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THE ART OF BERNARD SHAW

THE ART OF BERNARD SHAW

BY

S. C. SEN GUPTA

M.A., PH.D., PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH,
PRESIDENCY COLLEGE, CALCUTTA

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PREFACE

THE following pages are an attempt at a critical examination of the art of an author who himself claims to be a philosopher and journalist. 'For art's sake alone', says Shaw, 'I would not face the toil of writing a single line', and yet it is primarily as an artist that he has made his impression on the modern world of which he is one of the makers. Shaw wanted only to propagate certain doctrines on the distribution of wealth, the Relations between the sexes and the evolution of the Superman, but he has also created many living symbols for his ideas, and in literature it is the symbols and not the ideas that are our first concern. It has been truly said that 'no man in the modern English theatre has been subjected to so much confused thinking as George Bernard Shaw. The most talked of man of his time, he has been most misunderstood or most variously understood'. The confusion and misunderstanding about Shaw's literary work may be traced to two causes. Philosophical critics have discussed at great length the tenability of his ideas, and this confusion has biased them in their consideration of his art. Literary critics, again, have judged Shaw's works by laws and standards that he has set at defiance; they have not, therefore, been able to appraise an art that is professedly heretical. Even when they have felt

that a particular drama is attractive, their judgement has been warped by their fidelity to conventional standards, and they have looked upon Shaw more as an intellectual than as an artist. For the purposes of my argument I have taken Shaw's philosophy for granted, and have then examined not how far his works conform to romantic or classical methods of characterization and construction, but how far he has been able to create stories and characters that are living.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton¹ has declared that most people say that they agree with Shaw or do not understand him and that he is the only person who understands Shaw, and that he does not agree with him. I have tried to understand Shaw, but it is not the purpose of the present study to examine the scientific and philosophic value of his ideas. I neither agree nor disagree with him.

The present work forms the substantial portion of a thesis which was approved for the Ph.D. of the University of Calcutta on the recommendation of a Board of Examiners consisting of Professor Allardyce Nicoll, Professor J. W. Cunliffe and Mr. L. R. F. Oldershaw. I am grateful to the Board of Examiners for their favourable reports, and to Professor Allardyce Nicoll I am indebted for yet another piece of kindness. He has been good enough to read over the revised

¹ In the introduction to the first edition (1909) of his *George Bernard Shaw*, omitted from the new edition (1935).

manuscript and to suggest many improvements. The manuscript has been also revised by my teachers, Mr. W. C. Wordsworth, M.A, I.E.S. (Retd.), Dr. S. K. Banerjee, M.A., Ph.D., and Dr. P. E. Dustoor, M.A., D.Litt, to whom I wish to express my sincere thanks. My friends, Professor T. P. Mukherji, M.A., and Mr. P. K. Basu, M.A., have helped me with suggestions and criticisms which have been invaluable. The Index I owe to the kind assistance of my pupil, Mr. S. N. Ray, M.A. I am grateful to the reader of the Oxford University Press for the care with which he has seen the book through the press. Last, and first, to Mr. Shaw (and Messrs. Constable & Co.) for permission to quote freely from his works.

I am afraid that there are many errors and defects in the work, that have been left uncorrected, and for these I crave the indulgence of the reader.

S. C. SEN GUPTA

TO
MY TEACHER
PROFESSOR PRAPHULLA CHANDRA GHOSH
WITH GRATEFUL REGARDS

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PART ONE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION : THE REALIST

I

BERNARD SHAW is a dramatist, a novelist, a philosopher, a Fabian socialist, a literary critic, a theologian, a musical expert, and what not. The most important feature in him, however, is that he is a phenomenon of nature and after we have finished discussing everything about this literary figure, it is this impression that lasts. He himself once said that two events of considerable importance happened in the mid-nineteenth century : one was that he was born and the other was that Tennyson wrote his famous line : 'God fulfils Himself in many ways.' This shows that Bernard Shaw himself looks upon his advent as a remarkable phenomenon, as remarkable as the appearance of a comet, but highly beneficial to the world.

One great reason why Shaw is regarded as a phenomenon is that he is a mysterious creature whom it is difficult to agree with and probably more difficult to understand. With his great gift of humour he has made fun of this misunderstanding by letting the shameless rascal Louis Dubedat describe himself as 'a disciple of Bernard Shaw'. Shaw has said Voltaire in so many different ways that he

has been as great a puzzle to his admirers as to his detractors. He has been often misunderstood because he is not only prince of heretics, but also a master of paradox. He believes in Jesus and His teachings, but not in the Christ and Christianity ; he thinks that crime is only the retail department of what in wholesale we call law ; he is a republican but not a believer in modern democracy ;] he considers medical science to be a branch of craft ; the qualified medical practitioner is to him the greatest of quacks ; the "most enlightened General Medical Council is more reactionary than the fifteenth century Inquisition Courts. He has warred all his life on science and has warred only ' to found our institutions on genuinely scientific natural history '. He is ' the father of the flapper ', but no one else has done so much to lower the glory of the Eternal Feminine. He has pulled woman down from her ' throne ' in the realm of romantic love to secure for her her rightful position in the domain of finance and franchise. The great paradoxist has refused to distinguish not only between crime and punishment, but also between marriage and prostitution, between a financier and a burglar, between religion and superstition, between Voltaire and Jove.;

His perversities have, indeed, gone much farther. He has not only asserted that the standard of morals is in some respects much higher in the theatre than outside but has also claimed an apostolic succession from Aeschylus to himself, which he has patronizingly compared with the younger apostolic succession in the Christian Church. *A master of verbal intellectual jugglery, he claims to be a revolutionary without

being an anarchist— Many unconventional women have approached him for advice and he has recommended the most conventional of all things—marriage ! He regards the duties, responsibilities and sacrifices of a Bohemian as harder than the comparatively loose life of a respectable woman of fashion. Anarchists who hailed him as their prophet and philosopher have discovered in him a cold advocate of parliamentary and constitutional agitation. He has described himself as a specialist in heretical and immoral plays, and his heresies and obscenities have more than once brought him in conflict with the censor^ Yet there has scarcely been any other writer who is more puritanical and who has devoted himself with greater zeal to the task of freeing human society from its slavery to sex. Shaw possesses an intellect unrivalled in its acuteness, and yet no one, not even Schopenhauer, has done more to expose the limitations of the Intellect and to uphold the paramount power of the will and of the 'Life Force' which acts through human wills but has a purpose greater than its human machinery. It is because of these contradictions, paradoxes and perversities that the world has failed to grasp the meaning"" his philosophy. It has execrated and adored^ hini, but in both these extremes it has half confessed that it does not understand him. Like all other phenomena, Shaw remains in the ultimate analysis—a mystery.

II

As is the way with almost all modest men, Shaw likes to advertise himself and has never ceased to talk about his own beliefs and doctrines. / He is not a

^metaphysician by accident, but an original thinker by profession. He is not original in the sense that he has said things which are absolutely new ; indeed, he argues that no man can be original in that nineteenth century sense of the word. According to him, a man can no more be original in that sense than a tree can grow out of air. He has been looked upon as, a spiritual descendant of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Strindberg, Tolstoy, Samuel Butler" and many other eminent men in the domains of philosophy, economics, and literature. While acknowledging in a full measure his indebtedness to all these masters, he has warned his critics against carrying this work of tracing literary genealogy too far ; for, as he points out, he is not more indebted to the big masters than to comparatively unknown worthies like Charles Lever, Ernest Belfort Pax and a Captain Wilson.¹

Shaw is original in the sense that he has taken his morality ready-made from conventional standards, "of good and , but has read own meaning into life, giving^ his~own values to things. It is in this sense again, that he considers himself to be a philosopher. In his essay on Nietzsche he argues that a philosopher should see life unconditionally, that is, "without prejudice or partiality. That is why a philosopher can, according to him, never be a good man, though he can be and often is a great man. A good man is one who adapts his morality to conventional standards, while a philosopher is, above everything else, an unconventional evaluator of things. Not only has Shaw himself tried to give original values to things, but he has also insisted on this quality in all his

¹ Preface to *Major Barbara*.

heroes of art and literature. His objection to the characters of Shakespeare is that they are not heroes, for not one among them tries to see things and judge life for himself in the way in which Ibsen's Nora sees and evaluates things around her. Shakespeare's men and women are good or bad persons, but none of them is ^c by profession what is called an original thinker*. In his own creations Shaw has tried to ignore all that is conventional, all that is ready-made, all that is mere ^c reach-me-down Tj For example, in writing about Caesar, he thinks not of Caesar's victories but of Caesar off the field, because it was off the field that Caesar gave the best exhibition of his original morality.

(Shaw is original not only in his morality but also in his observation of life. He is a philosopher as well as a Realist. ; ReaHsrn is a, much misused term, and from Plato to iJertrand Russell all sorts of philosopher have been labelled as Realist. Fortunately, Shaw has himself explained what he means by realism, and we need not rely solely on a conventional term to describe the most unconventional of thinkers. Man, as he progresses from barbarism to civilization, adopts certain institutions which are neither perfect nor¹ divine, but as years pass and these institutions are handed on from generation to generation people come to imagine that they are of supernatural origin and are to be accepted and glorified assuch. It was such a fancy that led Burke to declare that the origin of human society was divine, that made him discover sacredness in the very dust that overlaid old documents. It was such a fancy that led the superficial Victorian poet to exclaim that it was God who fulfilled Himself in many ways. The aristocrats,

the Have-and-Holders, who have prospered by means of or because of these institutions, always try to encourage people in the belief that these are perfect and have to be accepted without demur. Since these men have monopolized all the power and all the wealth of the world, they can make poorer people believe in the ideal perfection of the institutions which have brought them all the prizes of life. It is in this imposture that I irmiticism have their origin."

Shaw claims to be one of those Realists who have the courage to face the truth, to declare that institutions are neither natural nor holy and that they are only human inventions which should not be allowed to outlast their earthly utility. The peculiarity about Shaw is that he is not only a realist but also a caricaturist, and he is a caricaturist, because he is a breaker of idols. Generally, realists try to give a photographic picture of manners or of economic conditions. The picture can never be absolutely photographic, because it is always critical, and creative. But realists try to find living symbols for their ideas by giving, as far as possible, a faithful picture of the actual conditions of society. Thus though Zola and Galsworthy are both propagandists and have warred on social evils, yet they preach their ideals through a picture of the real. With Shaw it is otherwise. (His criticism of social conditions proceeds from a new metaphysics, and hence, though he has treated of manners and given pictures of social conditions, his portraiture has none of the characteristics of an honest and photographic picture. He has gone to the roots of conventional beliefs and ideas and show essenGatlreapty behind external

conditions which to him are not real... but are only distortions of reality. For him, what is wrong with society is not that there is one injustice here or another there, but that the whole structure of society is based on a wrong understanding of the Life Force. The difference between him and other realists is in the ultimate analysis, one of degree rather than of kind, but it is so great that it should be stressed as a preliminary to the correct appraisal of his art and philosophy. Other realists are painters of phenomena while Shaw is a seeker of the reality behind phenomena. As his friend the oculist reminded him, "his vision is normal not in the sense that he sees things as other people do ; he sees them *better*."

There are, of course, some cases in which Shaw has drawn realistic pictures only in the sense that he has given more accurate facts than are known to his readers. Critics complained that his portraiture of the coward-soldier in *Arms and the Man* was untrue to life, and he flung at them a vast material of military biography, which supported his case. He could have given the same answer, if critics had made the same complaint about *John Bull's Other Island*, and in *Saint Joan* he has, in a lengthy Preface, tried to show that his picture along is historically true. He has vindicated his view of prostitution in more places than one and shown that *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is an accurate piece of contemporary history. The same thing might be said of dramas like *Widowers' Houses* and *Major Barbara* though these plays and those mentioned above also leave an impression that there is something somewhere which spoils their realism.

This impression is deepened in plays like *Man and*

Superman, Overruled, Heartbreak House, Getting Married, Misalliance, The Devil's Disciple and *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*. In society, women may desire to get married, but their bashfulness is as much a determining factor in their conduct as their desire for mating. Sex may be an impersonal instinct, but in real life, no man and no woman make the ludicrous mistakes committed by the Junoes and the Lunnns in *Overruled*. Though Shaw can quote instances in support of his view of the coward-soldier, yet in real life Sergiuses are much oftener married to Rainas than to servant girls like Louka. These marriages may prove to be ~~biological~~ failures, but they happen—and frequently. Tin spit? of all Shaw's professions of realism, it is undeniable that his men and women seem to be strange shadows. He has portrayed manners ; he has described social conditions, but he has turned the social state topsy-turvy.) He has left mere external conditions and gone to the primal essence of Life and then projected these external conditions from the primordial deep. Many things that appear real to us, all our conventions and institutions, seem to be perversions to him. Hence, though his writings are essentially realistic,, yet to us they appear to be caricatures. His normality is abnormal, his truths are paradoxe

III

An attempt has been made in the preceding section to distinguish Shaw's realism from what we generally understand by the term. It is based on 'natural' rather than on conventional history. It is necessary now to elucidate other characteristics of Shavian realism. The most important of these is that

it is absolutely unromantic and unsentimental. Many have been the attempts to define romanticism, and no two definitions say the same thing. But there is unanimity about one thing, namely, that romanticism is marked by a great emotional outburst. Shaw has tried to found his dramas on what he regards as 'genuinely scientific natural history', and since nothing can be more alien to scientific history than romance, Shaw's dramas are almost entirely devoid of sentiment. This distinguishes his plays not only from the dramas of a genuine romanticist like Shakespeare, but also from those of his own masters, Ibsen and Strindberg. None of his men speak with the passion of a Gustav, nor have his women the deep emotional fervour of a Nora or a Mrs. Alving. In his study of the world he has discovered that sentiment is loved by his wives, though they are nothing but slave-dealers; warriors are adored for their bravery though your gallant V.C. very often lacks the courage to check a temptation that does not move a first-rate coward. Shaw is probably not opposed to genuine emotion, but before there can be any real sentiment, we must be sure of the things about which these sentiments are to be aroused. Most of our sentiments are based on poverty and inequality, which are the poisons that will destroy our civilization. As long as this civilization lasts, there can only be diseased, sham sentiment, and this sentimentality Shaw has rejected as unworthy of serious consideration, v-'''

There is yet a deeper reason which has made him so severely unsentimental. It has already been pointed out that Shaw is a student of natural history, and in

the course of his study of natural phenomena he has discovered that man is only one of the many experiments of the Life Force which itself is constantly evolving. It has no partiality, no prejudice. Civilizations have perished, and it is possible that man himself will be discarded in favour of a nobler species. In his passion for going to the very bottom of reality, Shaw has discovered that there is only one thing fundamental and that is the instinct for betterment. This is the one thing that is essential, and everything else is circumstantial.⁷ But civilization, which is itself circumstantial, ignores the primal impulse of betterment and concentrates on inessential things. For example, man has given too much importance to his happiness and cared little for evolution, although happiness is a sentimental commodity which only impedes betterment. Being a biologist, Shaw has laid stress only on the fundamental instinct of betterment and made light of sentiments which are often unreal, almost always parasitic and absolutely unconnected with the evolutionary impulse.

Shakespeare's Othello loved Desdemona and thought that love was the most glorious thing in his life, because it made him most happy. For Shaw, the happiness of Othello or Desdemona is unimportant; what is essential is that their love should lead to their creation of a better race of men. (Hamlet is a typical character in romantic literature; he is in quest of happiness and is unhappy because he trips over the mistake which lies on the threshold of intellectual self-consciousness: that of bringing life to utilitarian or Hedonistic tests, thus treating it as a means instead of as an end.¹) In his

¹ *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*, Vol. II, p. 315.

great work on Socialism, Shaw reminds us that a 'drunken man is happier than a sober one ; that is why imliappy"people fake to "drink. There are drugs that will make you ecstatically happy while ruining your body and soul. It is your quality that matters and happiness will take care of itself. People of the right sort are never happy until they get things straight ; but they are too healthy and too much taken up with] their occupations to bother about happiness.'

This is the fundamental point in Shaw's philosophy, misunderstanding of which has led to a good deal of misconceived criticism of his novels and plays. If ias been urged, for example, that Shaw's characters are too intellectual, that they are not living that Shaw does not probe deep into the human heart and so forth and so on. These criticismSj derived from romantic canons, have no meaning when applied to Shaw, who professes, to have touched deeper than the deepest emotions, fShaw's dramas are dramas of instincts rather jhan 3 htimenJ his real originality consisting in the distinction he has drawn between Emotion and Intellect on the one hand and Intuition "on the other. Sentiment is an outer incrustation on the primal instincts and seen apart from them, is only -a romantic fiction) John Tanner does not fall in love with Ann ; his "tragicomedy is far deeper. He succumbs to a deadly instinct, in spite of the fact that he understands and defies to the last the fate which finally overtakes him.' Gloria Clandon is a twentieth

¹ Mr. G. K. Chesterton thinks (*Fortnightly Review*, August 1931) that this means the final abandonment of the philosophy of opportunism and hedonism Shaw enunciated in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. Chesterton forgets that Nora leaves her husband and her child, not for happiness and pleasure, but in obedience to a deeper instinct which makes light of hedonism.

century girl, scientifically reared and taught to despise her emotions. She meets a five-shilling dentist, rather unattractive, though a man of many flirtations. Normally, one cannot expect that they will fall in love with each other ; but that is what actually happens. It is apparently the story of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* over again with a slightly different plot. In spirit, however, there is little affinity between the two works ; for in Jane Austen's story there is sentimental coquetry, while in Shaw's play there is no touch of sentiment at all. The strongest of instincts has been roused, and the two persons are in the grip of a power far mightier than they. When this instinct has been awakened, sentimental coquetry is unnecessary ; and where it is dormant, no amount of sentimental mollycoddling will do.¹

• Shaw is unsentimental not only because he is a biologist but also because he is an economist. He has treated of themes which by any other hand would have been rendered into sentimental dramas ; but his essentially socialistic outlook has preserved them from descending into sentimentality.⁷ Take the case of *Widowers' Houses*. It is the story of a young doctor, who, having fallen in love with a girl, is repelled by the discovery of her father's occupation, which is slum landlordism. In this play there is the substance of sentimental melodrama, and indeed Shaw himself points out that if we could cut out some of the socialistic passages, it would be a typical sentimental play of the

¹ Only once has Shaw been caught sentimentalizing and that is not in his dramas but in his letters to Ellen Terry. Here also he has come forward with the apology that what is sentimentalism for lay people is realism for theatrical people. (*Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence*, pp. vii-x.)

twentieth century. (But Shaw makes light of the sentiments of the young hero, because he wants to show that the audience is as much guilty of slum landlordism as the landlord himself, and, therefore, sentimental indignation against one particular person is not only futile but also ridiculous. The same lesson is sought to be conveyed in all the other economic dramas of Shaw. Modern society, including its reverend pastors, its aristocratic barons and its plutocratic merchant princes is hopelessly in the wrong. It is no good complaining against individual villainy or commiserating with individual misery. The world is full of dirt, not vice, and Shaw, the great realist, remains permanently unromantic, permanently unsentimental. The problems of the world are in the ultimate analysis only of two kinds : biological and economic, and it is silly to think that they can be solved by sentimental hysterics.'

CHAPTER II
THE BIOLOGIST-ECONOMIST

I

IT has been pointed out in the preceding pages that Shaw is a realist who tries to find out the essence of truth behind the superficial garb of romance and respectability. Modern civilization appears to him as a splendid show without any substance. Here everything is false and nothing is real. As Ellie Dunn describes it : ' There seems to be nothing real in the world except my father and Shakespeare. Marcus' tigers are false ; Mr. Mangan's millions are false ; there is nothing really strong and true about Hesione but her beautiful black hair ; and Lady Utterword is too pretty to be real. The one thing left to me was the Captain's seventh degree of concentration and that turns out to be . . . ' If all our gods are idols, if our ideals are fictions, if our good men are monsters, if our religion is superstition, if our science is nonsense, what then is real in life, what is natural in nature ? This is the problem for Shaw, and in his search for the essence of life he has gone deeper than the purely economical phenomena and become a student of Life itself. He has found that other things might be fictitious ; but there can be no scepticism about life which does exist and cannot be dismissed as a Maya.

The world of phenomena appears to all of us as an object of knowledge ; it has no reality except

as an object of perception. In the language of Schopenhauer, the world is only an Idea. Though this is true of the world of external phenomena, it has to be accepted with some qualification so far as our own inner selves are concerned. The knowing mind is itself an object of knowledge and yet it is also the subject. Being both the subject and the object of knowledge, it has a deeper reality than as mere Idea. Schopenhauer says that the answer to the riddle of life is in the Will, which is the essence of existence in all its forms and grades. 'The will is a thing-in-itself! It is active where no knowledge guides it, in natural phenomena and animals where it is only blindly active. In human beings also the will is largely an unconscious agent, in all their vital and vegetative processes, in digestion, circulation, secretion, growth, reproduction.⁵¹ Now the question is : What is the ultimate end of this essence of existence? Will to what ? The great German philosopher thinks that the Will being blindly active, is free from all aim, from all limits, and that its only expression is found in an endless striving. To this view of the purposelessness of the Will may be traced the melancholy nature of his philosophy. All willing, he thinks, arises from want, but the satisfaction of a wish does not bring happiness, because at bottom, the Will is without any purpose. The denial of a wish is attended with pain, but the satisfaction of it leads only to more desire.

It is in this way that suffering becomes essential to life. 'No attained object of desire can give lasting peace, but merely a fleeting gratification ; it is like

¹ *The World as Will and Idea*, Vol. I.

the alms thrown to a beggar that keeps him alive to-day that his misery may be prolonged till the morrow.¹ Suffering is brought on not only by the denial or the satisfaction of wishes but also by a conflict which is inseparable from willing. The Will, according to Schopenhauer, is an endless striving, albeit to no purpose. Every object in nature is an objectification of the Will which seeks the highest possible form of objectification and to give up the lower grades of its manifestation after a conflict, in order to appear in a higher grade and so much the more powerful. There is no victory without conflict. The magnet that attracts a piece of iron carries on a perpetual conflict with gravitation which, as the lower form of the objectification of the Will, has a prior claim to this matter of the iron.

Shaw accepts the metaphysical principle that the Will is the essence of reality, but rejects the Schopenhauerian philosophy of struggle and pain. He regards the Will which he calls the Life Force as groundless, as beyond the principle of Sufficient Reason ; but it has, according to him, a profound purpose that guides its activities and that purpose is : Evolution or betterment.² The Will is not only active, but also creative, and, therefore, though unconscious, it is not blind. Its different manifestations are not only

¹ *The World as Will and Idea*, Vol. I.

² It is this aspect of Shavianism which Chesterton fails to understand. He feels inclined to ask Shaw the ' lucid question ', * If when you spare a herring, you are only being oikonomikal, for what oikos are you being nomikal ? * Shaw's answer, plainly stated, would be : The Will cares only for creation, and waste and destruction are opposed to the principle of life. Chesterton's next question would probably be : Whence is this principle of creation and betterment derived ? to which Shavianism might answer: It is inherent in the Life Force itself. (Vide *George Bernard Shaw*, p. 77 ff.)

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objectifications but also creations. The Life Force continually "strives to improve on its own creations, just as an artist strives after more and more complete Expression of his personality. The lower forms of life are only experiments which the Life Force rejects as soon as it finds something better. The striving of the Will is not due to any 'deficiency', as Schopenhauer thought, but to an inner necessity for complete expression and fuller evolution.

As the creations of the Life Force are not inspired by a feeling of deficiency, pain and its complement of pleasure are unknown to it. The lower forms of life are rejected only when something better is found by the same Force which invents the higher as well as the lower, and there is, therefore, no conflict between them. The Life Force strives but does not struggle. In the last part of *Back to Methuselah* (As Far As Thought Can Reach), we find that the Ancients are trying to get free from the bondage of the body, which started as a slave and has become the master of the spirit, but there is no idea of a conflict between the material and the spiritual forces of life, between what Schopenhauer would call the higher and the lower forms of the objectification of the Will. Life's battles are, as Shaw's Don Juan reminds us, mere blunders. Struggle and conflict being altogether foreign to the nature of life, there can be no room for happiness and sorrow. The Life Force may entail suffering for the individual, but it is itself innocent of and indifferent to pleasure and pain. It tries to minimize suffering, because the most successful creation is also the one that is most spontaneous. The Will makes an economy of effort so that creation may not be an exhausting process.

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with, the mother of Adam and Eve, produced two creatures, because she found that if creation were left to one person, it would become a too costly, difficult and wasteful affair. In A.D. 31920 it is seen that the newly-born baby bursts out of an egg without necessitating any one of the difficult and laborious processes which the birth of a child involves in the world of short-lived men.

Shaw's originality consists, therefore, in (*a*) his attempt to discover the ultimate creative purpose of the Will and in (*b*) looking upon the element of conflict as absolutely inessential to life. The fundamental purpose of Life Force or the Will is betterment, and, therefore, Shaw believes in Evolution, though he is not a Darwinian. Darwin's idea of Evolution minimizes the agency of the Will to insignificance. It lays all the stress on circumstantial selection and makes man completely a creature of environment. It ignores the fact that it is man who has created the environment and not vice versa. Imagine all possible sorts of environment, but there will be no living being unless * the breath of life' has been breathed into the nostrils by a creative Will.

As the Life Force is callous to everything except creation, it is absolutely non-moral. The ordinary concepts of 'good' and * evil' are as much foreign to it as those of 'pleasure' and 'pain'. Its morality is relative; that which helps creation is good and great, and that which is uncreative is evil and low. A good deal of harm has been done by the superimposition of a morality unrelated to the Life Force which is ignorant of everything except its own laws of evolution. This has turned men into * second hand'

machines who have responded to laws that are not primal impulses, to motives that are not instincts. Men are subject to an artificial code of morality and have made virtues of vengeance and punishment, giving them pompous names such as love, honour, justice, etc. These passions can supply only mechanical motives for action, because they are unconnected with the primal instincts which alone are truly living.

"The Life Force cares as little for Beauty as for morality. Croce has argued that Beauty consists in perfect expression and that the essence of the science of aesthetic lies in expression. Shaw, however, is not content with perfect expression alone ; the Life Force*¹ not only expresses itself but strives continuously for better and better forms of creation. If it had been its desire to create more and more beautiful figures, it would not have produced ugly animals, not even man after having created the most beautiful of all creatures : the bird. But the Life Force has not stopped there, nor gone on creating more and more wonderful specimens of birds. , It has produced creatures of a different type, creatures with a more self-conscious will.¹ v/

""TFart"has any real greatness of its own, if it can be said to mark a stage in the process of Creative Evolution, it is not because it pursues Beauty which is unrelated to the Life Force, but because it is more self-conscious than the joy of mere living. As Herr Spinell in Thomas Mann's story of *Tristan* says, ' Art is consuming, killing, but it is great, because it is driven with a painful insistence to orient everything around it, to express and bring it to consciousness.'

¹ *Man and Superman*, Act III.

This is in essence the point of view of Shaw too. The Will is making many experiments; its ultimate aim is unknown, but it seems to be proceeding in the direction of self-consciousness. That is why its latest product is man, who is neither so strong as the megatherium, nor so beautiful as the bird, but whose will is more self-conscious than that of every animal that preceded him. As yet the will is largely unconscious even in man, and the human intellect is even now a poor mechanism; but in the final stages of the present evolutionary process there will not probably be any difference between the power and insight of the will and the consciousness of the intellect. There will, it seems, be a complete wedding of the Self-conscious with the Unconscious.

To Life, the force behind the Man, intellect', says Shaw's Don Juan, 'is a necessity, because without it he blunders into death.' It is because man has not yet attained perfect intelligence that he has erected a false civilization and is wasting himself in fruitless struggle against the unreal forces of Death and Degeneration, which he has himself foolishly called into being. /

It is the striving after this alliance between the Conscious and the Unconscious that makes Shaw at the same time a mystic and a rationalist. It is as a rationalist that he has entered the field of controversial politics and economics. No other writer has carried on controversies with the same power of argument and analysis, no other writer has so thoroughly exposed the intellectual fallacies of a school opposed to his own. It is as a rationalist that he has shown that Mrs. Warren's profession is an economic

phenomenon, that Mr. Sartorius, the slum landlord, is not alone responsible for slum landlordism, that the mystical visions of Joan of Arc were rationalistically defensible. But behind all his rationalism there is the belief of a mystic that it is the Unknown, the Unconscious, that is really active and creative. The combination of rationalistic calculation and mystical dreaming has been best exemplified in the second and third parts of *Back to Methuselah*. It is the scientific biologist Barnabas that thinks and reasons that life ought to be prolonged so that society may be placed on a sounder basis, it is he who also calculates the exact period by which the term of human life will be extended, but it is not he and his brother and partner who really live a long life of three hundred years. Neither does the call come to their daughter Savvy, who is an energetic socialist worker and an unconventional thinker. The call appeals to the unconscious will of Mr. Haslam, who cares neither for biology nor for socialism but is a disinterested listener to the conversation of the two learned brothers. The other person who is influenced by the theory of long life and lives up to three hundred years is the parlourmaid of the Barnabas brothers, who only half understands the mission preached by her masters. The brothers Barnabas consciously think of long life as a possibility, but it is the unconscious elf of the priest and the parlourmaid that wills it.

II

Having considered the nature of the Will, I now examine how it acts or ought to act in modern society. Of all the forms of creation, none is so

important as the creation of a living organism, and man will go on progressing, if only he can produce a better race. He must make his children greater than himself or he will be scrapped by the Life Force. At present his energies are woefully misdirected. He makes laws, gives votes, drafts constitutions and thinks he is making progress. This idea of progress is a foolish illusion. When a sick patient changes his position, he does not necessarily make progress, though he might temporarily feel more comfortable in the new posture than in the old. To make real progress, man must procreate a better race ; he must produce the superman. Before there has been an evolution in the inner quality of the species, mere change in the external departments of politics and science will not mean any real advancement.

It is, however, very difficult to effect any change in the inner quality of the species, because procreation is largely an unconscious process. All that the conscious intelligence can do is to leave the unconscious Will free to act as it chooses. Circumstantial selection and so-called natural selection must give way to free selection by the Life Force. It is this desire to leave the Will free to choose for itself that has made the biologist also an economist. Shaw started his career as an exponent of Fabian Socialism and did not proclaim his views on Creative Evolution with any vehemence until 1903, when he wrote *Man and Superman*. This has led most critics to mistake the place of economics in his philosophy. His advocacy of socialism is really subsidiary to his championing the cause of Creative Evolution. He has never been a socialist for the sake of socialism. For him it is only a means

for doing away with the ponderous machinery of Capitalism, which is trying to stifle the activities of the Life Force. The two aspects of his philosophy are not disparate ; one naturally follows from the other.

Shaw is a socialist because unless all have equal incomes, equal freedom and leisure, the unconscious Life Force will not be free to move. As the Irish socialist points out to the black girl and the old gentleman in Shaw's Parable, the Evolutionary Will cannot be fulfilled if the fulfilment is not made reasonably easy and hopeful by Socialism.¹ The unconscious Will in a duke's daughter may choose a duke's son or her own footman, but in the present conditions of society where there is inequality of income, she is forced to restrict her choice, and the unconscious Will remains for ever dormant. In our society Ann has to choose between Tanner and Tavy, but if there had been perfect equality of income. Tanner's chauffeur Straker would have been in the running and would probably have beaten his rivals. Then, again, as the poor live in dirt and degradation, the constant struggle against poverty and total lack of leisure choke their unconscious powers. If there is perfect equality of income, if there is workior all as well as leisure for all, if there is no degradation, it will not mean the creation of a better species all at once, but it will produce the conditions precedent to the birth of a race of supermen.

As Shaw's economics is only an offshoot of his biology, his socialism has its own peculiarities. He has insisted with great force only on the equality of income and has been comparatively lukewarm in his support

¹ *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God*, p. 55.

of other aspects of the movement. Even when he has dealt with any particular economic question, he has laid stress only on this side of the problem : work for all and equal income for all. Not that he cannot argue technicalities, nor that he has an inadequate knowledge of statistics. Whenever his opponents have tempted him into a controversy, they have been amazed at the wealth of materials at his command and his ability to discuss technical questions of economics. But in his economic dramas, he has not gone into details which are purely economic ; he has only drawn our attention to the taproot of all problems : underpayment of the poor, idleness of the rich and the consequent waste of leisure and energy. Shaw was himself a rent-collector, and his first drama, *Widowers' Houses*, touches on the problem of rent ; but he does not discuss theories of rent ; he only shows that it is on the dirt of slums that gentility fattens. As a hardworking journalist he saw enough of underpayment in his younger days, and he skims over the question of wages in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. But here, too, he has only shown the intimate connexion between white slavery and respectability and refinement. If there is underpayment, there will be inequality, overwork, dirt and degradation, and the Life Force will be handicapped. The asphyxia of poverty must be removed ; for the Life Force must breathe.

There is yet another characteristic of Shavian socialism. As Shaw believes in Creative Evolution, he does not (as has been pointed out above) believe in the vulgar idea of Progress and has more faith in the illumination of the Will and the Intellect than in hasty

breaches of the law. This has made hiyi a Fabian, a member of a society which follows the waiting policy of Fabius Cunctator. Shaw is less interested in contemporary movements and in temporary profit-and-loss than in the evolution of the Will, which might take æons. Even amongst the Fabians he is a member noted as much for his brilliance as for his moderation, which some have interpreted as his conservatism, and critics like Cazamian¹ have pointed out that there has been a gradual softening of his orthodoxy and radicalism. He takes a mild view of changes and opposes anarchism, because revolutionary conduct can do nothing unless the Will has been roused into activity. When the unconscious Will has been moved, it will leap over precipices, and until it has been stirred, we cannot make one stride of real progress.

III

Let us now examine Shaw's attitude to the main problems of modern society. No problem in the family and the state has exercised Shaw's imagination so powerfully as the problem of the family. As a biologist, he considers the creation of a child to be the most sacred work of all, and as a socialist he demands that all work should be suitably remunerated. The most serious of social injustices is done to women who are underpaid in the industrial world and are not paid at all for their work in the family. The underpayment in the industrial world has led to Mrs. Warren's Profession, but in the domestic sphere where women are not paid anything for their housewifery and mothering,

¹ *A History of English Literature* by Legouis and Cazamian, p. 1,350.

there is a much worse form of prostitution than Mrs. Warren ever knew.

As women do not get any independent income for their work in the household, a social system has been raised on a foundation of fraud. The husband thinks, in the manner of the Reverend Mr. Morell in *Candida*, that he offers his wife his strength for her defence, his honesty of purpose for her surety, his ability and industry for her livelihood and his authority and position for her dignity. But the wife is the real 'creditor', for it is she who builds a castle of comfort and love for him and stands sentinel to keep out the vulgar cares. In Shaw's ideal society of which glimpses are given in *Back to Methuselah*, the State will become responsible for the rearing of children, private heritable property will be abolished, and the modern family which is a nuisance and a bore, will be unknown. Marriage will then automatically come to an end. We find that in A.D. 3000 mothers do not look after their children after the tenth year and that a woman who has specialized in babies does not know them if she meets them on the streets. When Zoo is asked a question about marriage, she gapes in wonder because the word is unknown to her; when her questioner refers to the paternity of her children, it is discovered that this is the one indelicate subject in a community that does not recognize the common reticences of civilization. She is not *Miss Zoo*, though she is Unmarried, neither is she *Mrs. Zoo*, though she is fifty-six and the mother of four babies. Scandalous, certainly; only she belongs to a society in which there is no scandal.

As woman is nowadays entirely dependent on man for her maintenance and for the rearing of her children,

her one business in life is to secure a man, who, though he may not be^e 'biologically attractive', is yet economically competent to provide her with 'nutrition'. Don Juan is no longer the hunter but the quarry. Society regards woman as the repository of delicacy and reserve, and formality requires that it is man who should propose, but behind all this veneer of romance and coquetry is the stark fact that a woman has to entangle ma _____ Even her shyness and reticence she will employ as a weapon for capturing her man. This pursuit has to be carried on by the rich woman as well as by the poor. But it is for the latter that the business is really heart-rending. Ellie Dunn in *Heartbreak House* knows what a fraud Boss Mangan is, and yet she has to make herself attractive to him, to win him 'at all costs'. It is to save her soul that she wants to be married to the soulless financier. As her father reminds the men and women in *Heartbreak House*, she cannot live like her mother on mere resignation. Ellie's mother knew of the dirty trick that Mangan had once played on them and yet she insisted on her marrying him, because by being married to an honest but poor man she herself learnt the relative values of goodness and wealth.

Shaw's principal objection to marriage, however, is not that it is based on false economics but that it rests on false biology. Marriage is the institution which society has invented and adopted for the purpose of regularizing procreation. There are different forms of marriage in different societies, but there is one thing common to all these marriages : it means the alliance of two persons for prolonged sexual intercourse, and

sexual intercourse leads to the birth of children. As marriage is intended to be a permanent institution, it has led to and been strengthened by another social institution which is even more lasting. This institution is the family which runs from generation to generation and covers innumerable marriages. Marriage and the family are based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of the sexual instinct. The instinct of sex is the most violent, the most imperative of all instincts ; but it is (argues Shaw)¹ the most sporadic and impersonal of them all. It is violent, it is necessary, it is even sacred, for the Life Force expresses itself through it, but it is not permanent and personal. It does not require any intimacy, nor does it by itself produce any intimate, personal relationship.

The family is created by marriage, and marriage depends on sex. The instinct of sex is sporadic, while property, and the family, are permanent. Property runs from generation to generation and the family name lingers even when there is no property to be handed over. Indeed, the prestige of a family depends often on the age of the family name. When marriages are contracted, every attempt is made to give them permanence. The marriage vow is for life, religion is requisitioned to give it a touch of sacredness ; in many countries the relationship is indissoluble, and even where there is provision for divorce, the divorced husband or wife is looked upon as an abnormality. Marriage means (theoretically in all cases and practically in most) a life-long companionship for sexual enjoyment, for the

¹ Preface to *Getting Married*.

rearing of children, and for the joint employment of property, if there is any, or joint struggle against poverty, if there is none.

The really intimate relationship between the husband and the wife is, however, a matter of moments. This compels them to fill up the remaining portion of their joint existence with much that is inessential and even unsubstantial. It is in this way that sentimentality is aroused and creates all the unreality and romance of married life. Sentimentality has its origin in the pretence that the husband and the wife are not only addicted to mutual sexual enjoyment but also devoted to each other for what are called the nobler purposes of life. But all this is a mere hoax. Sex being itself impersonal, can confer no personal intimacy on other relationships, and so far as the Life Force is concerned, the husband and the wife remain as great strangers to each other as to other persons. This has been sought to be brought out in the little drama *Overruled*. It is 'a clinical study of how polygamy occurs among quite ordinary people, innocent of all unconventional views concerning it'. In this drama two men discover that after a very slight flirtation with stranger ladies, neither of them can distinguish his wife from a recent acquaintance on board the ship. This shows that polygamy is inevitable, because no amount of sentimentalizing can confer permanence on a relationship which is impermanent by nature.

Marriage is based on a fundamental falsehood, and in order to protect it its supporters have called in the aid of other fictions like Sentimentality, Decency and Respectability, which are the weapons with which they fight truth. ^c Decency is Indecency's conspiracy of

silence' against reality. Respectability is described by Margaret Knox who comes to be at loggerheads with it as 'pretending, pretending, pretending'. It has already been shown how respectability leads to conservatism and sentimentality. People who have attained success in the material world persuade themselves and others that the institutions that have directly or indirectly helped them to eminence must be sacred. Once having attained wealth and power, they become what are called the Have-and-Holders in a society, and it is one of their duties to stand by all that exists there. They become conservatives, not only in their politics but also in their sentiments. Having thriven in the world as it is, they have accepted conventional standards of right and wrong and are, therefore, the most determined foes to original thinking. They do not judge the value of social institutions but cultivate a kind of morbid sentimentality for them, for marriage, the family, the Army, the Church and other similar institutions. The result is best described by Mrs. Knox, herself a member of this class : * We find out that with all our respectability and piety, we have no real religion, no way of telling right from wrong. We've nothing but our habits ; and when they are upset, where are we ?'

This combination of respectability and sentimentality has had disastrous effects on our civilization. It has impaired our strength by a culture of morbid sentiments, and it has tabooed the discovery and discussion of truth as indecent. There is nothing more real than sex, and yet in modern society there is nothing more obscene, because a recognition of the truth about sex will be fatal to the institutions which respectable people

hold dear. Sex is a matter of moments, but marriage is an organization for life. Respectable married people have, therefore, always pretended that they have married not for sexual relationship, but also for love, romance, duty and all the other noble and beautiful things of life. These noble and beautiful things are very good as ideals, but they are untrue, because they have no connexion with the primal instincts of man. A sudden shock of reality will make men feel how unsubstantial is the morality which is not based on the Life Force. Shaw has tried to expose the hollowness of respectability in *Fanny's First Play*, where at the first glimpse of reality, Bobby Gilbey and Margaret Knox are disburdened of the pompous pretences which they called morality and education. Sentimentality and respectability have, indeed, come to play such an important part in life in modern times that very often they have to be completely divorced from real passion. Sergius feels genuine emotion for the servant girl Louka, but he has to carry on a heartless, romantic coquetry with the respectable Raina. Raina, in her turn, is attracted to her chocolate cream soldier, but she cannot admit it until it is known that he is the son of a rich hotel-keeper in Switzerland. Lydia Carew, a rich heiress, finds that her emotions have been deeply stirred by the professional prize-fighter, Cashel Byron, but it is difficult for her to accept him because she has been taught that prize-fighting is not a respectable occupation for a gentleman.

Shaw's objection to marriage is that by being associated with private property, respectability and sentimentality, it has obscured the creative purpose of sex and that the Life Force has to confront many an

obstacle supplied by our artificial civilization. First of all, the institution of marriage is connected with property, which diverts attention from creation to the acquisition of wealth. Then, as marriage denotes a permanent relationship, it has to depend more on sentimentality than on sex, and thus the creative purpose is once more sacrificed, this time to romance, which is as unsubstantial as property is iniquitous. Shaw's chief argument against romance is that it is not essential to sex and that by trying to make sex romantic and respectable, it obscures the real creative purpose of sex. Sex should be viewed apart from all these unreal associations as a thing-in-itself, as the fundamental instinct in life which ought to be satisfied, not because it is romantic and pleasurable, but because it is real and evolutionary. We do not know w'hen and how and why it will be aroused, and we should not tamper with its profound mystery. In a natural and 'real' state of society there is no property, no sentimentality and no romance. But there is sex, and there is creation for which sex is meant. If a woman can produce better specimens of humanity than others, she will be allowed to specialize in babies as Zoo in A.D. 3000 is really made to do, but she does not share any property with her children, nor is she forced to live a life of sentimental banalities in the company of their father or fathers.

It is this attitude to life and sex that has led moralists to denounce Shaw's writings as irreligious, as outrageously obscene, and it is this attitude, again, which has made an epicurean philosopher like Chesterton regard him as essentially a Puritan. As a matter of fact, he is neither a sensualist nor a Puritan, but a

biologist. For a sensualist the aim of life is pleasure for its own sake, whereas for the Puritan repression is an end in itself or a necessary preparative for the attainment of heavenly bliss. Shaw is as much opposed to Puritanical repression as to pleasure being made the goal of life. For him indulgence is not a taboo, because it is a part of life's experience, and experience, especially sex experience, is a necessary part of human growth, but he regards the substitutions of sensuous ecstasy for intellectual activity as *the very devil'. His contempt of 'art for art's sake' is Puritanical, but he will not have the Puritans with him when he says that there can be no education except through art, nor will they approve of his treating life as a mere joke, albeit he wants to make it a good joke. In *The Devil's Disciple* he has caricatured the Puritan's conventionalism and lack of positive original religion, but his *Caesar and Cleopatra* is itself a Puritanical war on romance which poetizes unmitigated lust into heroism. Shaw's Caesar yields to the charm of Cleopatra with a frankness and innocence from which the Puritan will recoil with horror, but when she stands in the way of the graver tasks that lie ahead of him, he reminds her with cold indifference that her life is much less valuable to him than that of the humblest soldier in his army. This is also the attitude of Napoleon, Catherine of Russia and the Inca of Perusalem (Kaiser Wilhelm II). With a peculiar perversity which is partly Puritanical and partly hedonistic, Shaw has shown that it is in Catherine's debauchery that one will find the germ of her greatness. She enjoys her philandering, but is free from its bondage and can abandon a lover with the same readiness with which she courts him.

IV

False economics and false biology have given us not only our artificial marriage system but also a ponderous machinery of law and justice. Our laws are partly a scaffolding for the maintenance of property, which Proudhon defined as theft and partly they are an engine of vengeance. Believing in Creative Evolution, Shaw cannot countenance any measures of punishment, because all punishment is by nature destructive. If it is necessary for the higher purposes of the state to kill one or two men, it should be done in a free and frank manner without any malice. For malice begets malice, revenge breeds revenge. Evil, argues Shaw, should be counteracted by good and not by a hostile evil.

No one should look for abstract principles of justice in laws which are based on a fundamental misunderstanding. Captain Brassbound made the mistake of taking the social scaffolding seriously and then finds that his life's purpose was based on nothing. He foolishly believed in the sanctity of the law and is then made to discover that in not helping his mother to get back her property and in thus driving her to drink and desperation, his villain did not break any law. Then he substitutes the justice of vengeance for the refined justice of England, but Lady Cicely reminds him that in this he imitates his uncle who executes the law only to wreak the vengeance of society on those who disturb property. He tries to find shelter in the plea that he wants to punish his uncle for not doing his duty as a brother-in-law ; but in that case, he also cannot claim to have done his duty as a nephew. From whatever

point of view he might look at this mission of vengeance and punishment which he has pursued for so many years, he is forced to the inevitable conclusion that he has ploughed the sands.

It is characteristic of Shaw that he does not enter into the details of the administration of law, as Galsworthy does in his *Justice* and *The Silver Box*. A biologist-economist, he only wants to show that the system as a whole is a mere scaffolding with no moral sanction and that the feelings it rests on are malice and vengeance, both ignoble and destructive. In *Androcles and the Lion* he proves that even religious persecution is irreligious, being designed only to protect the property and power of the Have-and-Holders. When Christianity was persecuted by heathen Emperors, it was not because they thought that it was a new and false religion, but because they felt that Christians were not sufficiently devoted to the great Caesar and the patricians of Rome. As the Christians were not respectful, they thought that Christianity was not respectable. It is the eternal argument of the aristocratic classes ; when they meet anything revolutionary, they begin by calling it dirty. In Shaw's play we find that the persecutors of Christianity have no religious fanaticism, and they do not stop to distinguish the cowardly hopefulness of Spintho from the noble humanitarianism of Androcles, nor the Pauline Christianity of Ferrovius from the free-thinking of his sister Lavinia. For them it was enough that the Christians would not do what all 'respectable' men in Rome did : they would not sacrifice to the stone gods and worship the Emperor. When, in reply to the persuasions of the Roman Captain, Lavinia asks him

why she should burn incense to heathen gods, he cannot give any satisfactory answer. He only knows that all 'respectable' persons burn incense to Jupiter and Diana. Why should not Lavinia leave her craze of Christianity and join them at the altar? That is what Megaera asks her husband Androcles to do: 'Sacrifice as all respectable people do . . . everyone knows that the Christians are the very lowest of the low.' Thus it was not a struggle between heathenism and Christianity, but between aristocratic respectability and anarchical lowliness. It is, according to Shaw, the history of all religions and all persecutions.

Not only our judiciary but also our political organizations have been corrupted by the vicious capitalistic system of Government. All the power is in the hands of men who have the capacity to purchase. But they are too idle or too busy with their commercial pursuits to think of Government. They need not enter parliament, because having money in their hands they can be sure that those who do go there will never act against their interests. In *Heartbreak House*, we find that the great 'fraud' Boss Mangan has been offered the directorship of a department under Government. Hector, Hesione, and Ellie, are amusedly shocked to learn that this man, who is afraid of his own workers, who has to depend in every matter on experts like Mazzini Dunn, who is so silly that in that house three women have played cat-and-mouse with him, should have been chosen as the dictator of a great department in public life. The Boss himself supplies the explanation. It is the 'syndicate' that finances the 'party' and gets this in return. In a capitalistic society where the rich man's purse is sufficiently long,

the successful politicians and law-makers are, almost all of them, Boss Mangans, frauds and bunglers who are pledged to support the vested interests which have given them the power they misuse.

It is only natural that politicians who are subsidized and bullied will not be able to govern the country at all. The Members of Parliament are a set of 'heartless imbeciles' who reign but do not govern. They have no independence, no power, and it is no wonder they should pass their time in silly debates on unconsidered trifles, quite forgetful that they will easily learn the procedure as soon as they have got the power, but not till then. Of all writers on politics, none else is so un-political as Shaw. A socialist, he looks upon the science of government as a branch of the science of economics. Political reform, he thinks, is possible only when there has been antecedent reform in the economic system on which society is based. The Prime Minister in *The Apple Cart* thinks that the King is an enemy of liberal government, but the King and his Powermistress-General know that the real government is in the hands of the industrialists, the Breakages Ltd., and it is they who are opposed to all reform that is calculated to take the monopoly out of their hands.

Shaw's socialism and his devotion to the Life Force explain his aversion for medicine and warfare. He dislikes the medical profession not so much for the blunders that individual doctors commit as for the inherently perverse nature of the profession itself. It lives on disease just as charity lives on poverty. It is natural to be alive and diseases are, therefore, a deviation from nature. The medical profession, which

thrives on disease, has no right to exist. If there be no poverty, no dirt, no drink, no idleness, no over-work, there will be no disease and no medicine. We have been taught to look upon sickness as a part of nature, and when a man dies of a disease, we generally say that he has died a natural death. As a matter of fact, however, the most natural death is the one brought on by accidents, and this is the only kind of death known in the world of Methuselahs.

i Shaw is generally regarded as an enemy of medical Wence and of the medical profession. What is important to note is that he considers the art of healing less pernicious than unnecessary. Even if it is necessary, he finds no sense in leaving a particular class of men to trade on the diseases of the rest. All the crudities in the principles and practice of medicine have their origin in this fundamental misdirection. If people do suffer from diseases, it is the business of the state to supply them with doctors as it is its duty to supply them with good drinking water. The first business of the state is to see that all men are well born and well brought up. If that is done, and Harley Street is municipalized, it will be the look-out of the doctors to invent ways and means to eradicate diseases rather than to discover (and sometimes even to invent) them.

Capitalistic civilization is not only responsible for disease which it vainly tries to cure and crime which it punishes with disastrous effects, but it has also other ways of spoiling human life. It has invented war, which is the most terrible of all human inventions. Napoleon and the Inca of Perusalem (the German Kaiser Wilhelm II) are the two greatest of modern war maniacs, but they realize only too well that the effects

of war are as disastrous for the victor as they are for the vanquished. Their people, however, will not be satisfied with anything but warfare.¹ The Inca says that he thought of war only when all the arts of peace had failed. 'You talk of death', says he, 'as an unpopular thing; for years I gave them the arts, literature, science, prosperity, that they might live more abundantly; and they hated me, ridiculed me, caricatured me. Now that I have given them death in its frightfullest forms, they are devoted to me. . . .'

Now what is the secret of the popularity of war? Why is it that Napoleon finds the most suitable outlet for his genius in the arts of destruction? The answer is to be found in the guiding principle of Capitalism: competition and *laissezfaire*, germs of which are present even in the Garden of Eden. Cain suggests an economic reason for his murder of Abel, the first murder in the world. He found that Abel did not follow the ways of his parents and was richer than the rest. It struck Cain that the best way to become happy would be to kill his more successful brother and then to adopt his ways. If we analyse the story of our wars, we shall find the same motives behind them all. Difference in income begets competition, and it is but one step from personal jealousies to national animosities.

There is yet another reason which makes warfare popular with the common people who supply the rank and file of the army. The Inca claims that he gave

¹ In the touching short story, *The Emperor and the Little Girl*, Shaw makes it clear that the Kaiser is not responsible for the horrors of the War. He is nothing but 'a Usuality' and does only what is wanted of him. His ont apology is 'Iche habe es nicht gewolt' (It is not my doing or I never intended to, or It wasn't me).

his subjects the arts of peace, but they were not popular. Peace is not popular with the ordinary mass of mankind, because in the present conditions of society it is not worth having. This aspect of the situation has been vividly described in the playlet: *O'Flaherty, V.C.* Why did O'Flaherty join the army? It was because peaceful life at home had no charms for him. If soldiers go to war, it is to escape out of the misery and tedium of domestic life; if mothers send their sons and wives their husbands, it is because the poor creatures look forward to the pension. Soldiers would have been more difficult to recruit, if death and wounds in war had not been made more lucrative than peaceful life at home. Nor is domestic life as peaceful as people represent it to be. It was to escape from his mother's temper no less than from the drudgery and dullness of a poor man's life that O'Flaherty went to the 'quiet' life on the Front. This is the reality behind the so-called romance and glory of war.

/A believer in Creative Evolution, Shaw is eager to save life rather than seek means to destroy it. For him war is a biological absurdity. It is no wonder, therefore, that he has no admiration for the warrior-hero; indeed, he has made cowardice rather than courage a virtue. He considers the risks run by a soldier of no account when compared with those of a mother in childbirth. Says Mrs. Banger in *Press Cuttings*:
⁶ 'A mother's risk is jooty; a soldier's divilment.' In *Arms and the Man*, the hero Captain Bluntschli is a soldier with an * incurably romantic disposition', but he never forgets that discretion is the better part of valour. His common sense is a refreshing contrast to the reckless heroism of Sergius. The soldier, argues

Shaw, loves and should love nothing more than life, and he fights most heroically when he has the greatest reason to be afraid of his enemy,. He is courageous only because he is a 'coward on instinct'. The instinct of cowardice is a fundamental instinct, because it tends to preserve life rather than destroy it. In *Back to Methuselah* we find that 'the last civilized thing that happened (in the Pseudo-Christian civilization) was that statesmen discovered that cowardice was a great patriotic virtue, and a public monument was erected to its first preacher, an ancient and fat sage, Sir John Falstaff.'

Before leaving the subject of Shaw's attitude to war, it may not be out of place here to say a few words on his pronouncements on the Great War, which evoked a storm of protest and indignation and led Mr. John Palmer to write an epitaph on him. 'In the opinion of many people', says Mr. Robert Lynd, 'the allies seemed to be fighting against a combination of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and Mr. Shaw'¹ The 'many people' were mistaken. Though Shaw had little partiality for England and her allies, he was no friend of Kaiserdom or 'Potsdamnation'. He did not oppose England so much as War, which is destructive. If England could have kept out of the war, he would have welcomed it, because it would have meant the preservation of hundreds of souls that were butchered in that Armageddon. But he did not oppose England to ally himself with Germany. In his article on the case against Germany and also in the much-discussed paper 'Common Sense about the War,' he said very hard things against Germany, against the

¹ *Old and New Masters* ' p. 142.

ruining of the nation by Hohenzollernism and Junkerdom, which bred stupidity and snobbery. Shaw, however, went farther and proved that Sir Edward Grey was a Junker and that Asquith was a reactionary, in civil matters much more illiberal than the Kaiser. If German Imperialism was worse and more corrupt than British Imperialism, and if England seemed to have a better cause than Germany, it was because Englishmen are past masters in the art of hypocrisy.

It will thus be seen that Shaw's enemy is neither England nor Germany, but Capitalism and Imperialism, whether they appear in the form of German Junkerdom or British respectability or French patriotism. ^c Will you now at last believe, O stupid British, German, and French patriots, what the Socialists have been telling you for so many years : that your Union Jacks and tricolors and Imperial Eagles . . . are only toys to keep you amused, and that there are only two real flags in the world henceforth : the red flag of Democratic Socialism and the black flag of Capitalism, the flag of God and the flag of Mammon ? What earthly or heavenly good is done when Tom Fool shoots Hans Narr?¹ Herein lies the key to all that Shaw really wrote about the war. During the war the English made many misrepresentations of the German point of view and also laid absurd claim to diplomatic integrity. Shaw exposed the lie and hypocrisy and showed that both English civilization and German Junkerdom were offshoots of Capitalism.

¹ *What I Really Wrote About the War*, p. 86.

V

Shaw has warred so much on conventional religion that he has often been regarded as an irreligious man, though there cannot be a more mistaken view. He has pulled down many an idol, but he has also tried to build up an ideal of his own. The ultimate sanctions of conduct', says he, 'are metaphysical, by which imposing phrase I mean that from the purely matter-of-fact point of view there is no difference between a day's thieving and a day's honest work, between placid ignorance and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, between habitual lying and truth-telling. . . . Good conduct is not dictated by reason but by a divine instinct beyond reason. Reason only discovers the shortest way : it does not discover the destination. It would be quite reasonable for you to pick your neighbor's pocket, if you felt sure that you could make a better use of your money than she could ; but somehow it would not be honorable ; and honor is a part of divinity : it is metaphysics : it is religion.'¹

- Shaw's religion has been orientated by his economics ; like Tolstoy he has often spoken of Christ and meant Marx. But he does not identify economics with religion ; only he thinks that sound economics is a necessary preliminary to sound metaphysics. As Major Barbara discovers, it is very difficult to preach religion to men who have bodily hunger in their eyes and though wealth may not by itself lift up the soul,

¹ *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*, pp. 362, 365. In *Aerial Football*, Shaw declares that God is a presence and makes fun of the conventional belief that He is a substantial gentleman in apron and shovel hat. Cp. Preface to *Immaturity*, p. xvii.

poverty degrades it. * Money⁵, declares Shaw, in his Preface to *The Irrational Knot*, 'is the most important thing in the world; and all sound and successful morality should have this fact for its basis. Every teacher or twaddler who denies it or suppresses it is an enemy of life.' So long as there is no socialism with adequate subsistence for all, there can be no talk of real religion. Till then religion will act only as an auxiliary to the police (*The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet*) or as a parasite on irreligion; it will have to take money from dealers in whisky and explosives (*Major Barbara*).

[Though Shaw looks upon sound economics as a necessary preliminary to sound religion, his religion is more biological than economic. It is a religion of instincts rather than of reason. Some day religion may become 'scientific psychology'; but till then man should be guided by the Unconscious Life Force rather than by convention or reason. -Shaw wants to do away not only with the tyranny of reason but also with slavery to passion. His heroes and men of Destiny yield to passions when there is an instinctive urge, but they are never in permanent thralldom. Being self-acting, they are never governed by the love and hatred of another person. Shaw's Napoleon has married a woman who has lied to him about everything and who, even after her marriage, carries on philandering with other men. But -she believes that he is passionately devoted to her, and it is this fond belief which leads her to employ the Strange Lady to get back a letter that compromises herself with Director Barras. A devoted husband would never excuse the infidelity of his wife. Shaw points out in his drama how

mistaken Napoleon's wife is about her husband's real character. Napoleon neither loves nor hates her just as he does not love or hate anyone else. The story of his dishonour leaves no permanent impression on his mind. He frets and fumes in a childish manner for a moment, but the incident does not influence his deeper will. Shaw himself has defined in very clear terms the attitude which a heroic soul should adopt towards love. In a letter to Ellen Terry he says: 'You are not quite as proud as you should be of the fact that you are a fully self-possessed woman and therefore not really the slave of love. You would not delight in it so if it were not entirely subject to your will, if the abandonment were real abandonment, instead of voluntary, artistic, *willed* (and therefore revocable) rapture.'¹

From the negative point of view, Shaw's contribution to the building up of a new religion for man has been very considerable. The new man will be free from the tyranny of Poverty, Passion, Reason and Morality. His ideal will not be the attainment of Beauty or of Happiness. The next question that will have to be solved is : What will be the positive feature of the Superman ? What is it that he will seek ? Or, to put it in another way, in what pursuits will the Evolutionary Will express itself ? Nietzsche thinks that the ultimate aim of the Will is power and that is why he makes greed, voluptuousness, and tyranny into virtues, and his ideal hero is the fighting, conquering soldier who slaughters the weak in order to create the strong and the beautiful. It is on account of this that Nietzsche has been hailed as one of the precursors of the Great War. But if Nietzsche is the great apostle of

¹ *Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw : A Correspondence*) p. 71.

war, no one has condemned it and striven for peace more ardently than Shaw, Nietzsche is opposed to the Darwinian conception of Evolution not only because it is not creative, but also because he thinks that the Darwinian view of life is less bellicose than utilitarian. Shaw, on the other hand, objects to Darwinism, because, besides being uncreative, it lays too much stress on struggle as an essential factor of life. In the Nietzschean philosophy the Will seeks power as an end in itself, but for Shaw it is only one of the many forms in which the Life Force expresses itself. Some heroic spirits like Caesar and Napoleon seek and get it. Others like Joan of Arc and Captain Bluntschli are strangely impervious to its mighty appeal. In A.D. 31920, when man has progressed a good deal beyond his infantile blunders of the twentieth century, not every man seeks political and social power; indeed, in a perfectly socialistic state, the scope for the exercise of power by an individual over his fellow men is extremely limited. Here advanced individuals like Pygmalion, Martellus and Arjillax are creative scientists or artists, and the Ancients aspire after freedom from the bondage of the body and other beatitudes of a similar nature. The struggle for Power is absolutely unknown.

What then does the Shavian Superman do? He is self-acting, i.e. he is impelled by his instincts rather than by a morality superimposed from without. But we have yet to know the quality of the instincts of the Superman. Since he is not to be guided by reason, will he substitute caprice for a code? Shaw, therefore, is forced to re-establish Intelligence on the pedestal from which he pulled it down. He says that the instincts will be more self-conscious, that the gulf between

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Intelligence and Intuition will be bridge because of this that though Shaw's heroes act o, instinct, he endows them with reason of a very i order and then shows that the effect of instinctive action is not temporary or superficial, but that it touches the deepest recesses of their souls. In men with highly developed minds such as Shaw's Caesar, Napoleon, and Bluntschli, the dictates of instinct are so far from caprice that it seems that they *mechanically* follow an intelligently laid-out plan. Contrary to Shaw's definition, they do only such things as they intended to. Then again, in idolizing unsentimental, pragmatic heroism, Shaw seems to have gone back on his own creed of absolute realism, for he makes the discovery that the only glorious abandon is the one that is unreal and forgets that that rapture alone is genuine which is irrevocable.

This is not all. Shavianism has to face yet another and graver objection. How does Shaw conclude that the conduct of his heroes dictated by instinct and regulated by intelligence is 'better' than the conduct of those men who are guided by convention and sentiment? Is it possible to say that Shaw's Caesar who flirts with Cleopatra without yielding to her is on the whole a better man than Shakespeare's Antony who is caught in the coils of 'the serpent of old Nile'? Does Napoleon, who merely frets and fumes over a suggestion about his wife's infidelity, belong to a better species of humanity than Othello, who kills himself and his wife for love and jealousy? Here Shavianism seems to be not only biologically unsound but also historically false. If we mark the evolution of animal life, we shall find that man is distinguished

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inferior species not only by virtue of his highly developed consciousness but also by the rich sentiments which have illuminated his instincts. Some lower species have conscious intelligence, which, though inferior to the human intelligence, is fairly highly developed, but deep emotions seem to be the monopoly of man alone. The Evolutionary Will seems to have striven at least as surely for deep emotions as for keen intellectual consciousness.

It is not the purpose of the present study, as I have already said in the Preface, to examine the scientific and philosophical value of Shaw's ideas. But it is necessary to point out here that Shaw has no definite and clear-cut notions about the positive side, of super-human life. He seems to prefer intellectual activity and honesty to sensuous ecstasies, and in a letter to Frank Harris, he says : ' I liked sexual intercourse because of its amazing power of producing a celestial flood of emotion and exaltation of existence which, however momentary, gave me a sample of what may one day be the normal state of being for mankind in intellectual ecstasy.'¹ Shaw thus seems to rehabilitate Emotion and only passes it, as he wants to pass the Intellect, through the alembic of Instinct. But what is this ' intellectual ecstasy ' ? In Caesar, we have intellect and some dreaming, but very little of that ' flood of emotion', that ' ecstasy' which is an "exaltation of existence'. In Joan, there is ecstasy, and she, according to Shaw is the initiator of two profoundly new ideas : Protestantism and Nationalism. But Shaw himself calls her ' a semi-super-woman, because though she is the authoress

¹ Bernard Shaw, by Frank Harris, "p? 237.

of two evolutionary principles, she is not conscious of the far-reaching implications of her own faiths—She is gifted with vision and ecstasy, but as she is unconscious of the implications of her own religion, she lacks the essential condition for being a heroine. Her 'ecst F is not intellectual.

The Superman, Shaw would argue, is not to be found in the past, but in the dim future (A.D. 31920), glimpses of which he claims to have given in *Back to Methuselah*. But as will be shown later, there, too, the Ancients furnish us with little new knowledge except that they also have their troubles and are trying to get rid of their bodies. The Superman of the future appears to be much more shadowy than the heroes of the past. In so far as he is known, his ideal of life seems to be neither pleasant nor adorable. It is too early to anticipate with certainty in what direction man will move in the aeons that lie ahead. But if he advances in the direction outlined by Shaw in his *Pentateuch*, it cannot be said that he will make any real progress. Shaw will, of course, retort that progress will be judged by other standards than our own, for our civilization that has blundered over its economics and its religion and over everything else, has given us false values and false standards. But what will the new standards be like, and by what unchanging standard are we to know that the new standards are better than the old? Mr. Chesterton has some very sound remarks to offer on the incompleteness of Shaw's religion. ^c If, says he, 'Shaw had really asked himself what is logically involved in saying that the Life Force chooses Tanner or passes by Tavy, he might have begun to lay solid foundations for that

Religion which he clearly sees as needed by the world today. If he had set himself to answer the question (which seems to me the really challenging question) of how a mere expansion of new and nameless things in the void can possibly tell whether the novelties are improvements or not, unless there is an unchanging standard—he might have begun to build up those very Standards which the wise now demand. . . . It is *not* enough that there is always a beyond. Intelligent people want to know what it is that is beyond, and how it can really be shown to be better than what is behind.⁵¹

It is not true that Shaw has not given any new standard at all ; what is wrong with his standards is that they are all negative. The Superman is free from many of our shortcomings, but what he is we are left to guess. Then, again, even if we do not consider what positive traits he has, Shaw has not been able to prove that freedom from the tyranny of passion or reason is itself an evolutionary quality. Shaw's limitation as a philosopher is best seen in one of his latest works : *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God*, which is a parable on the nature of the Godhead. In course of her search for God, the black girl meets the primitive Old Testament God, Job's God, Ecclesiastes, Micah, Jesus and Mahomet, and finds that the concept of God has changed in course of the ages and that none of the many Gods as yet found can claim to have approached Godhead. Then she has an encounter with the great agnostic Voltaire, who induces her to give up the vain search and makes her cultivate his garden. Here in Voltaire's garden she

¹ *The Fortnightly Review* (August 1931), p. 158.

meets an Irish Socialist whom she marries and to whom she bears piccaninnies. In an explanatory appendix, Shaw points~biit that all the gods are imperfect and that even Voltaire's agnosticism is of no avail. What does the Irish Socialist (who represents Shaw) say? According to him, God is an ^c eternal, but unfulfilled purpose⁵. What is this purpose? Or, what does it want to fulfil? Shaw says in this Parable that one of the most important things is not to mix dirty water with clean water when we have found the latter. But the question, once again, is : How are we to find it? Has Shaw given us any clue to the path that leads to fresh and clear springs that are *better* than the dirty marshes in which we are wallowing now ?

CHAPTER III

ART PHILOSOPHY AND REALITY : AN ENQUIRY INTO SHAVIAN AESTHETICS

I

SHAW calls himself a philosopher whose only motive in writing dramas is to reform certain social institutions. 'I write plays', says he, 'with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinions. . . . I have no other incentive to write plays.'¹ In considering the technical novelty of the Ibsenist drama, he has discovered that the most important element in a modern drama is its discussion of social problems.] 'Formerly, you had in what was called a well made play an exposition in the first act, a situation in the second, an unravelling in the third. Now you have exposition, situation, and discussion ; and the discussion is the test of the playwright. . . . The discussion conquered Europe in Ibsen's *Doll's House*; and now the serious playwright recognizes in the discussion not only the main test of his highest powers, but also the real centre of his play's interest.'² This is the heresy on which Shaw has based all his dramas, and those who believe in a 'work of art' pure and simple, are described by him as musical epicures and political mugwamps.³

¹ Preface to *The Shewing-up of Blanco Pesnet*, p. 319.

² *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, p. 187.

³ *The Perfect Wagnerite*, p. 29.

Academic critics have, however, strenuously p. tested against art being allied to ethics. They want to draw a clear line between art and philosophy, and object to discussion being made the principal element in a drama or a novel. A discussion is a necessary element in philosophy; but it is, they argue, unimportant in art. A good work of art is a good work of art, in spite of the discussion and not because of it. Indeed, the critics argue that in a work of art the discussion is carried on not for its own sake but for the sake of the revelation of character. In other words, in a work of art it is immaterial whether the discussions are carried on with strict regard to truth, whether the opinions expressed are scientifically tenable or whether all available sources of information have been tapped. All these considerations are important only to the scientist and the philosopher and are of no account with the artist. Take Hamlet, for example. He is a metaphysician of rare merit and is always engaged in arguing out a case. Even when he is bantering Polonius or Osric, he is really discussing ethics or metaphysics. Yet the critics whom Shaw denounces as lazy creatures will argue that Hamlet's discussions are important only in so far as they reveal his mood at a particular moment; they have no value of their own. In a really philosophical discussion, the speaker's mood is irrelevant, because philosophy and science aim at being impersonal. In the arguments of a dramatic character, however, it is the mood alone that has any significance. These critics have refused to regard Shaw as a dramatist on the ground that his plays are devoid of the element of passion and are important only on account of

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, discussions which should have been relegated to the Prefaces. Shaw, in his turn, has made light of these critics and triumphantly proclaimed that in spite of them, his plays continue to be read, seen, and enjoyed. He is a philosopher, a propagandist, and, yet, he claims, a dramatist, too.

This raises one of the fundamental problems of aesthetic : what is the relation between art and philosophy and what, again, is the relation between art and morality ? The gre Italian a philosopher, Cmçe, holds that art has no Connexion with philosophy and that it is also independent of morality which, he argues, does not belong to the province of theoretical activity at all. In his opinion, man's theoretical activities are of two kinds : intuitive and intellectual. His most elementary activity is to feel, to have vague impressions, and when these primary feelings and original impressions are made distinct, that is to say, are expressed, we have concrete, individual images, and this expression of emotions in concrete, individual images is called art. For Croce, aesthetic is the science of expression ; it has no connexion with reasoning, with general, abstract concepts. Art is only the clarification of a vague sentiment in the form of a distinct, concrete, individual image. Successful art is only successful expression, and a work of art is unsuccessful only when it has failed to make clear and distinct the impressions which it was called upon to express. Croce says that there is another form of spiritual activity which comes after the expression of impressions in the form of concrete images has been completed. It collects and combines individual images and draws conclusions from them. These conclusions

are always general and abstract, and they are the province of philosophy. The death of *one* master-builder, Solness, may be treated of in art, but the mortality of humanity in general must be a matter of philosophical reflection. One individual prostitute may be a character in art, but prostitution is a theme for sociologists. Philosophy deals with concepts which are abstract and universal, while art creates images which are individual and concrete. As activities, there can be no connexion nor comparison between them, because they belong to different grades of consciousness. Philosophers like Hegel have held that philosophy is a higher form of activity than art, while others have hazarded the notion that all charms fly at the touch of cold philosophy. All such opinions are idle, because there can be no comparison between things unconnected.

The arguments of Croce and other believers in what is called 'pure art'⁵ are based on a fundamental misconception of the nature of a work of art. The mind of a civilized man is a highly complex thing, and it is daily attaining fuller and fuller degrees of consciousness. One cannot isolate human activities into watertight compartments. Indeed, pure intuition is a philosopher's concept; like other 'pure' things, it does not exist. Even Croce cannot give a single instance of undiluted intuition. He speaks of a particular lament as an intuition, but if he had mentioned details of such an intuition, it would have been found that that intuition also was impregnated with concepts, and in process of this impregnation, the concepts do not merge themselves altogether in the intuitions. Rather they combine together to give a meaning to the work of art,

and this meaning is never free from a conceptual determination of things. The reflections of a particular character may not have any intellectual value, they may have been given only to bring out some characteristic in his nature, but why does the artist create a particular type of character or try to bring out some special traits in his characters ? No doubt he does it with a purpose to bring out a particular meaning. It has again been argued that art is a matter of pure vision, that poetry grows, it is never made. But Adam's vision is only a poetical hypothesis. Even with Adam it must have existed only when he had not given names to the things of the world, when he had not learnt how to 'express' his impressions. As soon as he began to name things, there must have been some intellectual process behind it. ,

It is, of course, true that art depends largely on unconscious inspiration rather than on patient, plodding, mechanical labour. But this inspiration is never a matter of accident ; it comes to certain men only, nor does the same inspiration come to two different persons. It is the intellectual ideas which determine the character and scope of intuitive inspiration. Intuitive activity is creative only when the author is a conscious agent ; you can dream in sleep but you cannot create. It is the vision of a wide-awake, conscious person that is the subject matter of art. An artist feels sympathy for things which he knows are right and he has hatred for things which his reason tells him are bad. In actual life, there are, of course, cases where the unconscious will makes a man do certain things which his good sense forbids him to do ; but

these activities are not creative. Creative activity demands organized, consistent, harmonized effort and is never the product of confused thinking. There is contradiction between the conscious and the unconscious self in Hamlet but none in Shakespeare's imaginative concept; there is inconsistency in Shelley's life but not in *Prometheus Unbound* or in the *Ode to the West Wind*. It is, of course, often seen that a certain author is a better poet than prose writer, a better artist than philosopher. But this does not mean that there is no connexion between his prose and his poetry, between his art and his philosophy. In both departments he gives expression to ideas which are fundamentally identical; only, if he is an artist, he possesses the additional faculty of expressing them by means of concrete, living symbols.

It has been argued by Croce and others that a work of art is a combination or collection of images and that the only difference between one work of art and another is a difference of extension rather than of intensity, of quantity rather than of quality.¹ Even if we admit that a great work of art is nothing but a collection of images, we must not forget that this collection is not a disorganized heap but a systematic whole. The individual images, however beautiful they may be, are component parts of this unified whole and have a meaning only with reference to it. They are drilled soldiers in a disciplined army and not disorganized members of a chaotic mob. If a work of art is a collection, there must be a principle underlying the collection. There must, therefore, be a faculty which sifts and arranges and unites the various intuitions of

¹ *Aesthetic*, Ch. u.

the soul, and this faculty is intellective rather than intuitive. It is this faculty which gives meaning to the intuitions and expounds the purpose of a work of art. Take, for example, the poetry of Shelley. He was a dreamer of dreams, a seer of visions ; but there is always a clear meaning behind his wildest dreams. The skylark is described by him by means of many unearthly images, but there is one thing common to all his mystical pictures, and it is the lonely unearthly quality of the things described. The idea of the skylark removed from the world, luminous in its solitary grandeur, may be a thing of inspiration ; and the isolated images also may be all intuitions. But the original impression must be affiliated to Shelley's general view of life which was partly intellectual and partly intuitive, and it was Shelley's intellect, again, which helped him to find a connexion between the skylark and the images and also amongst the images themselves.

Wordsworth defined poetry as a recollection of emotions in tranquillity. Emotions are never pure intuitions ; they are intellective as well as intuitive, and the intellect plays, too, a very prominent part in the subsequent process of ' recollection '. The place of intellect which organizes and harmonizes images and reads a meaning into them must never be lost sight of. *King Lear* is a mightier effort, but a lesser work of art than *Hamlet*, because in it the scattered impressions have not been as successfully fused together as in the story of the Prince of Denmark. The problem of *Hamlet* about which so many conflicting theories have been advanced, is subtle and complex, but it is a unity, while that of *King Lear* is a tangled web.

Indeed, at the end of the drama one is not sure if *King Lear* has any *one* problem at all. Classic art relies more on the fusion between the intuitive and the intellectual faculties than on a cluster of isolated images, and that is why it is regarded as the highest form of art. Romantic art is remarkable more for brilliant imagery than for clarity of expression, and it is on account of this that romantic critics have enunciated a theory of art in which the image-making faculty has been regarded as the one creative faculty—an heretical and untenable doctrine of which even their critics have not been able to rid themselves. In the best specimens of romantic art such as the lyrics of Wordsworth and Shelley and Keats's odes or Goethe's *Faust*, there is such a happy reconciliation between the rival claims of Form and Colour, that one does not know whether they are classical or romantic. If we except the hypothetical primitive Adam's vision, we cannot imagine any form of art which is pure intuition and which has been able to dispense with the help of intelligence.

II

All these misunderstandings about the nature of art are largely due to a false analogy that is often drawn between art and life. It is said that art is like life, 'an imitation (in whatever sense we take the term) of reality. This facile analogy between art and life fails to take note of one fundamental difference between the creative energies that have called them into existence. The Life Force is unconscious ; but the artist is a human being who can never take leave of his

intelligence, and it is this conscious intelligence which determines the ultimate purpose and significance of his work. Of course, this purpose is not stationary ; in works like Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, it changes and develops as the work of creation proceeds, and even Shaw has admitted that when he settles down to his work, his characters seem to have a life of their own and as they begin developing in their own way, he has no more control over them than over his wife. The creative energy has its own purpose to fulfil, which at the time of creation is not known to the conscious mind of the author himself. Thus Shaw claims that he has explored the true meaning of Wagner's musical compositions, while Wagner himself fumbled over the deeper significance of his wonderful creations. Shaw also points out that it is not certain or even likely that Ibsen was as definitely conscious of his thesis as the author of *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. Dr. Bradley, again, has reminded us that Goethe did not know what he was doing when he composed the first part of *Faust* and yet it is one of the sublimest works of creative art; he knew very well what he was doing when he worked at the second part, and it is only a second-rate performance.¹ The same distinction may be drawn in many other cases, between *The Mill on the Floss* and *Middlemarch*, between the earlier and the later books of *Paradise Lost*, between the shorter and the longer and more philosophical poems of Wordsworth. The creative force of art seems to be as blind and to be as free from 'logical design', to quote the language of Shaw once more, as the creative force behind the universe.

All this is true, but only within limits, and it is because we lose sight of these limits that we fail to grasp the true significance of art. In spite of all this superficial similarity between life and art, there is a vast and organic difference between the two, and this difference may be accounted for by the part that man's conscious intelligence plays in the creation of art. There is one particular faculty which is intertwined with all artistic and philosophical work. It may be described as the evaluating faculty, the faculty which gives values to the things that we meet in life. All works of art are implicit judgements on life ; though there is a good deal of difference between the creations of art and the reasonings of logic, man's judgement is one unified whole which cannot be broken into fragments. Art may dispense with the mechanical arguments of logic ; the principles of Sufficient Reason and Causation may have very little significance for it ; but it can never dispense with evaluation or judgement. Indeed, all theoretical activities—whether intuitive or intellectual—are, after all, evaluating activities. Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* is a sublime work of art, but it is indissolubly linked up with a judgement (which is partly intellectual and partly intuitive) that there is in this world too much of poverty for man, too much of degradation for woman, too much of night for the child.

The work of evaluation presupposes a distinction not only between what is pleasant and what is unpleasant, but also between what is good and what is bad. In modern times the human mind has become such a complicated thing that even pleasure and pain cannot be matters of pure instinct, and as regards the

notions of good and evil, they can never be a product of simple intuition ; a thing is good or bad only with reference to some definite standard of judgement. Shakespeare's tragedies are regarded as the highest forms of art, 'pure art' ; but they contain pictures of a conflict between what Shakespeare regarded as good and what he condemned as evil. If we leave this aspect of the dramas out of consideration, the tragedies cease to have any meaning. The significance of a work of art is derived from the artist's attitude to life, the values he sets on things, and the poetry of Omar Khayyam differs from the poetry of Walt Whitman, because one of them considered life to be a failure, while the other hailed it as an achievement. Creative activity does, of course, depend on a mysterious impulse, but this impulse is impregnated with the values which the creator sets on life.

The psychological process involved in an artistic composition may be enunciated as follows : The artistic impulse is an inspiration, which is aroused in a mysterious manner and has very often no conscious connexion with the intellect. But it is the sudden inspiration of a man who has his own idea of good and evil, and it is when the conscious values are merged in the unconscious inspiration that a work of art is produced. Thus the intuitive inspiration is preceded by an intellectual evaluation of life, and indeed, the difference between the works of different writers is most often a qualitative difference of values rather than a quantitative difference of extension. It is these values which constitute what is called the content of art. Shakespeare set one 'value' on the place of woman in society; Ibsen's work differs from

Shakespeare's, because the Norwegian set an entirely different value on the ' dolls ' in our homes. After the inspiration has come and done its work, the intellect is again requisitioned to arrange and unify the images which the intuitive faculty has called forth. Thus a work of art which is largely a work of inspiration is preceded and followed by an intellectual evaluation and arrangement. The intellectual evaluation and arrangement is like the groundwork of art ; there can be no superstructure without the groundwork, but the groundwork may be there without a superstructure. There may be a bad superstructure with a very good groundwork, but there is never a good superstructure which has a rotten foundation. If the purely artistic qualities of a work of art could be isolated, it would be found that, considered from this point of view alone, there is no difference in merit between *Hyperion* and *Endymion*. *Endymion* is a lesser work of art, only because Keats was still groping for his philosophy when he composed this poem. The intellectual element in art is not its essence but it is certainly a part of its substance.

III

If art is not purely intuitive, but is also intellectual, if Shaw is a philosopher in the same sense in which Nietzsche is a philosopher, it remains for us to determine the proportion between the intuitive and the intellectual elements in art and also to ascertain the relation which it bears to philosophy. The difference between these two theoretical activities

seems at first sight to be only a difference in method. Art does not prove, it only depicts. It does not argue ; its illustrations are its only arguments. The most essential characteristic of art is that it should !portray living men rather than demonstrate theories. No drama is an accurate replica of life, because a drama is the creation of an artist while life is the product of an unknown creative force. The comparison between life and art is, therefore, of limited applicability only because life is anterior to art. All artistic work is preceded by an intellectual evaluation of life, but there can be no evaluation of life before its creation. The artist has a known morality, life has none. Art is a creation, while life is, for all that we know, a spontaneous growth.

There is, however, one fundamental point of affinity between the two, and that is why art has been affiliated to life. The events represented in a work of art are, in spite of all romantic extravagances, very much like those that happen in real life ; there are the same wars, conflicts, loves, friendships, marriages, jealousies, and divorces. But we should never forget that this similarity is external and superficial. It is because critics have approached the question of affinity between art and life from the point of view of external similarity that they have failed to arrive at a suitable solution. Some of the events in a work of art seem to be too 'romantic' to be real, and yet the most incredible incident in fiction seems to bear a strange affinity to everyday reality. The real affinity between art and life does not lie in external events so much as in the creation of living characters. The Life Force and

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artistic genius both have a capacity for creating characters who are alive, who have intellect and emotion and have to struggle against external circumstances. As only a fraction of life is represented in art, characters in fictions seem to have more intense emotions than real men and women, but this is a difference of degree rather than of kind.

It is the point of similarity between art and life, which is the point of distinction between art and philosophy. Philosophy is a commentary on life, while art is the creation of pictures that are essentially alive. The artist has his moral and intellectual ideas which influence the scope of his art and indicate its ultimate purpose, but in addition to this, he possesses the ability to create men and women who have the vital spark. Philosophers argue their ideas, test them with reference to known data, apply various methods with a view to making correct generalizations and subordinate everything to the principle of Sufficient Reason or Causation. But all these considerations have no weight with the artist. For him it is not necessary that there should be sufficient reason behind his arguments and conclusions, he does not look upon the world as a caused phenomenon at all. It is a world with a meaning which he not only understands with the help of his intellect but also *sees* in the shape of concrete and living symbols. As his truth comes to him in concrete, clear cut images, he need not wait and see whether they are warrantable by the principle of Causation. To the scientific philosopher, the world is a causal phenomenon, and even if he does not believe in an ultimate cause or design, he has to give sufficient reason to establish his contention ; to the artist it is a

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picturesque symbol, and that is why he never troubles himself about questions of logical design and sufficient reason.

We must, however, never forget that it is the combination of philosophical valuations and living pictures that constitutes true art. *The Spanish Tragedy* of Kyd contains the same pictures and uses the same materials, the same stock devices as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but it is a very poor work of art, because it contains pictures which have no meaning ; there is no original valuation behind the romantic fable. *Hamlet* is not only a moving story but also a profound and original study of life. Indeed, the difference between Shakespeare and his contemporaries consists simply in this, that while he has employed the same fables and the same technique as they he has never contented himself with the mere telling of tales but has always put his own philosophy of life into them. Shaw claims that he has found out the inner meaning of Ibsen and Wagner and that it is likely that at the time of composition the authors themselves were unaware of the deeper significance of their works. This may be true, but the meaning, if it is to be the correct meaning, must bear some affinity to the opinions and ideas expressed by them in their non-mystical moments. Indeed, in the case of Wagner, Shaw quotes the great composer's letters and other writings to prove that he must have composed his *Ring* and other pieces with his meaning in view, though the meaning may not have been as logically demonstrable to him at the time of composition as it is to his commentator.¹ Though artists cannot

¹ *The Perfect Wagnerite*, pp. 27-9.

and do not argue their ideas which come to them through pictures rather than through ratiocination, though they cannot prove a thesis, yet their artistic activities are determined by an understanding of life, which can never be a matter of pure instinct.

IV

Art has thus a two-fold significance, it creates pictures, and it teaches moral lessons about life. It not only images characters but also gives a philosophy. This, however, is a most unorthodox view of art, because the most widely accepted opinion of modern times is that it is unmoral, and that it is only revolutionaries like Shaw and Chesterton who hold that a work of art must not only have a fable but that the fable must also have a meaning. / When Tolstoy first enunciated the doctrine of morality in art, he was not taken seriously by the so-called art critics, and one of the greatest contributions of Shaw to aesthetic criticism is that he has shown that art is neither merely a fable nor merely a lesson, but both. The greatest aestheticians of modern times, Oscar Wilde, Walter Pater, Tagore, and Croce, have laid vehement emphasis on the non-moral character of art.

Those who believe in a poetic world distinct from and unconnected with the world of morality forget that man's life is one unified whole, and just as it is impossible to divide his theoretical activity into pure intuition and pure intellection, so also it is idle to imagine a line of demarcation between the theoretical and the practical. Man's actions are preceded and

determined by his knowledge. Though a part of man's action is volition, absolutely uninfluenced by theoretical convictions, yet in general, man is the product of his culture and his conduct is determined by his ideas. Art is the product of the moral ideas of the author, and its appeal is to the reader's ideas of good and evil. The world of art is so intimately connected with the world of reality } that it will be absurd to maintain that poetry is not a criticism of life. The doubt that has to be cleared up is the one about the meaning and scope of criticism. If art is moral and has a bearing on life, what is the substance of this morality and how are we to distinguish between the morality of *Hamlet* and that of Pope's *Essay on Man* ?

Chesterton holds that the difference between the ethics of high art and the ethics of manufactured art is that the bad fable *has* a moral while the good fable *is* a moral.¹ The defect of pedagogic morality is that it is always expressed through abstract arguments rather than through concrete and living symbols, which are the materials with which the artist works. The characters in a work of art derive their morality from their experience. The lesson which they are intended to teach was never given to them ready-made; it is evolved through experiences over which they had no control. When the artist creates anything, his morality is, of course, ready with him, but it is not equally ready with his creations. It is by virtue of this differentiation that every creator has to be a dramatist. All art has been said to be essentially lyrical, because every artist expresses his personal

¹ *Twelve Types* ('Tolstoy and the Cult of Simplicity'), p. 148.

emotions and his own ideas of good and evil. But an artist must be a dramatist too. He must find appropriate symbols for the expression of his ideas, symbols which contain the concentrated essence of his experience but from which he is maintaining a temporary aloofness.

These symbols have a life of their own ; though they are the creations of their author, they must be alive for their own sake with their own vitality. The lesson which an artist teaches through his characters he learnt in the course of many years, but in the story he has written, it has been condensed into a matter of a few days or a few minutes, and for the created characters nothing is real except the experiences which they have in their lives. There is, of course, the inevitable lesson of their lives, but they learn it as much as their reader. This is another case of 'necessity without and freedom within'. Everything in art is, after all, dependent on the moral convictions of the artist, but subject to that fundamental 'necessity', a created character is absolutely free to move as he likes, to struggle in his own way against the forces that may be arrayed against him. As Shakespeare had great faith in individual powers, which Ibsen lacked, his heroes and heroines are more sublime and his stories are more wonderful than those in the Ibsenist drama ; but this does not make his dramas less moralistic. The moral ideas in a work of art may be conventional as in Shakespearean drama, or they may be unconventional as in the work of Ibsen, but the author must have realized them in his own original way and expressed them not in a didactic but in a symbolic way.

V

The expression of moral ideas in art must involve some technical peculiarity. Every age, indeed, every single work of art must have its own way of expressing things, and this constitutes its technique. Much has been said and written about the distinction in technique between romantic and realistic forms of art. As has already been pointed out, Shaw himself believes that the most important peculiarity of modern art is its discussion of social problems. Poet-critics like Tagore, who are very hard on realistic art, hold that this element of discussion is the greatest bane of modern poetry and drama. Tagore thinks that the so-called problem dramas are not dramas at all ; modern Europe has been deeply engaged over certain socio-economic problems which have created a great turmoil in her society. These problems have made such a stir that even literature has not been able to protect itself from their intrusion, but Tagore asks us all to remember that it is nothing but unlawful trespass. 'Passing excitements and popular fancies', to quote his own words, 'are like the Australian Iris—they need no cultivation to choke effectively the flow of all normal and emotional expression.' Thus while the realist Shaw has regarded discussions as 'the test of the playwright', the romantic poet Tagore looks upon it as the poison which spoils all good art.

As a matter of fact, both the realist Shaw and the idealist Tagore are entirely on the wrong track. The

¹ Address on the fifty-fifth birth anniversary of Sarat Chandra Chatterjee,

great novelty in a modern drama is not its discussion nor does the element of discussion render a work of art inartistic. The new element in a modern play or a novel is that art has become more intellectualized and the characters in a play or a novel have become not only more self-conscious, but some of them also clearly represent the point of view of their creators. The soliloquies of Hamlet are more elaborate discussions than the one discussion held by Nora ; the only great difference is that Hamlet does not know his own mind while Nora knows hers, and Nora gives a simpler and more direct representation of Ibsen's philosophy than Hamlet can of Shakespeare's. Even when a character like Ferrovius in Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion* contradicts himself, he is very soon conscious of it, and indeed he goes to the other side and becomes a member of the Praetorian Guard only because he feels that there is a fundamental contradiction between his Christian professions and the deepest dictates of his heart. Modern science aims at illuminating everything with the light of its conscious intelligence, and though it is still mostly groping in the dark, the tendency has become too marked for art to escape it. This, however, is not the case with Shakespeare whose creations seldom understand themselves and can give only an indirect representation of his philosophy. But we must not forget that the difference in this respect is a mere difference in technique. Shakespearean drama is as deeply religious as Ibsenist drama and Shaw has to create concrete pictures as much as Keats. Every artist is a symbolist, and the moralist who is not also a symbolist is a pedagogue who may teach but cannot create.

VI

Shaw claims another technical novelty for the modern drama, which consists in 'making the spectators themselves the persons of the drama, and the incidents of their own lives its incidents, the disuse of the old stage tricks by which audiences had to be induced to take an interest in unreal people and improbable circumstances, and the substitution of a forensic technique of recrimination, disillusion, and penetration through ideals to the truth, with a free use of all the rhetorical and lyrical arts of the orator, the preacher, the pleader, and the rhapsodist V 'Shakespeare', says Shaw in another connexion, 'had put ourselves on the stage but not our situations. . . . Ibsen supplied the want left by Shakespeare. He gives us not only ourselves, but ourselves in our own situations. The things that happen to his stage figures are things that happen to us.'²

It is queer that the artist who preaches the most unconventional moral ideas should plead for conventional everyday stories. Shaw, here, seems to labour under an illusion. In a work of art, the ideas and the pictures embodying the ideas can never be looked upon as distinct from each other. It is the ideas that determine the symbols, and the symbols are only the expressions of the ideas. In the strict sense of the term there can be no story that is real ; every story in a work of art is important only as an expression of the author's attitude to life. Shakespeare had an infinite faith in man's emotional capacities, and he had to express

¹ *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, p. 205.

² *Ibid.*, p. 202.

it in wonderful stories which give full play to the emotions. In modern times, literature, like everything else, has been socialized. We believe in social forces rather than in personal emotions, and that is why our dramatists give commonplace stories and read into them their own original meaning. Drama arises out of a 'conflict of ideals' rather than out of wonderful adventures. As has been pointed out before, this change in outlook does not make the stories real ; because here also things are given a new arrangement and a new meaning. If we analyse the story of a novel by Emile Zola or by Upton Sinclair, we find that on the whole it does not possess greater verisimilitude than a story by Sir Walter Scott. The frightful details may be all true to life, but if you go to miners, they will tell you that though life in the mines is very much like what Mr. Sinclair has described, yet it is not so unbearably horrible. Most of them are absolutely innocent of the ghastly character of their own lives, and the majority of drunkards will say that drinking is not so terrible as the faithful pictures of Emile Zola make it out to be. Thus it will be found that the attempt to read a particular meaning into observed facts has interfered with the realism of so-called realistic stories.

Shaw has himself had to admit this (though in a rather indirect manner) in his defence of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*.¹ He says that if prostitutes are asked any question about the circumstances that led them to adopt this ignoble profession, they will say that it was desire for variety, thirst for excitement, dull monotony of home life, and all these, Shaw holds, are

¹ He all but recognizes this also in his Preface to *Three Plays* by Brieux.

only symptoms of poverty, which is the real cause of prostitution.¹ Therefore, in *Mrs. Warren Profession*, he does not give what is called a realist's picture ; he marshals the details of his observation in order to bring out his own meaning of the problem. From the point of view of verisimilitude, his picture has, therefore, become as unreal as the most romantic narrative of Elizabethan times. A story can never be historically real only because it is not history. Artists draw their pictures from what they have observed in real life, but no faithful copy of observed facts will make an artistic picture. These will have to be arranged, altered and sifted, and it will be found that this process of selection and arrangement cannot be distinguished from idealization. It is true that the stories in modern works of art are more credible, more probable than the adventures narrated in the romances of earlier times ; but this is only because the stories are more commonplace and the authors are concerned more with what is behind the facts than with the facts themselves.

Shaw makes the fundamental mistake of approaching this question from an objective rather than from a subjective point of view. Art is subjective ; it consists in self-expression. In course of expressing his ideas the artist will imagine things not as they are, but as they appear to him when he judges life by his own standards. Art does not describe ourselves, nor ourselves in our own situations. It expresses the author's personality and philosophy ; we ourselves are only the rough materials out of which the symbols for artistic expression are made.

¹ *Getting Married*) p. 173.

CHAPTER IV

' MY PLAYS ARE *SUI GENERIS*'

I

THERE is a touch of perversity in everything that Shaw says, specially in everything that he says about Shakespeare.) He has found fault with Shakespeare's tragedies, because they are not more comical, and he has quarrelled with his comedies, because they are not more serious. He feels that the tragic world of Shakespeare is one huge Chamber of Horrors and that the great tragic heroes ought to have been more alive to the comic side of their fall. If he had been entrusted with the task of rewriting Shakespeare's dramas, he would have made good comedies of unsettled social ideals; indeed, he suggests that *Othello* 'would be a prodigiously better play if it were a serious discussion of the highly interesting problem of how a simple Moorish soldier would get on with a "super-subtle" Venetian lady of fashion if he married her'.¹ Though the discussion is expected to be serious, the play as outlined by Shaw becomes an interesting comedy; and if only the discussions were removed, a comedy of the type that Congreve and Wycherley have written.

But it is the serious discussion which is the most important thing with Shaw, and it is for the serious discussion that for him comical plays exist. Not only that. He insists that there are some things

¹ *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, p. 197.

which should not be dealt with comically at all. That is his objection to the comic work of Shakespeare and Dickens; they have dealt in a spirit of levity with things that ought to have been approached with greater earnestness. Regarding Falstaff, he declares that the old sot does move him to laughter, but this is laughter of a low sort, because he makes fun of such terrible ^c blights on humanity as venereal disease, adultery and manifold varieties of human cruelty'. ^c To Ibsen', says he, 'from beginning to end, every human being is a sacrifice, whilst to Dickens he is a farce. And there you have the whole difference.'¹ . . . 'The English cry of "Amuse us: take things easily: dress up the world prettily for us" seems mere cowardice to the strong souls that dare look facts in the face; and just so far as people cast off levity and idolatry they find themselves able to bear the company of Bunyan and Shelley, of Ibsen and Strindberg and the great Russian realists, and unable to tolerate the sort of laughter that African tribes cannot restrain when a man is flogged or an animal trapped and wounded.'²

Shaw's attitude to the function of humour in art is rather puzzling. He considers it one of the saving graces of life, for to him light-hearted laughter is also 'sound moral judgement'. He believes in ^c an irrepressible gaiety of genius which enables it to bear the whole weight of the world's misery without blenching. There is a laugh always ready to avenge its tears, of discouragement.' But he has also relegated pure

¹ *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, p. 182.

² *Ibid.*, p. 186.

3 Preface to *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, p. 117.

comedy to a secondary position. The incidents of his 'interesting' play of *Othello* may be amusing and comical, but the discussions must be 'serious'. And though he has some good words to say about Shakespeare's comedies, he thinks that the final judgement on the poet must rest on an appraisal of his more serious works, for comedy neither compromises an author nor reveals him. He must be judged by those plays in which he puts what he knows of himself, his Hamlets and Macbeths, his Lears and Prosperos.¹ Drama, therefore, must, in his opinion, be both serious and ludicrous, and to Archibald Henderson who asked him whether he wrote dramas 'in the strict sense of the term', he replied that his plays are *sui generis*, and to call them tragedies, comedies or tragi-comedies or dramas is like saying that he is a Caucasian!²

It is this combination of deadly earnestness and the most light-hearted triviality that has puzzled his readers and critics. They have been at a loss to decide whether to take him seriously or amusedly. There has been many an instance of the combination of the tragical and the comic in the same drama. There is the Porter Scene in *Macbeth*, the Fool makes fun of the grim tragedy in *King Lear*, and if *Othello's* fate arouses pity and fear, Roderigo's movements excite nothing but laughter. All this is true, but it will be found that the comic has been introduced into these tragedies only as a sort of relief, and though sometimes it helps to bring out the deeper meaning of the dramas, it is not essential to the main substance of tragedy. There are one or two serious and (almost) pathetic incidents in

¹ *Man and Superman*: "The Epistle Dedicatory."

² *Table Talk of G.B.S.*, p. 80.

Shakespeare's comedies, but here, too, the plays are fundamentally comical, and the tragic interludes only jadd the charm of romance to the fun of comedy. With Shaw it is otherwise. The same drama must be at the same time humorous and serious ; the comic play must not only excite laughter but also pass a moral judgement on life. A farce must embody a grave discussion, and the grave discussion must be fso carried on as to arouse laughter. Shaw is not only a dramatist indulging in paradoxical statements, but as a dramatist he is himself the greatest of paradoxes.)

Shaw is a convinced socialist ; he knows that in a society where every man and every woman has equal income, where there is no idleness and no overwork, where sex is divorced from romance, marriage (if it exists at all) becomes an ordinary contract, and children are looked after by the state, female revolt will be as unnecessary as male frustration will be impossible, and most of our evils will become extinct. Ibsen, Strindberg, and Zola wrote under the shadow of ' Capitalist horror ', (but Shaw has the ' socialist hope' which makes me horror an unreal bogey,?) What Shakespeare idolized as love in his pictures of Othello and Desdemona and Romeo and Juliet, Shaw has scoffed at as the flirtation of Cherry Orchard and Heartbreak House. fAll our noble sentiments from parental love to patriotism are to him mere fictions manufactured by Capitalism, which itself is terrible but unreal. He has found that the really bad man is as much an impossibility as the really good man ; it is Capitalism that makes them so. Tragedy, as Mr. J. M. Robertson reminds us, is based

on moral reality.' For Shaw there can be no morality until society has been thoroughly reorganized on a socialistic basis. Man, as he is to-day, is a creature with a few powerful instincts and a poor conscious intelligence striving to make progress but hampered by Capitalism which has imposed upon him parasitic virtues and vices. The so-called 'normal' man appears to Shaw as amusingly abnormal as a lame beggar appears to a child.

He might, of course, have painted the horrible character of the social machinery which governs but does not understand. Galsworthy has no grievance against rich and aristocratic individuals, but he shows how terribly oppressive the social system is for poor men like Jack Falder, and the great Polish novelist St. Reymont shows how ruinously tempting this system is for poor girls like Yagna and how gallingly tyrannical it is for dependents like Antek and Hanks and down-trodden labourers like Kuba. But Bernard Shaw has viewed this problem from a very different angle of vision. As an economist, he has looked at poverty from the point of view of the poor as a disease fatal to human society ; but as a dramatist, he has attacked the problem in *Cherry Orchards* inhabited by the leisured, aristocratic classes. As an economist, he has fathomed the very bottom, but as an artist, he has scraped the surface. And he has done this deliberately, for he thinks that any other procedure would have been inartistic and even unnatural. This is how he defends Shakespeare from the charge of being undemocratic in his creations, ^c Shakespear's characters are mostly members of the leisured classes . . . the same thing is

¹ *Mr. Shaw and 'The Maid'*, p. 96.

true of Mr. Harris's own plays and mine. Industrial slavery is not compatible with that freedom of adventure, that personal refinement and intellectual culture, that scope of action, which the higher and subtler drama demands. . . . When poverty is abolished, and leisure and grace of life become general, the only plays surviving from our epoch which will have any relation to life as it will be lived then will be those in which none of the persons represented are troubled with want of money or wretched drudgery.⁵¹ This is not only defence of Shakespeare but also an apology for himself.

Thus Shaw's opinions on economics and art have combined to make him a serious comedian. He has taken the problem of poverty very seriously, but has found nothing real or serious in the emotions of men and women in the leisured classes, and the poor he has excluded from the field of art partly because poverty is unnatural and partly because it does not allow of that freedom which is essential to 'higher and subtler' forms of drama. His biological views also have tended towards the same direction. As a biologist, he has found that nothing is real in this world except the Life Force which is embodied in a creative instinct that is constantly evolving, and experimenting with new and ever new forms. According to him and Bergson, another creative evolutionist, Intelligence occupies a very subordinate position in relation to Instinct which alone is fundamental. 'The man who listens to Reason', says Shaw, 'is lost.' But it cannot be denied that reason has played a very large part in building up our civilization, and therefore, its

¹ *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, p. 128.

importance in human life cannot be ignored. The pity of the thing is that our intellect often runs counter to our instincts which lie deeper than mere superficial culture, but which never fail to assert themselves at the most vital points of our lives. It is this funny contradiction between the professions of our intellect and the dictates of the Life Force, which is a prolific source of comedy. The contradiction between instinct and reason is not, however, without its serious side, because it is a part of life's striving towards the attainment of perfect self-consciousness. The comic blunders of the Life Force are also its serious experiments.

There are various other factors which have helped to make Shaw a serious comedian. "Individual Siegfried", says he, 'can rescue them from this bondage and hypocrisy; in fact, the individual Siegfried has come often enough, only to find himself confronted with the alternative of governing those who are not Siegfrieds or risking destruction at their hands. In the Revoltionis Handbook, John Tanner says that * unless there is an England in which every "man" is a Caesar, a vGermany in which every man is a Luther plus Goethe the world will no more be improved by its heroes than a Brixton villa is improved by the Pyramid of Cheops.' In another place, however, Shaw thinks that the progress of the masses must be preceded by the progress of individuals like Cromwell, Luther, or Mary Wollstonecraft. This shows that Shaw's attitude to an individual's conduct is extremely peculiar. He takes a serious view of an individual's heresies but makes light of how he acts. It is no wonder, therefore, that most of his plays embodying serious

discussion end with a comic denouement.) It is what Candida thinks rather than whom she slays with that really matters. *Getting Married* ends in a marriage but only after the most outrageous blasphemies against marriage have been uttered.

Though Shaw is a socialist and is more interested in mass progress than in individual advancement, yet he cannot take an entirely serious and tragic view of the conflict of one will with another or in the conflict between two collectivities. He believes that most men are essentially good, and if there is a collision between two wills, it is not a conflict between good and evil, but between two forces equally well-meaning, only moving in opposite directions. As he has himself noted of the burning of Joan of Arc, 'The tragedy of such murders is that they are not committed by murderers; and this contradiction at once brings an element of comedy into the tragedy: the angels may weep at the murder, but the gods laugh at the murderers.'

Bernard Shaw claims that he is a 'writer of heretical and immoral plays' in which he has given the world a new set of moral and social values. His greatest heresy, however, does not lie in the field of ethical values, but in the domain of aesthetics. Here he has tried to combine two irreconcilable things: the comic and the serious. The attempt is not only 'original' but also 'new'. It has made him a puzzle to most of his readers; and it is on account of this combination, that he has seemed greater and less than what he is. How far he has succeeded in his attempts, it will be our business to discuss in the chapters that follow.

PART TWO

CHAPTER V

THE ARTIST ON THE WRONG TACK

I

ALL the highest literature is journalism. . . . And so let others cultivate what they call literature ; journalism for me.⁵¹ It is in these words that Shaw has defended his propagandist art. In a previous chapter it has been shown that all art has some connexion with morality. Shaw, however, has made morality the only goal of his art for him the fable not only *is* a moral, but it also *has* a moral. In considering his literary works, it should specially be examined how far his philosophical and economic doctrines have been expressed in his art, and it should also be seen if the expression has been artistically effective, that is, whether the symbols are live pictures or whether they are indistinguishable from mere dogma.

As an economist, Shaw believes that the great problem" of society is the problem of poverty. It is the greatest of crimes, and one of Shaw's principal missions consists in helping society to eradicate it. The rich are parasites living on the labour of the "poor ; it is only because the poor are poisoned in slums that the rich are pampered in palaces.) All our social institutions like marriage, property, the family and even our organizations of charity and religion are nuisances ; our moral ideas are immoral, and our emotions are

¹ *The Sanity of Art*, p. 3.

unreal. The great social virtues are suspect, because they thrive on poverty ; and the vices to be found in society are not also to be condemned on their own account, because they are the offspring of poverty, which is the source of all evil.

I When Shaw attacks the problem of poverty, he does not deal with it as it exists among the poor, but he tries to expose its pernicious effects amongst the rich. Being a realist, he has rejected poverty from art, because poverty is unnatural.) It is an imposture, and artistic works based on poverty will not survive when poverty itself has been abolished. This, however, is not a sufficient reason for keeping the poor out of dramas which are meant to be propagandas against poverty. What may be unreal or unnatural at a distant day is a problem that should not concern us ; it is only necessary that we should face the questions that are real to us, directly and straightforwardly.¹ He has written many dramas, which, without the lengthy prefaces, are bad propaganda, because he does not state the problems accurately and does not grapple with these directly and straightforwardly. It is absurd to suggest that people will learn the evils of poverty by reading accounts of the frivolities of the rich.

Shaw offers yet another excuse for the undemocratic attitude that he has taken up in his art. He pleads that industrial slavery is not compatible with 'that freedom of adventure, that personal refinement and intellectual culture and that scope of action which 'the higher and subtler drama' demands. This is an *ipse dixit* which does not bear scrutiny. Why should the higher and subtler drama demand

¹ *The Sanity of Art*, p. 2.

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intellectual culture from the *dramatis personae* ? Even if work of art only symbolizes the philosophical convictions and the moral ideas of the artist, and these may be expressed either through men like Hamlet who have both personal refinement and intellectual culture or through monsters like Caliban who have neither. It is absolutely impossible to restrict the scope of the imagination in respect of the symbols that it might create for the purpose of complete artistic expression. It is the essence of higher and subtler aesthetics that it makes no special demands and leaves the artist to justify his attempts by the results achieved,

shaw, however, has been led to confine himself to stories of high life in most of his dramas, by an inner necessity which he himself has not been able fully to grasp. The semi-conscious instincts of a comedian have played tricks with his conscience. He is a serious philosopher whom the problems of society have moved to deep thinking. But he himself wants to have a hearty laugh, too ; he has not only the seriousness of Ibsen, but also the light-heartedness of Wycherley. He has too delicate a conscience to laugh over the poverty of the poor, and that is why he mostly confines himself to the idleness of the rich, pleading all the while that his dramas are also propaganda against poverty and that he has adopted this indirect method of attacking the greatest of social crimes, because 'higher and subtler drama' demands it

Comedians like Aristophanes, Cervantes, and Moliere have written comedies with a serious motive, to put a stop to some social nuisance, but they have not adopted this indirect, fencing method. Shaw tries to abolish poverty by caricaturing Heartbreak House, and the

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result is not only bad propaganda but also bad art. Indeed, if the prefaces be taken away, no one will understand the purpose of many of his dramas ; and one reason why he has so frequently been misunderstood is that he has not been able to explain himself in his works of art. He cannot write a drama without a preface, because being a humorous-serious comedian, he has very often to discuss the serious portion of his argument in the preface and then he can indulge in his hearty laughter in the play. The prefaces to the propagandist comedies in which he has dealt with the problem of poverty are specimens of splendid prose, but many of the plays are poor as drama, because they do not satisfy the minimum condition that every work of art has to fulfil: they do not correctly and adequately represent their author's philosophy.

II

The inadequacy is most glaringly apparent in his tragedy *The Doctor's Dilemma*. As a socialist, Shaw knows that diseases are generally caused by poverty and overwork, and he also holds that it is the duty of society to cure them by introducing socialism. His first two recipes are : (1) Nothing is more dangerous than a poor doctor : not even a poor employer or a poor landlord. (2) Of all the anti-social vested interests the worst is the vested interest in ill-health. Having approached the question from a socialistic point of view, he has come to the conclusion that the best way to keep healthy is to be well born and well brought up and to make the doctor a civil servant with a respectable living wage paid out of public funds.¹

^x Preface, pp. xciii.-xciv.

In the drama Shaw fences with the problem rather than face it openly and boldly. A doctor is, according to him, the most dangerous thing on earth, because he is the cause of the diseases of others and also to invent and prescribe medicines even when these are unnecessary. But the poor doctor Blenkinsop is the most harmless and least dangerous of all the characters in this play. Indeed, he appears here not as a doctor but as a patient. He is "not only a harmless patient but also a very honest, useful member of society. He might have been a poor Post-Office clerk or a poor schoolmaster or anything else, provided that he was poor, useful and honest. The doctor's dilemma is to choose between a rascally man of genius and an honest, useful citizen, and it is immaterial from which particular classes these men are drawn."

Then, again, the dilemma which Shaw states inaccurately has not been honestly faced and clearly worked out in the course of the drama. Shaw has spoilt the unity of the story by introducing the attractive woman Jennifer. Dr. Ridgeon, the celebrated specialist in tuberculosis, has only one spare bed in his hospital and he has to choose between an honest citizen without any great talent, and a rotten black-guard of an artist. Before he has made a decision the doctor falls in love with the wife of the man of genius, and the introduction of this romance complicates the medico-economical problem. The doctor accents, Dr. Blenkinsop, not because he thinks that, an., honest man is more rascal, but, because thereby he places the hands of the blunderer, Sir Ralph Bloomfield Brompton, for that is the way to make a patient die. The

death of this man will make it possible for the great doctor to woo his beautiful widow. This shows that there is no real dilemma in Ridgeon's mind; he only adopts a not very honourable method of getting rid of the husband of the woman he has fallen in love with. The dilemma remains a hypothetical dilemma, and the drama does not end with its solution (as it ought to have done, if it had been a real doctor's dilemma), but it proceeds to describe the sequel to the doctor's courtship, its ultimate frustration.

Indeed, at the end of this play one does not know what it is about : does it deal with the follies and fatuities of medical science or does it treat of a dilemma which a particular doctor has to face, or does it show the futility of his courtship ? If the first theme is its subject matter, the episodes described in the latter portion of the play have no organic connexion with it. Louis Dubedat does not survive, but Blenkinsop does, and for once at least, Dr. Ridgeon through his Opsonian treatment has blundered into success. If, therefore, the play is looked at from this point of view, the conclusion does not support the premises with which the dramatist starts. If, again, Shaw wanted only to portray a dilemma, there seems to be no reason for introducing the episode of courtship, which is unconnected with it. It is very difficult to ascertain what Shaw really wanted to 'express' in this drama. If he desired to make a play out of the difficulties of private doctors, they should have been represented as real saviours of men rather than as blundering idiots. If he meant it to be a drama of courtship, the title is a misnomer, and there seems to be no reason why so much importance should have been given to the follies and foibles of

medical men, simply because the hero (or the villain ?) is a doctor.

Mr. H. G. Wells is said to have accused Shaw of indolence over fundamentals. That indolence would account for the confusion in this play. Shaw just skims over the real problem of poverty and disease and confines himself to the exposure of trivialities. He wants to write serious comic dramas, but here he has produced a serious preface and a comical drama. The most important things in the play are the caricature of individual doctors and the picture of the brilliant rascality of an individual patient. Shaw has shown that all the celebrated doctors are, both scientifically and practically considered, blundering idiots ; but he does not show how in a rotten social system all these honest, decent, well-meaning gentlemen are gradually reduced to colossal humbugs when they begin to trade on the diseases of others. Louis Dubedat, again, is an arresting and interesting figure, but he is introduced into the play only incidentally and then he and his wife usurrj a space which is out of all proportion to the part they were meant to play in the story. The first act is a comedy of doctors, but in the second Half of "the "play Louis is the one dominant figure and throws all others into the shade. Shaw is so much amused by his villainy that he forgets the doctors whom he originally introduced as the principal characters in his drama. There are, no doubt, characters (Parson Adams, for example) whf were originally meant to play a subordinate part, become later on the principal figures in the work which they appear, but it is not so with Dubedat. To the last he remains an inr

figure in a drama of doctors and their follies. But Shaw, having failed to make an effective drama out of the main problem, tries to render it interesting by introducing this rascal who sports with the moral convictions on which modern society is based. It is an amusing episode, no doubt ; but it does not make up for the poverty of the drama as a whole.

- The same defects have also spoiled the play of *Getting Married*, in which Shaw discusses the problem of marriage. It is one of the cardinal doctrines of Shavianism that marriage as an institution will be tolerable only if men and women are rendered economically independent of each other and if divorce is made easy, cheap, and honourable. In this drama, there are two women who have to face the problem of marriage and one who has to face the problem of divorce. Cecil Sykes and Edith Bridgenorth are going to be married, but on the eve of the ceremony they discover that conventional marriage is dishonourable for both the parties. Edith must be economically independent, which means that she must be paid for her housekeeping, and Cecil too, doubts whether he can marry her in view of the legal liabilities of a husband. They begin to draw up a contract, but soon discover that a contract is worse than conventional marriage. In the end, they are married to each other, an Insurance Company having agreed to solve the difficulty of the wife's torts, and the husband having undertaken that, if he ever commits a crime, he will furnish the necessary facilities for divorce,

"his certainly is not the right way to handle a 'em. The husband does not care to pay the ~s which people might claim against his wife,

but he agrees to bear the insurance charges against a probable legal action. Is the play an advertisement on behalf of Insurance? The wife remains an economic slave and will not be paid for her work as housekeeper and mother. She gets a promise of facilities for divorce, but a promise does not make a drama which requires action. The test of a marriage, whether contracted with or without the help of Insurance Corporations, lies in how it works in real life. The drama of Cecil and Edith ought, therefore, to have begun where it ended, after the marriage rather than before it. It is here that the serious dramatist can be distinguished from the dealer in superficial trivialities. It is by actual experience that Nora discovers the truth about marriage. For her wedlock is a real slavery; but for Edith the difficulties of wedded life are mere theoretical objections which she has explored, not by actual experience, but by the study of a pamphlet that was accidentally put into her hands on the day of her marriage.

With Leo, Shaw seems to face facts rather than argue preliminaries. It is only after marriage that the girl discovers that she cannot be a wife in the ordinary, conventional sense of the term, because she has fallen in love with another person. But here also the dramatist keeps aloof from the serious implications of the problem he has begun to discuss. The greatest difficulty in the way of getting a divorce lies in the economic slavery of women., which Shaw has described as the 'root difficulty'. In the drama, however, Leo does not feel the pinch of economic slavery; monetary difficulties do not urge her to seek a divorce nor do they stand in the way of her getting one. She wants a

divorce from her husband because she has fallen in love with another man, and she pleads for the decree being cancelled because she is too much in love with her husband. It is, therefore, not a question of economics, but one of tastes. 'Well,' says she, 'I love them both. I should like to have Rejgy for every day and Sinjon for concerts and theatres and goings out in the evenings, and some great saint about once a year at the end of the season, and some perfectly blithering idiot of a boy to be quite wicked with.' This, however, is not what we call love ; it only means that she wants to have occasional changes in the monotony of married love. The average husband will not grudge her the company of a Sinjon for theatres and some great austere saint about once a year at the end of the season, provided that he had her for every day.

There is only one character in this drama whom Shaw takes seriously, who means what she says, believes in what she professes. It is Lesbia Grantham who believes in her absolute right to motherhood without consenting to accept the slavery of wedded life. She has an intellectual contempt for the vulgar craze for mere happiness, and even when every other problem solves itself, she refuses to surrender her cherished ideas for the sake of mere convenience. In a house full of intellectual and moral pigmies, she is a towering figure with her bold convictions and her lofty independence of character. But here also Shaw does not state the case fairly; he sacrifices serious drama to mere triviality. Lesbia with her stern intellectual independence cannot but dislike 'sloppy people, slovenly people, people who cannot sit up straight, sentimental people'. The General is too much of a sentimental

idiot to be loved by a woman like Lesbia ; if Shaw wanted to face Lesbia's problem honestly and fairly, her wooer should have been a stronger and more likeable character. Then there would have been a real conflict in Lesbia's heart between desire to have children and fascination for a ' biologically attractive ' man on the one hand and hatred of matrimonial slavery on the other. As it is, Shaw cannot resist his temptation to create a farce, and since Lesbia has become a serious character, too serious to be made fun of, the comedian indulges in a hearty laughter at the expense of her sentimental, idiotic lover.

In another drama, *The Philanderer*, Shaw discusses the question of marriage, and also the grotesque sexual compacts which ' advanced people ' make in order to evade marriage laws which our society has outgrown but not modified. If the marriage laws are defective, if they are ' blundering abominations ', it is due to the fact (as Shaw himself has said) that marriage means economic slavery for woman and sexual slavery for both man and woman. But in this drama there is no reference to the tyranny of marriage laws or to the economic questions which marriage involves. In the triangular courtship that goes on at the Ibsen Club, the difficulties are caused not by marriage laws but by the fact that there are two women for one man. It is more a question of personal jealousy than of economic slavery. What Julia and Charteris want is monogamic marriage ; the only difficulty being that while Charteris has ceased to care for Julia, she is as passionately devoted to him as ever.

It is Grace Tranfield alone who seems to realize the slavery involved in marriage ; she loves Charteris but

refuses to be wedded to the man she loves, because that will give him too much power over her. But here, too, Shaw does not go to the very roots of the problem, nor is it very clear what 'sexual compact' Grace will like to enter. She does not want to marry Charteris, because that will make her too much his slave. Is this slavery sexual or economic? Or does it mean the mere sentimental fascination that she feels for him? Does she prefer a marriage in which there is not 'too much' love on either side? All these aspects of the question have been left undiscussed by a dramatist who looks upon discussion as the 'taint of the playwright'. Shaw has been lured away by his love of fun and has sacrificed 'discussion' to farce. Julia Craven must have been introduced into the drama as a foil to Grace Tranfield; but she, her father and her prospective husband, are so ludicrous, and they give Shaw such an opportunity for exploding into wit and mirth, that he forgets the real purpose of his drama. The follies of marriage laws are forgotten in the futilities of medical science, and the real literary value of this drama consists not so much in the speeches and actions of Charteris and Grace as in those of Dr. Paramore and his patient, Colonel Craven.

In *Misalliance* and *Fanny's First Play*, Shaw discusses the hollowness of our family ideal which is a creation of Capitalism and sentimentality. In these dramas, too, he betrays the same 'indolence about fundamentals' which has spoilt the plays discussed above. 'The family ideal', says he in his brilliant preface to *Misalliance*, 'is a humbug and a nuisance: one might as reasonably talk of the barrack ideal, or the forecastle ideal, or any other substitution of the machinery

of social organization for the end of it, which must always be the fullest and most capable life.¹ When he begins to expose the hollowness of the intimate relationship which is supposed to exist between parents and children, he once more hedges and confuses and fails to grasp the deepest issues.

John Tarleton is a wealthy gentleman who has risen to eminence through the success of Tarleton's underwear. He and Mrs. Tarleton have two children : an intellectually weak but physically healthy son named Johnny and a glorious beast of a daughter in Hypatia. Johnny and Hypatia are as unlike as if they were born at the opposite poles. They have both been accustomed to bourgeois society ; but while the brother is steeped in its ideals, the sister is sick of its nauseating dullness. Hypatia chooses as her mate a young man named Bentley Summerhays, who is all brains and no body, and is thus the opposite of her brother Johnny. It is obviously the intention of Shaw to demonstrate that consanguinity does not necessarily imply community of spirit. Johnny and Hypatia need not feel any near kinship with each other, simply because they are brother and sister. They may get on well with each other, but they do not get on any the better on account of ' a dictated compulsory affection '. It is the defect of propagandist art in general, and of this drama in particular, that it tries to create its own circumstances. If Shaw wanted to show the hollowness of brotherly and sisterly kinship, he ought to have portrayed Johnny and Hypatia as passing through the same educational influences and then shown how, in spite of

^x p. xciv.

consanguinity, there was no inner affinity between them. It would have been better if Johnny and Hypatia had consciously tried to feel and think alike and were yet led by their unconscious will in divergent directions. As it is, Shaw assumes what he seeks to demonstrate. Hypatia and Johnny do not appear to be children of the same home ; they are like strangers who have met at a hotel and have begun to drift apart from the very beginning of their acquaintance. I have said that Shaw's *Getting Married* ought to have begun where it ended ; it may be said that *Misalliance* should have ended where it began.

If Shaw has failed in his attempt at dramatizing his idea of brotherly and sisterly affection, he has not also attained better success in his efforts to give artistic expression to his heresies on the relations between parents and children. John Tarleton seems to discover at the end of the play that he does not know anything about his own daughter. ' You ', says he, addressing his daughter, ' run after young men and old men run after you. And I'm the last person in the world to hear of it.' But John Tarleton senior, has been portrayed as a rather absent-minded crank, with only a quotation ready for all the chances of life. He has a super-abundant vitality, intellectual curiosity and rather unconventional views, but he is something of a dreamer who, in spite of his success in business, seems to be too theoretical to have a close grip on the things that are happening around him ' under his very nose'. Shaw has a tendency to explode into laughter on every conceivable and inconceivable occasion, and that is why he has given so much importance to the idiosyncrasies of this old man. He wanted to portray

a typical father, but the typical father is lost in the idiosyncratic individual. Even from the very beginning Tarleton seems to be too deeply absorbed in his ideas and quotations to care for what his son and daughter are doing around him. Towards the end of the drama, he does become sentimental, hysterical and inordinately serious ; he wants to read *King Lear* and echoes the grave doctrines of Shaw. But there is nothing in the earlier part of the play to warrant that he is a normal, sane, loving father who is anxious to have control over the affairs of his own family.

Here, as in other places, Shaw has been the victim of his own shibboleths. ⁶ 'An allegory', he says in *The Perfect Wagnerite*, 'is never quite consistent except when it is written by someone without dramatic faculty, in which case it is unreadable. There is only one way of dramatizing an idea ; and that is by putting on the stage a human being possessed by that idea, yet none the less a human being with all the human impulses which make him akin and, therefore, interesting to us.'⁵¹ He forgets that if a character is really alive, he is to be distinguished from dead symbols more because of the one quality that he represents than because of the subordinate traits that are tagged on to it. Indeed, the subsidiary traits can be said to be living, if only they have been affiliated to the main 'idea'. Shaw's sense of humour is so super-abundant that he forgets the main idea in the comic episodes that are introduced only to support it. Thus he wants to represent John Tarleton not only as the father of a family, but also as a man with an acute sense of fun and a fondness for quotations. In the

⁵¹ p. 30.

drama, however, the minor traits have been so emphatically stressed that we lose sight of the qualities of a typical father, with which Shaw must have desired to invest him. It is the same thing with his daughter Hypatia, in whom the author has tried to portray a typical daughter, but has really drawn a young woman who has become sick of the ennui of bourgeois society. The main idea which Shaw wanted to dramatize has, in this manner, been lost sight of on many occasions in the accessory 'human impulses' which have been introduced to make the character 'akin and interesting to us'.

This peculiar theory has also told upon the construction of the plots in Shaw's dramas. He has not the patience to follow a story from its beginning through all its ramifications right up to the end. In the course of a conversation with Dr. Henderson, he said that stories and exhibitions of character through action are interesting, but plots are 'the deadest of dead wood'. As he hates plots, some of his stories have dwindled into mere situations, and these dramas of his are nothing but a combination of startling episodes, none of which have been dealt with with the thoroughness and completeness which art demands. *The Doctor's Dilemma* has as many as three episodes: the follies and futilities of the medical profession, the doctor's dilemma and courtship, and Louis Dubedat is an episode by himself. These episodes have very slender jlinks of connexion, and they have prevented the author from giving adequate expression to his ideas on poverty, disease and medical science. In *Getting Married*, the tangle of episodes is less intricate and confusing, but here also the situations have not been

elaborated into a dramatic story, and though the author's point of view is unmistakable, the characters have not become living symbols of his philosophy.

In *Misalliance*, there are many incidents which have only a nominal connexion with the main story, and the play turns out to be a mere combination of ill-assorted episodes in which the principal theme is lost. The new situations are startling, but they do not by themselves make a drama. The author wanted to exhibit John Tarleton's super-abundant vitality, and therefore introduces the incident of the Gunner, the overworked, ranting socialist, with whose mother John had an affair in the past. He comes to avenge the wrong done to his mother, but John almost talks him out of his ferocity. The situation is certainly highly entertaining, but what connexion has it with the main theme of the play: Parents and Children? John is not Baker's father, and it would have been better for the aesthetic unity of the play if he had devoted to his children the time that he spends in talking down the romantic socialist. It is probable that it was Shaw's intention to show that there is no community of interests between parents and children, that while John is busy out-maneuvring Julius Baker, Hypatia is engaged in flirting with Bentley or Joey. If that is so, he ought to have gone to the roots of the problem and shown how and why this divergence occurs, though society is trying its best to keep the different members of a family together.

It is also probable that Shaw wanted to expose the dirtier undercurrents of bourgeois life. But if that were his aim, the episode does not serve its purpose ;

we do not know how Lucy Titmus was enticed and wronged, nor are we shown how the wealth of Tarleton depends on the overworking and underpayment of men like the Gunner. These are excellent subjects for drama, but Shaw does not make anything out of them. He introduces both the socialist 'Gunner'⁵ and the acrobat Lina only as startling characters who form part of an amusing situation. They are outside the family and yet usurp the central position in a play which started with the intention of exposing the 'humbug and nuisance' of the family ideal. Towards the end of the drama, Lina becomes an integral part of it and denounces the stuffy atmosphere of the house where the men think of nothing but flirtation. But Shaw does not show how in capitalist society all the normal occupations of men and women have a tendency to be absorbed into mere love-making. Lina Szczepanowska comes from the outside world in an aeroplane, voices forth a splendid denunciation and goes away. When she has gone away, we are left wondering why it is that the men should have made such fools of themselves. There is no explanation to be found in the course of the drama, which begins with a discussion of the relations between parents and children, and involves itself in a diatribe against flirtation.

Fanny's First Play has greater unity of structure than the plays discussed above. Here the issues have not been confused by too many episodes; there are only two contrasted pictures, one of middle class respectable parents and the other of children whose souls have been 'awakened by disgrace'. But here, too, Shaw's impatience of the drudgery of plot spoils a drama which would have otherwise been one of his best achievements.

He draws a picture of the respectable parents and of the unruly children who have grown sick of the dullness of home life. But he does not show what exactly were the circumstances that led the latter to rebel against the tyranny of decency and respectability. The comedian busies himself with the ridiculous trivialities on the surface and does not probe the serious problem that lies below. His play is an exhilarating condemnation of middle-class respectability ; it does not contain any exhibition of human character through action, which Shaw himself regards as the essence of a drama.

In *The Apple Cart*, Shaw discusses a political problem and shows that it has a socialistic solution. The Apple Cart is the huge democratic machinery in England where government is supposed to be carried on by parliamentary majorities with a constitutional king to give his sanction to the actions of the legislature and the Cabinet. Shaw exposes the imbecilities and tomfooleries of Cabinet government, which only means that the ministers squabble with one another over details of form and procedure without being able to exercise any control over the real work of administration. In *The Apple Cart.*, there is a talk of crises and ultimatums, which come to nothing. 'The conflict', says Shaw, 'is not really between royalty and democracy. It is between both and plutocracy, which, having destroyed the royal power by frank force under democratic pretexts, has bought and swallowed democracy. Money talks : money prints : money broadcasts : money reigns ; and kings and labor leaders alike have to register its decrees, and even, by a staggering paradox, to finance its enterprises and guarantee its profits. Democracy is no longer bought :

it is bilked. Ministers who are Socialists to the backbone are as helpless in the grip of Breakages Ltd. as its acknowledged henchmen.⁵¹

In the drama, however, Shaw does not deal with this problem at all. He only gives a picture of the results that have followed the swallowing of royalty and democracy by Breakages Ltd., but Breakages Ltd. does not appear even once in the course of its pages. Mouldy Mike is occasionally referred to, but he is not amongst the *dramatis personae*; it is not shown how every political institution and every ministerial department are in the grips of men like Mouldy Mike and organizations like Breakages Ltd. The principal theme has been disposed of in one or two casual references and in one passionate speech of Lysistrata, the Powermistress-General of the Government, but a few references and one passionate speech do not make a drama. The play is taken up with superficial farces and it does not go deep into the conflict itself. The play of *The Apple Cart* without Breakages Ltd. is the proverbial play of *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark. There are in this comedy brilliant dialogue lambent wit aridromping farce, but there is no jceal drama. Shaw, who can never repress his irresistible tendency to laughter, has left out the serious portion of his philosophy from the comical play and relegated it to the preface which becomes a much more effective vehicle of his ideas than the drama itself.

In his latest play, *On the Rocks*, Shaw returns to the subject of Democracy, though he changes the metaphor and also thinks out a new plan of attack.

¹ Preface, p. viii.

In this comedy, he shows how a programme of Socialism is acceptable only to aristocrats and is rejected by the leaders of the Proletariat. The play is a failure both as an exposition of Shaw's philosophy and as a work of art. It is, indeed, true that manhood suffrage has not given Socialism that chance which might reasonably have been expected and that Democracy and Socialism have been not only 'bilked' by the trickery of Capitalism, but also spoilt by the ignorant fury of the Proletariat.

The great defect of the play is that the portraiture is superficial. Sir Broadfoot Basham, Sir Jafra Pandranath, Sir Bemrose Hotspot and the Duke of Domesday support the new programme without understanding its far-reaching effects, and the Democrats oppose it from an equally superficial view of it. If Socialism had the support of the landlords, the capitalists, big and little, the fighting services and of the police, the world would have been socialized long ago in spite of the furious opposition of an effete Toryism backed by the Democracy of the Isle of Cats. The discussion is hurried and inane, the only bright interlude being the speech of Aloysia against the scheme of compensation. Here the dialogue is dramatically effective, because the sentiment is genuine. The rest of the play is amusing as a disappointed propagandist's rigmarole against the senselessness of those on whose behalf he has carried on a life-long crusade, but it is wooden, because the problem is essentially unreal. The most sensational thing is the change in the character of the Prime Minister, Sir Arthur Chavender, but the Strange Lady is too aerial a figure to be taken seriously. Indeed, she seems to be Shaw's

substitute for the *deus ex machina* of ancient comedy ; only she creates difficulties rather than solves them.

Heartbreak House is different from the other dramas of Shaw in that it does not attack any one particular problem of capitalistic society, but challenges it as a whole. In this play, we are introduced to an eccentric Captain who wants to invent a life-saving psychic ray which will explode dynamite. He has two daughters ; one of them the pretty wife of a Colonial Governor, the other is married to a fascinating gentleman whose chief occupation is to tell romantic tales about himself. Mazzini Dunn, the founder of an unsuccessful business. Boss Mangan, a financier, and Ellie Dunn, the young daughter of Mazzini, are invited to the house, and Lady Ariadne Utterword, the Governor's wife, is accompanied by her brother-in-law, Randall, an amateur flute player. It will thus be seen that *Heartbreak House* is fairly representative of 'cultured, leisured Europe before the war'. It is, in Ellie Dunn's language, a 'silly house', a 'house without foundations'. As this is a drama which exposes the utter futility of the heart-broken imbeciles in capitalistic society, there is no 'action' ; indeed, the principal theme is to show that there is no initiative, no 'action'⁵ in *Heartbreak House*. It is professedly a drama without a plot.

As a work of art, it is superior to the plays that have been discussed above, because here the serious element in Shaw's genius does not totally surrender itself to his love of mere fun. Although Mazzini Dunn is exploited by Boss Mangan, he is a really honest man who wants to succeed ; the 'Boss' is befooled by three ladies, but in spite of his false millions, his foolishness and lack of self-control, he is a serious man who means what he

says and if he is a ° fraud ', he is at least a serious fraud. Ellie Dunn, who wants to marry a rich man to save her soul, and breaks her heart over her flirtation with Hector Hushabye, is not a mere amateur debater like Edith Bridgenorth nor a mere professional coquette like Hypatia Tarleton. She takes her life in earnest and is disappointed to find that so much of it is mere show. The eccentric Captain, who talks of the seventh degree of concentration and who wastes his life in the mad enterprise of inventing a life-saving psychic ray, is the leader of the well-intentioned but crazy and futile world of Heartbreak House. He is like the excellent, though 'drunken', 'drifting skipper' of a ship in which the well-meaning crew are 'gambling in the forecastle'.

In spite of these artistic merits, this comedy is on the whole too unphilosophical to be a great drama, Shaw's great defect consisting in his tendency to look upon life as a mere 'joke'. The episode between Mazzini Dunn and Boss Mangan fails to be really artistic, because Shaw has 'packed [his] cards' by making the honest worker something of a blind giant. There is no reason why this gentleman with a 'sound idea' and with a ° determination to work himself for it³, should be a 'child in business'. If Shaw really wanted to show that it was impossible to succeed as an honest worker, he should have endowed Mazzini Dunn with the business sense of Boss Mangan. As it is, he fails, not because of any inherent futility in Heartbreak House, but because he is outwitted by his financier. Not that he need be a fraud like Boss Mangan, but there is no reason why he should be an ignorant dupe either. Mazzini's daughter Ellie also

turns in the end into a mere farcical toy. We can follow her in her heartbreaking coquetry with ' Marcus Darnley', and her intention to marry for money to save her soul, but her ' heavenly marriage ' with the eighty-eight-year-old Captain Shotover, her spiritual husband and her second father, is too strange a thing to be real even in a play. Captain Shotover also is too uproariously crazy to be taken seriously in a philosophical drama. His intentions are noble and some of his statements are full of deep significance but as a character he is not impressive.

The great defect of this comedy is that Shaw does not go to the root of the problem. Why is it that here all the nice people are heartbroken imbeciles ? Why is it that their life is turned into one long vacuum ? How is it that they come to live in utter inaction, in absolute inanition ? To all these questions the drama suggests no answer. It is not necessary that a work of art should argue a problem and find out a solution, but art must draw pictures which give living symbols of the problem or of the solution. It is only towards the end of the play that Shaw discovers that the deeper problems have not been discussed with sufficient thoroughness. Suddenly Hector and Mazzini engage in talk on the necessity of ' doing something ', and the latter dilates on his futile efforts when he was young. Even then Mazzini cannot explain what the forces were which stood in his way and why the ' expected revolutions ' and the ' frightful smash-ups ' did not or do not come. Thus the problem drama comes to an end before the problem has been clearly envisaged. In these respects, Shaw's comedy is a very poor contrast to the great Russian drama after which

it has been composed—Tchekov's *The Cherry Orchard*. Tchekov not only exposes the superficial trivialities but also portrays the deep emotional background. When Lopakhin, the merchant, asks Madame Ranevsky to cut down the Cherry Orchard in order to make it commercially profitable, she exclaims, 'Cut it down? My dear, you must excuse me. If there is anything great or remarkable in the whole province, it's this Cherry Orchard of ours. . . . Oh, my orchard! After the dark autumns and cold winters, you're young again, full of happiness, the angels of heaven haven't left you.'⁹ Tchekov's drama is thus not only a tragedy of inaction, but a philosophical dissertation on it. It describes the supersession of the old by the new, of sentiment by business, of poetry by arithmetic.

A believer in Creative Evolution, Shaw has ignored happiness as a commodity without any significance to the Life Force for which the one essential thing is Betterment. But in *Too True To Be Good*, he wants to 'plead for a science of happiness to cure us of the miserable delusion that we can achieve it by becoming richer than our neighbours. The millionaire's wife and sons and daughters spending fabulous sums on themselves, are no happier than their housemaids, if so happy.' In the first act we find a healthy young girl bored and tyrannized over by doctors, nurses, and her mother. Two thieves enter her room to steal her necklace and give her the chance of escaping from her ennui and boredom in the house of her multi-millionaire mother. In spite of some touches of melodrama, there is, in this portion of the play, a genuine portraiture of the misery brought on by too

much wealth, and the exhilaration of the escape is a refreshing contrast to the sickly life that the girl had to live on her mother's millions.

In the second and third acts, we have, along with much incidental preaching and horseplay, a picture of the life led by the 'three reckless young people who come into possession of, for the moment, unlimited riches with all the modern machinery of pleasure to aid them. The result is that they get nothing for their money but a maddening dissatisfaction.' This picture is far less impressive than the one in the first act; because the sham Countess and her step-brother cannot be considered genuine representatives of *Heartbreak House*, and the routine of their life at the sea beach is not the routine of fashionable society in 'cultured, leisured Europe \ Nevertheless, the ennui the countess suffers from, her love of change, her hunger for excitement, all these are traceable to an artificial condition of existence in which people have nothing to do and millions to spend. This play is a great improvement on *Heartbreak House*, because it is far more real and the principal characters make a genuine effort to face life and conquer happiness.

Of these three characters Sweetie is the most impressive, though the author seems to have taken the other two more seriously. The hero of the play is largely a mere talking machine. He seems to have gone through varied experiences 'which have given him his very interesting philosophy, but only one of these has been recorded in this play, and when this adventure is over he ceases to be a living dramatic figure; he comments on the actions of others rather than performs any himself. His reflections are amusing

and even arresting, but he himself becomes unreal. His Mops very clearly points out the difference between him and Sweetie, 'Sweetie is bad enough, heaven knows, with her vulgarity and low cunning: always trying to get the better of somebody or to get hold of a man ; but at least, she is a woman ; and she's real ; they're all talk, talk, talk. . . .' This is an extravagant statement in so far as it is made of all men, but there is no doubt that it gives a correct description of the hero of this play. Mops, herself, in the later stages of the drama fails to impress us as a real woman and for a similar reason. She speaks of being preyed on by parasites, she openly avows that her love for Pops is transient and superficial, and she flies away from her lazy miserable life into the bracing atmosphere of a Sisterhood where work will give her the real cure for the misery of idle richness '. But her announcements come so suddenly that one suspects that she does not feel what she says, that she is only a gramophone for her creator's philosophy of work. From her friend, she catches the infection of preaching, and the more she talks, the less real she becomes.

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(The great limitation of Shaw is that he does not understand the depth and seriousness of human emotions. He is a preacher of ' intelligent socialism ', not of ' emotional socialism ', the world of sentiments being a sealed book to him. Being a scientific biologist, he understands instincts, but has rejected most of our sentiments as unreal. He is interested in the evolution of the race and does not care for the happiness of the individual; he is opposed to sexual

indulgence being regarded as a mere pleasure, but recognizes it as an experience. His revolt against marriage is a 'revolt against its sentimentality, its romance, its amorism, even against its enervating happiness V The realist has failed to see that sentiments may be unintelligent and yet genuine. It is the defect of an 'intelligent⁵ thinker that he forgets that there is so much in life which is false from a scientific point of view, but undeniably real from a human point of view. 3

Bernard Shaw thinks that what is unessential to the evolution of life is also false and enervating, and, therefore, he rejects much that is sincere, genuine, and real. A character in a work of art lives not so much because of his ideas as because of the feelings behind those ideas. The feelings of a human being are never resolvable into naive instincts ;Ahey are a complex product in which romance and sentiment are the most important ingredients. Shaw has failed to grasp the true significance of emotions and this has made some of his portraits not only unattractive but also lifeless. Sinjon Hotchkiss falls in love with Leo Bridgenorth and with Mrs. George, Incognita Appassionata, but it is nothing but mere play ; there is no depth, no sincerity, no ardour in their courtships. Indeed, it is generally found that the most thoroughbred coquettes in Shaw's dramas are also the most faithful wives—Lady Hastings Utterword, Mrs/ Hector Hushabye, Mrs. George Collins, Leo Bridgenorth. Sinjon tries to kiss Incognita Appassionata, and there is a kissing race between Hypatia Tarleton and Joey Percival, but these attempts at kissing are only physical feats,

¹ Preface to *Getting Married*, p. 129.

divested of all emotional associations. Shaw forgets that love is not a pastime but a passion—serious, deadly, barbarous, and intensely human. It is because he does not understand passion that the most serious of his lovers, Randall Utterword, seems to be like a 'toy donkey', dragged about and beaten like a child.; It is the defect of these propagandist dramas that they not only manufacture their circumstances, but also invent their characters.

There are only two dramas where Shaw has made sentiment one of the principal themes for discussion, and these are *Pygmalion* and *John Bull's Other Island*. The Greek sculptor Pygmalion carved a statue and had life breathed into it by Venus, after which he married the animate statue who bore him a child. The Shavian Pygmalion is Henry Higgins, a Professor of Phonetics who picks up a flower girl named Eliza Doolittle, teaches her fashionable language and manners and then successfully passes her off as a Duchess. But she is a living being and cannot, therefore, be treated as a mere machine. In course of all his experiments and exhibitions, the Professor only thinks of his own skill, his own success and failure, but never stops to consider how the girl feels. When the experiment is over, he has a profound sense of relief and joy that he has achieved his triumph and won his bet. Even now the sentiment of the girl is of no account. The girl naturally protests against this dehumanized relationship between her and her teacher. She hurls the Professor's slippers at him when he wants them and then leaves his place, a free woman. Evidently she has begun to feel for the Professor and wants also to be felt for.

Now the question is, what is the nature of Eliza's feeling for the Professor with whom she has lived in close association for some time? In the last Act, the girl says that she would not marry him, even if he proposed to her. The Professor himself is curiously insensitive to sexual emotions; he does not love young women, because he finds in them poor rivals to his own mother. If Eliza would not marry Higgins, what exactly does she want from him? Old Mrs. Higgins who knows much about women, says that it would have been all right, if he had thanked her, petted her, and told her how splendid she had been. Every girl has a right to be loved and Eliza loves and is loved by Freddy Hill whom she marries. Professor Higgins remains as ever, an old bachelor.

The stormy protest of Eliza against Higgins' callousness and the tempestuous search of the Professor have, according to Shaw, no deep emotional background. They liked each other, they looked after each other, they grew accustomed to each other, they were pleasant to each other, but they did not fall in love. It is because Shaw is very shy of deep emotions that he concludes a real drama with such an anti-climax. There is no doubt that Eliza was deeply moved when she left the Professor's place and it is equally certain that Higgins was in a feverish excitement when he went out in search of her. Shaw here creates a situation charged with deep emotional possibilities, but as he has a distaste for or an impatience of emotions, he stops to remind us that it was only a desire for a little kindness or a little fun that was at the root of the whole affair. The explanation, however, is totally inadequate. Eliza finds that a little kindness is

not enough to make life worth living, and she leaves the Professor for the 'weak and poor' Freddy Hill.

A dispassionate study of the drama will suggest that she chooses Freddy Hill only because she cannot get Henry Higgins; indeed, she begins talking about Freddy only after the estrangement from Professor Higgins is complete. Speaking about Freddy, she says, 'And if he's weak and poor and wants me, may be he'd make me happier than my betters that bully me and don't want me.' Her language shows that it is because her betters bullied her and did not want her, that she chooses him who wants her, though he might be weak and poor. Her emotions are much deeper than a mere desire for a little petting, and when she tells Higgins that she would not marry him if he asked her, she is not a coquette; neither does she announce (as her creator thinks) a well considered decision. It is only when the Professor has made the insulting proposal that she should marry Colonel Pickering that she looks fiercely round at him and says, 'I would not marry you if you asked me; and you are nearer my age than what he is.' This decision is a part of her rebellion against the tutelage of a Professor who has looked upon her only as his 'masterpiece V'. It springs from almost the same emotion which Irene feels for Professor Rubek in Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken*. Shaw is not only blind to romantic beauties in the works of Shakespeare, Dickens, and others, but also does not understand romance in his own creations and cannot, therefore, do full justice to the deeper possibilities in his dramas.

¹ Mr. Braybrooke who considers *Pygmalion* as an exposition of the stability of humanity (*Genius of Shaw*, p. 94) does not take note of this awakening in Eliza.

Shaw has not achieved greater success in portraying the character of Henry Higgins than that of Eliza Doolittle. The most momentous event in the Professor's career is the exhibition of the flower girl as a duchess, and the greatest thing in his life is his attachment to and estrangement from Eliza. Shaw says that his feelings were always free from the associations of sex, and in a Postscript he discusses why there was a disengagement of his affections, his sense of beauty and his idealism from the specifically sexual impulses. These things have not been touched on in the drama, in which he is represented only as an eccentric Professor with a magical command of phonetics. He declares that he does not like young women on the ground that they have an irresistible rival in his mother, but this idea has not been dramatized. Shaw has not shown how the specifically sexual impulses aroused by a girl like Eliza conflict with the noble idealism with which old Mrs. Higgins inspires her son. In the drama, the Professor is shown only as a specialist in phonetics with an utter insensibility to all kinds of deep emotions. Bernard Shaw is never at home in the region of affections and emotions ; and he relegates the discussion of this all-important subject to a Postscript where he wants to tell 'the rest of the story'. The interaction and conflict of emotions is one of the most suitable subjects for drama ; but as Shaw avoids romance and sentiment, *Pygmalion* has to end with an unbelievable anti-climax and a learned and thoughtful Postscript.

John Bull's Other Island has been called by Chesterton the most real of Shaw's plays¹ ; it contains a picture of

¹ *George Bernard Shaw*, p. 18.

Irishmen and Irish life by the greatest of all Irishmen—George Bernard Shaw. The hero of the drama, Larry Doyle, is an Irishman who has known and seen the world. He is a hardheaded, determined, cold, serious, unsentimental Irishman who left Ireland because of the pitiful waste and sterilization which he saw around him. He grew sick of the natural geographical climate and of the artificial economic climate, which had combined to produce the pitiful waste and the sterilization. His partner is Tom Broadbent, an Englishman full of the sentiments, susceptibilities, credulities, and the cheerful bumptiousness that distinguish his race. It is the combination of the unromantic intellect of Larry Doyle and the sentimental susceptibilities and bumptiousness of Tom Broadbent that help to make the firm of Doyle and Broadbent an immense success. Not only is Broadbent's silly bumptiousness a factor of success, but one might also be tempted to think that it is even more important than Doyle's intelligence, for Tom is adopted by the people of Roscullen (Larry's native village) as their prospective M.P. in preference to Larry, whose views about the future of Ireland are unpalatable to Irishmen. Tom is also accepted by Nora Reilly, a girl lover of Larry for whom she waited in vain for eighteen years. But these in no way detract from Larry's abilities, for he does not seek election from Roscullen, and he wants to get rid of Nora Reilly.

It is the character of Larry Doyle, not his success or failure, that is important. He is a sane, cold, unromantic, fact-facing Irishman, and eighteen years of struggle abroad have made him disgusted with the pervasive atmosphere of futility in Ireland. His

estrangement from Nora also has been brought about by the same cause ; he has seen and known much about life in foreign countries and he has acquired many interests during his eighteen years' sojourn, but Nora remains what she was eighteen years ago—a proud, dreaming, poor Irish heiress. There is now little that is common between him and her, and it is not surprising that he should come to regard her romantic affection for him as a burden that has somehow to be shaken off. He meets Nora alone only after he has come almost to the end of his short stay in his native land and then gives very dry and cold answers to her highly emotional appeals. Bernard Shaw has a shyness in the matter of portraying sentiment, and that is why he looks at romance from the point of view of an unromantic sojourner. He draws a picture of Irish character in one who has ceased to be an Irishman, who has escaped the influence of the two climates in Ireland. Larry does recognize the effect of the geographical climate, the dreaming which saves working, saves thinking, saves everything except imagination, imagination, imagination ; but in his actual life, he is brutally free from it. There is, of course, an explanation of this in his long absence from Ireland, but it is the assumption of this absence which marks the limitation of Shaw's genius. Larry ought to have remained for a few years in Ireland, with Cathleen ni Houlihan, and then there would have been a really dramatic conflict or interaction between 'dreaming' and 'fact-facing', between the influences of an Engineering Syndicate and Nora Reilly. As it is, there is nothing wrong so far as the story goes, and Larry Doyle is a truly heroic figure, not only grand but

also pathetic, but one cannot help feeling that he is an incomplete character too.

This impression is only deepened by Larry's attitude towards Irish politics. He is ruthlessly real about Ireland and is impatient about Irish patriotism which cannot be intelligently political. He does not believe in letting anything or anybody alone and tells Mathew Haffigan plump and plain that Ireland will be worse off under small land proprietors like him than she ever was under old rich landlords like Nick Lestrangle ; to Father Dempsey of the disestablished Irish Church he points out with equal bluntness that a disestablished church is the worst of tyrannies in England. He believes in Capital and English driving power, which, he hopes, will give Ireland her only chance in the big world which has gone past her and left her. These views are unpalatable to Irishmen like Father Dempsey and Mathew Haffigan and they throw Larry over. There is nothing to complain about in this. But *John Bull's Other Island* would have been a truly Irish play, or in Mr. Chesterton's phrase, a real play, if Shaw had made his hero a man who not only feels for Ireland, but also feels in the Irish way. Then it would have been a real drama about John Bull's Other Island, about Ireland with her poverty, oppression and her cold fact-facing men, and also about Cathleen ni Houlihan with her dreams, the Ireland of William Butler Yeats. Shaw is reported to have said to Chesterton that an Irishman has two eyes.¹ It is unfortunate that Laurence Doyle should have had one of them completely blinded by his long absence from home.

¹ *George Bernard Shaw*, p. 30.

CHAPTER VI
AT HIS BEST

I

IN the preceding chapter, an attempt has been made to show how some of the socialistic dramas of Shaw fail to achieve the highest excellence because of the author's tendency to approach his problems indirectly and also because of his desire to discuss serious questions in romping farces, {It is his irrepressible tendency to laughter that has spoilt his art and prejudiced his propaganda."} But there are other dramas where he faces his problems openly and squarely and reaches unsurpassed heights of artistic excellence. In these, he recognizes the two conflicting elements in society : the Have-and-Holders and the proletariat or righteous individuals who are working for the regeneration of the down-trodden. He not only portrays this mighty conflict between different elements in society, between individual effort and social inertia, but goes farther and shows where the social malady lies, how far it has spread and how it can be cured. It is the greatness of these dramas that in them he has vivified abstract social forces, made them concrete through pictures, and even where he has portrayed individual sentiments and ideas, he has looked at them from two different points of view. He has depicted individuals as individuals, but he has also correlated individual

emotions and ideas to the all-embracing social organization. He has recreated the old classical method and shown that men and women have a double function ; they are subject to 'necessity without', though they have 'freedom within'. He has, indeed, gone farther ; he has given concrete, real pictures of this external necessity and shown that it is to be found not on the unseen heights of Olympus but on the familiar plains of ordinary, everyday society.

In *Androcles and the Lion*, Shaw draws a picture of early Christian persecution, which he has viewed from an absolutely original angle of vision. It is not, as Shaw points out, a conflict between a true theology and a false one; religious conflicts are never the conflicts of religions; they are only expressions of a clash of secular interests. Whether Christianity brought any new theological doctrines was immaterial to the Romans ; they- only viewed with consternation the one great fact that the Christians of their day were talking of a new set of moral and social values ; and these values were highly prejudicial to the vested interests of all respectable Romans from the great Emperor, the Defender of the Faith, down to the humblest Captain and Centurion. Shaw claims that his martyrs are the martyrs of all times and his persecutors the persecutors of all times. It is the established law and order trying to quell a propaganda that threatened its own existence.

The artistic excellence of this play consists in the subtle manner in which Shaw has arrayed the two forces and emphasized the real point of conflict between them. In his picture of the Christians, there is very little of the technical doctrines of Christianity, and the

three prominent members of the group represent three different enthusiasms which have only a distant connexion with the teachings of Jesus Christ. Androcles is a humanitarian naturalist, Lavinia is a free thinker and Ferrovius has all the stupidity and unhealthy morbidity which Shaw ascribes to Pauline Christians. Their persecutors, again, are not impelled by any religious fanaticism. The Roman captain, who proposes to Lavinia, does not know if there is any truth in the pagan worship of Jupiter and Diana, the Emperor does not care to enquire who the archangels are, and the crowd that gathers to watch the gladiatorial show is not concerned about the truth or falsity of religious doctrines. But the main point of conflict is clear. Though the Christians differ from one another in their theological opinions, there is one thing common to all of them. They have abjured the respectable paths of life and do not believe in Roman Imperialism. They have disturbed the old social values, and even a tailor has begun to talk of his honour ! The aristocrats in Rome cannot tolerate any departure from the manners and customs of the respectable society to which they belong, nor can they excuse a class of men who care more for a place amongst the archangels than for one in the Praetorian Guard, who have the presumption to judge acts of the Emperor and can even think of forgiving him !

This is the story of the Roman persecution of Christianity. All the Christians did not preach the same doctrines, but they were at one in their scepticism about the divinity of the Emperor and its corollary, the respectability of patricians. The men of the

new religion start by shocking the aesthetic sense of their contemporaries, because they refrain from doing something which everyone else does. They do not sacrifice to the gods. This is only the beginning of heterodoxy, and who knows where this inartistic, low teaching might end? The conflict is spiritual, but not religious. It is a conflict between two ideals, and even though the Romans are actually putting the Christians to death, it is clear that they have the weaker cause. The Christians differ amongst themselves, but they have some convictions while the Romans have none, because they have substituted custom for conscience.

This conflict between two social forces is the principal element in this drama, and the comedy which arises out of the misunderstanding that exists between the persecutors and the persecuted is only incidental. Yet even in this drama, the author is so much taken up with the laughter of the Christians and the amusement of the respectable Romans that he does not discuss all the aspects of the problem he has raised. The respectable people find that the new propaganda makes light of the Emperor and does not care to burn incense at the altar, but they do not yet realize how this will affect their vested interests. They seem to persecute Christians for amusement, just as respectable people hunt harmless animals and shoot innocent birds. It is not clearly shown how the interests of the Have-and-Holders will be threatened by a propaganda carried on by missionaries like Androcles, Ferrovius, and Lavinia. If the respectable people had realized the gravity of the situation, it would have been a persecution carried on in deadly

earnest. It would have been a campaign of self-preservation rather than a source of enjoyment.

II

In *Major Barbara*, Bernard Shaw deals with another aspect of Christianity, not the persecution it was subjected to, but the salvation it pretends to effect. In *Androcles and the Lion* we find that Christianity is persecuted because it is a propaganda against the Have-and-Holders, but in *Major Barbara* it is otherwise. In this drama it has been shown that Christianity can pretend to save the souls of others, only because it has sold its own soul to the Have-and-Holders, to Bodger, Lazarus, and Undershaft. Society is moving in a vicious circle. It is governed by a set of men who wield the forces of destruction ; it is they who employ the largest number of men, manipulate the largest number of votes and control the largest number of newspapers. Capitalism creates poverty and disease, but it tries to remedy them by founding hospitals and endowing religious associations, which lull rebellion and help to perpetuate iniquity. Bodger, the distiller, earns huge profits at the expense of poor labourers who are driven by overwork, unemployment and illiteracy to drinking, and then the same Bodger finances the Salvation Army which preaches against drinking and devildom. The Undershaft gun cotton wounds able-bodied men, and then Undershaft founds hospitals where there are enough comforts for the victim. Thus religious and charitable institutions are only the ' almoners of the rich ' and act like a sort of ' auxiliary police '. These institutions are convenient instruments for the rich.

They keep the workman happy, which is an invaluable safeguard against revolution, and by turning his thoughts towards heaven preserve him from Trade Unionism and Socialism.

In this drama Shaw attacks his problems openly and directly. Breakages Ltd. is not merely referred to : it figures prominently in the play, being represented by Sir Andrew Undershaft, father of Major Barbara. The drama shows how society is dependent on rich capitalists like Lazarus and Undershaft and how absurd it is to talk of religion and independence until it can shake off the shackles of Capitalism. Lady Britomart has separated from her husband, and her two daughters and one son have not known their father and have, indeed, never talked of him. Lady Britomart, daughter of the Earl of Stevenage, is very proud and aristocratic ; she has raised serious objection to her husband's decision to disinherit her son and is living in fierce and majestic isolation. Lady Britomart is an aristocrat, the daughter of an Earl, but it is the foundling husband's money that helps the Earl's daughter to support her family and maintain her style. Her younger daughter, Barbara, is a Major in the Salvation Army ; she is a woman of the most refined sensibilities and deep religious convictions, whose only occupation is to save the souls of others. But it is her father's tainted money that has brought her up and given her not only education but also leisure to think about spiritual things and carry on her missionary propaganda. Undershaft reminds Barbara of this, saying, ' I fed you and clothed you and housed you. I took care that you should have money enough to live handsomely—more than enough ; so that you could be

wasteful, careless, generous. That saved your soul from the seven deadly sins. . . . I lifted them from your spirit. I enabled Barbara to become Major Barbara ; and I saved your soul from the crime of poverty.' Barbara is revolted and bewildered. She makes the fatal discovery that even virtue is a parasite on sin, the sin of Capitalism.

It is the most sublime thing in the drama, this discovery by an individual of her utter dependence on a corrupt social organism. It is the boa constrictor from whose embrace even a righteous person has no escape. Salvation itself is utterly dependent on devildom. In the classic drama, tragedy springs out of the whims of the gods on Olympus ; in the romantic drama of Shakespeare, it has its origin in human passions and weaknesses, in character that is Destiny and Destiny that works through fatal flaws in character. In modern realistic drama, the gods have been rejected as unbelievable and the individualist-romanticist point of view has been abandoned as untenable. \ The only source of tragedy in modern art is to be found in the realization that a man may have a personal consciousness, but he can have no individual character, because character is absolutely dependent on the social organization. The tragedy of Major Barbara consists in the realization of this utter helplessness of the individual. When she makes the tragical discovery, she cries out, ' My God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ' When she discovers that the temple of God has to be built by Mammon, that the seven deadly sins have to be conquered by money, she feels that the whole world is fast receding from beneath her feet. For as a Christian missionary has she not preached against

riches and said that a man cannot serve both God and Mammon ?

Major Barbara has yet another shock to get over. She discovers that not only are religious organizations dependent on the charity of the rich who have earned money by fair means and foul, but even an individual can have no religion so long as he is poor. Poverty keeps the soul open to temptations and is, therefore, the greatest of crimes, because it is the fountain of all others. Snobby Price makes professions of repentance, invents confessions to get the wherewithal to satisfy his hunger, and then steals a sovereign at the earliest opportunity that offers itself. This acts as an eye-opener to Major Barbara, who realizes that there can be no religion where men are not full fed. She is in a state of spiritual desperation. Her religious professions have been proved to be hollow ; her pride has been wounded but not killed. She, therefore, resolves to go to her father's works, where she will get ' not weak souls in starved bodies, crying with gratitude for a scrap of bread and treacle, but full fed, quarrelsome, snobbish, uppish creatures, all standing on their rights and dignities.' ' That is where salvation is really needed ', and that is where salvation gets a fair chance and fair play. There her father and other rich capitalists will not be able to throw it in her face that her converts are bribed with bread.

¹ There are some critics who have been puzzled by Shaw's portraiture of Sir Andrew Undershaft, who is too heroic a figure to be regarded as a mere caricature, and yet too great a capitalist to be a truly Shavian Superman. William Archer, the greatest of these critics, even finds a contradiction in the doctrines enunciated in this drama. ' I cannot help thinking/ says he, ' that there are two main lines, which eventually cross each other, so that the trains of thought which run on them collide, to their mutual destruction. We have on the one hand

The futility of personal righteousness and idealism is demonstrated in another great drama of Shaw—*Widowers' Houses*. We are all victims of the octopus of Capitalism and Harry Trench's sentimental idealism is as futile as Major Barbara's religious enthusiasm. The tragedy of personal righteousness is brought home to the hero by a series of successive shocks. At first he is made to realize how much dire poverty and helpless oppression lies behind the refinement and culture of his fiancée Blanche. Then he finds that not only respectable middle-class gentlemen like Sartorius, but also real gentlemen like himself derive their income from the same source, and even Lady Roxdale, who is the most aristocratic of his acquaintances and of whom Blanche and her father are so much afraid, is the ground landlord of the slums which Sartorius has built and from which the sweated, bullied rent-collector earns his pittance. There is not one person known to Dr. Harry Trench, who is not connected directly or indirectly with this fattening on poverty; even the 'tactful' Cokane with his literary abilities can only become a 'sekkeretary' to the

Mr. Shaw's favourite idea (in which I heartily concur) that poverty is the greatest evil in the world, and its extirpation our first duty. Following Samuel Butler, Mr. Shaw prefers to call it a crime, and I am not disposed to quarrel about words. On that score, then, he has me with him; but when he proceeds to lay down the Nietzschean doctrine of the Superman, and preach the gospel of high explosives, I cannot harmonize the two ideas' (*The Old Drama and the New*, pp. 353-4). There are really no two ideas in *Major Barbara*, for Andrew Undershaft's gospel is not Shaw's gospel any more than Caliban's ideas are Shakespeare's. Andrew Undershaft is a picture of the inevitable perversion of human talent in a capitalistic society. He is great, he is inevitable, but also undesirable. If poverty is abolished, there will be no property, and there will be no necessity for any explosives to protect it.

illiterate exploiter of slum property. After this he makes the most shocking of all his discoveries, that even proposals of improvement are connected with schemes of exploitation. In the capitalistic world virtue can in no way protect itself from the taint of vice. It will be found that there is nothing startling in the turn of events ; all the characters are ordinary men, treading the normal paths of life. What Shaw wants to point out is that all departments of society have been corrupted by Capitalism ; wherever a pious individual extends his hands, he will find them soiled by the dirt of Capitalism. Dr. Harry Trench is Everyman. As Shaw has himself pointed out in another connexion, the audience is as much responsible for the poverty of the slums as the slum landlord himself.¹ Where the whole of society is corrupt, the individual who has a conscience but cannot afford to keep it is hopelessly lost. He can never escape the tentacles of the octopus.²

Dr. Harry Trench resigns himself to the iniquitous social organization, but Miss Vivie Warren, who finds herself more foully soiled by the mire of Capitalism,

¹ *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 48-9.

² Frank Harris complains that the play ends on a note of compromise and that it is the work of a defeated realist. He does not realize that if Dr. Trench had done anything, he would have stultified himself, because the main point of the drama consists in exposing the hollowness of personal righteousness. Almost all criticisms of this brilliant drama are based on a misunderstanding of its main purport. William Archer, for example, blames it for, amongst other things, the crudity of the letter-writing scene and the irritable temper of the heroine. The dramatic interest of the story consists in the series of unexpected disclosures which convince the young romanticist how his respectability is bound up with a filthy economic system, and it is immaterial whether his lady-love is a Katharina or a Desdemona (both species being equally real), or whether he writes a letter himself or with the assistance of a secretary.

retires from the world, permanently single and permanently unromantic. Miss Vivie thinks that she is a practical woman of business who takes the world as it is, but really she has all the fond illusions of a romantic dreamer. She fancies that circumstances can be changed by individual energy and character and that it is possible to live honestly without ever coming in contact with immorality. Her fond romantic illusions about individual initiative and personal righteousness are rudely shattered by the new knowledge she gains about professional business without which there would be no Newnham and Girtons. Even before she knew the secret of her mother's profession and of all respectable business she had decided on working in Honoria Eraser's chambers and making her way up by means of her abilities and character. She sticks to her resolve even after she learns the secret ; but she has no longer the vivacious optimism of a young graduate with reputation and social standing. Rather than work her way up in the world, she retires from its filthy surroundings. Mrs. Warren wants a daughter, and Frank Gardner wants a wife. But she does not need either a mother or a husband. She leaves so-called respectable society out of an aesthetic disgust at its nauseating ugliness.

[*Mrs. Warren's Profession* is remarkable not only because it portrays a romantic individualist face to face with the dirtier aspects of social life, but also because it reveals the difference between "propaganda that is not art and art that is propaganda. Shaw has proclaimed on many occasions that it was his intention in this play to demonstrate how prostitution depends

on poverty, for it is caused by underpayment and ill-treatment of women. But in the drama, this has been assumed rather than demonstrated. Drama exhibits its hypothesis through living symbols. In this particular play, the Managing Director of hotels that are brothels in disguise is a rich, respectable lady>; the underpayment and ill-treatment which led her and her sister Lizzy to adopt this unmentionable profession forms no part of the story. Indeed, the sister, who advised Mrs. Warren to choose this path, does not appear as a character at all ; the past life of the two sisters has been condensed into two or three passionate speeches. But mere speeches do not make a living symbol which is the essence of art. The artist in Shaw has surpassed the limits set to him by his original propagandist motive and has created a drama which has become alive on its own account. It is a play not so much of Mrs. Warren's profession as of Miss Warren's discovery.

Shaw's dramatic art consists in visualizing the vast social organism lying outside the individual and in giving concrete form to an abstract idea. Chesterton is inclined to believe that sociological forces cannot be dramatized.¹ But a dispassionate study of these plays will convince everyone that the central figures are not any individuals but the social order which makes Salvationist organizations dependent on distillers and manufacturers of munitions, which forces Mrs. Warren to sell her good looks on her own account rather than on that of her employer and which leaves Lady Roxdale and Harry Trench no alternative but to subsist on money wrung out of slums. Shaw refers to persons

¹ *George Bernard Shaw*, p. 136.

as different as Miss Werren, Sir George Crofts, Frank Gardner, praed Sartorius, Trench, Lickcheese, and Lady IToxdale and shows how they are all parts of the same machine. It is this one point of unity in the midst of so many diversities that makes the social structure a really live symbol. We are all innocent creatures walking on the surface of a volcano. Shaw chooses a few spots, rips them up and shows the lava within. It is because the spots have been selected at random that they can typify the whole surface that we call society.

The playlet, *O'Flaherty, V.C.*, belongs to the same class as *Major Barbara*, *Widowers' Houses*, and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, because it portrays an individual's dependence on the socio-economic forces around him. It is not a great work of art like the dramas discussed above. The irony is superficial and the situations are rather undramatic. But it possesses the characteristics of Shaw's best work. In it he portrays the discontented Irishman in the midst of his poverty and boredom ; it is the wild, ignorant Fenian enthusiasm of his mother, the covetousness of his sweetheart, the tyranny of his landlord, the thwarted curiosity of Irish life in general that drove him to join the army, face the Boches and win the V.C. The pictures are not as powerful as those in *Major Barbara* or *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, because when we meet O'Flaherty he has already escaped out of the prison house of Ireland and seen the world ; and there is no room for that feeling of shock and surprise which the reader experiences when Major Barbara realizes that her God has forsaken her and Miss Vivie Warren understands what ' life as it is ' really means. But it is a more artistic portraiture

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is nobler than that'. The difference between without happiness and happiness without nobility has been brought out in Candida's desire to live with her husband and the poet's dashing forth into the unknown with the secret in his heart, which the husband and the wife do not understand.

In *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, Shaw has dealt with another social institution, law and justice. In this play, there is a sharp difference which gradually melts into identity. Brassbound is an 'adventurous filibuster', the leader of a smuggling party composed of rascals and ex-convicts. Sir Howard Hallam is a highly respectable and upright English official and an innocent man. The uncle is at the crest of civilized life, whereas the nephew is outside the pale of civilization. But there is no essential difference in character between them. Romantic writers have a tendency to exalt emotion and to show that a person who is ordinarily regarded as a villain may have heroic traits. This is the theme of Schiller's famous drama *The Robbers*, which is looked upon as a landmark in the history of the romantic literature of Europe. There are other writers who have shown that the 'pillars of society' are all villains and impostors. Even if they are not deliberate rogues, they are forced to be so by society, and Chesterton's judge makes the amusing discovery that the first person he ought to hang is his own self. Bernard Shaw has his own way of attacking society. It is equally different from the romance of Schiller and the comedy of Chesterton. He takes up a sentimental vagabond who has some real kinship with Charles, the hero of Schiller's drama, and then all but makes a hero of him. Gradually he shows that

'antic adventurer is a fool who has taken the scaffolding of law and justice seriously and that, in no way superior to the respectable gentlemen of Jety. The emotional fervour of the unconventional hero is, in essence, the same sentimental fiction on which conventional society is based. There is no fundamental difference between the rough justice of the rugged hills and the refined justice of the civilized courts of law. Both are based on the passion for vengeance.

Lady Cicely Waynflete, who is so immeasurably superior in intelligence to both the uncle and the nephew, always points out the comic side of the sensational happenings in the drama. If she had not been there, the play would have become a horrible Elizabethan tragedy of blood and thunder. Lady Cicely, who is impervious to all sense of danger, is shrewd enough to see through the hollowness of Brassbound's life's purpose and the judicial dignity of her knighted brother-in-law, and it is she who prevents the former from wreaking vengeance and the latter from inflicting punishment. She does not appeal to their sentiment; she argues with them and wins them over by means of her superior intellectual ability. There is an intelligent and serious discussion of a social problem, but it is never of an abstract nature. The discussion is a part of dramatic portraiture. Lady Cicely understands the characters of Brassbound and Sir Howard. To the romantic vagabond she dwells on the futility of vengeance from the point of view of sentiment and shows that if his uncle failed in his duty as a brother, he is not doing his duty as a nephew. To the respectable judge whose sensibilities have been deadened by convention, she does not bring any

sentimental argument, but points his attention to the scandal that would be raised by the revelation of such an affair. This makes the drama intensely real to us, and Lady Cicely, too, in spite of all her superiority and detachment, is a real human being. Her wisdom, though extraordinary, is not superhuman ; it is only a combination of tact, presence of mind, and freedom from the influence of romance and convention. She has, of course, no sense of danger and braves all risks ; yet she is not adamant. When a strong soul like that of Captain Brassbound lays itself bare before her, she can hardly resist its mesmerism, and in her terror-stricken response and withdrawal we feel the pulsations of a woman's heart.

IV

(Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* is regarded as one of his best plays and also as one of the most remarkable works of modern times.) It is a great play, and one of the greatest contributions to the literature about Joan of Arc. It is not only an excellent play, but, as Shaw claims further, also a perfect historical drama. It does not merely dramatize an abstract theme like the historical dramas of John Drinkwater ; but, as Shaw asserts, it also presents a historical picture, faultless and complete in its details. (This claim of historicity has been hotly contested, and attempts have been made by critics to 'save History from Mr. Shaw', just as Shaw is said to have written his play on Saint Joan to '-save the Maid from Mr. Drinkwater')

Bernard Shaw does not take any liberty with the

¹ *Mr. Shaw and 'The Maid'*, by J. M. Robertson, p. v.

principal events in Joan's life. Her interview with the Squire of Baudricourt, the hostility of the noblemen at Court, her momentary recantation, her withdrawing of the recantation, her burning at the stake, her clinging to the cross supplied by the English soldier—all these incidents are faithfully represented. The picture of a maiden, who trusted to her personal Inspiration, being tortured and burnt by an age which could not tolerate any divine inspiration except the one that came through the Church, has been drawn with consummate art. Joan lays claim to divine power, but even when she is just Beginning to achieve her miracles, she is warned by the Archbishop of her own country that she is heading for the heretic's faith. She is not completely intelligible to herself. She bows before the Archbishop, she asks for his blessings, for she does not know that absolute faithfulness to the Church is inconsistent with her assertions about personal revelation. Even when she stands her fatal trial, she begins by swearing that she is a faithful child of the Church, that she will bow to its decision, but she still insists that her own visions are true, and if the Church commands her to disbelieve them, it will command her to do the impossible.

Catholicism was an all-pervading organization ; the men of the Middle Ages accepted it not only as a divine institution but also as a natural fact like the sun moving round the earth. Religious heresy was looked upon as a disbelief in the open facts of nature, and personal emotions had nothing to do with man's attitude to mighty natural phenomena. The assertion of an individual that she had personal revelation was not

her silly blunder at Paris/ Shaw does not paint her as an Amazon, because he does not believe in the greatness of the Amazon.

"Shaw distinguishes not only between the mystical and rational elements in Joan's character but also between the accidental and genuine factors in her success. Accidents play a large part in her career, as they do in the life of every other successful person) It is an accident that the west wind blows with her approach, it is an accident that the hens in the establishment of the Squire of Baudricourt begin to lay as soon as her request is complied with, it is an accident, again, that she is arrested by the Burgundian soldier, because if she had not worn her gold surcoat on the battlefield, she would never have been caught> But Joan had such firm faith in her mystical power and her faith is so contagious that the humblest French soldier is inspired by her enthusiasm. Wild stories are told about her, and they help to spread her influence over the masses in France. She has a strong, impetuous will, and it is no wonder that this will, helped by accidental happenings, gains an immense hold on will-less men like the Squire of Baudricourt and the Dauphin: is Shaw is both an economist and a biologist. As an economist, he is interested in the surroundings of his characters ; in this drama he draws a picture of the Court and the country which help Joan to achieve her signal triumph. The Dauphin does not know his own mind and is not even sure of his own position, nor do the noblemen know where they stand, what they have to do, what they can rely on. To this unruly rabble comes Joan with her piercing insight and invincible will. It is little wonder that she gains ascendancy and

hits upon the right plan for herself and for her country. In a better ordered State she could not have achieved this feat, but chaotic conditions always help persons with a cosmic will. They help Joan as they were to help Napoleon at a later date.¹

¹ Mr. Robertson contended that Shaw has completely ignored the fact that the Middle Ages were a time of Faith and that it was on account of the ardent religious zeal that characterized the men of those days that Joan could become a leader. Shaw has, according to him, 'missed in his preface the salient historic fact that she appalled the English soldiery through *their* religious faith, just as she inspired the French soldiery and people through theirs' *op. cit.*, p. 40. So far as the charge against the preface is concerned, it may be left out of account, for 'the play's the thing'. In the drama, it has been made clear that Joan could influence De Poulengey, the Squire of Baudricourt, La Hire and the common soldiers, only because they belonged to an age which had greater faith than ours in the intervention of divine agencies in human affairs. The laying of the eggs which convinced the Squire of Baudricourt and the blowing of the wind which staggered Dunois, would not appeal to a schoolboy in modern times. Shaw has not, of course, drawn any vivid picture of how the English were appalled by the fear of the Maid, though there are casual references to this panic in the speeches of Warwick and others. As has already been pointed out, he has no faith in any specific military talent and has not, therefore, given any importance to the battles fought by Joan of Arc. The French and the English soldiers do not occupy in this play the prominent place which would have been given to them, if Scott had made a novel out of this theme.

CHAPTER VII

AT HIS BEST : THE SUPERMAN-HERO

I

IT has been pointed out in a previous chapter that Shaw's biological theories have led him to form a new conception of the hero of a serious drama. The traditional concept of a hero is based on an internal and an external conflict.) Action is the stuff of drama, which is derived from the Greek word 'drao', and conflict is generally regarded as the essence of dramatic action, (in Shaw's plays, however, the element of conflict is reduced to a minimum.) Indeed, with the exception of *Androcles' and the Lion* and *Saint Ifoan*, there is no genuine conflict in any play of his, and even in these two dramas he tries rather to give an idea of the real nature of the conflict thaj to portray it in all its stages.)

In those dramas where Shaw has tried to draw the picture of a hero, it has not been possible for him to introduce any conflict. He is not interested in external contest, because he does not see any heroism in a conquest of external forces; for him the only real conquest is the conquest of self. Even when he has portrayed great soldiers like Caesar and Napoleon, he portrays them off the field rather than on it; according to him, genius consists in the possession of original values, in the power of seeing and

judging things independently of conventional standards. A perfect hero must have consciousness of original morality and the will to act upon it.

Shaw suggests that a real conquest is the conquest of self, which means the triumph of the will over passions. But he starts with the premise that for a man with original morality the urge of passion is external, mechanical, and fundamentally unreal. It is no wonder, therefore, that in his superman dramas we have portraits of heroes who have genius and self-control, but who pass through no genuine spiritual struggle, for there can be no conflict between a deep, original morality, and passions which are superficial and inessential. A believer in Creative Evolution, Shaw does not also believe in progress in the ordinary sense of the term. He thinks that really man has not changed from the days of Julius Caesar to modern times ; for nineteen centuries is too short a time for any real evolution. Consequently, it will be absurd to think that a man develops from one action to another ; there may be a hardening of the muscles or an increased knowledge of the phenomena of nature, but there can be no development in the inner man. He will take generations and generations to develop into a higher species of being. Shaw has, therefore, eschewed the vulgar idea of progress which looks for development in the course of a few years or even a few hours in a man's life. The Napoleon of Waterloo must essentially be the same man as the Napoleon of the Bridge of Lodi. It is unnecessary to have a lengthy and complicated plot, because all the incidents will, after all, reveal the same man. Bernard Shaw does not select plots which are rich in incidents ; he takes

up simple stories which unfold most vividly the new morality of the superman.

This meagreness in respect of plot is not, however, an artistic defect of his dramas, as his critics have imagined. In his dramas, character does reveal itself through action ; only the actions are bare of complicated and thrilling adventures. In a drama, character must be exhibited through action, and the only function of action is to reveal character. This harmony between characterization and narration is the essential condition of successful art. It has been preserved in the plays of Shakespeare, but it is not always to be found elsewhere in Elizabethan literature.

The chief peculiarity of many a drama of Shaw is that its hero has an original morality. Its technique, therefore, is a technique of contrast, original creative morality being contrasted with the mechanical morality that is imposed from without. Generally, there is only one petty incident, and Shaw describes his heroes and other characters in relation to it. The events that Shaw takes as the central theme of his dramas are not complicated or sensational. Not that there is not sufficient potentiality in them, but to the hero everything seems to be trivial. It is only because the man of Destiny is different from Othello that the story of Shaw's play is less thrilling than that of Shakespeare's tragedy. There are suggestions of a scandal, a duel, and a ruined home, but the suggestions do not materialize, because to the Man of Destiny the conventional motives, love, fidelity, and jealousy, have no meaning. There are openings for thrilling adventures in *Caesar and Cleopatra*, but Caesar's self-possession makes the adventures look like pastimes. It will thus

be seen that the very pettiness of the incidents is evidence that they are adequate for their purpose. ("A Shavian drama with a Shakespearean plot would be an absurdity. A Shakespearean tragedy works through conflict, while a Shavian play with a superman hero depends for its effects on contrast.

II

In *The Devils Disciple* there is the picture of a hero who is guided by his own instinctive morality and makes light of the accepted religion of the Church. The title is not an accurate description of the hero. He is not a disciple of God, but one who does not obey God is not necessarily a disciple of the Devil. Richard Dudgeon does not belong to any Church, whether of God or of Satan ; for he is a man with an original morality and is guided by his own instincts. In the society about him, he is looked down upon as an outcast. There are dark insinuations about him, but he seems to have done nothing that is positively shady. Indeed, the people who accuse him of devilry cannot quote any particular action that is devilish. They hate and curse him, because he does not accept their religion and morality. But the one action that he performs in the course of the play would appear to be noble, even according to their moral code. They, however, would regard it as a deed of self-sacrifice, done at the call of a moral force which lies outside the instinct, while for him this sacrifice is only a gratification of the inner will.

In this drama there is a set of contrasts. The first act is a sort of prologue. It contrasts the principles of

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the devil's disciple with those of his puritanical mot. Even this exposition of principle is not altogether without 'action'. It arises out of the hanging of Peter Dudgeon and the death and will of William Dudgeon. In the two succeeding acts we have the real action of the drama, the self-sacrifice of Richard Dudgeon and his rescue by Anthony Anderson. Richard Dudgeon is a contrast to both Anthony and Judith Anderson. Anthony and Judith are a respectable couple with generous sentiments ; they have not the puritanical ferocity of Mrs. Dudgeon, but they accept conventional morality with all its external compulsion. When Judith finds that Richard Dudgeon sacrifices himself for her husband, she thinks that it must be for love of her, a purely external stimulus. She does not understand him when he says that he did it for himself; bred in the mechanical morality of conventional society, she does not understand a 'self-acting' hero. She is tortured between admiration for his self-sacrifice, love for him and indignation at her husband's cowardly flight. She is greatly perturbed ; she does not know what to do, and on a sudden impulse offers to go to the end of the world with Richard. Her perturbation and indecisive movements are a pitiful contrast to the cool and collected behaviour of Richard Dudgeon who acts only on his own impulses. He does not know why he chose to impersonate Anderson, but of this he is quite sure, that he did it neither for Anthony nor for Judith, but only for himself.

The last scene is taken up with the rescue of Richard Dudgeon by Anthony Anderson. Judged by conventional standards, this action is as noble as the self-sacrifice of Richard. Shaw, however,

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...s that the two actions are fundamentally different. The self-sacrifice of Richard Dudgeon has its origin in his instinct, while the rescue effected by Captain Anderson results from gratitude (which is a parasitic emotion) and also from a desire to regain the affections of his silly, sentimental wife. Thus by means of a brilliant contrast Shaw demonstrates that actions which are seemingly alike are essentially dissimilar. To Richard Dudgeon there is no difference between flight and self-sacrifice, if both are original impulses. Anthony Anderson is guided by an external code of morality which gives fixed values to conduct. Flight is always cowardly, and self-sacrifice always heroic. Towards the end of the play, Anderson makes a patriotic speech and announces that he has joined the army to fight for his country. Richard Dudgeon remains silent. He has only one cause and that his own.¹

in *Arms and the Man*, Shaw portrays a heroic figure in Captain Bluntschli and contrasts him with the romantic fool, Major Sergius Saranoff. Saranoff fights for success and glory, but Bluntschli joins the army out of an unmotivated impulse which he describes as an 'incurably romantic disposition'. He is a Swiss who fights for the Servians, not because he feels for Serbia but because Serbia fell in his way. He takes part in the fray out of an inexplicable instinct, and the same instinct makes him fly from the battle-field to

¹ In a letter to Ellen Terry, Shaw explains that Richard Dudgeon is a foil not only to his mother and the Andersons, but also to Burgoyne, the type of gentility: 'Burgoyne is a gentleman; and that is the whole meaning of that part of the play. . . . Richard should be superior . . . to gentility: that is, to the whole ideal of modern society.' (*Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence*, p. 169.)

save his life. Judged by external standards, there is contradiction between the two things. If he is so anxious to save his life, why did he risk it? But the deepest instincts of a 'self-acting' man are subject to no external law, not even the law of uniformity. Instinctive actions are uncaused, and are not, therefore, bound to be consistent.

Captain Bluntschli has unlimited control over his own faculties, and when once an instinct has been aroused he can subordinate everything else to it. Thus when he is intent on saving his life, no exploit is too difficult, no trick is too mean for him. He climbs a pipe and gets inside the room of a house through a window. He frightens a girl with his pistol; he is shrewd enough to realize that even though the pistol will not go off, it is good enough to frighten her. He appeals to her sense of pity, he holds out threats and then finds his safety in her undress. He does not feel any scruple in pointing out to her that she cannot receive a company of soldiers with a nightgown on and hastens to take possession of her cloak. Raina reminds him that this is not the weapon of a gentleman'. But being as free from the delicate scruples of a gentleman as from the reckless courage of a romantic soldier, he is anxious only to save himself and is interested in nothing else. As soon as deceit has served its purpose, he gives it up, for he has no interest in stage-acting for its own sake. When the soldiers have come and gone and Raina has played her part with great credit, he no longer conceals from her that the pistol is unloaded. Then, again, he has absolute control not only over his intellectual faculties but also over his physical senses. As soon as

he feels the slightest sense of security, he is fast asleep. But if there is any possibility of danger, he will keep awake and act and talk in a free and easy manner, as if there was nothing to wear him down.

The first act is remarkable from yet another point of view. It shows a perfect combination of the elements of 'action' and 'discussion'. The conversation between Raina and Captain Bluntschli is extremely lively and through the mouth of the Chocolate Cream soldier, Shaw gives expression to his own heresies about the romance of warfare. The fugitive soldier talks of the universality of the flying instinct; but his talk is not an end in itself. He argues only with a view to persuading Raina to give him shelter and to protect him from the raids of Bulgarian soldiers. Thus there is not a scrap of discussion for the sake of discussion. The action of the drama requires that Raina's hatred of a cowardly soldier should be disarmed, her romantic notions blasted and her sympathy and pity aroused. As soon as this end has been achieved, the tired soldier drops down fast asleep. He instinctively realizes that he has become Raina's 'poor dear', and there is no need for further argument.

The second and third acts are not as bright as the first. Sergius is too much of a fool even to serve as a contrast to the brilliant Captain Bluntschli. Of course, Shaw believes that all romantic soldiers are stupid. But that is a belief which has to be demonstrated by means of an artistic portrait. He ought to have shown Sergius first as a romantic soldier and then as a fool. But the Major is represented as essentially a fool, and a soldier and lover only

by accident. It is one of those cases where Shaw can justly be accused of having assumed his premises. Neither has he succeeded in making Petkoff and Catherine live characters. The General and his wife are sources of fun, but there seems to be no reason why they are introduced. Art imitates' by means of selection ; only such characters have to be chosen for portraiture as will help to symbolize an idea. If the idea is absent, characters stiffen into mere marionettes. They may excite fun, but they will not arouse the true comic spirit.

III

The Man of Destiny, like *Caesar and Cleopatra*, contains the picture of a superman taken from history. The subject matter of *The Alan of Destiny* is extremely thin,¹ Napoleon's life is full of incidents, but Shaw does not take up any one of the startling adventures for the theme of his drama. Napoleon's Italian expedition which included the crossing of the Bridge of Lodi is one of his greatest exploits. The incident which Shaw has selected is supposed to have occurred in the Italian campaign, but it takes' place in an Italian hotel rather than on the Bridge of Lodi. The dramatist takes Napoleon's military talents for granted and believes that they were only an offshoot of that genius of his

¹ Most critics look upon this short play as a caricature, a parody of the legend of Napoleon. Napoleon and the Strange Lady, however, are too serious personages to be dismissed as mere caricatures. It is, indeed, true that Shaw does not believe in the Napoleonic legend that is generally accepted, but he dismisses it only to create a new legend, to show where the real greatness of Napoleon lay. This, indeed, is the difference between the portrait of the hero in *The Man of Destiny* and the caricature of the warrior in the fourth part of *Back to Methuselah*.

which consisted in freedom from conventional moral values. In the preface to *Saint Joan*, he refers to the Napoleonic realism of war ;¹ but this realism of war was only a part of his realistic attitude to life in general. Napoleon succeeded, not because he had greater soldierly talents than other generals, but because his view of life was not coloured by conventional standards of right and wrong, decency and indecency.

In Shaw's play, Napoleon's opponent is not Wellington or Pitt, but an ordinary woman, unconnected with military or political life. She comes not to beat him in battle or to hoodwink him in statesmanship, not even to rob him of his despatches, but to steal a private letter which was mixed up with the official correspondence. The woman has extraordinary intelligence. She has outwitted a lieutenant, can successfully change her dress and can even pass herself off as her twin brother. She is not less courageous than a general, not less resourceful than a diplomat, and her gifts of ready retort might well be envied by the best parliamentarians. Indeed, in shrewdness, in courage, and in ready wit, she is fully a match for the Man of Destiny. She uses all her diplomatic tricks with Napoleon, she cajoles him, she appeals to him with the helplessness of a woman in distress, and yet Napoleon is adamant. He triumphs over her as he triumphed over so many generals and statesmen, only by virtue of his realistic morality. The lady is fighting for a cause which is not her own ; she has been urged by love for a friend for whom she has little regard and by the desire to preserve the peace of a family, which is one of the false ideals of our society.

¹ p. v.

Napoleon, on the other hand, serves no interests but his own. He is essentially selfish, while the lady is wasting herself for a friend and an ideal. This is Napoleonic realism pitted against the idealism on which Shaw has warred all his life. Here Shaw has not 'packed the cards'. He has made the lady the equal of Napoleon in everything except her morality and then shown how it is Napoleon's morality that makes him triumph.

There are moments during the conversation when the lady seems to get the better of Napoleon. She throws about clever insinuations as to the identity of her friend. Napoleon is 'evidently startled', he is 'offended' and frowns at her with a face darkening in anger and irritation. His frenzied movements betray extreme perturbation, but the lady is seated, immovably cool. She thinks that she has a jealous husband before her and returns his angry mocking with a quiet, amused smile. She wants to flatter him at his weakest moment, but Napoleon, who has a superman's gift of self-control, sees through her artifices even when she is at her very best. The lady laughs at him, saying, 'I have often seen persons of your sex getting into a pet and behaving like children; but I never saw a really great man do it.' Napoleon brutally flings back the reply, 'pooh; flattery! flattery! coarse, impudent flattery!'

This is a revelation to the lady who realizes that even in his weakest moment Napoleon's vision is unblurred and that his passions cannot undermine his will. She now understands that this man is too great, too self-centred to be unbalanced by his wife's infidelities, that the revelation in the letter will bring no infamy, no disgrace, and that there will be no ruined home, no

scandal, and no duel with Director Barras. Her friend is safe, and she springs up 'with a bright flush in her cheeks'. 'Oh, you are too bad,' says she, 'keep your letters. Read the story of your own dishonour in them ; and much good may they do you.' She has understood that he is too bad, too great to be the slave of a passion or to have any conventional ideas of honour and dishonour, and when she says that the knowledge of this letter may do much good to him, she means that he is unscrupulous enough to use it for his own advancement with Director Barras. That is why she asks him to read the letter which she was at pains to conceal, for her friend 'runs no risk now ; she does not quite understand her husband'.

Napoleon is free not only from the scruples of morality but also from those of decency. He is an unromantic, unchivalrous, 'vile, vulgar Corsican adventurer'. For the romance-fed lieutenant, the lady is more beautiful when she appears as a woman than when she comes as her twin brother. To Napoleon, however, a woman is only a female of the human species, and her person does not acquire any special charm or sacredness because of her sex. Bluntschli does not shrink from exploiting the undress of Raina for his own safety. Napoleon also makes it plain that the lady will not gain anything by keeping the despatches on her person, and he actually 'rushes at her ; seizes her by the wrist and drags her back', insults her 'past all bearing'. The lady, who serves as a foil to Napoleon, is subject to all the scruples of respectability. When Napoleon harangues her in a lonely hotel, she is conscious that it is not quite decent for them to be there in that manner, and she asks him

to consider if Caesar's wife would not have any suspicion, if she saw them there together. Napoleon has not thought about this side of the matter at all. With his elbows on the table and his cheeks on his hands, looking at the letter, the incorrigible humorist half-wittingly murmurs : ' I wonder ! '

The action in *The Man of Destiny* is of a rather negative kind. The purpose of the play seems to be to show how Napoleon keeps unmoved even when he knows of his wife's unchastity. There is *no* ' duel ', *no* ' domestic scene ', *no* ' broken household ', *no* ' public scandal ', *no* checked ' career ', *none* of these ' all sorts of things '. In *Caesar and Cleopatra* the action is fuller. Caesar "not only conquers himself but also conquers others. He makes himself master of Egypt, takes the 16,000 talents which his Britannic Secretary interprets as a debt due to Rome, places Cleopatra on the throne of Egypt and leaves Rufio as the Roman Governor. All this he manages to accomplish, in spite of the fact that he is in a foreign country, vastly outnumbered by the Egyptian soldiers and also opposed by the Roman army of occupation under Achillas.

His character, therefore, has two aspects : his control of self and his conquest of others, and the dramatist also shows that it is his self-control that helps him to be the conqueror of the world. In this drama Caesar sets before himself the task of conquering Egypt and returning safely to Rome. To this primary purpose all causes must give way. He is an author, but has no slavish devotion to books. The library of Alexandria must burn, if it helps him to keep the Egyptians engaged during the time he is busy taking possession

of the Island of Pharos. He is a refreshing contrast to Theodotus who forgets his mission to capture Caesar and Cleopatra when he finds that the famous library, first of the seven wonders of the world, perishes. Caesar is a soldier, but he has no special fondness or distaste for human blood. In spite of his theatrical speeches condemning the murder of Pompey, it is evident that he has not disrelished it. He makes his maudlin speeches only when it is necessary to snub his murderers. He is furious when he hears that Pothinus, whom he spared, has been stabbed ; but he spared Pothinus only because he knew that the leader of the Egyptians would be more dangerous when dead than he was when alive. He is angry when he hears that Pothinus has been killed, but when the queen's chief nurse is killed by Rufio, the news leaves him cold. The murder of Pothinus rouses the Egyptians to vengeance, but Ftatateeta's death can do nothing more than make the helpless queen wear mourning.

There is a contrast not only between Caesar and the men about him but also between what he is and what he appears to be when judged by conventional standards. The men about Caesar do not understand him, because they cannot probe into his deeper self. He is at the same time brutal and kind. He is frank and truthful and therefore conquers and rules without the help of spies. But he will stoop to the meanest subterfuge ; he will never correctly state his age and will have twenty birthdays in twelve months. He is extremely sensitive to the call of sex, but he is not the slave of any woman, not even of Cleopatra. There is, however, no real contradiction in his nature. His actions are not controlled by any impulse supplied

either by his passions or by the external world. Truth and untruth, clemency and brutality, chastity and lustfulness—these are words which have no meaning for him. He surrenders himself to his passions with the frank innocence of a child, but he can use them in the same way as a master chess player employs his pawns. He feels a call to dream away his life in the arms of Cleopatra ; he cannot resist the temptation to pet and fondle her, but in a crisis, her life is less important to him than that of the humblest soldier. This contrasts Caesar with a hero like Shakespeare's Antony, whose soul is transfigured by his passion for his mistress. Antony is a slave to the instinct of sex, but it is a slavery that glorifies him. Shaw has offered his Caesar as an improvement on Shakespeare's ; but there can be no comparison between the two; they are incommensurable.

Caesar, who is one of the greatest experiments of the Life Force, was born in an age in which one could rise to eminence only through war and conquest ; his occupation was given to him by his surroundings. But in Shaw's drama we find that the evolutionary instinct is never dormant in him ; he feels that his soul has been cramped within the narrow confines of a warrior's profession. The greatest of Romans, he is sick of Rome. He addresses the Sphinx, saying, ' I have wandered in many lands seeking the lost regions from which my birth into this world exiled me. . . . Rome is a madman's dream ; this is my Reality. These starry lamps of yours I have seen from afar in Gaul, in Britain, in Spain, in Thessaly, signalling great secrets to some eternal sentinel below, whose post I never could find. And here at last is their sentinel—

an image of the constant and immortal part of my life, silent, full of thoughts, alone in the silver desert/ The devastation of war repels his creative genius, and he cries out : ' Cleopatra : will you come with me and track the flood to its cradle in the heart of the regions of mystery ! Shall we leave Rome behind us—Rome that has achieved greatness only to learn how greatness destroys nations of men who are not great ? Shall I make you a new kingdom and build you a holy city there in the great unknown ?' The mortal and impermanent part of Caesar's life is taken up with wars and conquests; the constant and immortal part is silent, full of thoughts ! The interaction between the two is not the least important of the themes of Shaw's drama.

CHAPTER VIII

METABIOLOGICAL DRAMA

I

BERNARD SHAW has claimed that he alone of modern English playwrights has written genuine sex dramas.¹ He has written a Don Juan play and named it *Man and Superman* ; in *Overruled* and *How He Lied to Her Husband* he shows how polygamy occurs among ordinary men and women, who have conventional views on morality and have not the courage to violate the seventh Commandment. He says that he does not deal with 'romantic nonsense' and 'erotic ecstasy', but with the genuine 'natural attraction of the sexes for one another'. A study of these plays will, however, show that they are almost as free from the incidents of real sexual attraction as those in which romantic nonsense is substituted for a biological instinct. In Shaw's plays the pictures of sexual attraction have always been spoiled by his love for fun and his disposition to look upon the vsex instinct as only an instrument of Creative Evolution.

In *How He Lied to Her Husband*, Shaw challenges Shakespeare (and also parodies his own *Candida*) and shows that the 'point of honour' on which Othello's love and jealousy are based is a romantic assumption which has nothing noble or tragic in it. This playlet

¹ *Man and Superman*. 'Epistle Dedicatory to A. B. Walkley.'

contains a brilliant dialogue and a farcical somersault on the part of Bompas, 'Her Husband.' But it is not a sex drama, nor does it effectively demonstrate the lack of connexion between love and jealousy. 'Her Husband'⁵ becomes very angry when he learns that 'She' has fallen in love with 'Him', and that he has dedicated poems to her. But as soon as he is told that the poems were written about Aurora, the goddess of Dawn and not about Mrs. Aurora Bompas, he flares up in rage at this slighting of his pet property, and there is a knockabout farce between the husband and the poet. The point Shaw wants to stress is that the jealousy aroused in the husband's heart had nothing to do with love. The defect of the play is that here, as in many other places, Shaw has assumed what he ought to have proved ; in his love for fun he has created a bumptious fool who is incapable of any serious emotion. The comparison that Shaw seems to draw between him and Othello only shows to what height of self-complacent narrowness a man of genius can go. To make a real drama of love and jealousy, Shaw ought to have taken a husband gifted with intellect and imagination and then passed him through the intimacies which marriage involves. If it has been found that even in spite of these intimacies love had conferred no personal tie, then only would Shaw's idea have been effectively portrayed. As it is, *How He Lied to Her Husband* impresses us as one of those brilliant farces which sparkle but do not shine.

In the short play, *Overruled* Shaw attacks the question of polygamy more directly. But here, too, the characters have been so ineffectively drawn that there is no genuine dramatic interest. Mrs. Lunn, for

example, is too indifferent to love-making to be really polygamous. 'Men,' says she, 'do fall in love with me. . . . It used to upset me and terrify me at first. Then I got rather a taste for it. It came to a climax with Gregory ; that is why I married him, . . . now it's an unmitigated bore.' Her lover, Mr. Juno, is not a more impressive figure ; he seems to be like a gramophone for making conventional professions of love -and disappointment, which do not proceed out of the deepest core of his heart. The only person in this playlet who seems to have been drawn with some effectiveness, is Mrs. Juno. She has all the prudery of a respectable woman with conventional views on morality. She makes love to Gregory Lunn, responds to his advances, but warns him against doing anything horrid and urges him to be good. When, however, Gregory really wants to be good and makes a move to go away, she implores him to sit down and then adds the respectable prude's corollary : 'Be nice.' She does not want to be 'wicked and coarse', but when she opens her arms to him and they are locked in a close embrace, she cries out, 'Never mind your conscience. Tell me how happy we are.' She does not mark the transition between the two stages in her amour. She started with a horror of being horrid and coarse, but she ends by being wild and reckless. This 'strong simplicity' is not to be found in her lover, Gregory Lunn, who talks a little too much of his innocence, his incorruptible conscience and his unsubdued mind. A man who discusses his conscience is very much like a woman who discusses her modesty—a disgusting specimen of humanity. He talks so loudly of his principles that one doubts whether he really has any.

Man and Superman is professedly a drama of sex, being Shaw's answer to a challenge from Arthur Bingham Walkley. But Shaw's biological prepossessions have spoiled the exhibition of sexual attraction, and the answer remains an unfulfilled promise. A drama of sex must isolate sexual attraction from all other associations and purposes. Shaw rescues sexual attraction from its slavery to romance, but he binds it with new chains by making it a mere instrument of creation. His play is more devoid of incidents connected with sexual attraction than Byron's *Don Juan*, where, along with cynicism and romance we have innumerable pictures of real sexual emotion. Tanner feels a call from the deepest recesses of his soul, and that call unites him to Ann Whitefield in marriage. But there is not one incident, not a word, to show that the impulse is primarily a sexual urge. Tanner calls Ann a boa constrictor, an elephant, and declares that he is in the grip of the Life Force. But one wonders what the nature of the Life Force is, how far it is a call to replenish the earth and how far, if at all, it is an urge for the 'gratification of the amoristic sentiment of mankind' which Shaw looks upon only as an accidental function of marriage.

Shaw has not only made sex a mere instrument of the creative will, but he has also subordinated it to the economic struggle for nutriment. It is one of his theories that as man is specializing in the department of earning nutrition and the serious business of sex has been left to woman, the initiative in sex pursuits must always come from her. Shaw has drawn a picture of this pursuit and capture in *Man and Superman*, where Ann Whitefield lays a trap for John Tanner who

pretends to be a misogynist. How far this picture is dramatically effective will be examined in course of this study. What is necessary to note here is that the capture is as free from sexual appeal for the captor as it is for the captive. Ann selects John Tanner, not because he is sexually 'deserving' but because if she married Octavius, she would have had to stand all her life 'on an altar to be worshipped', which is an intolerable nuisance for a living idol. This preference has nothing to do with sexual impulse; she would have chosen her female companion on exactly the same principle.

Another great defect of *Man and Superman* is that Tanner is not a convincing character. In the Epistle Dedicatory, Shaw argues that his hero shows a strength that promises to extricate himself and that only when he shows it does Ann abandon her pretence of passiveness and openly fling coil after coil about him until he is secured for ever.¹ Really Tanner has no strength to extricate himself from a woman's coils nor is he inclined to do so. When he first hears from Straker about Ann's aim, he does not try to arm himself spiritually, to fortify his soul against the fascination of the enchantress. Rather he makes the ridiculous attempt of running away in a motor-car; and when he is overtaken by her after an accident, there is nothing more serious between them than a verbal contest. Ann does not fling coil after coil about him, because the mere proposal secures an easy victim. He fights the enchantment cast by a woman, not with his whole soul/as does Paphnutius in *Thaiti*, but with mere words, words, words and with the help of an exceptionally

¹ p. xix.

competent chauffeur. The great talker unintentionally imposes on Ann (as also on his creator) as a man with a strong personality, and that is why she begins her campaign with well laid plots and traps, but from the way in which he behaves, it seems that these were absolutely unnecessary. She has only to make him understand that she loves him, and Tanner is at once her slave. This drama is a brilliant piece of work ; it is a splendid attempt at the portraiture of a new type of hero and a new type of heroine in a new type of situation. But the hero is so ineffective as a dramatic character that the play can be looked upon as only a magnificent failure.

There are a few minor episodes which, though brilliant in themselves, are only remotely connected with the main plot or with the philosophy of the drama. Don Juan De Tenorio of the *Dream* resembles Tanner only in appearance and in their common belief in the Life Force, but even here the resemblance is superficial. Tanner dreads the Life Force as a boa constrictor of which he is the victim, while Don Juan discusses Evolution with the zeal of an enthusiast.¹ Donna Ana De Ulloa has little affinity with the heroine of the drama, though either of them might be said to be Everywoman. Then, again, though Mendoza Ltd. present an amusing spectacle, they have not the slightest connexion with the story or the philosophy of the play. Octavius⁵ sister, Violet, is an arresting character who, by her bold defiance of those who meddle in her affairs and by her conquest of her multi-millionaire father-in-law, almost rises to the height of

¹ Tanner is an enthusiast only when the Life Force seems to have been aroused in another person (Violet).

a true heroine. But her story would have formed a vital part of a sex drama, if the actual courtship between her and her wealthy husband had been portrayed. As it is, we hear of her only when her marriage is over, and she has postponed divulging the secret till she has disarmed the opposition of her father-in-law, whose money cannot be dispensed with.¹

From these defects, *You Never Can Tell*, another dramma of sexual attraction, is totally free. In this the sexual problem is not complicated by any other entanglement. Valentine is a poor man, but that does not deter either him or Gloria from getting engaged. The hero and the heroine have this advantage over Tanner and Ann, that they are terribly sincere;² Valentine does not gain over Gloria in a motor race, and she, too, is fully alive not only to the hollowness of her education but also to the shamefulness of her surrender. In this play, the man is the hunter and the woman is the quarry, and both are instruments of a mighty Force which they understand vaguely and are powerless to resist. Valentine, the duellist of sex, starts as an ordinary flirt, but before long the depths

¹ *Village Wooing* is only a simpler version of *Man and Superman*. There is no expedition to Sierra Nevada, no talk of Darwin and Evolution, no American millionaire, no chauffeur to represent the New Man. The playwright has modestly described it as a mere comedietta for two voices whom he has called A and Z, probably to warn the reader and the audience that these are not to be taken as full drawn human beings. This playlet is a failure, because it is too superficial to be moving as a drama. It represents more the conquest of an absent-minded widower by a clever and determined woman than man's submission to the inescapable call of the Life Force. The defect of *Man and Superman* and *Village Wooing* lies in the ineffectiveness of the heroes. John Tanner is too talkative, too self-conscious, and A is too absent-minded and forgetful to be capable of a real spiritual struggle between the instinct to be free and the instinct to procreate.

² Valentine begins in jest and finds himself in earnest.

are stirred in his heart, and he realizes that the deadliest instinct does not permit any toying. 'Why was I tempted?' he asks, and the answer is 'Because Nature was in deadly earnest with me when I was in jest with her.' He does not flatter Gloria, and Gloria only expresses her contempt of him; but the terrible Force is active, and it easily triumphs over the feeble resistance offered by the lightheartedness of the male flirt and the unromantic education of the New Woman of the twentieth century. Gloria is driven mad with shame and almost collapses at the thought of her weakness, but her weakness is her strength, for her defeat means the triumph of the Life Force. It is because they are so terribly sincere that there has been no need for those unconvincing tricks and traps which supply the want of a real drama in *Man and Superman*.

Ton Never Can Tell contains not only an analysis of sexual attraction but also a comic study of family life. By a perfectly natural process, Shaw exposes the unnatural character of the relationship existing between parents and children. There is a non-judicial separation between Mr. and Mrs. Crampton, the result of which is that while the husband sulks in England, the wife settles with her children in Madeira. Mrs. Clandon (for that is the name adopted by Mrs. Crampton) fills so much space in the lives of her children that she becomes a bore, and though the children are attached to her, they protest, half in jest, half in earnest, against her all-pervasive influence. The father has been so completely cut off from them that when after eighteen years, he enters into their lives to claim his rights, he strikes them as a

symbol of the rotten world, for here there can be no trial without prejudiced sheriffs, corrupt jurors, perjured witnesses, and spectators hungering for the excitement of lynching. There is such a combination of rotten men and women in this small room (not unlike an old English barn) that it seems to be an epitome of the corrupt world in which we all live. It is a world where everyone is a fraud, where not only a minister of religion is a drunkard and seller of drinks, but God Himself also is a party to the rotten game that is played there, for He is a sly One, a mean One, who plays His clever tricks on helpless men. Blanco Posnet is an unrepenting Protestant against God's dispensation which is a cat-and-mouse game and makes us do what we never intended. Indeed, the world is such a rotten place that even a rotten man cannot play his rotten game. Blanco flies with a horse, but God, the mean One, the sly One, has a trick up His sleeve and has the last laugh.

Blanco strives hard to triumph in this rotten world.]\$ack down he never will. But he feels that he is mere clay in the grip of a Force mightier than himself. He can argue with those who are arraigning him, he knows what are the weak points in the prosecution story ; he challenges the prejudiced jury, he knows that it is very difficult to give the oath to Feemy Evans, he lectures the Sheriff in the best forensic manner and even laughs his judges to scorn ; but he betrays himself more effectively than his prosecutors can expose him. As soon as the woman comes with the horse, he looks terrified, and though he tries to argue that he could have had nothing to do with the woman or her child, yet the expressions which unconsciously escape his lips

are sufficient to incriminate him. There is something like a conflict in Blanco's soul between his Reason which leads him one way and an unreal Force in the rainbow, the woman and her Judas kid, which makes him do what he never intended. This conflict ends in a conversation, the tragic victim becoming a jolly philosopher. He finds that this Force is active not only in his own soul but also in the hearts of all rotten men and women in the rotten world. It is the Force which 'makes one go soft'. It is because of this that Feemy Evans goes soft and is landed like himself; it is this, again, which makes the Sheriff and the boys relent and spare him. Shaw points out how men and women as different from one another as the Sheriff and his brother, the two Posnets, the jurors and the boys, Feemy Evans and the girls assembled at the trial, are fundamentally all alike. All of them try to play the rotten game, and all have the great game played on them.¹

¹ The character of Blanco Posnet is nearly allied to that of Richard Dudgeon. But Blanco feels that he is a victim of God's sly game whereas Richard Dudgeon acts like a hero. It is because of this that the spirit and the technique of the two plays are different, and hence this drama is discussed here rather than in the previous chapter which is taken up with a consideration of the superman plays of Shaw.

CHAPTER IX

WIT AND HUMOUR: FARCE AND COMEDY

I

THE distinction between wit and humour is never so important as in a discussion of the comic art of Shaw, for he has often been regarded as a mere wit and, therefore, not entitled to a place in the rank of the great humorists of the world. Many attempts have been made to define the different forms of the comical. Without entering into the subtleties of the question and the eccentricities of individual opinion, we shall proceed on the popularly accepted distinction between wit and humour. (It is generally thought that wit is concerned with the incongruity and opposition between words, phrases, fancies and opinions, while humour delights in abnormalities of sentiments and idiosyncrasies of character.) Humour, in contemplating eccentricities, often falls in love with the object of its derision, while wit is allied to intellectual judgements, but humour is allied to sentiment, while wit is a pure intellectual exercise. Then, again, there is a tone of seriousness in humour that distinguishes it from wit which delights only in the combination of words and fancies, as seen apart from character.

/Bernard Shaw such a brilliant talker that it may seem that He is nothing more. (There is so much smart

wit in his drama that many have thought there is nothing else. It seems that Mirabell has walked out of *The Way of the World* straight into *The Philanderer* and assumed the name of Charteris, and that Wycherley's Plaindealer Manly has studied Darwin, Marx and Nietzsche and rechristened himself John Tanner. (Shaw's dramas are not only full of the smart conversation of fashionable society, but they are also replete with intellectual judgements on life) Marriage, the family, established religion, the distribution of wealth, the various professions—all these have come in for the severest censure, and this conscious, intellectual judgement allied to a sense of the ludicrous is the stuff of wit. Social institutions are based on certain ideas about the welfare of human beings, and the Comedy that is derived from a critical examination of these institutions springs from a clash of ideas rather than from natural idiosyncrasies in character. It belongs, therefore, to the province of wit rather than to the domain of humour.

Other features of Shavian comedy also affiliate it to wit. Shaw's dramas are absolutely unemotional; he hates sentiment and tries to take an intelligent [view of things]. That is why he never falls in love with his creations; there is never a scrap of sadness in his writings. When Tolstoy, the gloomy socialist, remarked that Shaw treated life as a joke, Shaw retorted, 'Life is, indeed, a joke.' There is, therefore, not that depth, that large-hearted tolerance in his comedies, which is inseparable from an emotional view of life. Shaw's Dubedat is very much like Benavente's Crispin, but Shaw cannot draw a character like Leander In a more light-hearted vein, he would

have portrayed Major Barbara as one of the many 'evil doers of good' in society, but he has not the command of humour, irony, and pathos which is necessary for the conception of a character like the Spanish master's Don Heliodoro. Except Jennifer, there is no character in the whole range of Shaw's comedy that might arouse a feeling of pathos, and even Jennifer herself has no importance of her own, existing as she does only for the sake of her two lovers.

And yet on a deeper study of Shaw's dramas, it will appear that there is as much humour as wit in them. His view of life is no doubt 'intelligent' and rational, but it is also something more. On a superficial view he seems to be a modern Aristophanes whose business it is to degrade the idols and ideals of society, and indeed, *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* appears only to be a Shavian version of *The Thesmophoriazusae* of Aristophanes. But the twentieth-century Aristophanes does not confine himself merely to a condemnation of individuals and institutions, but also makes an attempt at an examination of the fundamental bases of individual and social ideals: the relations of the sexes and the distribution of wealth. His pictures are, of course, bare of sentiment. But emotions and the intellect are only external adornments, the true basis of human character lying in the depths of the instincts. Shaw always draws portraits of instinctive conduct, of the contradiction that lies between the professions of reason and the dictates of the Inner Will.

It is in this sense that the majority of his dramas are comedies of humour. The best illustration will be

found in the pleasant play, *You Never Can Tell*. The courtship of Valentine and Gloria is a wordy duel like that of Benedick and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. But there is one thing which should be especially noted about this courtship ; Valentine and Gloria are both terribly sincere. They are not the victims of any trap ; at every stage of their encounter and courtship they try to understand and analyse themselves. Valentine realizes that in jesting with Nature he has only helped her to stir the very depths of his soul, and Gloria feels that all her vaunted independence and strength vanish at the one touch of Nature which makes her kin with the unsuccessful dentist.

Bernard Shaw is often regarded as a wit of the same class as Oscar Wilde, whose comic dramas are full of smart sayings and cleverly-worded judgements on life. The brilliant dialogues in Shaw's works do remind one of Oscar Wilde's comedies, and Shaw may have consciously imitated the style of his fellow-Irishman. But though there is an apparent similarity in style, there is no affinity in spirit. In Oscar Wilde there is very little connexion between the stray judgements on life occurring in the conversation of the *dramatis personae* and the concrete pictures which he has drawn. Oscar Wilde touches the surface of life ; he does not sound the depths below. It is on account of this that the brilliance of his comedies is only a superficial sparkle. Such a criticism cannot, however, be made of Shaw's dramas. He is a propagandist in art, and in his best work he makes, from his own point of view, a thorough analysis of sociological and biological problems. There is no lack of brilliant dialogue, but

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smart talk is never an end in itself.¹ He goes to the roots of human character.

In the most amusing scenes in Shaw's dramas there is an exhibition of the Life Force surmounting all that is in its way. Shaw very often portrays a perfectly self-possessed man confronting persons with conventional culture and some silly romantic notions about happiness and heroism. Thus in the first scene of *Arms and the Man* the natural morality of Captain Bluntschli is set off against the conventional beliefs of Raina. In this scene it is 'the fugitive Captain, sheltering in a strange house, who ought to look perturbed, and Raina ought to meet him with perfect self-composure. But the tables are turned ; it is she who appears to be the intruder, and Captain Bluntschli quietly makes himself master of the situation. The amusing scene seems to be a farce based on the inversion of the usual order of things, and there is no lack of brilliant wit in Captain Bluntschli's talk. But the episode is- really' a specimen of humour, for it is a masterpiece of character-study, the humour of the situation lying in the contradiction between the self-possession of the man who is guided by instinct and the perturbation of the girl who in a crisis has nothing but romance and convention to depend on.

The same opposition is at the bottom of the comedy enacted by the Gunner and Tarleton (senior) in what is one of the most amusing scenes in the whole range of Shavian drama. When Tarleton made love to Lucy Titmus, he did so out of a sudden impulse and was

¹ Shaw's criticism of Oscar Wilde's plays which he describes as farcical comedies (*Dramatic Opinions and Essays*, Vol. I, pp. 11-15, 32-4, etc.) is an indication of the difference between his own 'Comedjic talent' and that of Wilde.

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grammelled by any sense of the consequences that might follow. But if we are to believe Lucy's son, this thoughtless flirtation was one of the causes that led to her ruin, and after her death the Gunner comes to avenge his mother. It is only natural to expect that Tarleton will feel guilty and cower before the accusation of the Gunner. At least, that is what the son of the wronged woman expected. But Tarleton meets him with the same indifference to romance and responsibility with which he seems to have courted his lady-love. The Gunner is encumbered with ideas of good and evil, and is, therefore, no match for the old man, whose good humour is imperturbable, because his mind is unburdened. Once more the tables are turned, and it is the accuser who seems to be the accused, because he has intruded into the life of a man who does not care for him or for his romantic notions.

The family is one of the artificial institutions of society, and the naive feelings of men can never fully accommodate themselves to its tyranny. In *You Never Can Tell* there is more than one spring of humour. In the first act we have before us three children who have grown up independently of their father. The father is suddenly introduced to them, and we have the tragi-comedy of an old man trying to trespass into the domestic life of children who have nothing to do with him. The waiter, William, the father of a Q.C., is a well of mirth undefiled. He is a spectator of the transactions between the father of the family and his wife and children ; he understands the follies of both the parties and helps them with his advice and comments which are as remarkable for their simplicity as for their aptness. Mrs. Clandon is a social reformer

who has brought up her children independently of their father, but the first thing that is necessary in our society is that every respectable person should have a father legally married to the mother. The children pester her with troublesome questions about their father. She will not disclose to them anything about her husband, because that is her private affair ; but they have an equal right to know who their father is, for that is one of their own personal affairs. Thus the personal affairs of the children conflict with the privacies of the mother ; and we have a new comedy of cross purposes.

The Life Force pokes fun not only at the family but also at marriage which is the basis of the family. Man's instincts are impersonal and variable, and cannot, therefore, be confined within the narrow limits of monogamy. Reginald Bridgenorth understands this and allows his wife a safe divorce as soon as he finds that she is not attached to him. His disgust at his wife's infidelity is a personal feeling, unmixed with moral or religious hatred. It is no wonder that he easily turns the tables on the convention-ridden fools who have a moral horror of divorce. He is, at first, all but turned out of his brother's house as a reprobate but when after explaining everything he himself wants to go away, he is prevented by his erstwhile accusers. Only men who have nothing but conventional standards to guide them are capable of these somersaults. They are so easily fooled, because they have no living personality, but are, in Bergson's phraseology, mere automatons, propelled by an external, mechanical code of morality.

Nothing in human life is so certain as the blind will

to live, and yet death is always gaining on life. Human civilization is controlled not so much by a love of life as by the bogy of death. But the will to live asserts itself with naïve impetuosity, in spite of all the horrors that have been called forth by the fear of disease and death. This is the source of the comic in the exclamations of Craven, who was told that he had only another year to live, but who suddenly learns that it was on a wrong hypothesis and on the basis of insufficient experiments that he was given such a warning. 'That's all very well,' says he to Dr. Paramore, 'You don't half see how serious it is to make a man believe that he has only another year to live. . . . I've made my will, which was altogether unnecessary ; and I've been reconciled to a lot of people I'd quarrelled with, people I can't stand under ordinary circumstances. Then I've let the girls get round me at home to an extent I should never have done if I'd my life before me. I've done a lot of serious thinking and reading and extra church-going. And now it turns out simple waste of time.' He is told that he can give up the abstemious habits which he adopted according to the doctor's advice and that now he can eat as much meat as he likes. But there will be some difficulty with the Vegetarian and Humanitarian societies which have elected him their Vice-President!

The naïve humour of a man who moves independently of convention is best seen in the life of Mr. Alfred Doolittle, father of Eliza in *Pygmalion*. Society makes a pretence that it distributes its wealth among its members as they deserve, an arrangement which is not only unworkable but also iniquitous. Alfred Doolittle, an original moralist, exposes the injustice

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of conventional standards which preU.

what people deserve to earn rather than desire to consume. He is one of the unpoor and frankly makes his claims on that .

'I am,' says he, 'one of the undeserving poor : the is what I am, think of what that means to a man. It means that he's up agen middle-class morality all the time. If there is anything going, and I put in a bit for it, it is always the same story : " You're undeserving ; so you can't have it." But my need is as great as the most deserving widow's that ever got money out of six different charities in one week for the death of the same husband. I don't need less than a deserving man ; I need more. I don't eat less hearty than him ; and I drink a lot more. Well, they charge me just the same for everything as they charge the deserving.' Alfred Doolittle is militantly unbourgeois even when he has suddenly come in for an inheritance. He feels that he will no longer be happy, that he is being intimidated by a morality that is opposed to the spirit of life. ' We are all intimidated,' says he, 'intimidated, ma'am : that is what we are. Intimidated. What is there for me if I chuck it but the workhouse in my old age ? . . . Happier men than me will call for my dust and touch me for their tips ; and I'll look on helpless, and envy them.' Doolittle is in every respect an ordinary man ; it is only his original morality combined with his general incompetence that makes him not only witty in himself but also the cause that wit is in others, and this brings him within the province of humour.

If Alfred Doolittle is frankly non-moral, Louis Dubedat is as openly immoral. His creed - is - the

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airbed enjoyment of life, and he believes the innocence of a child and the conviction (philosopher?) He may be guilty of bigamy and but all his misdeeds are perpetrated with an open-hearted good humour, which even Falstaff might have envied. He is surrounded by men who lend him money and confront him with charges of criminality. But their charges are charges of conventional morality and have, therefore, no weight with a man who is free from the bondage of convention. His high spirits rise above their accusations ; his resourcefulness is inexhaustible. He has arguments to defend all his actions and sometimes beats them with reasons derived from the same social morality, which they believe in, but by which he is absolutely uninfluenced. When they abuse his confidence, he accuses them of treachery, but when they charge him with having trifled with the affections of two innocent girls, he meets them with arguments drawn from his own aesthetic philosophy of life. There is a combination of childlike ingenuousness and acute ingenuity in many of Shaw's creations. It distinguishes Caesar as well as Napoleon, Bluntschli as well as Dick Dudgeon, Tarleton no less than Andrew Undershaft, Doolittle as much as Dubedat. It is the source of a comedy that is peculiarly Shavian. This comedy has an element of wit, because the men who are the source of the comic are all brilliant, original talkers ; it has also an "element of humour, because they have the simplicity and naiveté of children.

A Of all the social institutions which have moved Shaw to laughter, none has given him greater amusement than the medical profession which he looks upon

as a vested interest in ill-health. The vital force is unseen, intangible ; it follows its own laws. Medical science can deal with the physical organs, but the vital principle always eludes its grasp. The pretensions of this branch of witchcraft, which passes itself off as a science, are infinite. All its researches and conclusions are blunders, and the specialization of a doctor means the acquisition of a mania. The conference of doctors in *The Doctor's Dilemma* is a pandemonium of mono-maniacs. Sir Ralph Bloomfield Bonington will think of nothing but stimulating the phagocytes, Sir Richard Colenso Ridgeon will not stimulate them unless at the right moment, while Cutler Walpole, who regards every mental or physical trouble as a case of blood poisoning, will prescribe cutting of the nuciform sac as the panacea for all diseases. But they are, all of them, almost equally in the right, or equally in the wrong. For Sir Ralph Bloomfield Bonington injected a patient suffering from typhoid with tetanus serum and a tetanus patient with a serum meant for typhoid, and the result was that they recovered ! And yet there is a scientific and logical explanation for all the blundering successes and failures of the medical profession.

Doctors deal in disease, and from tinkering at life have lost all sense of its sacredness. These irreligious men regard every human life not as the embodiment of the Eternal Will but as a mere case on which they can carry on their experiments. When Louis Dubedat is at the point of death Sir Ralph Bloomfield Bonington, who has not been able to do anything to save him, contemplates the case with perfect good humour, and even wants to write a paper about it. 'It's an enormously interesting case, you know, Colly; by Jupiter, if I did

not know as a matter of scientific fact that I'd been stimulating the phagocytes, I should say I'd been stimulating the other things. What is the explanation of it, Sir Patrick? How do you account for it, Ridgeon? . . . Nay, have they finally begun to prey on the lungs themselves? Or on one another? I shall write a paper about this case.')

The most interesting instance of a medical man's insensibility is, however, to be found not in Dr. Bonington, but in Dr. Paramore, who, on the strength of experiments made on three dogs and one monkey, discovered a fatal disease called Paramore's disease, and passed sentence of death on Craven, who, he thought, was attacked with it. When, however, it is proved by his rivals, on the strength of more extensive experiments, that such a disease does not exist at all, he is not glad at the immunity of the human body from such a fatal ailment, but cries out in agony, 'The worst of news! Terrible news! Fatal news! My disease—the work of my life! . . .—it was all a mistake; there was no such disease.' When Craven remonstrates with him and not unnaturally, the doctor cuts him short, saying, 'It's natural for you to think only of yourself. I don't blame you: all invalids are selfish. Only a scientific man can feel what I feel now.' Too true I¹

¹ Shaw's antipathy to the medical profession reminds one of Moliere with whom he has other affinities, and M. Augustin Hamon has not only called Shaw 'The Twentieth Century Moliere', but drawn a long synoptic table of the similarities between them (*The Twentieth Century Moliere*, pp. 310-16). A careful scrutiny will, however, show that the affinities between them are very superficial and that the divergence is fundamental. Moliere is an individualist, while Shaw is a socialist. Moliere caricatures individual quacks, humbugs, and pretenders, whereas Shaw ridicules the medical profession and the Heartbreak House which we call cultured society. Thus, though Moliere's comedy is

II

From the above discussion it will appear that Shaw's plays are more humorous than witty. There are specimens of wit, no doubt; because his men and women are always conscious of the comic side of their fall and the ludicrous trait in their character. But Shaw never confines himself to an exhibition of mere intellectual brilliance. } There is, of course, no touch of sentiment, and Shaw's humour is not of the Shakespeare-Elia-Dickens type. But Shaw goes beyond mere sentiment and penetrates the instincts which form the bedrock of human character. (His plays are often witty in form, but they are always humorous in substance.)

The dramas of Shaw are not only rich in *bon mots*., but have also a farcical element ; and in the best plays, genuine drama has to be distinguished from the garb of farce.¹ There are two explanations for the predominance of farce in Shaw's comedies. The first is the ' abnormal normality ' of his philosophy ; for him all our social institutions are tremendous frauds which not only irritate him but also amuse him by their absurd pretences. He looks upon the world with the same amused contempt with which a man on his

penetrating, its scope is much narrower than Shaw's. Then, again, Shaw believes in the Life Force, and in his comedies the defeat of an individual means the triumph of the Life Force which is irrepressible. This lends a vivacity to his laughter which is not to be found in Moliere's. The difference between M. Jourdain (a bourgeois turned gentleman) and Alfred Doolittle (a dustman turned bourgeois) and between Moltere's Don Juan and Shaw's John Tanner, is the measure of the difference between Moliere and Shaw.

¹ M. Hamon points out that though Moliere and Shaw are great masters of comedy, they employ all the clownish devices to be found in popular farces. (*The Twentieth Century Moliere*, pp. 259, 302, etc.)

legs contemplates the fool who walks on his head. It is the paradoxical nature of his philosophy which makes him turn his characters into grotesques and pack his plots with those sudden inversions, exaggerations, and transpositions, which are the special property of farce. A comedian without his abnormal normality would certainly have written his dramas in a different manner. There is some affinity of spirit between Barrie's *What Every Woman Knows* and *Candida*; but Barrie's play has not the topsy-turvydom which marks the climax of Shaw's comedy, nor has the Admirable Crichton, unlike Shaw's never-failing William, a Q.C. for a son. The second reason for the predominance of farce in Shaw's comedies is to be found in the prominence he has always given to mere situation. His plays have generally very slender plots, the artistic interest being derived more from the exhibition of character through startling situations than from the weaving of a complex story.

It must be remembered that in Shaw's best comedies, such as *The Devil's Disciple* and *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, it is the picture of the human heart that is predominant, the situations having been devised only to exhibit character through action. In *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, the dramatist contrives a strange situation in which the uncle and the nephew meet each other on the hills of Morocco, and the end of the drama is marked by incidents not less sensational. But the situations have been so much subordinated to exhibiting the characters of Sir Howard Hallam, Captain Brassbound and Lady Cicely that the element of farce has been reduced to a minimum. In plays like *You Never Can Tell*, there is a harmonious combination of the

characteristics of farce and drama. The meeting of the father and the children is startlingly accidental, and there is a farcical incongruity in the relationship between a waiter father and a Q.,C. son. But mixed up with this farce, there is the drama of sexual attraction as well as the comedy of family life with all its misunderstandings and impostures. In *Arms and the Man*, there are many farcical situations, but the sttfdy of character has never been subordinated to them ; it is the elusive personality of the brilliant, 'self-acting' hero which shines through all the entertaining situations conceived by the dramatist.

There are some scenes in which the element of farce predominates and the true drama of character is sacrificed. In the meetings of the multi-millionaire Malone with his daughter-in-law and with Mendoza, the master brigand, there is not a spark of genuine comedy. In *Fanny's First Play*, there is an interesting study in contrast, but Shaw concentrates more on inventing situations than on analysing character, and the farcical element all but chokes the dramatic interest of the comedy. Then, again, the diagrammatic courtship in *Overruled* looks more like a parallelogram than a play. In *Misalliance*, there is an attempt at probing the depths of character, but study of character has been sacrificed to the rough-and-tumble situation which lends an element of farce to the comedy. *The Philanderer* is more a comedy of wit than a farce, but the meeting of Charteris, Julia, Grace and her father exhibits Shaw's fondness for farce. *The Man of Destiny* reduces Napoleon's life to a mere farcical situation, though the farce has been redeemed by a brilliant study of character.

The farcical situations referred to above are not of a rough or coarse type. But there are occasions when Shaw adopts devices involving physical movements, in which there is neither comedy nor even farce, but sheer horseplay. The most harmless of these low farces is the dance of Androcles and the Lion at the end of the drama of that name. Its only apology is that it is superfluous, for the dance is introduced when the drama is over. (Some justification may also be found for the farces enacted by the newspaper man. Sir Ralph Bloomfield Bonington, and Louis Dubedat, in the last scene of *The Doctor's Dilemma*. Louis Dubedat's death cannot arouse the true tragic emotions, and it is fitting that the tragedy should be brought down to the level of farce.) The talk between Tanner and the Legs in *Man and Superman*, the incident of the pig in *John Bull's Other Island*, and the masked ball in *Ton Never Can Tell*, too, are unobjectionable farces, but they are pointless; for they do not help to propagate any idea nor have they any importance as studies in character. But there are other absurdities which are not only pointless but also inartistic. The scene in which Boss Mangan begins to strip himself is extremely awkward and is saved only by the symbolical suggestion which may possibly be read into it. There are some flashes of genuine insight into character in *Great Catherine*, but there is so much kicking and tickling in the play that it seems to be more an exhibition of gymnastics than a comedy. In *Misalliance*, the pursuit of Hypatia by Percival and of Percival by Hypatia is a device of the coarsest type, and the advantage that Johnny takes of Bentley's physical weakness belongs more to farce than to drama. The Tomfooleries employ clownish devices

which are almost always more entertaining than artistic. For example, Balsquith's travelling to Mitchener's lodgings in the disguise of a suffragette is a farcical incident which can have no place in a genuine comedy. The most popular amongst these little pieces, *Passion, Poison, and Petrification*, has aroused interest not by its study of character but by a picture of the gradual petrification of a man through the administration of poison and lime. There is only one instance in the whole range of Shavian comedy in which physical movements have been inter-related with the study of character. It is the scene in *Caesar and Cleopatra*, in which Cleopatra is swung off to Caesar along with the carpets of Apollodorus ; and the most amusing incident of this type is to be found in the first scene of the same drama, where the Queen of Egypt meets an unknown soldier to whom she describes Julius Caesar as a man with a nose like an elephant's trunk, and the stranger, who is none other than Caesar himself, ' involuntarily rubs his nose '.

CHAPTER X

THE NOVELIST

I

BERNARD SHAW started his career as a creative artist, not in the domain of the drama where he has attained so much celebrity, but in prose fiction, in which he wrote five novels which he has modestly described as novels of his nonage, and though some critics are said to have declared that as an artist he never surpassed the excellence achieved in *Cashel Byroris Profession*, the fact remains that he found his public through his dramas rather than through his novels. Even Mr. Joseph McCabe, who feels that Shaw might have 'won a large circle of admirers as a novelist when his conception of work was fully developed', finds in the early novels clearer evidence of dramatic talent than of a gift for novel writing.¹ Indeed, his novels are remembered only because they are the work of a great dramatist, and not because they are masterpieces by themselves. It seems that there is something in the technique of the novel which is alien to his art, and it is highly significant that though he has written about forty plays since the production of *Widowers' Houses*, he has not written a single novel.²

¹ *George Bernard Shaw*, p. 23.

² He has written some short stories and scraps which have now been collected in the Standard Edition. Of these, *The Emperor and the Little Girl* and *The Serenade*, are beautiful short stories, even if they are judged by conventional standards. Of the rest, some like *Aerial Football*, *A Dressing Room Secret*, *Still after the DoWs House*, are brilliant fantasies. The others are less remarkable, though all the 'shavings' are characteristic of Shaw.

The technique of the novel is very different from the technique of the drama. A drama is meant to be acted, and the acting lasts only a few hours. The number of characters must not exceed the supply of actors, and the principal roles are to be played by the 'stars' whom the audience want to appear on the stage as frequently as possible. The audience do not read the play in a leisurely manner ; they come to be moved by a spectacle. That is why the plot of a drama is very often a fragment of the life of the hero and consists of a succession of moving scenes in which the principal actors try to monopolize the attention. All these considerations have no weight in a novel which is meant for slow and leisurely reading at home. The plot of a novel may be lengthy and complex, covering years and sometimes generations ; there is no external necessity for limiting the number of characters, and petty incidents can be described with the same minuteness as the mighty adventures. Thus in the manner of narration, the novel is a more realistic form of art than the drama.¹ The drama is a selection of dazzling scenes whereas the novel traces the slow evolution of a plot through minor details as much as through major adventures.

Shaw has labelled his novels works of his ^c nonage'. What exactly this expression means is difficult to say. In the Preface to *Immaturity*, he asserts that he left off writing novels, because after writing one or two sections

¹ In a letter to Ellen Terry, Bernard Shaw says that the introduction of some tourists in *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* would have made the play more realistic, 'but it would have lengthened the play and scattered the interest/ (*Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw : A Correspondence*, p. 332.) This is a consideration that would have less weight with him, if he had made a novel out of the theme.

of the novel, he discovered that he must 'educate himself further'. When we remember that at that time he had completed his socialistic education and was doing a good deal of public speaking, it seems that the failure of his novels is not due to his lack of education ; neither can it be said to be due to his hostility to conventional standards of good taste or morality, because the dramas, which have conquered the world, are in this respect even more offensive than the novels. And it is significant that when after a period of critical journalism Shaw returned to fiction, he did so as a playwright rather than as a novelist.

The real cause of his failure as a novelist is that in this department he started with a great handicap. He has the gift of contriving situations, but he has no capacity for inventing and managing complex plots. It has been constantly pointed out that his dramas are inartistic, because they have no story-interest. This criticism, which has only a limited applicability to Shaw's dramas, can be urged with greater force against his novels. Not that the novels are always lacking in incidents, but the main story is seldom well told, and the isolated episodes are not unified into an organic whole. In *Immaturity*, his first venture, the main story is beautifully conceived, but it is spoilt as much by over elaboration as by the introduction of sub-plots that have only a remote connexion with it. Robert Smith is fascinated by a dancer, falls in love with a dressmaker and is made love to by his employer's daughter, Isabella Woodward. But the dancing girl passes out of his life even before he has made her acquaintance ; the dressmaker and Isabella are married to other men, and the end of the

story finds its hero a lonely bachelor. The tragi-comic ending, especially the anti-climax on which the affair with Isabella ends, is characteristic of Shaw, and all but suggests the technique of his plays. Harriet, the dressmaker, says that Smith is a 'bad case of immaturity', but Smith's failure is really due to his priggishness which repels women sooner than his sobriety and correctness attract them.

This story, which might have been told through a succession of dramatic scenes, is choked by too many unnecessary descriptions and digressions. Mrs. Foster, Mrs. Summers, even Patrick Hawkshaw and Cyril Scott are given more importance than they deserve, and there seems to be no reason why characters like Grosvenor and Lady Geraldine Porter are introduced into a novel in which they have no part to play. Indeed, the irrelevant characters and episodes obscure the real significance of the marriage between Harriet and Cyril, which the reader can fully grasp only when he comes to the end to find that Smith is a mere guest in the house where he might have been the master. Smith's flirtation with Isabella is powerfully portrayed, but even here the episode of Hawkshaw might have gained by condensation. One fails to see why the Watkinses and Fraser Fenwick figure in the novel, because their only connexion with it is that Fraser and Smith happen for a few days to occupy rooms in the same house. Davis, again, is an interloper whose story only serves to remind the reader of Frank Harris's description of Shaw's novels as 'duller than pewter'.

An Unsocial Socialist and *Cashel Bywris Profession* fail to impress only because the author has not been able

to manage the plots. In the former, we have the story of a sentimental socialist who wants to set the world right by his own unaided efforts. But Shaw does not believe in personal righteousness or in individual efforts at the reconstruction of society. In *Widowers' Houses* and *Major Barbara*, where he has given expression to these beliefs, he has contrived situations where the hero and the heroine discover that the whole of society is rotten to the core and that their own incomes are derived from the corrupt practices they want to abolish. The dramatic beauty of these plays is largely derived from the startling though unforced manner in which the truth is borne home to the romantic Trench and the Salvationist Major Barbara, and also from the subtle art by which the whole world has been represented as a party to the nefarious practices which are generally attributed only to certain sections of men and women. There is a contrast between the dirt of society and the beauty of romantic sentiment, and there is also a picture of the futility of these sentiments.

In the novel, *An Unsocial Socialist*, Shaw cannot contrive any situation where Sidney Trefusis might realize the contradiction between his socialism and his unsocial sentimentalism. He only makes his hero play some antics in his career as an unsuccessful labourer, which do not lead to anything beyond his flirtation with Agatha Wylie. He runs away from his wife, but marriage and flight have no real connexion with his socialistic convictions, for Shaw cannot clearly demonstrate the relation between his sentimentalism and his unsocial socialism. Probably he wants to say that a man, who engages in so many

courtships and who performs so many romantic feats, is incompetent for socialistic work ; but such a man is unfit to do any work that requires steady application, socialistic or otherwise. Another great defect of this novel is that there is no real unity in the incidents narrated here. Everything seems to happen by accident. There is no justification for the introduction and dismissal of Henrietta. The marriage of Sidney and Agatha is so much the result of accidental flirtation that one fails to see why it is preceded by two previous instalments of courtship, nor is it clear why Sidney plays the gallant with Gertrude Lindsay whom he persuades to marry Chichester Erskine.

Not only is the novel too episodic to impress the reader as a connected story, but Shaw also mis-manages the isolated episodes. Miss Wilson, the Headmistress of Alton College, uses physical coercion, though she herself thinks that in her establishment the students have full liberty and there is no restraint but that of moral persuasion. With her recording angel, her philosophy of moral force and her practice of physical coercion, she is the counterpart of Mrs. Clandon in *Ton Never Can Tell*. But in the drama, the contrast between the philosophy and practice of Mrs. Clandon is made vivid by the children asking unobjectionable questions which the freedom-loving mother refuses to answer and by their quoting her own maxims against herself. In the novel, the comedy of the situation is watered down by lengthy descriptions and by the students discussing the matter behind the back of their teacher. The mutual recognition between Trefusis and his wife Henrietta is a truly dramatic situation, but the couple fly away as soon

as they have recognized each other, and there are only second-hand reports of what they did after fleeing from the College. The situation, so rich in dramatic possibilities, loses all its charm, because the recognition takes place with unwarranted suddenness and the incident is closed as soon as Henrietta has found out who Joseph Smilash is. In *You Never Can Tell*, there is a similar episode, where Crampton and the Clandons accidentally discover their relationship with one another, but Shaw takes full advantage of the possibilities in the embarrassing situation which is saved only by the presence of mind of the never-failing waiter William, and of his resourceful son Water Bohun, Q .C.

Cashel Byron's Profession is a popular novel and was praised by no less a judge than Robert Louis Stevenson. But even this novel gives a poor idea of Bernard Shaw's artistic workmanship. It is an attempt at the portraiture of a genuine hero, and will, therefore, remind one of dramas like *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *The Man of Destiny*, *Arms and the Man*, and *The Devil's Disciple*, where Shaw creates heroes who are 'naturally great', who have an 'original morality' and see things beyond the gaze of ordinary man. He portrays his heroes by placing them in extraordinary situations in which they act with self-control and with absolute freedom from convention. *Cashel Byron's Profession* is a novel, and must not, therefore, be a mere succession of exciting episodes. Shaw gives his novel the semblance of a plot by describing the whole story of Byron's life from his boyhood to his wedding and giving also a report of his happy married life. Not only is it a connected story, but the author tries also to render it complex by making him fall in love with a respectable woman far above him in

social position. This lady has an enthusiastic lover in her cousin, Lucian Webber, whom she likes, but does not consider so 'biologically attractive' as the pugilist hero. The episode of Bashville, who falls in love with his beautiful mistress, and the affairs of Alice Goff are intended to add to the complexity of the plot.

A close examination will, however, reveal that there is less of a real plot than of a semblance of it. Cashel's running away from his mother, the prizefights, the flight from the ring, the pursuit by the police—these are episodes which do not help to reveal the depths of human character. Some of these episodes are rich in possibilities, but in the novel they look like adventures in a detective novel—mere thrillers which have no significance from the point of view of art. Shaw wants to show that a prizefighter need not be a blackguard, professional pugilism being as honest as any other occupation. In all his transactions, Cashel Byron does not *do* anything blackguardly; he earns his fortune honestly and never behaves meanly. But he has not that instinctive heroism which we find in Richard Dudgeon, or that instinctive self-possession and that deep insight which mark out supermen like Caesar, Napoleon, and Bluntschli. His heroism is of a completely negative type. He is unsophisticated and untouched by conventional morality; but this is due more to ignorance of conventional manners and standards of right and wrong than to any inherent superiority to them. As the husband of Lydia Carew and a Member of Parliament, he must have behaved like a conventional gentleman of means and not like a hero who judges things by original standards and acts upon original principles.

Shaw considers self-control an essential constituent of heroism and has blamed Shakespeare for making a hero of a hog like Antony. But in *Cashel Eyroris Profession*, he has himself drawn the picture of a hero who is a slave of passion and resigns everything for the sake of getting Lydia Carew as wife. When he is first rejected by her, he raves like a madman and behaves like a cad. Indeed, one wonders if Shaw's only ground for regarding Cashel Byron as a heroic character is that he can be loved by a respectable lady like Lydia Carew. Lydia, in her turn, falls in love with Cashel not because she finds something specially noble in him, but because he is unlike lazy aristocrats like Lucian, and because he has the appearance of a sylvan god. It is his physical prowess and his beauty, and not any inner quality of character, which make him 'biologically attractive' to his lady-love. It may be pointed out that these are defects of conception rather than of construction. This is no doubt true, but it is probable that Shaw would have made a better work of art out of the story if he had written a stage play instead of a novel. There are some excellent situations, such as the one in which Lydia conceals the fugitive Cashel and throws the police off the scent, a scene which will remind the reader of a similar episode in *Arms and the Man*, where Raina gives shelter to Captain Bluntschli. In the novel, however, Shaw does not want to emphasize the dramatic possibilities in the situation and has a novelist's anxiety to proceed with the story. But he has no gift for narrating a complicated tale through significant details which bring out hidden traits of character.

The dramatic version of the story called *The Admirable*

Bashville does not deserve more than a mere passing notice. It is a tomfoolery, written only to anticipate the attempts of those who might steal Shaw's story and turn it into a play. It is, in point of style, a parody of the Elizabethan manner, and cannot, therefore, be regarded as a serious attempt at drama.¹ It is in no way an improvement on the novel, and in the episodes in which the dramatic version departs from the original, it is a failure. The scenes in which Lydia conceals Byron (almost against her will and certainly against her conscience) and in which Cashel Byron meets his mother are two of the best things in a bad novel, and one might think that Shaw would make excellent dramatic versions of them. But in the tomfoolery of *The Admirable Bashville* Cashel comes out from his concealment to surrender to the police when he finds that the alternative is to surrender to his mother. Not only is it unnatural, but it also awkwardly lets down Lydia in the presence of Lucian, Bashville, Byron's mother, and the police. Far from taking advantage of the dramatic possibilities of the situation in his novel, Shaw only spoils them by introducing this crudity. He seems to be too anxious about his heretical doctrines of filial affection and duty to care for probability and artistic propriety.

Love Among the Artists and *The Irrational Knot* are far better works than the two novels discussed above. They have both an elaborate and complicated plot with diversity in characterization. In spite of these qualities, however, they are only an additional proof

¹ In *The Perfect Wagnerite* (p. 130) Shaw describes blank verse as a 'devastating tradition' which robs 'the dramatic style of the genuine poet of its full natural endowment of variety, force and simplicity'.

that novel-writing was not Shaw's metier. Even in these works in which he can give a complicated story, there is not that process of slow development which is essential to prose fiction.

It is this lack of development which spoils not only *Cashel Byron's Profession* but also *Love Among the Artists*, which otherwise has many promising features. Owen Jack, the central character, is a man of genius, wedded to his art and oblivious of everything else. He is rather brusque, almost coarse in manners, and has the self-confidence, the independence of spirit, and the creative energy which belong only to genius. These are the impressions which a reader gets of him at the very first sight, and this is the impression which is repeated on every succeeding occasion. This makes the novel monotonous, which is the last thing that can be said of the better dramas of Shaw. There is only one situation which is unexpected and startling ; this is the occasion on which Jack meets Madge and her father and helps the daughter to escape the tyranny of the household. The supreme indifference with which he gives away all his money is a characteristic of his artistic temperament ; it is a new trait which is discovered only on this occasion. But after this affair, the activities and the conversation of Owen Jack become extremely dull, because the reader can anticipate how he will talk and behave in a particular situation, even before he has himself appeared in it.

From the Preface, it appears that in this novel the author wanted to draw a contrast between two sorts of artists, the false artist and the true, to illustrate the difference between the enthusiasm for the fine arts which people gather by reading about them, and the

genuine artistic faculty which cannot help creating, interpreting, or at least unaffectedly enjoying music and pictures. But before the story has made any advance, the false artist becomes madly infatuated about Mary Sutherland and then about Aurelie Szczymplyca. Thus love affairs are intermingled with incidents which are meant to illustrate the difference between the confidence of the true artist and the got-up enthusiasm of one who lacks the genuine aesthetic faculty. Probably the author wants to show that the man or the woman who is wedded to art is above that slavery to amorous sentiment which marks Philistines and pseudo-artists like Adrian Herbert, for Owen Jack does not propose to Mary with the same infatuation with which Adrian wooed her, and there is also a distinction between the love which Adrian has for Aurelie and the affection which Aurelie has for Adrian. But Aurelie and Jack seem to be insensitive creatures on whose souls love makes little impression. Aurelie is married and has a child, and Jack makes a proposal of marriage ; but they appear to be too intensely devoted to their art to be mindful of the call of the Life Force, though it must have overcome them, as it overcomes John Tanner and Gloria Clandon. There must have been an inward contradiction between their passion for art and their passion for sexual gratification, but Shaw so exaggerates the former that the picture seems to be wholly one-sided. The unity of the plot is marred also by the incidents connected with Madge Brailsford, who has no part to play in the main story. She seems to have been introduced only to illustrate Shaw's favourite doctrine that the family is a nuisance, but as the main theme is not about life but about art,

Madge and her father are nothing but interlopers in the story of Jack and Herbert, and Madge's relationship with Jack does not make her an organic part of the main plot.

The Irrational Knot, which may be regarded as Shaw's masterpiece in prose fiction, suffers from the same defect. The main story of Ned Conolly and Marian Lind, with Sholto Douglas coming to form the eternal triangle, is powerfully narrated. Marian Lind is a beautiful girl, the flower of aristocratic society in London, the society which lives on the hard-earned money of the working classes. She feels a natural attraction to Edward Conolly, the indefatigable inventor, the plebeian, who earns his own bread, and is proud to do it. But she cannot live with him happily. She and her society have always been fed on unreality, and, therefore, she is unhappy in the company of the hardest of all realities, a working man. She runs away with Sholto Douglas, her lover of the unreal world of Heartbreak House, but is shocked to discover that a union between two persons who have avoided all realities, is as irrational as a marriage between a working man who has faced nothing but reality, and a woman who has lived only on illusions. Edward Conolly is a considerate husband and offers to take his wife back, but as matters have been complicated by Marian bearing a child to another man, he agrees to her proposal to untie the Irrational Knot for good.

The Irrational Knot is, as Shaw himself points out in the preface, the story of *A Doll's House* over again. Though the heroine is never in anything like the situation of Nora, she makes the same painful

discovery about the irrationality of the marital tie. Shaw adds to the complexity of the plot by giving two lovers to his doll, each different from the other not only in his occupation and general attitude to life, but also in his relations with the common lady-love. In the drama, Ibsen expresses his philosophy by conceiving a few startling situations, and the brilliance of his exposition and the intensity of Nora's contempt for the Doll's House have made it one of the greatest dramas of the world. The defect of *The Irrational Knot* is that it has no plot worth the name. Nora discovers the hollowness of her position as a married wife only after being compelled to adopt a thousand subterfuges for keeping her prestige with her husband and her children, and the threats of the blackmailer Krogstad also prove too much for her nerves. She concentrates her energies into one masterly effort and bursts her chains. There is no such thing in Shaw's novel. Marian leaves her husband because she thinks that he does not make enough of a doll of her, and the immediate cause of the elopement is that he does not take her to Glasgow. She seems to leave him, not out of a deep, settled conviction, but in a huff, and would not probably have gone away if Sholto Douglas had not been there to make love to her and also to make the proposal of elopement.

The principal story is magnificently conceived, but the plot is rather thin, and to make up for this defect Shaw introduces the episode of Marmaduke Lind and Susannah Conolly, who try to live together without being wedded to each other, but it is soon found that their union is as unhappy as the irrational knot of marriage. This part of the story has

only a slender connexion with the main plot, and here Shaw packs his cards by representing Susannah as a woman who is always tiggly and with whom it is impossible to live. Indeed, this part of the story is like one of those cause-and-effect, mechanical dramas which Shaw abhors so much. It is a Temperance Society morality on the evils of drinking and has only an indirect connexion with the union of the sexes, which is the principal theme of the novel. Shaw must have introduced this episode to make the plot of the novel more substantial, but it only mars the beauty of the main story by its crude moralization.

CHAPTER XI

THE CRITIC OF SHAKESPEARE AND IBSEN

I

BERNARD SHAW'S criticism has its own peculiarity. He deliberately adopts a point of view which the majority of critics regard as uncritical. Every genuine critic tries to place himself in the position of the author and to judge a work with special reference to what the latter wanted to produce. Criticism thus becomes not only a judgement from without but also an interpretation from within. Shaw, however, rejects impartiality as 'a figment attainable only through indifference'. 'I must', says he in a prefatory essay, 'warn the reader that what he is about to study is not a series of judgements aiming at impartiality . . . I brought everybody, authors, actors, managers, to the one test : were they coming my way or staying in the old grooves ? . . . As a rule, I set up my own standard of what the drama should be and how it should be presented; and I used all my art to make every deviation in aiming at this standard, every recalcitrance in approaching it, every refusal to accept it seem ridiculous and old-fashioned.'

Shaw's criticisms of Shakespeare and Ibsen are, therefore, not criticisms in the true sense of the term. Shakespeare did not write dramas according to the Shavian standard, and Shaw's judgements of the Immortal Bard consist mostly of sheer abuse which makes us smile at its very exaggeration. There is no

¹ *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*, Vol. I, p. xxi.

interpretation, no analysis, no attempt at an understanding of the genius of Shakespeare from within. Even where there is praise, there is no penetrating analysis, no real insight. He praises Antony (in *Julius Caesar*' not in *Antony and Cleopatra*) as superlative and has also a few words to say in appreciation of Shakespeare's command of language, his gift of telling a story and his prodigious fund of that vital energy, which is the true differentiating property behind the faculties of the man of genius.² It is otherwise with Ibsen. This dramatist is a master of the kind of play which Shaw holds as 'desirable', and here the critic has not only given his verdict but also analysed and interpreted the plays. But Shaw views the dramas from *his* own point of view alone. His analysis of Ibsen's works is thus one-sided, and it has been pointed out by many critics that his dissertation on Ibsen is more a quintessence of Shavianism than 'the quintessence of Ibsenism'.

Shaw regards his criticism as well as his creative work as a part of propaganda, and it is only natural that he should try to draw a line of distinction between the substance and the form of art, between its philosophy and literary technique. He points out more than once that his work on the quintessence of Ibsenism is an exposition of Ibsen's message rather than a criticism of his literary art.³ In the preface to *Three Plays for Puritans*, he suggests that the content of art changes from one age to another, while the form remains intact. In the twentieth century, we have travelled far beyond Shakespeare's philosophy, and,

¹ *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*, Vol. II, p. 398.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 52.

³ *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, p. xxiii. (Preface to First Edition), etc.

therefore, his ideas do not appeal to us ; but the technical peculiarities are eternal and unchangeable, and though Shakespeare's ideas now appear to be crude, his music is as entrancing to-day as it was three hundred years ago. Shaw goes even so far as to hold that 'only musical critics should be allowed to meddle with Shakespeare—specially early Shakespeare'.¹

It must be pointed out here that this distinction drawn by Shaw is artificial and untenable. The form of art can never be distinguished from its content. For convenience of analysis, they may sometimes be discussed separately, but it must never be forgotten that in a work of art they are indivisible from each other. If Shakespeare is a great poet to-day, it is not so much for his music and his language as for the ideas of which the music and the language are the expressions, and *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* is a work of literary criticism, even though it treats more of Ibsen's message than of his technical craftsmanship.

Bernard Shaw's criticism of Shakespeare is vitiated by another misconception about the nature of art. Shaw regards comedy as a lower form of art than tragedy. 'Description', says he, 'is not philosophy ; he (Shakespeare) must be judged by those characters into which he puts what he knows of himself, his Hamlets and Macbeths and Lears and Prosperos.'² This, however, is an untenable distinction. Every work of art is an imaginative picture and must, therefore, be a revelation of the deeper sensibilities of the author. Dogberry and Bottom and Stephano and Trinculo are as much an expression of Shakespeare's

¹ *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*, Vol. I, p. 24.

² *Man and Superman* : 'The Epistle Dedicatory', p. xxx.

personality as Hamlet, Iago, and Cleopatra. The aspects revealed in comedy are not the same as those which tragedy unfolds, but both are equally real. Shaw himself admits that Falstaff is the one man in the whole range of Shakespeare's creation who approaches his own ideal of the heroic, and Falstaff is not only witty in himself but also the cause that wit is in others.

Shaw claims a special merit for his criticism of Shakespeare. There was so much Shakespeare worship during the whole of the nineteenth century that it reached almost the point of idolatry. It was held by the romantic critics of the nineteenth century that almost every work of Shakespeare reached the highest excellence in drama and that he was divinely infallible. In modern times, Shakespeare is still read and appreciated as the greatest of poets, but Shakespearolatry is no longer in vogue. As Shaw himself has put it, 'When I began to write, William was a divinity and a bore. Now he is a fellow-creature.'⁵¹ Bernard Shaw has justly claimed that he is one of those men to whose outspoken judgements this change in attitude is due. Looked at from this point of view, his amusing scurrilities have had a salutary effect; they have given a healthy tone to Shakespearean criticism.

Shaw points out that Shakespearean drama is an [inferior specimen of art because it is romantic in its situations, conventional in its ideas, and pessimistic in its temper. Shakespeare generally borrows the plots of his dramas from others. These stories are mostly romantic and wonderful, and introduce all sorts of extravagant incidents and situations. It is Shakespeare's speciality that even in these unbelievably

¹ *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*, Vol. II, p. 465.

wonderful stories, he gives genuine glimpses of the subtleties of human character. But in such dramas as *A Midsummer Mghfs Dream*,¹ *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Cymbeline*, there are extravagances without genuine studies of character. Bernard Shaw's objection to the 'childish stuff' in these plays is unexceptionable ; they have not ^c the overpowering human interest of those original criticisms of life which supply the rhetorical element in his best work '. Such childish stuff finds a place also in Shakespeare's best comedies like *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Bernard Shaw is very hard on *As You Like It* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Much of his criticism of these dramas is inept, but there is no doubt that even in these plays genuine human drama is mixed up with a good deal of romantic extravagance.

There is yet another aspect of Shaw's criticism of Shakespeare to which no objection can be taken. Renaissance romance was associated with criminality, and the Elizabethans thought that mere ^c horror was naturally akin to sublimity'. Alone amongst the Elizabethans, Shakespeare has revealed the depths of human nature behind sensational stories of murder and lust. But in a ^c school of falsehood, bloody-mindedness, bombast, and intellectual cheapness, his standard was naturally dragged down ', and in plays like *Richard III*, he has substituted mere horror for sublimity. Bernard Shaw's criticism of *Richard III* is unfair to the last scenes where there is the dawn of real

¹ Bottom is, of course, one of the noblest specimens of Shakespeare's art.

² Curiously enough Shaw regards the immature play of *All's Well That Ends Well* as a masterpiece. (*Dramatic Opinions and Essays*, Vol. I, pp. 24 ff.)

human interest. Richard's fear of spirits and the awakening of his conscience are not mere conventional appendages like the Punch hump, as Shaw misunderstands them to be. But he justly points out that this early drama is more a Punch and Judy show than a profound and subtle historical study.¹ Here, as in other historical plays, Shakespeare mistakes not only horror for romance, but also mere warfare for history. *Henry V* is a good text-book for inculcating patriotism and is said to have been recommended for study in wartime Germany, but as an analysis of human character its value is negligible. It is Falstaff alone that redeems the two parts of *Henry IV*, in which the other characters are portrayed with 'the roughest directness', and in which there is very little of philosophy or poetry.

Shaw does well to draw our attention to the extravagances that Shakespeare accepted for romance. But he confuses genuine romance and its sensational counterpart. Shaw has an inherent incapacity for appreciating literature that is conventional and romantic. Having started life as an economist, he has failed to understand feelings that are their own justification. He recognizes the instinct of sex, but leaves the romance of love out of consideration. He lays stress on the impersonal character of sex and points out that the sex relation can and does exist between entire strangers, different in language, colour, tastes, class, civilization, morals, religion and character.²

¹ *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 131-9.

² That Shakespeare knew of this impersonality can be gathered from *Airs Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*. Helena is rejected by Bertram and Mariana by Angelo, but the men find nothing repelling in being 'bedded' with them!

Sex, however, is not merely an appetite but also a feeling. It is a violent instinct, but it is satisfied by means of intimate contact with a living person who derives satisfaction while affording it to the partner. This give-and-take arouses deep emotions which can never be killed by the mere act of gratification. Love is a composite sentiment which combines remembrance of the past, happiness in the present, and expectation about the future. There is an indefinable sweetness, which has no biological or pragmatic value, and is yet a subtle aroma, pervading everything biological and economic. In writing his dramas Shakespeare had no set propaganda before him. He exhibits the profoundest emotion in all its phases, in its romantic triumph as well as in its tragic futility. There is barrenness in Isabella who represses it and does not seem to feel the call at all ; there is happy union between the lovers in *As You Like It*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*, while Othello kills himself and his wife, and Antony loses a world for the sake of Cleopatra. The desire to idealize or idolize anything may have no significance from a practical point of view, but it is a real feeling, and it is the depth and intensity of the passion for idealizing love which gives reality to Shakespeare's portraiture of humanity. Cleopatra may be a Circe, but Antony is not a hog, because he retains to the last an imaginative outlook on life, which is the hall-mark of humanity.

Shaw objects not only to the romantic sentiments in Shakespeare's dramas but also to the romantic situations to be found there. He forgets that Shakespeare portrays the deepest passions and has, therefore, to invent situations that are unusual, because they help

to reveal the hidden depths of character. In real life there will be a thousand little incidents whose combined testimony will divulge to Hamlet the secret of his father's death and impress on him the duty of taking revenge. As it is not possible to reproduce all these minor incidents, Shakespeare condenses their force into one extraordinary situation where Hamlet meets the ghost of his dead father and realizes what the mission of his life consists in. What is important to remember is that in the greater dramas of Shakespeare there is no extraordinary situation which is unrelated to human emotions. The situations may be extraordinary, but they are made real by the genuineness of the passions that have been stirred. The Witches came to Macbeth and not to Lady Macbeth, and their prophecies have not the same influence on the two generals whom they meet. Then, again, with the progress of events and the gradual hardening of Macbeth's heart, there is a change in his relationship with the Weird Sisters. The pound of flesh in *The Merchant of Venice* is merely an indication of Shylock's mortal hatred of Antonio, and the great trial scene has been invented only to give an exhibition of Portia's powers and also to show that in spite of all her forensic skill, the great lawyer is at heart a witty young woman. She not only wins her case, but also plays a trick on her husband. It is the great defect of Bernard Shaw's criticism of Shakespeare that he disentangles romantic devices from their emotional context and then condemns them for their falsity.¹

/ In the very brilliant scrap, *A Dressing Room Secret*, Shaw makes the bust of Shakespeare define a farce as 'a play in which the misunderstandings are not natural, but mechanical', and then illustrates this definition with reference to the terrible tragedy, *Othello*. What

Bernard Shaw's chief ground of complaint against Shakespeare's dramas is that there is no heroic figure amongst all his creations. Shaw thinks that a hero ought not to be guided by conventional standards of good and evil, but by an original morality, which is independent of conventions and moral generalizations. He should be self-acting. Shakespeare, says Shaw, 'is forced to borrow motives for the more strenuous actions of his personages from the common stockpot of melodramatic plots ; so that Hamlet has to be stimulated by the prejudices of a policeman, and Macbeth by the cupidities of a bush-ranger.'¹ Shaw points out, further, that the romantic heroes act from motives 'rigidly commercial'. They do not consider a noble life worth living and a great work worth doing for their own sake, unless the commercial profit and loss sheet showed that the one brought happiness and the other money.

A conventional motive or idea is one which has been agreed upon by people in general, and which an individual accepts without personally feeling its impulse. An individual can never constitute a society, and that is why all human feelings are made up as much of external stimulus as of inner impulse, the latter being always a reaction to the former. Whether an impulse is original or is a mere external pressure has to be determined in every individual case by the nature of the feeling. If it has passed through the alembic of a man's soul and been transformed in the

the Shavian bust of Shakespeare fails to realize is that even 'mechanical' misunderstandings are rendered 'natural' when they are vitalized by emotion. The loss of the handkerchief in *Othello* is fundamentally different from such happenings in farces and comedies.

¹ *Man and Superman*: 'The Epistle Dedicatory', p. xxix.

process, it has become original and personal. It is not the idea but the nature of the feeling that matters. Looked at from this point of view, every protagonist in Shakespeare's tragedies is a heroic figure. The duty of avenging the murder of a man may be a policeman's prejudice, but no policeman feels it in the manner of Hamlet. Hamlet's duty is an external stimulus, but his conscience is original, because it is his own. He has, of course, no will except in bursts of temper. But Shakespeare cannot be blamed for this, because in the tragedy *of Hamlet*, he wants (as Shaw also haltingly recognizes) to draw the picture of a will paralyzed by a moral shock and by a tendency to think too precisely on the event. Macbeth has a share of the cupidities of a bushranger, but the typical bushranger has not the imaginative susceptibilities of Macbeth. Indeed, Shakespeare's heroes are so distinctly individualized that if Hamlet were placed in the position of Othello or Othello in the position of Hamlet, there would have been no tragedy.

Bernard Shaw's criticism that Shakespeare's heroes > act from motives which are rigidly commercial is also equally misconceived. Claudius hailed Hamlet as the person immediate to his throne, and from a worldly point of view it would have been better for the prince to stay quietly with his uncle-father and aunt-mother and then reign as a happy monarch. But he resigns all his earthly prospects to gratify his impulse to wreak vengeance for his father's murder. Killing Desdemona does not bring Othello any material happiness ; it is only the gratification of the inmost impulse in his heart and is its own justification. Shakespeare's heroes are romantic ; they may even

be called hedonistic ; but what is important to note is that they are not automatons moved from without.

Shaw fails to grasp the spirit of Shakespearean drama, because it is based on a view of life and art fundamentally different from his own. Shaw's philosophy of life has no connexion with the existence of evil in human nature. 'Crime, like disease,' says he, 'is not interesting.'¹ He thinks that the really bad man is as rare as the really good man, and to him life is, in spite of poverty, disease and misfortune, a huge joke. This is fundamentally different from Shakespeare's outlook on life, which considers evil an essential element in human nature. Macbeth's villainy is as real as his conscience ; Gertrude may be an affectionate mother, but she is also a treacherous wife and marries a murderer. Shakespeare does not consider crimes uninteresting, because they have their springs in human nature. In his tragedies he portrays the conflict between good and evil ; he looks upon evil as a destructive force that kills itself and also spoils much that is good. It is because of this that his philosophers turn into hypochondriacs, and his noblemen look like fools. Bernard Shaw, who does not understand the spirit of Shakespearean art, thinks that Shakespeare has mistaken hypochondriacs for philosophers and viewed the world as 'a great stage of fools on which he was utterly bewildered'. Nothing is farther from the truth. There is greatness and nobility in Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Cordelia, Ophelia, and Desdemona, but the presence of evil turns it to dust and ashes.

¹ Preface to *Saint Joan*, p. Iv.

² *Man and Superman*: 'The Epistle Dedicatory', p. xxix.

This is what Shaw fails to understand, and it is on account of this fundamental misconception that he condemns all the great tragedies except *Hamlet*, for which he has faint praise, and that terrible drama *Coriolanus* strikes him as one of the greatest of Shakespeare's comedies.¹

Another Shavian charge against Shakespeare is that his characters are too consistent to be human. 'Rosalind', says Shaw, 'is not a complete human being: she is simply an extension into five acts of the most affectionate, fortunate, delightful five minutes in the life of a charming woman. And all the other figures in the play are cognate impostures. Orlando, Adam, Jacques, Touchstone, the banished Duke and the rest play each the same tune all through. This is not human nature or dramatic character.'² . . . If there is one lesson that real life teaches us more insistently than another, it is that we must not infer one quality from another, or even rely on the constancy of ascertained qualities under all circumstances. . . . In romance, all these "inconsistencies" are corrected by replacing human nature by conventional assortments of qualities. When Shakespeare objected to this regulation, and wrote *AIVs Well That Ends Well* in defiance of it, his play was not acted. When he succumbed and gave us the required assortment "as we like it", he was enormously successful.³

Such a criticism of Shakespeare will not certainly apply to the romantic tragedies, where Desdemona tells lies, Othello acts like a brute, Hamlet's will contradicts his theoretical resolution and Macbeth's

¹ *Man and Superman*: 'The Epistle Dedicatory', p. xxx.

² *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*, Vol. II, p. 325.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 367-8.

imagination tortures his ambition. Shaw must have intended this remark only for Shakespeare's romantic comedies to which it has a limited applicability. Rosalind appears at first as the daughter of an unfortunate duke, pining for her father. She seems to care only for her father, and Celia also thinks that her cousin has no other interest in life. But when Rosalind meets her man, or, in Shavian language, when the Life Force is aroused in her at the sight of Orlando who is 'biologically attractive', she at once sets about thinking not so much of her own father as of her (yet unborn) child's father. Benedick and Beatrice, again, have built up a philosophy, ignoring the profoundest instinct of humanity, and the comedy of their life is that they teach each other the unbiological nature of their philosophy. It must, however, be admitted that the predominant impression left by these comedies is not one of inconsistency but of uniformity. Every man has one or two inconsistencies, but there are some broad traits which are generally constant, and these form a vital part of his character. Shakespeare looks upon contradiction in character as a fatal thing and portrays it in his tragedies. In his comedies, he describes the joy and glory of life, not its failures and futilities, and here, therefore, he depicts features which are more or less permanent. Rosalind may be an extension into five acts of a delightful five minutes in a charming woman's life, but these five minutes are representative of her normal life.

II

The defect of Shaw's criticism of Shakespeare is that Shaw has an inherent inability to understand literature

that is romantic and poetical. With Ibsen, he treads on much safer ground, because Ibsen's dramas are largely a war on the ideals of Capitalistic civilization. Shaw has devoted his life to an unceasing propaganda against Capitalism and the institutions it has brought into being. There are three lessons in Ibsen's plays on which he lays special stress. First, Ibsen calls the so-called good man to account and shows how his life is based on a lie. On the pedestal of the statue which, Shaw imagines, will be dedicated to Saint Henrik Ibsen in A.D. 3000, it will be written : 'I came to call the righteous and not the sinners to repentance.'⁵ Then, secondly, Shaw has been hailed as the father of the flapper, and it is no wonder that he should have drawn pointed attention to those amongst the plays of Ibsen in which women rebel against the hollowness of the marital tie. He claims that Ibsen has finally exploded the myth of the Womanly Woman. Lastly, though Shaw is himself an ardent socialist, and though his work on Ibsen is a part of socialistic propaganda, he recognizes the essentially individualistic tone of Ibsen's dramas. 'What Ibsen insists on', says he, 'is that there is no golden rule ; that conduct must justify itself by its effect upon life and not by its conformity to any rule or ideal. . . . he claims afresh the old Protestant right of private judgement in questions of conduct as against all institutions, the so-called Protestant Churches themselves included.'¹

To this analysis of the substance of Ibsen's drama most readers will demur. Though Shaw definitely points out that his essay is not mere literary criticism

¹ *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, p. 172.

yet the attempt to reduce the work of an artist to a formula is a violence done to art whose principal business is the creation of images. Then, Shaw's analysis of the plays is incomplete and gives an imperfect account of the import of Ibsenist drama. In some of the plays in which Shaw finds anti-idealist propaganda, there is really no discussion of social problems at all, and even where he correctly grasps the spirit of a play, he lays so much stress on one aspect of it that the interpretation becomes one-sided and incomplete. He reads a moral where there is none, and in some cases, he reads the wrong moral.

There is, indeed, a fundamental difference between Ibsen's attitude and Shaw's. Shaw is primarily a propagandist and has looked upon art as merely the best vehicle for propaganda. That is why he has ready solutions for all the problems that he discusses in his plays. But he has made a mistake in approaching Ibsen's dramas from the same point of view, for Ibsen is primarily an artist and only secondarily a propagandist. He paints human beings in different poses, looks upon them not simply as individuals but also as social units ; but it is only in rare cases that he suggests a solution of any social problem. In this connexion, we must remember what Ibsen said about those who look for ethical and political recipes in his dramas. ' They say ', he wrote to Schandorph, ' that the book (*Ghosts*) preaches Nihilism. Not at all. It is not concerned to preach anything whatsoever. It merely points to the ferment of Nihilism going on under the surface, at home, as elsewhere.' His dramas are pictures of the 'moral chaos' which we call our social organization, and do

not contain any definite scheme for the evolution of a cosmos out of this chaos.

Bernard Shaw divides Ibsen's plays¹ into three groups. In the first group, he discusses *Brand*, *Peer Gynt* and *Emperor and Galilean*. They are pictures of idealistic egotists, and precede his anti-idealistic objective plays which form the second group and include all the dramas from *The League of Youth* to *Hedda Gabler*. In the third group, Shaw comments on the last four plays in which Ibsen passes into the shadow of the valley of death, and he gives the section dealing with these dramas the appropriate title of *Down Among the Dead Men*.

Shaw's criticism of *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* is vitiated by his anti-idealistic prejudices. In discussing *Brand*, he is under yet another handicap. *Brand* is a tragedy, a species of art, which Shaw neither practises nor understands. Ibsen wrote *Brand* with a definite object in view, and no discussion of the play may leave the playwright's own idea out of consideration. In the figure of Brand, Ibsen tried to give expression to his ideal of a heroic character, whom he held up before the faint-hearted Scandinavians of his own day. He made the drama a tragedy, because it was through this form that he could best give expression to a heroic ideal of character. Nothing is farther from his intention than to deduce definite conclusions from the fate of his hero. Shaw, however, regards this tragedy holding forth a noble ideal as a morality on the evils of idealism and draws many lessons on the basis of that profit-and-loss philosophy which he derides in his criticism of romantic literature. Comparing *Peer Gynt*

¹ He does not consider the six drama' nreredinor *Rrand*.

with Brand, he says, ' Brand dies a saint, having caused more intense suffering by his saintliness than the most talented sinner could possibly have done with twice his opportunities.'¹ Shaw even goes so far as to hold that it is better to be wife or sweetheart to Peer Gynt than mother or wife to Brand. This moralization is, no doubt, true, but this will only remind one of an absurd criticism about *Ghosts*, quoted by Shaw himself. A certain dramatic critic of Piccadilly is said to have defended this play on the ground that it throws into divine relief the beautiful figure of the simple and pious Pastor Manders. Cassio is a fellow damn'd in a fair wife, and Othello is a noble, romantic lover, but Bianca has not the sad fate of Desdemona. Imagine anyone drawing from Shakespeare's tragedy the lesson that drunkenness is a lesser evil than jealousy or that it is better to be mistress to Cassio than wife to Othello !

Ibsen wrote *Brand* to hold up the ideal of a heroic character ; in *Peer Gynt*, he exposes the pusillanimity of a character that has no ideal. Peer Gynt is the central figure of many adventures, but it is found that nowhere does he stand for 'all or nothing', which is the ideal of Brand. He cannot win a woman but carries her off from the wedding, and when she is alone with him leaves her to shift for herself. He makes love to a Troll maiden, accepts some of the manners of the Troll kingdom, but retains the eyes that he had in the human world. His attitude to life is not one of total conquest or of absolute surrender, but one of half-hearted compromise. Bernard Shaw, however, represents Peer as an idealist seeking the gratification of his own will. This is an incorrect description of the

¹ *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, p. 47.

aim of the author and of the impression which the reader gets from a study of the play. Peer Gynt has neither the consuming passion nor the terrible will-power of an idealist. He retains, in the midst of his multifarious adventures, an acute consciousness of self; but he does not seek his own good with the conviction and determination of a man who pursues an ideal. Indeed, the adventures come to him; he does not go out to seek them. Brand is an idealist, not a caricature, while Peer Gynt is a caricature, not an idealist. Shaw makes the mistake of thinking that each of them is the caricature of a man who heedlessly pursues an ideal and not only comes to grief himself, but causes injury to others.

Shaw's comments on *Emperor and Galilean* are as misconceived as his criticism of *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, because he looks upon the great world-drama of Ibsen as the mere satire of an idealist. It is, of course, true that Julian enters into a silly competition with the Galilean and heedlessly follows a wrong ideal. His jealousy of the authority of Christ is based on a delusion, because the power of the Galilean is spiritual, while that of the Emperor must be primarily material. Shaw, however, regards Julian as a mere biological problem, as one who wills the wrong way. Even if we accept the interpretation that Shaw puts upon the visions of Julian and the cryptic utterances of the mystic Maximus, the fact remains that Julian is an arresting figure in the drama, primarily because of the psychic revolution that he passes through. Shaw is absolutely blind to the human side of Ibsen's drama. He discusses Julian as a problem and is concerned more with the pragmatic value of the

Apostate's willing than with the human feelings behind it. He has not a word to say about the beautiful and pathetic Helena, nor does he understand the true nature of the conflict between the followers of the Emperor and those of the Galilean. The author of *Androcles and the Lion* can be conscious only of the economic side of the persecution of the early Christians, and it is no wonder that he has nothing to say about the fervid religious enthusiasm which inspires men like Gregory and Agathon and on account of which Julian can never get the better of the Galilean. Shaw's criticism and analysis are brilliant and instructive, but they refer only to certain remarks of Maximus and Julian and view the Apostate Emperor more as a dehumanized biological phenomenon than as a man with a many-sided personality.

Bernard Shaw lumps the nine realistic dramas beginning with *The League of Youth* into one group, and calls them anti-idealistic objective plays. In reality, these plays do not belong to one group, but to two ; for what affinity of spirit can there be between *The League of Youth* and *The Wild Duck*? The most essential characteristic of a true idealist is that he sincerely believes in his ideals. Those who do not do so and use their idealism only as a cloak for their selfishness, are not really idealists, but impostors. When Consul Bernick played false to Lona Hessel and invented the story of a theft which did not occur, laying the blame of his own guilt on the shoulders of Johan Tonnesen, he did so with a view to preserving his reputation and improving his own position. There is no ideal involved here. In the drama, we find that he occasionally swears by the ideals preached by

Rorlund, but this is only a convenient shield with which he can defend (and also conceal) his felonies. Rorlund is introduced into the play as a representative of the society that the Consul has duped, and his idealistic bombast is only an evidence of Ibsen's command over irony. *An Enemy of the People*, too, exposes the hypocrisy of the Have-and-Holders who impose on the masses by means of fine phrases. The impostors of these two dramas and the villain-hero of *The League of Youth* have nothing in common with a genuine idealist like Gregers Werle. *The League of Youth*, *Pillars of Society* and *An Enemy of the People* are 'objective plays', but they are not 'anti-idealistic'. Shaw's analysis of these dramas is misleading. He gives undue importance to Rorlund but passes by the most important characters in *Pillars of Society*. He talks glibly of the ideals professed by men like Burgomaster Stockmann, but forgets that the one genuine idealist in *An Enemy of the People* is the 'honest doctor' himself.

The other six dramas included by Shaw in this group are objective, and they also discuss social ideals which are genuine ideals and not merely masks for impostors. Shaw's analyses of these plays are correct and brilliant, so far as they go, but they are imperfect, because they over-emphasize only one aspect of Ibsen's genius. There are really two Ibsens in these dramas : the anti-idealist thinker and the poetical dreamer. Shaw's criticism lays too much stress on the former and all but ignores the latter. He gives an exhaustive exposition of Nora's rebellion against marriage and Mrs. Alving's protest against the family ideal ; he also draws a mercilessly correct picture of the vapid idealism which is the Rosmer view of life and of the circumstances

which make Ellida ^c an idle, helpless and utterly dependent article of luxury' for her husband. But there is yet another Ibsen whom Shaw's criticism takes little note of. It is the mystic who moans with Oswald Alving for the sun, who with Hedvig is fascinated by the Wild Duck, who with Thea visualizes Eilert with the vine leaves, and who with Ellida longs for Beauty, Nature, and the Infinite and the Unknown.

•Shaw's discussion of the anti-idealist Ibsen is very much one-sided and incomplete. Ibsen exposes the hollowness of the ideal of marriage and family life in *A Dolls House* and *Ghosts*, but he does not pass any final verdict. Even if the attack on marriage is rather uncompromising, he does not seem to have regarded the institution of the family as a pure fiction or farce. Shaw fails to realize that it is the reality of Mrs. Alving's affection for her son Oswald, which makes half the drama of *Ghosts*. Then, again, if in *Nora*, Ibsen has championed uncompromising rebellion, in *Lona* and *Martha* in *Pillars of Society*, *it* has drawn attractive pictures of the self-effacement of women. In *Martha*, there are very faint murmurs of protest, but *Lona* openly avows that her life's mission is realized in looking after her half-brother Johan whom she affectionately calls her boy.

Shaw's analysis of *Hedda Gabler* is almost unexceptionable, because *Hedda*'s ideal is more romantic than ethical and social, and Shaw has been able to approach this drama without his socialistic prejudices. But his tendency to look for a social^c ideal', even where there is none, is seen in his explanation of *Hedda Gabler*'s villainy. He thinks that she has made an ideal of vice. As a matter of fact, *Hedda* remains a

romantic woman to the last and thinks that courage consists in acting upon the deepest impulses of the heart, with perfect independence of convention. Here is a non-moral love of Beauty and Courage, which Shaw mistakes for slavery to a conventional ideal. Thea has had the courage to live her own life, and Hedda discovers that Thea's life has been not only bold but also beautiful, for she has inspired genius in Eilert, while she herself has only heard dirty stories from him.

Bernard Shaw's criticism of *The Wild Duck* is the most misleading of all his studies of Ibsen's plays. He makes a hero of Dr. Relling, a pessimist with a half-cynical, half-pitying despondent view of human nature. In this despairing philosopher who does not consider a noble life worth living and a noble deed worth doing for their own sake, Shaw discovers flashes of that 'direct vitality' which is to be found in the heroes of Ibsen's earlier poetical dramas. He adopts Relling's view of life and makes a villain of Gregers Werle who, according to them, has been infected with the disease of integrity and pesters men in their poverty with the claim of the ideal. Here Shaw is once more on the wrong tack, for he does not see that Relling's philosophy consists in basing life on a series of flattering fictions. Molvik is a drunkard, but Relling soothes him with the pleasing suggestion that he is a man of daemonic energy. The domestic life of the Ikdals is founded on false pretences, and yet the doctor, with his cynicism which is tantamount to cowardice, will leave things as they are rather than face unpleasant truths. It is, indeed, true that Gregers Werle creates mischief by always pressing the claim of the ideal, but it is not a

pleasant household of happy people that he breaks with his revelation. But for the death of Hedvig it was much worse off before than it will be ever afterwards. In this drama, Ibsen does not countenance any definite view of life; his mind seems to have been tortured between the claim of the ideal that spoils happiness and the allurements of peace that is based on lies. In the conflict between these forces consists the tragedy of *The Wild Duck*. In his propagandist zeal Shaw passes over the conflict and forces his own meaning into the play.

The last four of Ibsen's dramas are pictures of dreamers and have little connexion with ideals and idealists. Bernard Shaw recognizes this in the short preface to the chapter 'Down among the Dead Men' in his work, but he ought, consistently with his principle, to have left these dramas out of discussion, just as he has passed over the six plays preceding *Brand*. He, however, not only includes them, but also reads into them his own anti-idealist philosophy. The castles in the air in *The Master Builder* are really nothing but castles in the air, the dreamy imaginings of a poet. Shaw mistakes them for symptoms of the most dangerous of all the varieties of idolization, and that is why his analysis of this play, though not incorrect, is yet unfair to Hilda and Solness. The same thing may be said of his criticism of *John Gabriel Borkman*. He forgets that the great banker and the people about him are not 'idealists' but poetical dreamers. Shaw constantly refers to the madness and delusion of John Gabriel Borkman but does not grasp the fiery intensity of the ex-banker's imagination, nor does he understand the self-effacing yet assertive personality of Ella Rentheim. Shaw speaks, too, about the silly, oppressive idealism

of Mrs. Borkman who wants to devote her son's life to her ideal, but he does not appreciate the passion and strength in which lies the essence of her character.

His criticism of the two remaining dramas is still more misleading. In *Little Eyolf*, he discovers Ibsen's satire of the ideal of conjugal love. Shaw makes the mistake of thinking that the ideal of marriage is that the couple should have a prolonged holiday and that life should be one long honeymoon. Nothing is farther from the truth. Marriage only means that two persons should work for common ends ; it is never a part of its aim that the couple should go on honeymooning for ever. In the propertied classes men and women have doubtless no occupation except flirtation, but this is only a distortion of the ideal, for idleness is an abnormality which should not be allowed to obscure our view of normal men and women. The marriage of Alfred and Rita cannot be looked upon as a typical one. Rita is a hyper-sensitive woman who has been brought up in luxury and wants to convert life into one long courtship. She is so much of a bride that she refuses to discharge the functions of a mother when she has a baby. Here is an abnormal case, and any judgement passed on the ideal of marriage from a study of her life will be like an opinion passed on a healthy, normal man from experience gained in a clinic. It may serve as a warning but not as an illustration.

Shaw's analysis of *When We Dead Awaken* is as misconceived as his comments on *Little Eyolf*. In this last play of Ibsen there is a picture of the corrosive nature of artistic inspiration, and it belongs to the same *genre* as Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and *Tonio Kroger*. Thomas Mann shows that the passion for art is as

consuming as any other intoxication and that a man must be dead in order to be a perfect creator. In *When We Dead Awaken*, Ibsen demonstrates how oppressive art is, not so much for the creator as for the person who has served as his model ; but Shaw fails to grasp the spirit of this drama and regards it as an essay on the whole question of domestic civilization. He forgets that Irene does not stand in the same relation to Professor Rubek as his wife Maia, for (as Shaw himself recognizes) Rubek and Irene are not lovers. Indeed, one of Irene's chief complaints is that while she exposed herself wholly and unreservedly to the Professor's gaze, never once did he touch her. There is no domestic ideal involved here, no desire to show (as Shaw has tried to make out) how culture does not help to lessen the sacrifice involved in marriage and family life. The marriage of Professor Rubek and Maia, is of course, a misalliance, but the emphasis laid on the relations between the sculptor and Irene shows that the problem of this drama is aesthetic and psychological rather than sociological.

Though *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* is not intended to be a piece of literary criticism, yet Shaw has appended a chapter on the technical peculiarities of the Ibsenist drama. According to him, the technical peculiarities of the new drama are : first, the introduction of the 'discussion' and second, the substitution of realistic incidents for romantic adventures. The significance of realism in art and the place of discussion in drama have already been considered. It is only necessary to point out here that Shaw exaggerates the importance of discussion in Ibsenist drama. The discussion of a problem occupies the most prominent place in only

two plays of Ibsen : *A Dolls House* and *When We Dead Awaken*. It is also important in such dramas as *Ghosts*, *Rosmersholm* and *John Gabriel Borkman*, though in these plays discussion is subordinated to dramatic action, and Mr. P. P. Howe holds that there is no 'discussion' for the sake of discussion in a play like *A Dolls House*, at least no more than there is between Isabella and Claudio in the prison in *Measure for Measure* or between Rosalind and Orlando in the forest of Arden in *As You Like It*.¹

The dramatic interest in all the other plays of Ibsen proceeds wholly from the contriving of the situations, the effective portraiture of the characters and also from the dynamic quality of the story, and the element of discussion is reduced to the minimum in such plays as *Pillars of Society*, *An Enemy of the People*, and *The Wild Duck*. Bernard Shaw does not say a word about the real novelty of Ibsen's technique, about what has been called his 'retrospective method' in which the Exposition becomes a part of the action of a drama. A propagandist, Shaw exaggerates the importance of discussion both in his own plays and in Ibsen's, and fails to note that discussion becomes a vital element in a work of art only when it is a part of the process by which a story is evolved and the depths of character are revealed. Controversy is an end in itself in journalism, but not in art. Shaw's critical papers on Shakespeare, Ibsen, and others, are brilliant expositions of Shavianism with flashes here and there of genuine criticism, but they are vitiated by his obsessions as a journalist and his prejudices as a propagandist-artist.

¹ *George Bernard Shaw*, p. 79.

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