superfluous energy has gone to his brain and to his muscle. He has become too strong to be controlled by her bodily, and too imaginative and mentally vigorous to be content with mere self-reproduction. He has created civilization without consulting her, taking her domestic labor for granted as the foundation of it.[41]

Ana agrees with Juan that Man has created civilization and based it upon the assurance that Woman can always manage

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[40] Ibid., p. 110.

[41] Ibid., pp. 110-111.

to fulfill her own biological purposes. So far, the Life Force has been occupied with the survival of the species, and it has reached a point in the evolutional scale which allows mankind to rely upon the results of fecundity and greed.[42]

Ana takes a defensive stand against the ambitions of Man because she naturally feels them to be antagonistic to the accomplishment of her purpose. She cannot understand him, and she refuses to admit that Man possibly has his own purposes which are not identical to hers. When Juan states that Man is unselfish only when furthering an ideal, Ana agrees: "Yes: he shirks all his responsibilities, and leaves his wife to grapple with them."[43] What Ana means by "responsibilities" is husbandly duties. Ana cannot seem to understand that Nature has any other purposes than propagation. In order to explain the dual purpose of Nature, Juan finds it necessary to point out the basic purpose of Man as well as the basic purpose of Woman. These two purposes are the two objectives of the Life Force: (1) to maintain, or assure the preservation of, its greatest accomplishment, the human species; and (2) to urge Man on to higher levels of intelligence and self-understanding.[44] The former objective is the more urgent of the two since the second objective is dependent upon the accomplishment

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[42] Ibid., p. 111. [43] Ibid., p. 110. [44] Ibid., p. 111.

of the first objective. The Life Force has assigned the job of accomplishing the primary objective to Woman, and it has given to Man the somewhat more difficult task of accomplishing the second objective of developing the intellect.

Woman instinctively knows what means are advantageous to her purpose, and she becomes a grasping and scheming adversary of the man whom she has selected for her mate.[45] When Juan describes his experiences with Woman, which contradicted those romantic teachings he had learned from the Artist, Ana proposes that Woman is not responsible for any idealizations of her by Man; she even implies that such an attitude on the part of Man toward Woman is justified since it serves her purposes:

> DON JUAN. Yes: I came to believe that in her voice was all the music of the song, in her face all the beauty of the painting, and in her soul all the emotion of the poem.
>
> ANA. And you were disappointed, I suppose. Well, was it her fault that you attributed all these perfections to her?
>
> DON JUAN. Yes, partly. For with a wonderful instinctive cunning, she kept silent and allowed me to glorify her: to mistake my own visions, thoughts, and feelings for hers.[46]

Juan recalls more of his experiences which illustrate the duplicity of Woman when she tries to ensnare the man she has chosen:

> Well, I found that when I had touched a woman's imagination, she would allow me to persuade myself that she loved me; but when my suit was granted she never said

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[45] Ibid., p. 119.

[46] Ibid., p. 115.

> "I am happy; my love is satisfied": she always said, first, "At last, the barriers are down," and second, "When will you come again?"
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> Well, these two speeches always alarmed me; for the first meant that the lady's impulse had been solely to throw down my fortifications and gain my citadel; and the second openly announced that henceforth she regarded me as her property, and counted my time as already wholly at her disposal.[47]

The Statue agrees with Juan that women do make these statements, but he does so only after the Devil, Ana, and he chide Juan for revealing such intimate experiences. However, Juan continues by describing how Woman reacts when she has some assurance of winning her man:

> Then the lady, who had been happy and idle enough before, became anxious, preoccupied with me, always intriguing, conspiring, pursuing, watching, waiting, bent wholly on making sure of her prey: I being the prey, you understand.[48]

Up to this time Ana has been protesting Juan's idea of the ruthlessness of the nature of Woman, but after Juan baits her cleverly, she drops her pretentions and reveals herself as a perfect example of Woman as conceived by Juan:

> DON JUAN. I did not run away from you. Do you blame me for running away from the others?
>
> ANA. Nonsense, man. You are talking to a woman of 77 now. If you had had the chance, you would have run away from me too--if I had let you. You would not have found it so easy with me as with some of the others. If men will not be faithful to their home and their duties, they must be made to be.[49]

After this revelation of the ruthlessness of Woman, Ana demonstrates that she possesses some of the traits of

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[47] Ibid. [48] Ibid., p. 116. [49] Ibid.

the Realist, i.e., she is not at all deluded as to the true nature of Woman. This disclosure makes the Devil and the Statue uncomfortable since they both have idealized Woman:

> I daresay you all want to marry lovely incarnations of music and painting and poetry. Well, you cant have them, because they dont exist. If flesh and blood is not good enough for you, you must go without: thats all. Women have to put up with flesh-and-blood husbands--and little enough of that too, sometimes; and you will have to put up with flesh-and-blood wives. [The Devil looks dubious. The Statue makes a wry face]. I see you dont like that, any of you; but its true, for all that; so if you dont like it you can lump it.[50]

But Ana is not a realist as far as marriage is concerned; she defends this institution with such standard terms as "honor," "chastity," and "virtue." She appears indignant when Juan attacks chastity, and she begins her earnest defense of marriage:

> ANA. Don Juan: a word against chastity is an insult to me.
>
> DON JUAN. I say nothing against your chastity, Senora, since it took the form of a husband and twelve children. What more could you have done had you been the most abandoned of women?
>
> ANA. I could have had twelve husbands and no children: thats what I could have done, Juan. And let me tell you that that would have made all the difference to the earth which I replenished.[51]

This comment by Ana affords Juan a chance to illustrate the artificiality of the moral trappings surrounding marriage:

> DON JUAN. No: for though that difference is the true essential difference--Dona Ana has, I admit, gone straight to the real point--yet it is not a difference of love or chastity, or even constancy; for twelve

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., p. 118.

> children by twelve different husbands would have replenished the earth perhaps more effectively. Suppose my friend Ottavio had died when you were thirty, you would never have remained a widow: you were too beautiful. Suppose the successor of Ottavio had died when you were forty, you would still have been irresistible; and a woman who marries twice marries three times if she becomes free to do so. Twelve lawful children borne by one highly respectable lady to three different fathers is not impossible nor condemned by public opinion. That such a lady may be more law abiding than the poor girl whom we used to spurn into the gutter for bearing one unlawful infant is no doubt true; but dare you say she is less self-indulgent?
>
> ANA. She is more virtuous: that is enough for me.
>
> DON JUAN. In that case, what is virtue but the Trade Unionism of the married? Let us face the facts, dear Ana. The Life Force respects marriage only because marriage is a contrivance of its own to secure the greatest number of children and the closest care of them. For honor, chastity, and all the rest of your moral figments it cares not a rap. Marriage is the most licentious of human institutions--[52]

After an interruption from Ana and the Statue, who are shocked at Juan's attitude, Juan continues his indictment against marriage, and he even uses Ana's background as evidence for his conclusions:

> DON JUAN. [determinedly] I say the most licentious of human institutions: that is the secret of its popularity. And a woman seeking a husband is the most unscrupulous of all the beasts of prey. The confusion of marriage with morality has done more to destroy the conscience of the human race than any other single error. Come, Ana! do not look shocked: you know better than any of us that marriage is a mantrap baited with simulated accomplishments and delusive idealizations. When your sainted mother, by dint of scoldings and punishments, forced you to learn how to play half a dozen pieces on the spinet--which she hated as much as you did--had she any other purpose than to delude your suitors into the belief that your husband would have in his home an angel who would fill it with

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[52] Ibid., pp. 118-119.

> melody, or at least play him to sleep after dinner? You married my friend Ottavio: well, did you ever open the spinet from the hour when the Church united him to you?
>
> ANA. You are a fool, Juan, A young married woman has something else to do than sit at the spinet without any support for her back; so she gets out of the habit of playing.
>
> DON JUAN. Not if she loves music. No: believe me, she only throws away the bait when the bird is in the net.[53]

Ana inadvertently agrees with Juan on this point. She is outraged once again because Juan has exposed her secrets, and she reacts again by a counterattack upon Man. But Juan calmly asserts that he is not defending Man but is condemning the lies and deceptions with which marriage is initiated:

> ANA. [bitterly] And men, I suppose, never throw off the mask when their bird is in the net. The husband never becomes negligent, selfish, brutal--oh, never!
>
> DON JUAN. What do these recriminations prove, Ana? Only that the hero is as gross an impostor as the heroine.[54]

At this point Ana attempts to defend marriage on the grounds that "most marriages are perfectly comfortable,"[55] i.e., that most matrimonial unions are not the unpleasant relationships which Juan believes them to be. But Juan explains that this apparently comfortable relationship is, in reality, neither comfortable nor pleasant, but is made as comfortable as possible under the circumstances by each individual:

> "Perfectly" is a strong expression, Ana. What you mean is that sensible people make the best of one another.

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[53] Ibid., pp. 119-120. [54] Ibid., p. 120. [55] Ibid.

> Send me to the galleys and chain me to the felon whose number happens to be next before mine; and I must accept the inevitable and make the best of the companionship. Many such companionships, they tell me, are touchingly affectionate; and most are at least tolerably friendly. But that does not make a chain a desirable ornament nor the galleys an abode of bliss. Those who talk most about the blessings of marriage and the constancy of its vows are the very people who declare that if the chain were broken and the prisoners left free to choose, the whole social fabric would fly asunder. You cannot have the argument both ways. If the prisoner is happy, why lock him in? If he is not, why pretend that he is?[56]

Ana evidently feels that she can no longer defend marriage with the conventional application of moralistic terms, so she falls back on the pragmatic view of marriage, i.e, it accomplishes the purpose of Woman:

> At all events, let me take an old woman's privilege again, and tell you flatly that marriage peoples the world and debauchery does not.[57]

Now that Ana has confessed the real reason for her staunch defense of marriage, Juan admonishes her and her kind for deceiving men and leading them away from Man's purpose:

> Well, you have done your best, you virtuous ladies, and others of your way of thinking, to bend Man's mind wholly towards honorable love as the highest good, and to understand by honorable love romance and beauty and happiness in the possession of beautiful, refined, delicate, affectionate women. You have taught women to value their own youth, health, shapeliness, and refinement above all things.[58]

After disproving all the idealistic concepts of marriage, Juan begins to construct his own realistic view of marriage.

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[56] Ibid. [57] Ibid. [58] Ibid., pp. 120-121.

The first thing he does is declare that the purpose of marriage is to breed the human species in order to continue and hasten the evolutional processes of man:

> The great central purpose of breeding the race: ay, breeding it to heights now deemed superhuman: that purpose which is now hidden in a mephitic cloud of love and romance and prudery and fastidiousness, will break through into clear sunlight as a purpose no longer to be confused with the gratification of personal fancies, the impossible realization of boys' and girls' dreams of bliss, or the need of older people for companionship or money. The plain-spoken marriage services of the vernacular Churches will no longer be abbreviated and half suppressed as indelicate. The sober decency, earnestness, and authority of their declaration of the real purpose of marriage will be honored and accepted, whilst their romantic vowings and pledgings and until-death-do-us-partings and the like will be expunged as unbearable frivolities.[59]

The next step which Juan takes is necessary to divorce from marriage its essence, the sexual attraction, in order to show that conjugation has no relationship with idealistic concepts. He begins by asserting that the sex relation is neither personal nor friendly. Ana again protests: "Not a personal or friendly relation! What relation is more personal? more sacred? more holy?"[60] Juan answers by pointing out the differences between these terms: "Sacred and holy, if you like, Ana, but not personally friendly. Your relation to God is sacred and holy: dare you call it personally friendly?"[61]

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[59] Ibid., p. 123. [60] Ibid. [61] Ibid.

Juan suggests that the sex relation is a device of the Life Force which shows no personal considerations:

> In the sex relation the universal creative energy, of which the parties are both the helpless agents, overrides and sweeps away all personal considerations, and dispenses with all personal relations. The pair may be utter strangers to one another, speaking different languages, differing in race and color, in age and disposition, with no bond between them but a possibility of that fecundity for the sake of which the Life Force throws them into one another's arms at the exchange of a glance.[62]

This speech is essentially a generalization based upon Juan's personal experiences with women.[63]

Juan does admit that the social consequences brought about by the abandonment of Woman does justify her tactics:

> The consequences, yes: they justify her fierce grip of the man. But surely you do not call that attachment a sentimental one. As well call the policeman's attachment to his prisoner a love relation.[64]

Ana now reveals her pragmatic inclinations most vividly; she feels that Juan's admission of the necessity of Woman's tenacious efforts is the same as recognizing marriage, the instrument which Woman uses, as being good. But what Juan is actually admitting is that it is only expedient. She does not seem to understand completely what Juan is trying to say:

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., p. 118.

[64] Ibid., p. 124.

> ANA. You see you have to confess that marriage is necessary, though, according to you, love is the slightest of all human relations.[65]

Juan answers Ana's statement by declaring that the sex relation, as an instrument of the Life Force, transcends personal considerations and moral entrapments. He further implies that if marriage can be made to serve a political and family advantage, it can be made to serve its true purpose just as easily:

> How do you know that it is not the greatest of all human relations? far too great to be a personal matter. Could your father have served his country if he had refused to kill any enemy of Spain unless he personally hated him? Can a woman serve her country if she refuses to marry any man she does not personally love? You know it is not so: the woman of noble birth marries as the man of noble birth fights, on political and family grounds, not on personal ones.[66]

Juan's entire argument concerning Woman and marriage contains seven major points: (1) Woman's purpose is to perpetuate the human species; (2) Woman deliberately and unscrupulously fosters illusions and devices which trap Man into marriage; (3) the confusion of marriage and morality has corrupted the conscience of mankind; (4) marriage prevents man from fulfilling his own natural purpose; (5) marriage is not necessarily a blissful nor happy union; (6) the sex relation, the basis of marriage, is impersonal and above moral limitations; and (7) marriage must again serve its true purpose of fostering the evolutional advancement of the human species.

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[65] Ibid. [66] Ibid.

Propagation is not in itself an impediment to the development of the Superman, which is the end product of the evolution of the human intellect; it is instead the very means of acquiring the Superman. Evolution is a by-product of propagation, and therefore, evolutional results must be attained through the processes of reproduction. The difficulty which Juan is attempting to explain is the confusion of marriage and conjugation: Man has built a false relationship between the two. In order to progress, mankind will have to realize that all men and women must be eligible to breed with one another. The guidepost, or measuring stick, for the progress will be the "guidance of fancy (alias Voice of Nature)."[67] Conjugation propagates the race, and marriage provides for the needs which arise from conjugation; if the needs can be provided for by another means, marriage will dissolve.[68]

But Woman is not entirely incapable of understanding or desiring evolutional progress, for Ana, the representative of Woman, leaves in search of a mate to help her produce the Superman:

> ANA. Tell me: where can I find the Superman?
> THE DEVIL. He is not yet created, Senora.
> THE STATUE. And never will be, probably. Let us proceed: the red fire will make me sneeze. [They descend].

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[67]"The Revolutionist's Handbook," p. 180.

[68]Ibid., p. 184.

> ANA. Not yet created! Then my work is not yet done. [Crossing herself devoutly] I believe in the Life to Come. [Crying to the universe] A father! a father for the Superman![69]

The Philosopher and the Life Force

To explain the nature and position of the Life Force, Juan briefly describes the accomplishments of it:

> So far, the results of Life's continual effort, not only to maintain itself, but to achieve higher and higher organization and completer self-consciousness, is only, at best, a doubtful campaign between its forces and those of Death and Degeneration. . . . Well, the Life Force is stupid; but it is not so stupid as the forces of Death and Degeneration. Besides, these are in its pay all the time. And so Life wins, after a fashion. What mere copiousness of fecundity can supply and mere greed preserve, we possess. The survival of whatever form of civilization can produce the best rifle and the best fed riflemen is assured.[70]

The Devil questions Juan at the point and claims that Juan is actually proving that the species which survives is the species which is the most destructive rather than being a species which has attained a greater capacity for Life:

> Exactly! the survival, not of the most effective means of Life but of the most effective means of Death. You always come back to my point, in spite of your wrigglings and evasions and sophistries, not to mention the intolerable length of your speeches.[71]

Here Juan recapitulates the purpose of the Life Force and asks if all agree upon its objectives:

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[69] *Man and Superman*, Act III, p. 135.

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 111. [71] *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

> Are we agreed that Life is a force which has made innumerable experiments in organizing itself; that the mammoth and the man, the mouse and the megatherium, the flies and the fleas and the Fathers of the Church, are all more or less successful attempts to build up that raw force into higher and higher individuals, the ideal individual being omnipotent, omniscient, infallible, and withal completely, unilludedly self-conscious: in short, a god?[72]

The agreement of the Devil and Statue to this premise constitutes the weakest point in Shaw's presentation of his argument. Once the others have agreed, Juan demonstrates that the intellect is the most godlike quality possessed by Man. There seems to be no particular reason for this agreement since Juan has presented no argument which would warrant the necessary recognition of the validity of this premise. Because of this unwarranted acceptance of first premises, the philosophical qualities of the dream interlude are greatly weakened. As a matter of fact, it seems extremely odd that the Devil, in view of his previously expressed pessimistic concept of the nature of Man, should suddenly accept a telic explanation of the Life Force, which is, according to Juan's presentation, no more plausible than the Devil's. Shaw perhaps realized this weakness because the inconsistency appears to have been covered by having the Devil and the Statue agree conditionally in a rather humorous manner, and immediately following this agreement,

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[72] Ibid., p. 112.

Ana expresses her disagreement--not to the premise, but to an insignificant allusion made by Juan:

> THE DEVIL. I agree, for the sake of argument.
> THE STATUE. I agree, for the sake of avoiding argument.
> ANA. I most emphatically disagree as regards the Fathers of the Church; and I must beg you not to drag them into the argument.[73]

With the establishment of his telic premise, Juan continues to refute the Devil's proposal that beauty is the objective of the Life Force:

> And now, since we are, with that exception, agreed so far, will you not agree with me further that Life has not measured the success of its attempts at godhead by the beauty or bodily perfection of the result, since in both these respects the birds, as our friend Aristophanes pointed out, are so extraordinarily superior, with their power of flight and their lovely plumage, and, may I add, the touching poetry of their loves and nestings, that it is inconceivable that Life, having once produced them, should, if love and beauty were her object, start off on another line and labor at the clumsy elephant and the hideous ape, whose grandchildren we are?[74]

It should be noted once again that here Juan has assumed that Man is the highest species in the evolutional scale, but logically there is no reason for this assumption since, at this point, the objective is unknown. Once Juan has assumed that Man is the highest achievement of the Life Force, it is only a short step to the assumption that the quality which differentiates Man from the other animals, the intellect, is the objective of the Life Force. The

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[73] Ibid., p. 112. [74] Ibid., pp. 112-113.

examples which Juan uses are equally as presumptuous as his basic premise of the objective of the Life Force. For example, he uses the birds as an example of beauty, but he neglects to define exactly what he means by the term beauty. The Devil could have easily questioned Juan with a similar argument; e.g., if intelligence or self-consciousness had been the measure of success for Life, and since in this respect Man is far superior to any other species, ". . . it is inconceivable that Life, having produced . . ." Man, ". . . should, if . . ." intellect and brains ". . . were her object, start off on another line and labor. . ." at the stupid bird or the simple and unconscious insect. The wording is the same as Juan's, but a change in concept shows that Juan's argument actually proves nothing and contributes no concrete support of Juan's belief. Juan might have had a valid point if he could have shown that all the species of lesser intellect are diminishing in number, but such a demonstration would be impossible.

Rather than question Juan in such a manner, Shaw has the Devil attempt an innocuous and very obvious subterfuge:

> THE DEVIL. You conclude, then, that Life was driving at clumsiness and ugliness?
> DON JUAN. No, perverse devil that you are, a thousand times no. Life was driving at brains--at its darling object: an organ by which it can attain not only self-consciousness but self-understanding.[75]

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[75] Ibid., p. 113.

Here the Statue protests that the discussion is metaphysical and asks Juan why Life should want to develop the intellect. Juan declares that intellect is a necessity:

> But to Life, the force behind the Man, intellect is a necessity, because without it he blunders into death. Just as Life, after ages of struggle evolved that wonderful bodily organ the eye, so that the living organism could see where it was going and what was coming to help or threaten it, and thus avoid a thousand dangers that formerly slew it, so it is evolving today a mind's eye that shall see, not the physical world, but the purpose of life, and thereby enable the individual to work for that purpose instead of thwarting and baffling it by setting up shortsighted personal aims as at present.[76]

The explanation which Juan offers in the above passage is extremely disappointing because he fails to point out adequately that the intellect is necessary to Life; instead, he states that intellect is necessary to Man because ". . . without it he blunders into death." The presentation of the fact that the intellect is necessary for the survival of Man is not adequate proof that it is necessary to the force behind Man, Life. Is this to say that Life would perish without intellect because Man would? This passage seems to imply that Man and the Life Force have a common destiny; but is the intellectual development of the Life Force necessarily connected with the intellectual development of Man? Could Man not perish without ending the Life Force? Juan admits that some species have become extinct, but he does not say that Man could enter the same fate as the prehistoric animals:

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[76] Ibid., pp. 113-114.

> These things lived and wanted to live; but for lack of brains they did not know how to carry out their purpose, and so destroyed themselves.[77]

One might venture to propose that Juan's plea is not on behalf of the Life Force, but on behalf of Man. The urgency implied by his speeches makes it apparent that his plea is for Man because the Life Force, working throughout eternity, need have no concern for time.

The Statue demonstrates by his actions that most Philistines are perfectly satisfied with enough intelligence to enjoy themselves, but the Philistine is aware that the analysis of his pleasures sometimes is disagreeable: "But I am quite content with brain enough to know that I'm enjoying myself. I dont want to understand why. In fact, Id rather not. My experience is that one's pleasures dont bear thinking about."[78] After explaining to the Statue the necessity of intellect, Juan suggests that neither the Philistine nor the Idealist is actually happy:

> Even as it is, only one sort of man has ever been happy, has ever been universally respected among all the conflicts of interests and illusions.[79]

The Statue immediately assumes that Juan is talking about the military man, but Juan is quick to enlighten him:

> No: I sing not arms and the hero, but the philosophic man: he who seeks in contemplation to discover the

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[77] Ibid., p. 105.

[78] Ibid., p. 113.

[79] Ibid., p. 114.

> inner will of the world, in invention to discover the means of fulfilling that will, and in action to do that will be the so-discovered means. Of all other sorts of men I declare myself tired. They are tedious failures.[80]

The philosopher is actually an intellectual mutation created by the Life Force for the purpose of advancing the species; he is the means by which nature can find more direct methods of achieving its purpose. Juan discloses his attitudes toward the other professions on earth:

> When I was on earth, professors of all sorts prowled round me feeling for an unhealthy spot in me on which they could fasten. The doctors of medicine bade me consider what I must do to save my body, and offered me quack cures for imaginary diseases. I replied that I was not a hypochrondriac; so they called me Ignoramus and went their way. The doctors of divinity bade me consider what I must do to save my soul; but I was not a spiritual hypochrondriac any more than a bodily one, and would not trouble myself about that either; so they called me Atheist and went their way. After then came the politician, who said there was only one purpose in nature, and that was to get him into parliament. I told him I did not care whether he got into parliament or not; so he called me Mugwump and went his way. Then came the romantic man, the Artist, with his love songs and his paintings and his poems; and with him I had great delight for many years, and some profit; for I cultivated my senses for his sake; and his songs taught me to hear better, his paintings to see better, and his poems to feel more deeply.[81]

The Artist is very close to the Philosopher in Juan's esteem because the Artist is a genius in the same sense that the Philosopher is a genius, that is, the Artist can perceive inner truths and realities. But Juan feels that the Artist

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[80] Ibid., p. 114. [81] Ibid.

possesses a characteristic which greatly discredits him--romanticism. Juan claims that the Artist led him to idealize Woman, and such idealization blinded him to the true nature of Woman and consequently to the true nature of Woman's purpose.[82] After studying the romantic ideas of the Artist, Juan began to try to apply those concepts to the women with whom he came into contact.

> Yes: I came to believe that in her voice was all the music of the song, in her face all the beauty of the painting, and in her soul all the emotion of the poem.[83]

But Juan found that the Artist's notions about Woman were not true:

> Ah, my friends, when the barriers were down for the first time, what an astounding illumination! I had been prepared for infatuation, for intoxication, for all the illusions of love's young dream; and lo! never was my perception clearer, nor my criticism more ruthless. The most jealous rival of my mistress never saw every blemish in her more keenly than I.
>
> My ear, practised on a thousand songs and symphonies; my eye, exercised on a thousand paintings; tore her voice, her features, her color to shreds. I caught all those tell-tale resemblances to her father and mother by which I knew what she would be like in thirty years' time. I noted the gleam of gold from a dead tooth in the laughing mouth: I made curious observations of the strange odors of the chemistry of the nerves. The visions of my romantic reveries, in which I had trod the plains of heaven with a deathless, ageless creature of coral and ivory, deserted me in that supreme hour. I remembered them and desperately strove to recover their illusion; but they now seemed the emptiest of inventions: my judgment was not to be corrupted: my brain still said No on every issue.[84]

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[82] Ibid., p. 115. [83] Ibid. [84] Ibid., pp. 117-118.

This disillusionment is what converted Juan from the romantic, idealistic Artist to the realistic Philosopher:

> That is just why I turned my back on the romantic man with the artist nature, as he called his infatuation. I thanked him for teaching me to use my eyes and ears; but I told him that his beauty worshipping and happiness hunting and woman idealizing was not worth a dump as a philosophy of life; so he called me Philistine and went his way.[85]

Juan credits Woman with teaching him the basic truth concerning life, and consequently he began his career as a Realist:

> ANA. It seems that Woman taught you something, too, with all her defects.
>
> DON JUAN. She did more: she interpreted all the other teaching for me. I was not duped: I took her without chloroform.
>
> ANA. But you did take her.
>
> DON JUAN. That was the revelation. Up to that moment I had never lost the sense of being my own master; never consciously taken a single step until my reason had examined and approved it. I had come to believe that I was a purely rational creature: a thinker! I said, with the foolish philosopher, "I think; therefore I am." It was Woman who taught me to say, "I am; therefore I think." And also, "I would think more; therefore I must be more."[86]

In this statement Juan means that the sex relation overpowers any rational objectivity on the part of the individual who is attracted to the opposite sex. Even though Juan knew the consequences involved, he could not escape: "Life seized me and threw me into her arms as a sailor throws a scrap of fish into the mouth of a seabird."[87] This made Juan acutely aware of the fact that the instinct in Man is much more

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[85] Ibid., pp. 116-117. [86] Ibid., p. 117.

[87] Ibid., p. 118.

powerful than the intellect, and since the intellect is the result of Man's evolution through instinctive mating, Man actually thinks because he exists, i.e., he has existence of the body. If then Man wishes to progress intellectually, he must do so through the only instrument which the Life Force has placed at his disposal--mating.

Juan also implies that the Life Force will determine the selection of the individuals. He makes several references to the power of the Life Force: "Life seized me and threw me into her arms. . . .";[88] "I saw then how useless it is to attempt to impose conditions on the irresistible force of Life. . .";[89] ". . . the Life Force throws them into one another's arms at the exchange of a glance";[90] ". . . the philosopher is in the grip of the Life Force."[91] If the Life Force is to select the individuals for mating through the human instinct, and is to determine the course of evolution, then all Man must do is clear away all deterents and obstructions. But Juan explicitly states that Man will soon recognize the "great central purpose of breeding the race."[92] Juan does not explain how Man is to breed the race and at the same time to allow instinct to determine selection unless he

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[88] Ibid., p. 118. [89] Ibid. [90] Ibid., p. 123.
[91] Ibid., p. 131. [92] Ibid., p. 123.

proposes that instinctive breeding is in fact breeding the race. Juan's ambiguity becomes more pronounced when he insists that the philosopher have a positive approach:

> I tell you that as long as I can conceive something better than myself I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence or clearing the way for it. That is the law of my life. That is the working within me of Life's incessant aspiration to higher organization, wider, deeper, intenser self-consciousness, and clearer self-understanding.[93]

But perhaps Juan means that those persons in political and social power should be the ones to lead in furthering the purposes of the Life Force:

> . . . and if we who are of that governing caste aimed at more Life for the world instead of at more power and luxury for our miserable selves, that secret would make us great.[94]

At this point the Devil returns to the initial concept of progress, and he reveals himself as the arch pessimist--an advocate of the mechanistic theory of the universe:

> . . . men get tired of everything, of heaven no less than of hell; and . . . all history is nothing but a record of the oscillations of the world between these two extremes. An epoch is but a swing of the pendulum; and each generation thinks the world is progressing because it is always moving. Where you now see reform, progress, fulfilment of upward tendency, continual ascent by Man on the stepping stones of his dead selves to higher things, you will see nothing but an infinite comedy of illusion. You will discover the profound truth of the saying of my friend Koheleth, that there is nothing new under the sun.[95]

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[93] Ibid., p. 127.

[94] Ibid., p. 129.

[95] Ibid., pp. 130-131.

Juan, the optimist, finds this argument detestable. He thus asks the standard question: ". . . has the colossal mechanism no purpose?"[96] The Devil then declares there is none:

> None, my friend. You think, because you have a purpose, Nature must have one. You might as well expect it to have fingers and toes because you have them.[97]

This comment affords Juan the opportunity for a telling rebuttal in which Juan identifies himself positively with Nature and the purpose of Nature:

> But I should not have them if they served no purpose. And I, my friend, am as much a part of Nature as my own finger is a part of me. If my finger is the organ by which I grasp the sword and the mandoline, my brain is the organ by which Nature strives to understand itself. . . . Were I not possessed with a purpose beyond my own I had better be a ploughman than a philosopher; for the ploughman lives as long as the philosopher, eats more, sleeps better, and rejoices in the wife of his bosom with less misgiving. This is because the philosopher is in the grip of the Life Force. This Life Force says to him, "I have done a thousand wonderful things unconsciously by merely willing to live and following the line of least resistance: now I want to know myself and my destination, and choose my path; so I have made a special brain--a philosopher's brain--to grasp this knowledge for me as the husbandman's hand grasps the plough for me. And this," says the Life Force to the philosopher, "must thou strive to do for me until thou diest, when I will make another brain and another philosopher to carry on the work."[98]

The Devil, unimpressed by such sentiments, demands to know what is the purpose for having such knowledge, and Juan gives him as answer which seems to be almost the same reasons he has already given:

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[96]Ibid., p. 131. [97]Ibid. [98]Ibid., pp. 131-132.

> Why, to be able to choose the line of greatest advantage instead of yielding in the direction of the least resistance. Does a ship sail to its destination no better than a log drifts nowhither? The philosopher is Nature's pilot. And there you have our difference: to be in hell is to drift: to be in heaven is to steer.[99]

This final argument between the Devil and Juan is essentially the same problem which Shaw presents in the preface to Back to Methuselah. The Devil uses the principles which Shaw believes the neo-Darwinians to use, and Juan refutes the ideas in the same manner in which Shaw refutes the neo-Darwinians, on the basis of faith.

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[99] Ibid., p. 132.

CHAPTER IV

SHAW'S PHILOSOPHY

Although the Dream Scene is a complete expression of Shaw's philosophy, it is not an adequate explanation of it. The Dream Scene provides no real background or historical context for the development of the philosophy, nor does it deal fully with the origins of ideas about the process of evolution. An explanation of Shaw's philosophy and of the influences upon Shaw's philosophy will bring the ideas in the Dream Scene into a clearer focus.

Influences Upon Shavian Philosophy

The importance of Darwin's Origin of Species to the formation of Shaw's philosophy can hardly be overestimated. Shaw spent his lifetime refuting what he believed to be the philosophical interpretation of the mechanistic theory of evolution.

The French naturalist Lamarck represents the beginning of the approach to scientific explanation of variations of species. The evolutionary theory which he championed is exemplified in the work Philosophie zoologique, published in 1809. Lamarck maintained that living nature is a plastic

force which responds creatively to environment.[1] External environment affects an organism as a stimulus; and if the response within the organism is sufficient, adaptation results and the physiology of the organism changes.[2] Lamarck supported the theory of acquired characteristics; i.e., organisms pass their characteristics of adaptability and the chances of the survival of the species on to their offspring. Lamarck's theory, however, like Darwin's, postulates no informing purpose or plan.[3] To Lamarck, life was strictly a physical phenomenon, and his assimilation into the vitalistic tradition resulted from a misunderstanding or ignoring of his theory.[4]

The school which embraced Darwin's theory of natural selection (or the struggle for existence) overemphasized the point which Darwin had made, but the opposing school of thought equally overemphasized it. Actually, Darwin never maintained that natural selection was the only method of evolution:

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[1]Charles Coulston Gillispie, "Lamarck and Darwin in the History of Science," Forerunners of Darwin: 1745-1859 (Baltimore, 1959), p. 270.

[2]C. E. M. Joad, Matter, Life and Value (London, 1929), p. 7.

[3]Charles Darwin, Origin of Species (London, n.d.), passim.

[4]Gillispie, op. cit., p. 275.

> But my conclusions have lately been much misrepresented, and it has been stated that I attribute the modification of species exclusively to natural selection; I may be permitted to remark that in the first edition of this work, and subsequently, I placed in a most conspicuous position--namely, at the close of the Introduction--the following words: "I am convinced that natural selection has been the main but not the exclusive means of modification."[5]

But Darwin does not endorse any other methods of evolution, and people interpreted him to believe only in natural selection. Two main schools of thought which developed after 1859 were the Darwinian theory of continuity of species and the traditional view of creation as expressed in Genesis. Darwinists believed that the great law of organic life had been discovered through the doctrine of the continuity of species; whereas, religiously orthodox individuals believed that if man is a development from lower animals then special divine creation and human dignity were sacrificed.[6]

The discussion was placed upon a different basis when Samuel Butler pointed out that Darwin's particular contribution was not the doctrine of the continuity of species, since Lamarck and Erasmus Darwin had proposed such a theory long before, but the doctrine of Natural Selection. Butler found the former theory easily acceptable, but he rejected the latter theory on the basis that it made the development

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[5]Darwin, op. cit., pp. 495-496.

[6]Eric Bentley, Bernard Shaw (Norfolk, 1957), p. 59.

of man a result of a freakish accident or mechanical law.[7] The objection to the element of chance which lay inherent in the doctrine of Natural Selection provided the foundations for the Lamarkians, or Vitalists. The Darwinists, who accepted the doctrine of Natural Selection, became known as Mechanists.

Butler was not able to disprove Darwin, but he did devise a counter-theory which seemed to him to be equally unassailable.[8] Operating with a theory similar to Lamarck's, Butler proposed that the remarkable changes which permit survival of a species come from an independent source outside the organism. In other words, the changes could be deliberate development influenced by an outside force (the independent vitality of matter) which might also be a controlling influence allowing the organism to make changes independently of the inherent qualities received from its predecessors; indeed, the independent quality of this force would allow it to use the organism, act upon it, or enter into it for its own purposes.[9] Butler assumed that Lamarck's theory of acquired characteristics was correct.[10] Butler

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Julian B. Kaye, Bernard Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Tradition (Norman, Oklahoma, 1958), p. 72.

[9] Samuel Butler, Luck or Cunning? (New York, 1924), pp. 233-235.

[10] Ibid., p. 7.

maintained also that instinct is inherited memory and that intelligence is the formation of instinct; consequently, instinct should be a better guide to conduct than intelligence.[11] From these assumptions Butler devised his own philosophy which contains the following doctrines: (1) life began by the combination of material substances and forces of the world; (2) life is being possessed of memory; (3) death is the breaking up of an association of ever-living molecules; (4) God is the sum total of all life.[12]

But whether Butler's theories are creditable today, the effect of his writings upon Shaw is indisputable; Butler's Luck or Cunning led eventually to the formation of Shaw's philosophy.[13] The primary difference between their theories lies in the time required to accomplish a change in a specie. Butler assumed that evolution progressed by imperceptible degrees, whereas Shaw supported the theory of abrupt mutations.[14]

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[11] Ibid., pp. 4-5.

[12] C. E. M. Joad, Samuel Butler (Boston, 1924), pp. 47-50. (Butler's theories are ridiculed today as being unoriginal expressions of moral resentment, and Shaw's criticism of Darwin is considered a diatribe. Cf. Gillispie, op. cit., p. 285.)

[13] Archibald Henderson, Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century (New York, 1956), p. 786.

[14] William Irvine, The Universe of G. B. S. (New York, 1949), pp. 313-314.

Shaw frankly admits his indebtedness to Butler and Lamarck and he champions Lamarck just as Butler does;[15] Shaw's optimism is probably responsible for his sympathy toward these earlier supporters of Creative Evolution.[16] The ecbatic philosophy developed by the neo-Darwinians seemed intolerable to Shaw because the theory of natural selection reduces every achievement in the universe to accident:

> As such, it seems simple, because you do not at first realize all that it involves. But when its whole significance dawns on you, your heart sinks into a heap of sand within you. 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.[17]

If the achievements of Nature are left to accident, then there is no room left for hope, and hope is an absolute necessity in the Shavian philosophy. Shaw demonstrates that the lack of hope inherent in the doctrine of Circumstantial Selection opposes a belief in human improvement:

> What hope is there then of human improvement: According to the Neo-Darwinists, to the Mechanists,

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[15] Preface to Back to Methuselah, passim; cf. also Bernard Shaw, Sixteen Self Sketches (New York, 1949), p. 160.

[16] Bentley, op. cit., p. 49.

[17] Preface to Back to Methuselah, xlii.

> no hope whatever, because improvement can come only through some senseless accident which must, on the statistical average of accidents, be presently wiped out by some other accident.[18]

In order to reconcile the theory of evolution and the fatalism which he believed that Darwin proposed, Shaw conceived a telic philosophy which proposes a constant consciousness behind the changes of the universe. Shaw thus offers a new religion to the world:

> Creative Evolution is already a religion, and is indeed now unmistakably the religion of the twentieth century, newly arisen from the ashes of pseudo-Christianity, of mere skepticism, and of the soulless affirmations and blind negations of the Mechanists and Neo-Darwinians.[19]

The religious concept of Creative Evolution has not been widely accepted because its doctrine lies between extremes and may be interpreted to mean almost whatever the individual mind wishes it to mean. Creative evolution is attacked by Rationalists and Radicals alike as being both reactionary and orthodox. The Catholics and Conservatives attack it as neo-pagan and heterodox.[20] In spite of such criticisms Shaw clung to his three stages of belief as being the cornerstone of the development of religion: the first stage is the belief in a God of wrath; the second stage is the belief in a God of love; and the third stage is the belief in Will. The first stage reflects pre-Christian

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[18] Ibid., p. xviii. [19] Ibid., p. lxxx.

[20] Bentley, op. cit., p. 44.

theology, the second stage utilizes the Christian ethics of modern free thought, and the third stage characterizes a philosophy of Creative Evolution.

The dualistic metaphysic of Shaw proposes that two entities exist in the universe: Life and Matter. The pentateuch Back to Methuselah, a philosophical work based upon the first principle of Life and Matter as the basic entities of the universe, is an effort to establish a foundation for the religion of Creative Evolution which Shaw believed himself to have exemplified in the third act of Man and Superman.[21] According to Shaw, the thesis of Back to Methuselah is that conduct is not determined or influenced by experience, but by expectation, and that the individual life span is too short to be taken seriously.[22] However, Back to Methuselah has been criticized by some as being philosophically unoriginal since the concepts demonstrated in the play are very close to those of Bergson.[23] Even though Shaw did incorporate some of the analogies of Bergson in Back to Methuselah, and the philosophies of both men are almost identical, Shaw is not indebted to Bergson particularly for the formation of the Shavian philosophy.[24]

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[21]Henderson, Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century, p. 578.

[22]Ibid., p. 730.

[23]Bertram Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York, 1945), p. 791.

[24]George Whitehead, Bernard Shaw Explained (London, 1925), p. 103.

Bergson did, however, unite various concepts of Schopenhauer, Lamarck, and Nietzsche by the conception of the "elan de vie." He suggested, as did Butler, that the "elan vitale" is an exterior force existing independently of matter but working through it. Bergson illustrated the force of Life as a current flowing through the universe:

> . . . this current of life, traversing the bodies it has organized one after another, passing from generation to generation, has become divided amongst species and distributed amongst individuals without losing anything of its force, rather intensifying in proportion to its advance.[25]

This metaphor intrigued Shaw so greatly that he utilized it in the final play of Back to Methuselah to illustrate his own concept of the Life Force. Pygmalion explains to his surrounding friends how he has created tissue which is capable of conducting the Life Force:

> The Life Force is not so simple as you think. A high-potential current of it will turn a bit of dead tissue into a philosopher's brain. A low potential current will reduce the same bit of tissue to a mass of corruption. . . . There was the Life Force raging all around me: there was I, trying to make organs that would capture it as a battery captures electricity, and tissues that would conduct it and operate it.[26]

Shaw's philosophy of the Life Force incorporates various features of the philosophies of Schopenhauer, Butler,

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[25]Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, translated by Arthur Mitchell (New York, 1911), p. 26.

[26]Speech by Pygmalion, "As Far As Thought Can Reach," Back to Methuselah, pp. 230-231.

Nietzsche, Bergson, and Lamarck. From Schopenhauer comes the concept of Shaw's Life Force as an impulse in nature which aspires to ascend, or a universal need to attain the highest grade of life. This need or impulse is endowed with the power to achieve its goal. This portion of Shavian philosophy is found in Lamarck.[27] Nietzsche gave the Life Force the preliminary goal of the superman, and Bergson offers the concept of an impersonal being in the act of creating itself.[28] Butler emphasized that the progress of evolution is the progress of God.[29] Unlike Nietzsche's superman, Shaw's superman is not the end product, but the first of three great steps to godhead: first, a superman; second, an archangel; and third, a god.[30]

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[27]Joad, Shaw, p. 175.

[28]Martin Ellehauge, The Position of Bernard Shaw in European Drama and Philosophy (Copenhagen, 1931), p. 177.

[29]Kaye, op. cit., p. 57.

[30]Archibald Henderson, "The Philosophy of Bernard Shaw," Atlantic Monthly, CIII (February, 1909), 233-234.

The Life Force

In a speech to a congregation of the London City Temple, Shaw professed the belief that God is will.[31] But Creative Will, the Life Force, is not so independent as a god and not so complete a thing as a "world will."[32] The Life Force has chosen to work through matter to attain its ultimate goal, but in making matter its slave, the Life Force has been enslaved by matter.[33] Once the oppression of matter is overcome by Man, the individual will enter into (or enter back into) the main stream of the Life Force and become assimilated by it.[34]

Shaw preferred not to compare the Life Force to God because he wished to disassociate his universal force from the traditional and preconceived concept of God.[35] The

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[31] "Bernard Shaw's Religion," Current Literature, XLII (February, 1907), 198-200.

[32] Holbrook Jackson, "Constructive Side of Bernard Shaw's Philosophy," Current Literature, XLIII (December, 1907), 649.

[33] Joad, Shaw, p. 177.

[34] Henderson, "The Philosophy of Bernard Shaw," p. 234. (Although this particular point in Shaw's philosophy resembles the Oriental religions somewhat, it is necessary to note that Shaw himself was most careful not to identify himself with any established religion. Cf. Henderson, Bernard Shaw, Playboy and Prophet, p. 519; see also Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century, p. 581.)

[35] "Bernard Shaw's Solution to the Problem of Evil," Current Literature, XLIII (August, 1907), 191.

Life Force works by trial and error rather than by a pre-established plan.[36] Shaw believed that the Neo-Darwinians had destroyed the traditional God in the minds of men, and Creative Evolution, alias the Life Force, was Shaw's replacement for the traditional God rather than a return to the old manner of religious thought:

> And here arises the danger that when we realize this we shall do just what we did half a century ago, and what Pliable did in The Pilgrim's Progress when Christian landed him in the Slough of Despond: that is, run back in terror to our old superstitions. We jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire; and we are just as likely to jump back again, now that we feel hotter than ever. History records very little in the way of mental activity on the part of the mass of mankind except a series of stampedes from affirmative errors into negative ones and back again. It must therefore be said very precisely and clearly that the bankruptcy of Darwinism does not mean that . . . the world was made in the year 4004 B. C.; that damnation means an eternity of blazing brimstone; that the Immaculate Conception means that sex is sinful and that Christ was parthenogenetically brought forth by a virgin descended in like manner from a line of virgins right back to Eve. . . .[37]

Shaw was a confirmed mystic. His concept of the Life Force as an imperfect God resulted from his inability to explain suffering and sin from the Christian viewpoint.[38] Shaw offered a definition of his idea of God to Tolstoy in a letter dated February 14, 1910:

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[36]Ervine, op. cit., p. 391.

[37]Preface to Back to Methuselah, p. lxxvi.

[38]Archibald Henderson, Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet (New York, 1932), p. 519.

> . . . To me God does not yet exist; but there is a creative force constantly struggling to evolve an executive organ of godlike knowledge and power; that is, to achieve omnipotence and omniscience; and every man and woman born is a fresh attempt to achieve this object.
>
> The current theory that God already exists in perfection involves the belief that God deliberately created something lower than himself when He might just as easily created something equally perfect. This is a horrible belief: it could only have arisen among people whose notion of greatness is to be surrounded by inferior beings--like a Russian nobleman--and to enjoy the sense of superiority to them.
>
> To my mind, unless we conceive God as engaged in a continual struggle to surpass himself--as striving at every birth to make a better man than before--we are conceiving nothing better than an omnipotent snob.
>
> Also, we are compelled by the theory of God's already achieved perfection to make Him a devil as well as a god, because of the existence of evil. The God of love, if omnipotent and omniscient, must be the god of cancer and epilepsy as well. . . .
>
> Whoever admits that anything living is evil must either believe that God is malignantly capable of creating evil, or else believe that God has made many mistakes in his attempt to make a perfect being. But if you believe, as I do, . . . that the croup bacillus was an early attempt to create a higher being than anything achieved before that time, and the only way to remedy the mistake was to create a still higher being, part of whose work must be the destruction of that bacillus, the existence of evil ceases to be any problem; and we come to understand that we are here to help God, to do his work, to remedy his old errors, to strive towards Godhead ourselves.[39]

The Life Force is, then, the power behind the universe. Nothing is known of its origin; it is neither all-powerful nor all-knowing, but it is striving to become omniscient and omnipotent by means of its own creations. The progress

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[39] Ibid., pp. 529-530.

of the Life Force is made through trial and error, and Man is the last trial of the Life Force.[40]

The Life Force has chosen to work through matter to attain its ultimate goal, and matter seems to have an existence which is independent of the Life Force. Thus Shaw's universe is composed of two elements: Life and Matter.[41] Lilith summarizes the conflict between the two elements in the final speech of the pentateuch Back to Methuselah:

> . . . after passing a million goals they [mankind] 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. And though all that they have done seems but the first hour of the infinite work of creation, yet I will not supercede them until they have forded this last stream that lies between flesh and spirit, and disentangled their life from the matter that has always mocked it. . . . 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.[42]

The preceding passage suggests the following propositions:

(1) That Life was originally a whirlpool in pure force;
(2) that it entered into matter, used matter and compelled matter to obey it;
(3) that by doing so it became matter's slave;

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[40] J. S. Collins, Shaw (London, 1925), p. 44.

[41] Joad, Shaw, p. 177.

[42] Speech by Lilith, "As Far As Thought Can Reach," Back to Methuselah, pp. 261-262.

(4) that the object of Life's development is to put an end to this slavery by winning free of or conquering matter. It is not clear whether matter still remains, Life having, as it were, merely disentangled itself from it, or whether matter is ultimately eliminated by Life so that it ceases to be;
(5) that redemption from the flesh having been achieved, Life will become pure thought.[43]

Why should the Life Force bother itself to work through a medium which imposes serious limitations upon it? Only through matter, or some similar medium, can Life actually evolve by enjoying a greater variety of experience in order to accumulate more knowledge and thus develop a greater awareness.[44] It is certain that the Life Force is helpless without matter in the form of organisms, since the development of the organism is the progress of the Life Force.[45] The determination of the Life Force as an independent entity is not apparent to all of Shaw's critics. Some individuals have interpreted the Life Force as having its entire existence dependent upon matter.[46]

The objective of the Life Force as it was originally expressed by Shaw appeared in the play Man and Superman in 1903. At that time Shaw gave the objective as being complete self-understanding and self-consciousness; this objective is not stressed as much in the later work Back

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[43]Joad, Shaw, p. 195. [44]Ibid., p. 178.

[45]Holbrook Jackson, Bernard Shaw (London, 1909), p. 203.

[46]Ibid.

to Methuselah, although the achievement of self-consciousness is implied. The primary problem in Back to Methuselah is the transcending of the soul from the flesh without the penalty of death. Death is the only known way of divorcing the soul from the tyranny of matter, and Shaw points out in the final portion of Back to Methuselah that once the elementary problems such as the extension of life, the development of intellect, and the conquering of disease are overcome, the basic problem still remains unsolved: freeing the intellect from matter. Shaw offers no solution and very probably knew of no solution since he titled this final portion "As Far as Thought Can Reach." The Life Force works through the process of evolution with organisms as instruments to obtain a fuller and deeper realization of its own purposes and aims.[47] Shaw's philosophy has no formula for the achievement of the goal of the Life Force because Shaw was aware that formulas and systems tend to curb or destroy instinctive action.[48] Instinctive action is Man's direct communication with the Life Force:

> Giving a free rein to one's natural instincts means nothing more or less than the fulfillment of the individual will. It is conceit, not hypocrisy, that makes a man think he is guided by reasoned principles when he is really obeying his instincts.[49]

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., p. 228.

[49] Henderson, "The Philosophy of Bernard Shaw," p. 231.

Man's attempts to improve upon the trial and error method of the Life Force have always failed because Man has never been certain of the objectives of the Life Force. In the third act of Man and Superman Shaw determined that the immediate objective of the Life Force within Man is the development of intellect. Man has always sensed this objective instinctively because Man has never accepted limitations upon the development of intellect; he has consistently attempted to broaden the scope of his knowledge.[50] Man has a special part to play in assisting the Life Force in the acquisition of its objective:

> The desire of the Life-Force for brains should be met by man, not by the indifference of reason eternally looking back at itself, but by the concentration of the mind upon the blindness of life, urging forward towards the light. This is the contemplative attitude; it is the attitude of co-operation with life for the sake of living, in the sense that living is growth, creation; and growth and creation are power, wisdom, joy.[51]

Man's reward for his efforts to assist the Life Force does not particularly lie within sharing the attainment of the ultimate objective; instead it lies within his inner satisfaction received from the knowledge that he has done his part.[52]

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[50]Jackson, Bernard Shaw, p. 230.

[51]Ibid., p. 231.

[52]Henderson, "The Philosophy of Bernard Shaw," p. 231.

The trial and error method of the Life Force reaches into all facets of the universe. Even morality is transitional and must evolve with the course of time. The evolution of morality necessitates change within the individual concepts of religion, mores, and government.[53]

Students of Shavian philosophy should not become confused by trying to separate Man from the Life Force as though the two were separate entities, nor should the student consider the Life Force as having a development aside from that of evolution. Such separation leads to the conclusion that the Life Force is merely another name for the traditional God of Christianity.[54]

Man's individual position insofar as he is presently developed is approximately that of a mere child. The need for the life span of the individual man to be lengthened in order for him to realize the consequences of folly and the urgency of co-operation with the Life Force occupied the mind of Shaw as long as twenty years before the writing of Back to Methuselah:

> We are intellectually still babies: this is perhaps why a baby's facial expression so strongly suggests the professional philosopher. All its mental energy is absorbed by its struggle to attain physical consciousness. It is learning to interpret the sensations of its eyes and ears and nose and tongue and fingertips.

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[53] Ibid., p. 228.

[54] Cf. Patrick Braybrooke, The Genius of Bernard Shaw (Philadelphia, 1925), pp. 74-76.

> It is ridiculously delighted by a silly toy, absurdly terrified by a harmless bogey. Well, we are all still as much babies in the world of thought as we were in our second year in the world of sense. Men are not real men to us: they are heroes and villains, respectable persons and criminals. Their qualities are virtues and vices; the natural laws that govern them are gods and devils; their destinies are rewards and expiations; their reasoning a formula of cause and effect with the horse mostly behind the cart. They come to me with their heads full of these figments, which they call, if you please, "the world," and ask me what is the meaning of them, as if I or anyone else were God Omniscient and could tell them. Pretty funny this: eh? But when they ostracize, punish, murder, and make war to impose by force their grotesque religions and hideous criminal codes, then the comedy becomes a tragedy. The Army, the Navy, the Church, the Bar, the theatres, the picture-galleries, the libraries, and the trade unions are forced to bolster up their pet hallucinations. Enough. You expect me to prate about the Absolute, about Reality, about The First Cause, and to answer the universal Why. When I see these words in print the book goes into the basket.[55]

The characteristic of Shaw's evolutional theory is its tremendous optimism. Any desire, regardless of its extravagance, can be accomplished as long as it is a sincere desire.[56] But, unfortunately, Man has within his power the ability to resist the Life Force.[57] The greatest resistance which Man can oppose to the Life Force is sterility, and a movement toward sterility is destined to come about because of the bungling of Man and his discouragement resulting from that bungling. If Man were able to will his own extinction

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[55]Bernard Shaw, Sixteen Self Sketches (New York, 1949), pp. 90-91.

[56]Ellehauge, op. cit., p. 274.

[57]Joad, Shaw, p. 181.

by sterility he would effectively negate the highest achievement of the Life Force--the development of self-consciousness. But a reaction is due to set in before such measures can be introduced extensively.[58]

The progress of Man is the progress of the Life Force; hence, in order to fulfill the work of the Life Force, Man must concentrate upon higher development. Shaw does not explain how or why the developments and advancements in evolution come about; all he is sure of is that they do come. Furthermore, the appearance of each new acquisition is abrupt. Whether the acquisition be an organ or an awareness, a definite and immediate advance is noticeable; but the individual may try an accomplishment countless times before he realizes the advance. In addition, he immediately begins to exercise the acquisition unconsciously.[59]

Realizing this abruptness, the urgency of right conduct becomes apparent. Man may be just on the brink of a new and important achievement. Back to Methuselah illustrates this abruptness in several incidents within the various plots: the discovery of re-creation by Eve and the discovery of death by Adam; the discovery of the extension of life by Brothers Barnabas; and the realization of that extension by mankind.

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[58]Act III, Man and Superman, pp. 121, 123.

[59]Preface to Back to Methuselah, p. xxiv.

The Shavian view of right conduct is, then, the fulfillment of life's intentions by each individual person. This fulfillment does not necessarily guarantee happiness for the individual; it means instead the satisfaction of having done all that he could have done to improve the world. The keynote of the Shavian philosophy is the pursuit of life for its own sake, and life is realized only as activity that satisfies the will--that is, as self-assertion. Every extension or intensification of activity is an increase of life, and quality and quantity of activity measure the value of existence.[60] Happiness will be found in the furtherance of whatever purpose for which the individual has been created. The by-product of happiness in the work of the Life Force is a bribe offered to Man to increase his interest and enthusiasm.[61] Life is "not the fulfillment of a moral law or of the deductions of reason but the satisfaction of a passion in us of which we can give no account whatsoever."[62] Righteous living consists not in the sublimination of passions but the training and categorizing of the harmless, ugly, intellectual, or physical passions.[63] The one deadly enemy of the Life Force is the

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[60]Henderson, "The Philosophy of Bernard Shaw," p. 232.

[61]Joad, Shaw, p. 185.

[62]"Sanity of Art," XIX, p. 324.

[63]Bentley, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

person who maintains that there are laws prescribed for man and maintains that there are world rules forever valid.[64] Shaw's own opinion of the individual who would consider happiness as an important necessity of life was disparaging:

> This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.[65]

The primary principle of Shaw's philosophy is, then, the replacement of convention by instinct, and conformity by conscience, the keynote of which is the pursuit of life for its own sake. He shunned the ascetic ideal of Christianity in favor of individual judgment and rational ethics in matters of conduct.[66]

Life, Purpose, and Will are the cornerstones of Shavian belief; the Neo-Lamarckian view that "where there is a will, there is a way" is axiomatic. "Shaw believed that there is a purpose in the universe; identified his own purpose with it, and made the achievement of that purpose an act, not of self-sacrifice for himself, but of self-realization."[67] Life is

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[64] J. P. Hackett, Shaw/George versus Bernard (London, 1939), p. 144.

[65] Preface to Man and Superman, pp. xxxiv-xxxv.

[66] Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century, p. 770.

[67] Ibid., p. 771.

the force which is striving for self-consciousness and brains, and man must change in order to evolve toward the goal of intelligence.[68]

A Criticism of Shaw's Philosophy

C. E. M. Joad is particularly qualified to be a critic of Shaw's philosophy. In 1929, Joad published his own version of the philosophy of Creative Evolution in a work titled Matter, Life, and Value. This philosophy, although it has an additional entity "Value," is derived from philosophy which Shaw expounded in the two works Back to Methuselah and Man and Superman. Joad's book is, in effect, an attempt to express the philosophy of George Bernard Shaw in the traditional terms and manner of a philosophical treatise. The primary criticism which Joad has of Shavian philosophy is the total lack of a scale of measurement, or value. This is the reason he felt it necessary to add the third entity--to make the philosophy logically sound.[69]

Joad's treatise was disappointingly received by the philosophers of the world with disinterest, but it should be noted that his work is certainly a creditable and plausible philosophy, and is considered as such by students of philosophy.[70]

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[68] Ibid., pp. 771, 772. [69] Bentley, op. cit., p. 53.

[70] Ibid.

One of the most apparent difficulties with Shaw's Life Force philosophy is the difficulty of origins. The essentially unsolvable problem of the first cause besets every philosophy, but Shaw's philosophy confuses the problem further than is necessary. This confusion is prominent in two ways:

> (a) If you start with an eternal omnipotent Being, creating the universe in pursuance of His own design, He Himself remains outside the universe which He creates, though for certain purposes and on certain occasions He may become immanent in it. Therefore, He is not affected by the universe's fate and remains immune from its destruction. Shaw's Life Force, even if it does not exhaust the universe--and by "the universe" I mean this scheme of physical things in space and time and life that visibly evolves within it--is integrally bound up with it. Therefore, (i) the Life Force can only be said to create the universe in the sense in which it also creates itself. But can anything create itself? Can anything, that is to say, come out of nothing? (ii) An omnipotent Creator can be credited with mind and purpose; Shaw's Life Force develops mind and purpose as it evolves. Therefore, it was initially without mind and purpose; therefore, it cannot be credited with the mind and the purpose to create itself and or the evolving universe. (iii) Being wholly immanent in the universe, it must share the universe's fate. Now the fate of physical universe, according to the indications of present evidence, is ultimately to run down like a clock. It is difficult to see how the Life Force can avoid a similar end, unless it can contrive to emancipate itself from the universe in which it evolves. (b) Instead of having one "inexplicable" on his hands, Shaw has two. For the Life Force is not matter; on the contrary, matter is, as it were, there to begin with, Lilith's enemy, whom she seeks to enslave. What, then, is the origin of matter? We are not told. Indeed, we can only suppose that matter has existed from eternity.[71]

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[71]Joad, Shaw, pp. 199-200.

Matter plays the part of a ladder which enables the Life Force to reach a higher destination. But the top is not the end; there is more, and although Shaw does not attempt to define what lies beyond, he assures the audience that there is a beyond; Lilith, in the final scene of Back to Methuselah, states that what remains after the conquest of matter is not within her vision, but it is enough to know that there is something further. Shaw declined to offer any end or goal for the processes of evolution:

> Shaw presents us with a dualistic universe which contains life and matter in which life incarnates itself and through which life develops. But if we ask, to what end does it develop, there is no answer. There is, that is to say, no element of perfect or changeless reality in Shaw's scheme, the apprehension and realisation of which might be regarded as constituting the purpose and goal of the evolutionary process. Shaw's cosmic scheme would seem to demand the inclusion of precisely such an element, an element of absolute value. Shaw might have said that life evolved in matter, through matter and beyond matter to a knowledge of value. He hints as much, but never explicitly it.[72]

Another difficulty which Shaw encountered is free will. Shaw's view of the individual free will leaves no doubt that each person is capable of resisting the Life Force by merely pursuing the purposes of the individual. This concept of individual freedom poses additional problems:

> (a) First, is our freedom only a freedom to go wrong? Are we, when we go right, when, that is to say, we go about life's business, mere automata, responding to the promptings and impulses that reach us from life,

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[72] Ibid., pp. 200-201.

whereas when we assert our wills and go our own ways, when, in fact, we thwart life's purposes, we are acting as self-determining individuals? (b) If we are free, whence do we derive the energy which enables us to pursue a course divergent from life's purpose in regard to us? Granted that we are instruments of life, how can the instrument turn against the hand that wields it? Is it, conceivably, the interposition of matter between the main stream of life and its individual expressions that confers a measure of freedom upon the latter, much as a line of rocks lying athwart a river will diversify and deflect it into a number of different streamlets, each of which may pursue its own direction, though the energy with which it pursues is that of the parent river. This suggestion is not unplausible; but besides making use of a metaphor which may well be inadmissible, it derives the fact of freedom from the interposition of matter which limits the power of life over its individual expressions, Shaw himself never, so far as I know, tackles this difficulty. (c) It may and has been urged that Shaw's theory provides a pitiably inadequate explanation of evil and of the facts of moral experience.[73]

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[73] Ibid., pp. 202-203.

CHAPTER V

SOME CONCLUSIONS: READING SHAW

The individual who reads a play by George Bernard Shaw for the first time may be puzzled by what appears to be an explosive and spontaneous technique; a rather stiff, formal, and seemingly false collection of characters; a vague and sometimes incomprehensible unifying element; and many apparent contradictions. But probably the reader will be dazzled initially by Shaw's wit, polish, and speed of presentation, only to feel dejected later after some sober reflection because he feels he has been deceived by an empty-headed, but clever, clown.

Such bewilderment is probably due to a lack of knowledge of Shaw's ideas and beliefs which form the foundation upon which his techniques, plots, and characterizations are based. A brief study of the philosophy of Bernard Shaw should provide the Shavian reader with a key by which he can understand Shaw's intentions and purposes. The following ideas may well serve the reader as guides to the understanding and analysis of any Shavian drama:

(1) Shaw is a didactic writer; he always has a message for his audience. He had absolutely no use for the esthetic doctrine of Art for Art's Sake.[1] All of Shaw's works show this characteristic of didacticism:

> Shaw once said he wrote only treatises and plays. Both are animated by social and religious purposes. Every play he ever wrote is a play with a purpose. In forms more or less veiled, all are argumentative theses, rhetorical appeals, for the prevalence of an idea or group of ideas.[2]

The ideas contained in Shaw's plays are basically related to Shaw's own concept of the philosophical theory of Creative Evolution.

(2) Shaw's plots are situations which reflect his Life Force philosophy in action. His application of his philosophy is universal, and the resolution of the plot is the demonstration of the working of the principles of the Life Force philosophy.

(3) All of Shaw's characters are either direct illustrations of the basic types of humanity as conceived by Shaw, or they are variations and modifications of those types. The basic types of Man are also outgrowths of Shavian philosophy, and they occur in every Shavian drama. The basic types are founded upon the individuals' attitudes and functions in relation to the purposes of the vital force of creative evolution.

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[1]Bernard Shaw, Sixteen Self Sketches (New York, 1949), p. 83.

[2]Archibald Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century (New York, 1956), p. 763.

(4) One of the characters in each play is a raisonneur. The reader should find this character and pay particular attention to his comments--he is Shaw's mouthpiece, and he is generally the protagonist of the play. The remainder of the cast is usually a representative selection of mankind which is edified by the raisonneur. All of Shaw's plays have a raisonneur.[3]

(5) The reader should not look for tragedy in Shaw's plays. Shaw wrote no real tragedies because he believed that any man's sacrifice to the objective of Creative Evolution is admirable. Shaw believed that no action is "complete" as in Hamlet; therefore, dramatists such as Shakespeare are not true to life.[4]

The reader should also keep in mind that Shaw's criticisms of the various institutions of society are observed in relation to how these institutions serve the Life Force in its evolutional ascent. The efficiency and effectiveness of the institutions are what interest Shaw. Outmoded concepts must be discarded or brought up to date; the institution must be true to its purpose, which is the purpose of the Life Force. Decadent society is a restraining barrier to progress, and it must be streamlined to meet the new ideas as they evolve. Shaw's plays of social

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[3]Archibald Henderson, "The Evolution of Dramatic Technique," North American Review, CLXXXIX (March, 1939), 442.

[4]Sylvan Barnet, "Shaw on Tragedy," PMLA, LXXI (December, 1956), 899.

criticism use the conflict between the Idealist, who is the defender of the outmoded social concepts, and the Realist, who flouts the rules and standards of society whenever he perceives the slightest bit of decay within those standards. Nearly all of the plays of social criticism show the conflict between the arch conservative, the Idealist, and the arch liberal, the Realist.

Shaw presents no real problem of evil in his plays or characters. Evil is explained by Shaw as unsuccessful efforts, or attempts, by the Life Force to evolve upward.[5] Those individuals who advocate outmoded romantic concepts are not really evil but are merely misguided. The Devil in the Dream Scene is not a thoroughly despicable character; he has some merit and considerable perception. But he is misguided or misled to a certain extent; in a sense, he, too, is nothing more than an unsuccessful attempt on the part of the Life Force to evolve a higher intellectual being. The Devil's sin, or evil, is ignorance and stupidity and conceit. His ignorance and stupidity he cannot help, and his selfishness, which is nothing more than a result of these afflictions, cannot really be helped either.

This helplessness of the characters shows a particular weakness in Shaw's philosophy and in his drama which reflects

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[5]Archibald Henderson, Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet (New York, 1932), pp. 529-530; cf. "Bernard Shaw's Solution of the Problem of Evil," Current Literature, XLIII (August, 1907), 191-192.

his philosophy. This weakness is the problem of free will of the individual. Since the individual cannot alter his own intellectual capacity, he must continue throughout life with the same attitude because his attitude is ultimately the result of his intellect. Thus Shaw could not present a tragic figure on the stage; or, at least, he was unable to present a true tragic character as outlined by Aristotle. Shaw's antagonist, which is as close as he ever gets to a tragic character, is at best a straw man, kicking, whimpering, quoting platitudes and cliches--a pathetic creature, but not a tragic one. This problem of free will was a difficulty which Shaw is not able to resolve.[6]

If Shaw is unable to portray a tragic character, perhaps it is because he is more interested in demonstrating his idea of the noble individual. Don Juan is an excellent example of Shaw's noble man--a person with direction and a goal; he possesses the strength of character and ability to strive toward his goal with unwavering devotion and faith. Juan is the man who sees the world as something greater than a personal playground, and he devotes himself to a universal purpose. He is Shaw's idea of the true hero--an active and vigorous philosopher of the Life Force.

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[6]C. E. M. Joad, Shaw (London, 1949), pp. 202-203.

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