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Bernard Shaw's attitude toward certain social institutions

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BERNARD SHAW'S ATTITUDE TOWARD CERTAIN SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

by

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I. THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

II. MARRIAGE

III. WAR

IV. RELIGION

Human society is like a glacier: it looks like an immovable and eternal field of ice; but it is really flowing like a river; and the only effect of its glassy rigidity is that its own unceasing movement splits it up into crevasses that make it frightfully dangerous to walk on, all the more as they are beautifully concealed by whitewash in the shape of snow - - - - - - -

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PREFACE

The purpose of this study is to analyze Shaw's attitude toward four institutions with which he often manifests a concern: the medical profession, marriage, war, and religion. Many biographies and critical appraisals have been written about Shaw but none of them has treated his attitude toward these institutions with thoroughness. Chesterton, for example, devotes three pages to Shaw's views on marriage. Not only is his material inadequate, but it is completely subjective; note, by way of illustration, Chesterton's statement prefaced to his remarks on Shaw's views of marriage: "Shaw is wrong about nearly all the things one learns early in life and while one is still simple." Burton has a chapter, "The Social Thinker," in which he makes brief reference to Shaw's views on the family; his discussion of Shaw's religion is more thorough, but there is no attempt to show Shaw's attitude toward Christianity. Harris devotes a chapter to Shaw's religion; but it is an accepted fact that, in addition to being unfamiliar with much of Shaw's work, Harris is notoriously inaccurate, sometimes making up a story just to add interest to his book. Hesketh Pearson's book is almost straight biography and devotes little space to a discussion of the opinions of Shaw to be dealt with in this paper. Henderson's chapter, "Artist and Philosopher," treats quite fully the philosophy of Shaw which is included in this study; however, it is hoped that by bringing in Shaw's attitude toward Christianity and combining it with his faith in creative evolution, the chapter will have a separate value from that of Henderson.

A problem that sometimes arises when one deals with a writer

of satire is that of deciding when the writer is really serious. Shaw's manner of presentation, his deliberate effort to shock people so that they will listen to him, makes it even more difficult to objectively determine his real views on a subject. In a single play, of course, it is possible to find entirely opposite opinions voiced by the leading characters. Because of this, a casual reader might easily lift isolated statements from Shaw's writing and use them to substantiate a personal and unwarranted opinion of Shaw.

I have tried to overcome this difficulty of determining what ideas are basic to Shaw, whether in serious comment or in jest, by reading a substantial portion of his work, and noting all of the occurences of ideas on a certain subject. It was possible by comparison of the basic similarities of these ideas to determine which of them were valid representations of Shaw's opinions. Isolation of these ideas, and subsequent detailed discussion of them, should lead us to a better understanding of the man and his plays.

I have deliberately read only Shaw's writings and have organized the material without consulting the opinions of other writers. The secondary sources referred to in this paper were for the most part consulted after Shaw's works had been read. When comments of other writers are included in the discussion, they are always of secondary importance to the material presented from Shaw himself.

Three special points need mention here. One, no appreciable development or change in Shaw's ideas was discovered; hence the

omission of any detailed attention to chronology. Two, Shaw takes individual liberties with punctuation, and the material quoted from Shaw contains the original punctuation. Three, an abbreviated footnote form has been used, the explanation of which can be found on the following page.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF SHAW'S PLAYS IN THEIR ORDER OF COMPOSITION[1]

This table has two purposes: to give a chronological perspective of Shaw's dramatic works which were consulted during the writing of this paper; and to indicate the volumes in which the plays are collected in order to facilitate a shortened footnote form. The brackets indicate that the plays enclosed are published in the same volume. Except where otherwise indicated, the title of the book will begin with the title of the first play in the collection.

Volume	Play	Date
Unpleasant, 1898	(Widowers' Houses	1892
	(The Philanderer	1893
	(Mrs. Warren's Profession (MP)[2]	1893
Pleasant, 1898	(Arms and the Man (MP)	1894
	(Candida (MP)	1894
	(The Man of Destiny	1895
	(You Never Can Tell	1896
Three Plays for Puritans, 1900	(The Devil's Disciple (MP)	1896-7
	(Caesar and Cleopatra (MP)	1898
	(Captain Brassbound's Conversion	1898-9
	The Admirable Bashville	1902-3
	Man and Superman (MP)	1903
	(John Bull's Other Island	1904
	(How He Lied to Her Husband	1905
	(Major Barbara	1905
	(The Doctor's Dilemma	1906
	(Getting Married	1908 (Preface 1910)
	(The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet	1909
	Press Cuttings	1909

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1. These dates can only be considered as approximate. They represent an effort to reconcile the sometimes conflicting reports of many sources. Wherever possible, internal evidence in the plays and prefaces was used.
2. MP indicates that the play is present in the volume Nine Plays and was read in that volume.

Volume	Play	Date
	(Misalliance	1910 (Preface 1914)
	(The Dark Lady of the Sonnets	1910
	(Fanny's First Play (NP)	1911
	(Androcles and the Lion (NP)	1912 (Preface 1915)
	(Overruled	1912
	(Pygmalion	1912
	(Great Catherine	1913
	(O'Flaherty, V. C.	1915
	(The Inca of Perusalem	1915
	(Augustus Does His Bit	1916
	(Heartbreak House[3]	1917
	(Annajanska	1917
	Back to Methuselah	1921
	Saint Joan (NP)	1923
	The Apple Cart	1929
	(Too True To Be Good	1931
	(The Village Wooing	1933
	(On the Rocks	1933
	(The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles	1934
	(The Six of Calais	1934
	(The Millionairess	1936

3. The title of this volume begins with Heartbreak House.

INTRODUCTION

Before presenting the main matter of this paper, these three aspects of Shaw's thought must be understood: his general concern with a reform of social institutions; his theory of the drama as a vehicle for the presentation of social problems; and his socialism. This chapter will be devoted to a discussion of these three points.

If we are to live with one another in a complex society, we must have institutions by which we can expedite the carrying out of everyday affairs. However, says Shaw in his Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism, "We cannot make perfect institutions because we are not perfect ourselves."[1] We must remember that conditions change, and we must adapt our institutions to those changing conditions. This idea seems quite commonplace, but Shaw thinks that we have not yet grasped it; he speaks, for example, of "the fancy with which we all begin as children, that the institutions under which we live . . . are natural like the weather."[2] He says that we pretend "that our institutions represent abstract principles of justice instead of being mere social scaffolding," and that such a pretense is dangerous, because "persons of a certain temperament take the pretense seriously," and when they find that our institutions fail to give them justice, they suffer unnecessary disillusionment.

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1. The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism, p. 4.
2. Ibid., p. 1.

Instead of being founded upon "abstract principles of justice," our institutions are often founded upon ideals which have no other basis than our instinctive passions. Shaw feels the inadequacy of such a foundation: he feels that institutions should be founded upon a more solid basis. He makes this point clear in the preface to his Pleasant Plays (1898):

> To me the tragedy and comedy of life lie in the consequences, sometimes terrible, sometimes ludicrous of our persistent attempts to found our institutions on the ideals suggested to our half-satisfied passions, instead of on a genuinely scientific natural history.[3]

Shaw not only disapproves of our blind acceptance of institutions, he also disapproves of modern conceptions of morality and artificiality in conduct. A man who defines morality as "the substitution of custom for conscience"[4] leaves little doubt as to his position in this matter.

Shaw attaches great importance to his ideas of social reform. His concern with these ideas shows itself in his books and prefaces, and just as steadily in his plays. This use of the drama as a propaganda vehicle owes much to the influence of Ibsen.

Into the decadent theater of the later nineteenth century, which manifested itself in England by such sentimental melodrama as The Drunkard and in France in the artificial well-made play of Dumas-fils and his contemporaries, Ibsen injected a new spirit of

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3. MP, p. 121.
4. Ibid., p. 747.

hope: in his hands the drama once again became a subject for serious thought. Ibsen believed "that social progress takes effect through the replacing of old institutions by new ones."[5] His most daring thesis, however, as Shaw states it, was "that the real slavery of to-day is slavery to the ideals of virtue . . ."[6] Ibsen's idea that a play must deal with a social problem, that it must be didactic, was immediately adopted by Shaw. Shaw always gives full credit to Ibsen for establishing this "new drama." In his preface to the first plays he published, the Unpleasant Plays (1898), he states that "The New Theatre would never have come into existence but for the plays of Ibsen."[7] But his interest in Ibsen was evident long before this: indeed it was Shaw who helped to popularize Ibsen in England by the publication, in 1890, of a little book called The Quintessence of Ibsenism.

Ibsen's plays met with much opposition when they were first presented in England. However, there were Englishmen besides Shaw who were not unsympathetic to the new movement in drama. Robertson and Pinero had made progress toward renovation of the English stage;[8] and in 1889 Charles Charrington and Janet Achurch, with their production of A Doll's House, struck what Shaw terms "the first really

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5. Shaw, The Quintessence of Ibsenism, p. 7.
6. Ibid., p. 128.
7. MP, p. 747.
8. See William Archer, The Old Drama and the New, for a discussion of the new drama in England.

effective blow"[9] in the fight for the establishment of the "new drama." Mr. J. T. Grein established the Independence Theatre in 1891 for the express purpose of promoting the new movement: his search for plays by native authors had lead him to Shaw's door; and in 1892 Shaw finished Widower's Houses, a play which he had begun seven years earlier in collaboration with William Archer, in answer to Mr. Grein's request. The new play, which dealt with slum landlordism, definitely showed Ibsen's influence. Widower's Houses established the pattern, as far as subject matter goes, of the plays that were to follow. Years later, Shaw himself mentioned the subject matter of some of his plays in the preface to Back to Methuselah (1921):

> I tried slum landlordism, doctrinaire Free Love (pseudo-Ibsenism), prostitution, militarism, marriage, history, current politics, natural Christianity, national and individual character, paradoxes of conventional society, husband-hunting, questions of conscience, professional delusions and impostures, all worked into a series of comedies of manners in the classic fashion . . .[10]

Shaw has always admitted that his plays are really propaganda vehicles.[11] He believes that art should never be anything but didactic. He insists on making people think about the society around them, so that they will not blame Mrs. Warren or anyone else for the evil which exists. He wants his audience to blame themselves. He cannot understand why, if we take people seriously off-stage we cannot take them seriously on stage; and, he says, "If you don't like my preaching you

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9. MP, p. xii.
10. Back to Methuselah, p. xcviii.
11. Pygmalion, p. 113.

must lump it. I really cannot help it."[12] In his preface to his Dramatic Opinions and Essays he refers to the theatre as "the Church where the oftener you laugh the better, because by laughter only can you destroy evil without malice," and maintains that the theatre must take "itself seriously as a factor of thought, a prompter of conscience, an elucidator of social conduct . . ."[13]

We have seen that Shaw's purpose in writing his plays is a serious one. However, because he attacks society by using satire his seriousness may not always be immediately apparent; yet it is present only a little below the surface of the most amusing scenes and dialogue. Keegan, who is Shaw's raisonneur in John Bull's Other Island (1904), makes an ironic statement which indicates this underlying seriousness of purpose: "My way of joking is to tell the truth. It's the funniest joke in the world."[14] Ridgeon in The Doctor's Dilemma (1906) says that "Life does not cease to be funny when people die any more than it ceases to be serious when people laugh."[15] And one of Shaw's He-Ancients (the Ancients are supposed to represent the highest stage of intellectual achievement that man can evolve into) in Back to Methuselah (1921) says: "When a thing is funny, search it for a hidden truth."[16]

Shaw's most succinct discussion of his views on the purpose of

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12. MP, p. 486.
13. Dramatic Opinions and Essays, Vol. i, p. xxiii.
14. John Bull's Other Island, p. 38.
15. The Doctor's Dilemma, p. 109.
16. Back to Methuselah, p. 282.

art may be found in a little volume called The Sanity of Art. In 1895 Max Nordau wrote a book which was translated into English under the title of Degeneration. His subject was the insanity afflicting modern society, an insanity which he believed was fully reflected in the contemporary art, literature, music, and philosophy. He attacked, among others, Ruskin, Morris, Wagner, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Ibsen. Shaw's essay The Sanity of Art is a scorching rebuttal of Nordau. Shaw maintains in this essay that the progress of mankind and its reflection in art, music, and literature comes from the examination of our ideas and the rational determination of their rightness or wrongness. The innovations of art are not tolerated because the average man blindly accepts conventional ideals and is content to follow the dictates of society. Let man be freed from artificial controls of convention, and he will not consider the tendency to apostasy an evil thing, he will be controlled much more vigorously by his own conscience. Artists are fundamentally sane people. Art is an important part of life, a tool to be used for the betterment of mankind.

The last of the three preliminary considerations to be taken up in this section is Shaw's socialism. Shaw was closely associated with the Fabians; he himself wrote many of their tracts and pamphlets, and edited many more. Consequently, the reader who understands the broad outlines of Fabian Socialism knows the general principles of Shaw's social philosophy. Shaw's individual variation from Fabian Socialism may be found in two of his own books which explain his

social theory in detail: The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism (1928) and Everybody's Political What's What? (1944).

In the fall of 1882, Henry George, whose Progress and Poverty was enjoying great popularity at the time, delivered an address in Memorial Hall, London. One of the members of his audience was the young Bernard Shaw, who, hearing George for the first time, felt that his life had taken a new direction. Since his arrival in London in 1876, Shaw had spent his time in writing five unsuccessful novels and in desultory reading at the British Museum. His income was not even sufficient to keep him in food, and, at the age of 26, he was still being supported by his mother. Inspired by the new ideas of Henry George, Shaw immediately read Progress and Poverty, and soon after attended a meeting of the Democratic Federation, which Sidney Webb refers to as the "first definitely socialist organization in England."[17] According to Henderson, Shaw was told that as a novice in the field of economics he must read Marx's Das Kapital; consequently, Shaw read Marx, only to find "that his advisers were awestruck, as they had not read it themselves."[18] His interest in economics and socialism grew steadily until, in September 5, 1884, he was elected a member of the newly formed Fabian Society.

Pease, in his History of the Fabian Society, maintains that Henry George should be credited with "the extraordinary merit of

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17. Sidney Webb, Socialism in England, as cited in T. A. Knowlton, The Economic Theory of George Bernard Shaw, p. 8.
18. Archibald Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: His Life and Works, p. 153.

recognizing the right way of social salvation"[19] which the new Fabians adopted. The Marxists were talking of revolution, and men like Robert Owen had tried to establish isolated social communities, but George believed that the will of the people could be moulded by proper persuasion, that social evolution could be accomplished through the ordinary channels of political maneuvering. The Fabians adopted George's method of converting people by educating them. They realized that this process might take a long time; but, like Fabius Cuntator whose name they adopted, they were willing to wait until conditions were right for the complete acceptance of their doctrines. They were determined to carry out their "gradual transition to Social Democracy" by such peaceful means as "a gradual extension of the franchise; and the transfer of rent and interest to the State, not in one lump sum, but by instalments."[20]

As the Fabians were not very radical in their methods, so also they were not very radical in their demands. The basic tenets of their teaching can be found in Fabian Tract Number 2, a manifesto published in 1884: every individual in a nation has a right to an equal share of its wealth; land should be nationalized; revenue should be raised by a direct tax; the State should see that children are properly brought up, taking them away from incompetent parents if necessary; men and women should have equal rights; every man

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19. E. R. Pease, The History of the Fabian Society, p. 20.
20. Shaw, "Transition," Fabian Essays in Socialism, p. 167.

should be given the right to an education.

Shaw's most succinct statement of his position in regard to socialism is contained in The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism: "Socialism means equality of income and nothing else."[21] This concept of equality of income is Shaw's own addition to Fabian Socialism, and it is the most distinguishing mark of his social theory.[22]

Thus we have the picture of a man who believes in socialism. A man possessed with great dramatic talent who says quite frankly that he writes plays to convert society to his way of thinking. And a man who feels that our institutions are not at present satisfactory; that, far from being sacred, they must constantly be altered to conform with changing conditions, and they must undergo even greater change as we evolve toward a socialistic society. Now let us look in detail at his attitude toward four of these institutions.

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21. Intelligent Woman's Guide, p. 94.
22. See Edmund Wilson, The Triple Thinkers, p. 236.

I.

Through his long period of dramatic writing, Shaw is often concerned with a reformation of the medical profession. His two most detailed statements on this subject are his preface to The Doctor's Dilemma (1906) and chapter xxiv, "The Medical Man," of his Everybody's Political What's What?(1944). However, the following discussion represents a bringing together of pertinent ideas from a large body of material.

Shaw strongly objects to the attitude of blind credulity and trust with which many people regard the medical profession.[1] He complains the people believe that doctors, because of the nature of their work, tend to have exceptional moral conscience. Doctors, says Shaw, are just like other men; it isn't sensible to expect in them an exceptional propensity toward right action.

But much worse than our attitude toward the conscience of the doctor is our faith in medical infallibility: that is, our belief that the doctor can make no mistakes. This notion, says Shaw, is pure bosh. No one knows better than the doctor himself the extent of his failures. In The Doctor's Dilemma Shaw gives this idea voice through an eminent doctor, Sir Patric Cullen. During one scene in

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1. This attitude of blind credulity is not merely an objectionable attribute in respect to the medical profession. Indeed, in his preface to The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles (1934) Shaw speaks of a "law of the Conservation of Credulity," maintaining that it applied first to our belief in religion, and, when that faith was gone, to our belief in science.

which several doctors are grouped together an accusation is made by one of them to the effect that a patient has been killed by the faulty treatment of another.[2] The other doctor is offended, but Sir Patrick gives him little opportunity to dwell on the subject: "Come Come! When youve both killed as many people as I have in my time youll feel humble enough about it."[3] However, though doctors admit mistakes among themselves, before the public they present a united front. For this they can hardly be blamed, but the main point, again, is that we realize "the effect of this state of things is to make the medical profession a conspiracy to hide its own shortcomings."[4] It must be remembered, however, that this conspiracy against the laity is not a special attribute of the medical profession. Indeed, the professions

> are all conspiracies against the laity; and I do not suggest that the medical conspiracy is either better or worse than the military conspiracy, the legal conspiracy, the sacerdotal conspiracy, the pedagogic conspiracy . . . But it is less suspected.[5]

It is precisely because Shaw feels the medical profession is less suspected of conspiracy than others that he so strongly fights the dogma of medical infallibility. Toward the end of his "Preface on Doctors" he suggests a method for stamping out this dogma: "Make it compulsory for a doctor using a brass plate to have inscribed on it, in addition to the letters indicating his qualifications, the

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2. The Doctor's Dilemma, pp. 90-1.
3. Ibid., p. 91.
4. Ibid., p. xv.
5. Loc. cit.

words, 'Remember that I too am mortal.'"[6]

A second attitude which Shaw attacks is our manifest desire for useless operations: many people want an operation for no other reason than because that particular operation is fashionable.[7] Indeed, Shaw thinks this mania for operations is sometimes caught up by the doctors themselves, so that they too believe in the curative powers of foolish operations. Doctor Cutler Walpole in The Doctor's Dilemma has come to the conclusion that "Ninety-five per cent of the human race suffer from chronic blood-poisoning, and die of it."[8] Now Walpole has discovered somewhere in the human body a potent little organ known as the nuciform sac, "full of decaying matter--undigested food and waste products--rank ptomaines."[9] Since this mischievous organ can be removed with little difficulty, Walpole's cry has become: "I'll remove the sac."[10] Apparently the only people who can escape his knife are the other doctors who know better and the lucky five per cent of the population who, according to Walpole, are not dying from blood poisoning.[11]

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6. Ibid., p. xci.
7. In his preface to Androcles and the Lion (1912) Shaw discusses the part which fashions play in beliefs, giving a general application to this idea. (NP, p. 873 et. seq.)
8. The Doctor's Dilemma, p. 19.
9. Loc. cit.
10. Ibid., p. 76.
11. This is a good example of Shavian satire. Although treating a subject on which he is deadly serious, Shaw is careful to steer clear of invective. Men like Walpole are in reality anything but funny. However, Shaw presents him without malice--in fact, with a kind of tenderness--and therefore we laugh at Walpole. And the wonderful part is that the laughter is far more effective than scorn.

The influence of monetary consideration on the practices of the medical profession is an important one. Shaw points out that it is useless for a doctor to prescribe a change of climate and a rest to a poor working man who could never fill such a prescription. Moreover, the doctor himself may need money; he may be a society doctor who has tremendous expenses in keeping up appearances, and cannot very well be expected to tell the truth to a wealthy hypochondriac when the patient would be happier if given an expensive prescription and charged a fat fee. Then too the successful doctor can pick up some quick money by a useless if harmless operation. And he often helps make ends meet by running a nursing home--in reality, a fashionable hotel. It is little wonder, then, that, occupied with all these considerations, the doctor often fails to do his best work.

In addition to these considerations, Shaw maintains that it is of the utmost importance that doctors be scientists, and further, kindly scientists. However, he does not believe that doctors at present are scientists; to his notion, they are primarily artists, practising science only to earn their bread. In the first place, though doctors may perform experiments, many of them are not trained in gathering data properly. And more important still, they are incapable of properly evaluating the data when once gathered. Shaw points out the technical difficulty involved in calculation. For example, he mentions the work done by Professor Karl Pearson in biological statistics and the Professor's "immense contempt for, and

indignant sense of grave social danger in, the unskilled guesses of the ordinary sociologist."[12] And, of course, Shaw would add "doctors."

Then, too, there is the aspect of statistical illusions, of false impressions gained from statistics blindly interpreted. The Pasteur institute serves as an example. Many people not treated by a Pasteur institute may recover from hydrophobia, says Shaw, but we do not hear of those cases. Conversely, many people who are treated may not recover but, in a like manner, we hear little of those cases. However, if one person who is treated does recover, the recovery is immediately attributed to the treatment, whereas in reality the recovery may have been accidental. In general, we often fail to attribute decrease in disease to two very real factors: the increase in sanitary measures; and the increase in attention to disease, the one good result of our unwarranted concern with vaccination, vivisection, and innoculation.[13]

In addition to defects in its use of statistics, Shaw says that the medical profession fails badly in its use of the science of bacteriology. He believes that the simplest way to kill germs is the application of fresh air and sunshine, a method which he feels has been neglected. We find him very much concerned with this matter in his "Preface on Doctors" (1906). And this concern

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12. The Doctor's Dilemma, p. lxix.
13. When demonstrating his points about the fault-use of statistics, Shaw occasionally gets carried away. Note for instance his hypothetical example of vaccination statistics in a small village. (Ibid., p. lxiv.)

with the neglect of the sunshine and fresh air treatment shows up again in 1931 in his play Too True To Be Good. When the play opens we find Miss Mopply, a wealthy pampered young lady, asleep on a sickbed in a room with the windows tightly closed and the door "carefully sandbagged lest a draught of fresh air should creep underneath."[14] Beside Miss Mopply on the bed is a monster who sadly laments:

> I am so ill! so miserable! . . . Why doesn't she die and release me from my sufferings? What right has she got to get ill and make me ill like this? Measles: thats what she's got . . . and she's given them to me, a poor innocent microbe that never did any harm.[15]

Mrs. Mopply, the invalid's mother, enters the room with the doctor. Shaw cannot understand how the measles germ could get in when "I keep the windows closed so carefully. And there is a sheet steeped in carbolic acid always hung over the door."[16] After persuading the doctor to write a new prescription, which he knows will do no good, Mrs. Mopply leaves the room. A spirited discussion between the sick bacillus and the doctor ensues. The poor bacillus gets the doctor to admit that the microbe for measles has not yet been discovered but, when the doctor is asked why he told Mrs. Mopply that a microbe caused measles, he replies: "Patients insist on having microbes nowadays."[17] As we might suspect Miss Mopply eventually cures herself by running away from home, abandoning her medicine, and living in the fresh air and sunshine.

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14. Too True To Be Good, p. 27
15. Ibid., p. 28.
16. Ibid., p. 29.
17. Ibid., p. 33.

Other subjects related to bacteriology are vaccination and innoculation. It is not necessary to read much of Shaw in order to discover his violent opposition to these practices. He justifies his denial of the value of immunization by giving several arguments concerning the dirt, the danger of disease, the cost, and the difficulty in the administration of vaccines and serums. He also points out his conviction that a strong reason for the doctors' advocacy of vaccination and innoculation is their economic dependence on them as a source of income. He even gives an alternative to what he feels must be the otherwise necessarily complete rejection of these methods, the alternative of a scientifically organized public program in which the process will be strictly watched; and he maintains that "the advance of scientific therapeutics is in the direction of treatments that invoke highly organized laboratories, hospitals, and public institutions generally . . ."[18] Still it is difficult to believe that, even if this alternative were accepted by the public, Shaw would change his mind about the efficicacy of vaccination. His statement about this alternative occured in the "Preface on Doctors" (1906), yet thirty-eight years later, after many advances had been made toward improvement in administration of vaccines, we find him saying, in his Everybody's Political What's What?, that "vaccine is now killing more children than small pox."[19]

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18. The Doctor's Dilemma, p. xxxv.
19. Everybody's Political What's What, p. 216.

Shaw is also opposed to vivisection. His second play (The Philanderer, 1893), although dealing chiefly with Ibsenism and marriage, contains in the character of Dr. Paramore an effective satire on the vivisector. Paramore is extremely proud that, after experimenting with three dogs and a monkey, he has discovered a new liver disease. His joy hardly knows bounds when he thinks he finds that very disease in one of his patients, Colonel Craven. Craven, convinced that he is to die quite soon, assumes with a certain satisfaction the role of the noble sufferer. Then the worst happens. Paramore discovers that his liver disease has been proved nonexistent. The fault lies, he complains, in the "wickedly sentimental laws of this country."[20] A Frenchman who refuted his theory was permitted to use 200 monkeys, 300 dogs, and camel's liver at 60 degrees below zero; and an Italian was given government grants to buy animals. How could he compete with men who received so much assistance from their governments?

Paramore reveals the news with the utmost distress to Craven who has suffered to no avail all along. Poor Craven almost breaks: "Now, upon my soul, Paramore, I'm vexed at this. I don't wish to be unfriendly; but I'm extremely vexed, really."[21] Paramore, far from apologizing for a mistaken diagnosis, refuses to admit defeat to the extent that he denies his own beliefs: "But please remember that it is doubtful—extremely doubtful—whether anything can be

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20. The Philanderer, p. 125.
21. Loc. cit.

proved by experiments on animals."[22]

Shaw discusses Paramore's malady in greater detail in his "Preface on Doctors." He points out that there are two strong motives for vivisection: cruelty, which has a mystery about it that appeals to our primitive instincts; and curiosity for knowledge. Curiosity, of course, is the higher motive. In phrases which anticipate Back to Methuselah, "it is godlike to be wise . . . and everybody, by the deepest law of the Life Force, desires to be godlike,"[23] Shaw defends the right of man to knowledge. And in a characteristic touch he reveals his belief in that right as an integral part of his own make-up:

> I have always despised Adam because he had to be tempted by the woman, as she was by the Serpent, before he could be induced to pluck the apple from the tree of knowledge. I should have swallowed every apple on the tree the moment the owner's back was turned.[24]

Granting the right of every man to knowledge, however, we must realize that it should be restricted, that it has limits. If, for example, a man could make an important discovery by torturing his mother, it is extremely doubtful that he would do so.

The error of the vivisector is that he fails to realize that there is an alternative humane method. Vivisection, like the whipping of children, often becomes merely routine. However, the man

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22. Ibid., p. 134.
23. The Doctor's Dilemma, p. xxxix.
24. Loc. cit.

who does a cruel thing unconsciously is just as culpable as the one who does it deliberately. Shaw's point in this case—and we shall discover the same sentiment when dealing with the other institutions—is that we must cross the routine acceptance of any practice out of our minds; we must constantly be examining all of our habits and evaluating their usefulness.

The remedy for this false belief in vivisection, says Shaw, is more knowledge on the part of the public, for the vivisection craze, like the vaccination craze, was given impetus by public enthusiasm. The people, who are always seeking a cheap remedy for all diseases, seized upon these practices in the hope that in them their dreams had at last been realized. Needless to say, they were wrong. Their search is a futile one, they are seeking something that does not exist.

With the previous criticisms of the medical profession in mind, especially the treatment of Dr. Paramore, one might easily draw the conclusion that Shaw is a crank who refuses to grant credit where it is due. This is not true, however. In one section of his "Preface on Doctors" Shaw points out some of the doctor's virtues which he feels many people are apt to forget:[25] he must treat a patient, whether or not the patient can pay; he is constantly exposed to

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25. Shaw's discussion of the doctor's virtues in his "Preface on Doctors" (1906) represents a more carefully thought out judgment than he previously showed. Note for example his remark in "The Revolutionist's Handbook" (1903): "the physician is still the credulous imposter and petulant scientific coxcomb whom Moliere ridiculed." (MP, p. 717.)

disease; he must respond to a sick call any hour of the day or night; and, in order to eat, he must keep working--that is as much as to say that a doctor cannot sit back and let his money work for him, like a landlord.

It must be apparent after considering this material that Shaw feels the medical profession is in a lamentable condition. What then, it will be asked, is his solution to the problem? Of course, he has a solution, one that is inevitable to anyone who is familiar with Shaw--socialism:

> Until the medical profession becomes a body of men trained and paid by the country to keep the country in health it will remain what it is at present: a conspiracy to exploit popular credulity and human suffering.[26]

There is no technical medical problem involved in the carrying out of such a plan:

> If there were, I should not be competent to deal with it, as I am not a technical expert in medicine: I deal with the subject as an economist, a politician, and a citizen exercising my common sense.[27]

However, the transition must be a gradual one. For a time it may be necessary to pretend the efficacy of obsolete treatments, such as the burning of sulphur in sick rooms, before the people as a whole can be persuaded to follow genuinely scientific guidance in sanitation. And certain adjustments must eventually be made in our social thinking, for instance:

> The theory that every individual alive is of infinite value

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26. The Doctor's Dilemma, p. lxxix.
27. Ibid., pp. lxxxii-lxxxiii.

> is legislatively impracticable . . . the man who costs more than he is worth is doomed by sound hygiene as inexorably as by sound economics.[28]

But these considerations are minor ones. The important point is that Shaw thinks of socialization of medicine as the panacea for all the decadence and inefficiency of the medical profession. Under socialized medicine the doctor need never worry about his income, he needn't be a slave to patients, and, as a public officer of health, he would demand more respect than an officer in the army or navy. And private practice need not be abolished; the doctor might still have the alternative of private patients if he chose.

To summarize, these ideas on the medical profession have been brought out in this section: Shaw's attitude toward blind credulity, fashion, monetary problems, science, and cruelty—and his solution to the problem, namely, the socialization of medicine.

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28. This statement, which demonstrates the Shavian tendency to carry an argument a step too far, is a good example of the kind of thing which might prevent an objective consideration of Shaw's over-all position on a subject. (Ibid., p. xcii.)

II.

As he was concerned throughout his writing career with a reform of the medical profession, so also Shaw was constantly concerned with the institution of marriage.[1] In his preface to his Unpleasant Plays (1898),[2] the first volume of plays given to the public, Shaw refers to marriage as "an institution which society has outgrown but not modified."[3] In his preface to Getting Married (1910) he says that "our marriage law is inhuman and unreasonable to the point of downright abomination . . ."[4] And in The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles (1934) he includes an experiment in group marriage.

In "The Revolutionist's Handbook and Pocket Companion," which Shaw appended to his publication of Man and Superman (1903), he states that marriage has two functions: "regulating conjugation and supplying a form of domesticity."[5] Shaw complains that we greatly over-emphasize the importance of the first of these functions, that of regulating conjugation. In his preface to Getting Married (1910) he devotes a section to "The Impersonality of Sex." Shaw thinks it

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1. This concern reflects the influence of Shelley, a man whom Shaw deeply admired. For a brief discussion of what Shaw thinks about Shelley's views on marriage, see the preface to Getting Married, pp. 124 et seq.
2. Shaw termed them unpleasant because "they face unpleasant facts." The plays deal with slum landlordism, marriage, and prostitution.
3. MP, p. xxv.
4. Getting Married, p. 119.
5. MP, p. 698.

unfortunate that people think of marriage in terms of sex. The sex drive, or "reproductive appetite" as he terms it, is held in common by all living things and is entirely impersonal. Indeed, satisfactory intercourse is possible between complete strangers who may not even have language, race, or religion in common. Shaw feels that the really solid things upon which successful marriages are based are mutual regard, money, similarity of tastes.

Shaw's impersonal view of sex is definitely reflected in his plays, making his treatment of the sexual drive a cold, mechanical, passionless kind of thing.[6] Consider some of his characters who were affected by this "evolutionary appetite:" Blanche Sartorious, Vivie Warren, and Ann Whitefield--none of them manifests genuine affection. In his earlier writings Shaw refers to this relationship between the sexes as the "sex duel;" for example, he uses that term to describe the affair between Gloria Clandon and Valentine in You Never Can Tell (1896). However, in Man and Superman (1903), a play "in which the natural attraction of the sexes for one another is made the mainspring of the action,"[7] we find Shaw using a new term for the sex drive: he refers to it as a part of the Life Force, our subconscious will that compels us to follow the dictates of evolution.[8] And woman,

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6. In fact, some critics have accused Shaw of creating characters completely lacking in emotion. He answers them in his preface to Mrs. Warren's Profession (MP, p. 21).
7. MP, p. 487.
8. The Life Force as a part of Shaw's belief in creative evolution is discussed in the section of this paper which deals with religion.

Shaw believes, are more affected than men by this compulsion of the Life Force to reproduce the race.[9] Surely the case is such in Man and Superman, in which the whole plot revolves about Ann Whitefield's spirited pursuit of Tanner. Now Tanner is a bright fellow and when he learns of Ann's motives he flies from her in a panicky state. However, Ann finds him and he cannot resist her; he becomes helpless when face to face with the Life Force.[10] Shaw explains this action quite clearly in his preface to the play when he says,

> The woman's need of [man] to enable her to carry on Nature's most urgent work, does not prevail against him until his resistance gathers her energy to a climax at which she dares to throw away her customary exploitation of the conventional affectionate and dutiful poses, and claims him by natural right for a purpose that far transcends their personal purposes.[11]

Thus, although Shaw feels that sex is not the important element in marriage that it is believed to be, he nevertheless recognises it as a significant part of life. However, even literature has failed to deal seriously with sex. He maintains in his preface to Overruled (1912) that the treatment given sex on the stage is either romantic "poppycock" or "sheer voluptuousness." Although the theme of sex has dominated the stage from the time of the light, humorous Restoration drama to the psuedo-tragedy of the Parisian school of the

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9. In the preface to Man and Superman he speaks of our society as one "in which the serious business of sex is left by men to women." (MP, p. 495).
10. The scene of his surrender to Ann is, incidentally, the closest Shaw ever comes to portraying passion.
11. MP, p. 497.

nineteenth century, its treatment has always been dull. Indeed, Shaw maintains[12] that it was Ibsen who successfully demonstrated "that from Francesca and Paolo down to the latest guilty couple of the school of Dumas _fils_, the romantic adulterers have all been intolerable bores."[13] He further asserts that Moliere's plays, Victorian novels, and even _Don Quixote_ are sexless: our attention is not concentrated upon the sex play in these works, it is centered in the action the sex convention may bring about. Shaw himself followed the tradition of the light-hearted treatment of sex. He believes that sex should be discussed seriously on the stage; but his play _Overruled_, which deals with marriage problems, is a farcical comedy because "We are permitted to discuss in jest what we may not discuss in earnest."[14]

Thus we see that sex is an important part of life even though its importance as an aspect of marriage is exaggerated. Although there should be a law by which society provides for any consequences which might arise from a sexual union, it is ridiculous to demand that a young man or woman marry because he or she has satisfied a momentary, fleeting impulse.[15] In Shaw's opinion, this sexual freedom will not encourage promiscuity, it will only bring about impersonality in sexual relations. He believes that it is a rule in nature for people

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12. Note that this statement bolsters the contention that Shaw's plays are passionless.
13. _Overruled_, p. 68.
14. _Ibid._, p. 67.
15. Cf. Don Juan's speech in _Man and Superman_: "The confusion of marriage with morality has done more to destroy the conscience of the human race than any other error." (MP, p. 633.)

to desire only one mate. This problem of promiscuity is a minor one and should not lead us astray from the principal point: that we must not think of marriage as a requisite for conjugation, we must not demand

> that when two people are under the influence of the most violent, most insane, most delusive, and most transient of passions, they . . . swear that they will remain in that excited, abnormal, and exhausting condition until death do them part.[16]

Until this restriction on conjugal love is removed, marriage will continue to be for many people simply a form of sex slavery.

Mention of sex slavery brings into the picture the economic problems involved in marriage. Here we can see Shaw the socialist, who seldom fails to consider the economic aspect of a question. Shaw looks at the economic aspect of marriage from the standpoint of both the woman and the man. When discussing the economic slavery of males, he insists that we must face the fact that many young men of marriageable age simply cannot afford to marry, particularly professional men and aspiring business men. A few men solve this difficulty by marrying wealthy women; however, in the majority of cases this is impossible. Furthermore, the bachelor is prohibited by society to make love to his friends' wives or daughters. Therefore, because all other feasible outlets of his sexual drive are taboo, the bachelor turns to the only other solution besides celibacy, a "cheap, temporary substitute for marriage."[17] The case for the woman is quite similar.

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16. Getting Married, p. 136.
17. Ibid., pp. 187-8.

Unless she has money or talent to assure her economic independence, she must get a husband.[18] A manifestation of the general regard of the husband as an economic necessity can be seen in the shameful husband-hunting antics engaged in by the parents of marriageable young women. Unless this dependence of women on men is abolished, unless there is equality of income between male and female, in short, unless we live in a socialistic society, we shall find that the young man who is inclined to seek a cheap substitute for marriage will have no difficulty in finding a young woman who is compelled to earn her living by providing that substitute. But a woman need not be driven actually to sell her body in the street to be a prostitute:

> At present [the economic dependence of women on men] reduces the difference between marriage and prostitution to the difference between Trade Unionism and unorganised casual labor: a huge difference, no doubt, as to order and comfort, but not a difference in kind.[19]

Shaw deals with the problem of prostitution in Mrs. Warren's Profession (1894). Mrs. Warren, the protagonist of the play, philosophizes about her livelihood thus: "The only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good to her."[20] Shaw's thesis in the play is that it is society, not Mrs. Warren, that is responsible for the institution of

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18. Cf. preface to Man and Superman: "the ordinary man's business is to get means to keep up the position and habits of a gentleman, and the ordinary woman's business is to get married." (MP, p. 494).
19. Getting Married, p. 164.
20. MP, p. 69.

prostitution.[21] He faces the problem squarely, and through the lips of Kitty Warren he strikes out at what he feels is the false, hypocritical attitude of many people: "It's not work that any woman would do for pleasure, goodness knows; though to hear the pious people talk you would suppose it was a bed of roses."[22] And when, in a moment of great excitment, she blurts out, "Oh, the hypocrisy of the world makes me sick!"[23] she voices Shaw's attitude completely.[24] However, Shaw maintains that although the fundamental cause of Kitty Warren's corruption was poverty, she kept on working because of greed.[25] It is precisely because Mrs. Warren insists on continuing her work after she is no longer economically compelled to do so, and not because she was once a prostitute by necessity, that her daughter leaves her and

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21. In his preface to the Unpleasant Plays, Shaw says: "I must, however, warn my readers that my attacks are directed against themselves, not against my stage figures. They cannot too thoroughly understand that the guilt of defective social organization does not lie alone on the people who actually work the commercial makeshifts which the defects make inevitable . . . but with the whole body of citizens whose public opinion, public action . . . alone can replace . . . Mrs. Warren's profession with honorable industries . . ." (WP, p. xxvi.)
22. Ibid., p. 68.
23. Loc. cit.
24. Cf. Shaw's remark in his "Note on Modern Prizefighting" appended to The Admirable Bashville: "As long as society is so organized that the destitute athlete and the destitute beauty are forced to choose between underpaid drudgery as industrial producers, and comparative self-respect, plenty, and popularity as prizefighters and mercenary brides, licit or illicit, it is idle to affect virtuous indignation at their expense." p. 71.
25. Shaw might easily have put the words of Moll Flanders into the mouth of Kitty Warren: "as poverty brought me in, so avarice kept me in, till there was no going back." There is a striking parallel between Moll Flanders and Mrs. Warren. It would be interesting to know whether the similarity between the works of Defoe and Shaw is coincidental or whether Shaw is definitely indebted to Defoe.

precipitates the tragic ending of the play. Shaw's view of prostitution might be summed up in this statement which he makes in his preface to his Unpleasant Plays (1898):

> I believe that any society which desires to found itself on a high standard of integrity of character in its units should organize itself in such a fashion as to make it possible for all men and all women to maintain themselves in reasonable comfort by their industry without selling their affections and their convictions.[26]

And this statement would apply not only to actual prostitution, but also to sex slavery in marriage.

The second function which Shaw attributes to the institution of marriage is that of "supplying a form of domesticity." The form of domesticity which marriage supplies, of course, is the institution of the family. Shaw cannot tolerate what to him are empty cliches such as The Home, a Mother's Influence, a Father's Care, Filial Piety, Duty, Affection, Family Life: "The flat fact is that English home life today is neither honorable, virtuous, wholesome, sweet[or] clean . . ."[27] In fact the state of family life is so unhappy that it has produced a revolt which is evinced by the popularity of such literary profligates as Tom Jones and Charles Surface. And when an "unscrupulous libertine" appears he enjoys tremendous popularity among girls brought up in the best of homes. A good example of such a libertine is Charteris in The Philanderer. One of the specific

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26. NP, pp. xxv-xxvi.
27. Getting Married, p. 131.

things which Shaw objects to in family life is its supposed "atmosphere of love." He lashes out at such an idea:

> No healthy man or animal is occupied with love in any sense for more than a very small fraction indeed of the time he devotes to business and to recreation wholly unconnected with love.[28]

In his preface to Misalliance (1914) he states that too much affection is just as harmful, if not more harmful, than physical torture of the child.[29]

Another element of family life which he objects to is the notion that old people and young people should combine within a family to form a social unit. He believes that older people are physically and mentally incompatible with younger ones.

Finally, Shaw attacks the notion that consanguinity alone justifies the existence of strong affection. Not that a brother and a sister, for example, may not get along well together if allowed to "follow their own bent," but "the danger lies in assuming that [they] shall get on any better."[30]

Because of the present miserable state of family life, it is a crime, Shaw says, that a woman must marry in order to have children.

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28. Ibid., p. 134.
29. When discussing physical torture Shaw sights the case of a man who said that "the only thing he beat his children for was failure in perfect obedience and perfect truthfulness . . . As one of them is not a virtue at all, and the other the attribute of a god, one can imagine what the lives of this gentleman's children would have been if it had been possible for him to live down to his monstrous and foolish pretensions." (Misalliance, p. xvii.)
30. Ibid., p. xcix.

Child-bearing is a woman's right and, if she desires to have a child, she should not be forced to marry if she does not wish to. It is essential that society no longer demand marriage as a requisite for child-bearing because many of our most intelligent and able women—therefore, the best mothers—refuse to tolerate life with a husband, and yet desire children. He shows us an example of such a woman, Lesbia Grantham, in his play Getting Married. Lesbia is pursued constantly by General Bridgenorth, who wants to marry her. In answer to Bridgenorth's spirited question, "Hang it all, Lesbia, don't you want a husband?"[31] she replies:

> No. I want children; and I want to devote myself entirely to my children, and not to their father. The law will not allow me to do that; so I have made up my mind to have neither husband nor children.[32]

Up to this point, brief reference has been made to children as a part of a larger unit, the family. Now let us turn our attention to the child itself. Shaw devoted one of his longest prefaces, the one preceding Misalliance (1910), to a discussion of children's problems. It will be necessary to rely heavily on this preface on "Parents and Children" for a detailed picture of Shaw's views, because little material on this subject of children can be found in any of his plays.[33]

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31. Getting Married, p. 120.
32. Loc. cit.
33. This is a generalization. There are several children in Shaw's plays, like Ptolemy in Caesar and Cleopatra, but their parts are minor ones, and their characters are not carefully developed.

Shaw thinks of childhood as "a stage in the process of that continual remanufacture of the Life Stuff by which the human race is perpetuated."[34] To him children are a manifestation of the teleological effort of the Life Force toward perfection, the goal of evolution. In addition to avoiding the extremes of affection and punishment already mentioned, we ought to be perfectly honest and modest toward children. The most unpardonable error of the adult in dealing with a child is to set himself up as an example to be followed. What he ought to do, Shaw says, is to hold himself up to the child as a warning. Shaw cannot tolerate the hypocritical adult who feels superior to a child.

The adult manifests hypocrisy in another way: he refuses to admit that children are nuisances, that their company cannot be tolerated for more than a short period of time: "in fact the evidence shews that it is easier to love the company of a dog than that of a commonplace child between the ages of six and the beginnings of controlled maturity . . ."[35] There is undeniable proof that parents do want to get rid of their children at least part of the time, and that proof lies in the existence of the school.

On the subject of education Shaw is particularly bitter. He speaks of his own schooling in biting terms:

> I was taught lying, dishonorable submission to tyranny, dirty stories, a blasphemous habit of treating love and maternity as

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34. Misalliance, p. ix.
35. Ibid., p. xxiv.

> obscene jokes, hopelessness, evasion, derision, cowardice, and all the blackguard's shifts by which the coward intimidates other cowards.[36]

He particularly objects to the incompetence of teachers, caused partly by their dissatisfaction in having to teach subjects in which they are neither interested nor properly trained; and he objects to their cruelty. To the child a school is nothing less than a prison in which he is forced to assimilate unwanted knowledge from textbooks written in a thoroughly dry and incompetent manner. Shaw's attitude toward our present system of formal education is so bitter that his suggested alternative, a proposal, with a few qualifications, that children be allowed to roam about without direction or restraint, does not come as a surprize. There are certain basic subjects that a child should be taught in order to prepare him to live with his fellowman in society; he should be taught "reading, writing, and enough arithmetic to use money honestly and accurately, together with the rudiments of law and order . . ."[37] Nature has given the child the attribute of docility so that he can easily be forced to learn these fundamental things; however, society must avoid the egregious sin of abusing that docility. Shaw, of course, believes that children should have access to more formal education; but he is indefinite as to when that education should take place, for after the child has learned the three r's he has a right to follow his own inclinations; there is to be no more compulsory schooling.

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36. Ibid., p. xxxi.
37. Ibid., p. lxxii.

Shaw's solution to the problem of the relationship between the adult and the child can be summed up in the following statement:

> If adults will frankly give up their claim to know better than children what the purposes of the Life Force are, and treat the child as an experiment like themselves, and possibly a more successful one, and at the same time relinquish their monstrous parental claims to personal private property in children, the rest must be left to common sense.[38]

And his belief that the institution of the family, which is society's attempt to establish some form of domesticity, is "a humbug and a nuisance"[39] is equally clear. His exact solution to the problem of a family substitute is vague, but evidence would lead to the belief that Shaw might advocate Plato's suggestion for state controlled bringing up of children.[40]

Shaw does not recommend the abolition of marriage by society. Nor does he recommend that the individual should ignore that institution; he states that it is evident that illegitimate matches will not work out, that all laws should be stronger than the individual. Under our present system of social organization marriage is inevitable; our task is to make it decent and reasonable. The

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38. Ibid., p. lvii.
39. Ibid., p. cii.
40. In his preface to Getting Married Shaw has a section of "What is to become of the Children?" (p. 198 et seq) In it he states that since the welfare of the child is a concern of the nation, a parent should be required to conform to certain regulations in bringing up its child. But many parents would be too poor to properly follow the rules; therefore, such a solution is not at present possible. Thus, Shaw fails to solve the problem of what is to be done with the child, saying only that "however we settle the question, we must make the parent justify the custody of the child exactly as we should make a stranger justify it."

first step in the reformation of our marriage law is a careful examination of its present state. As is the case with our other institutions, we have taken it for granted and failed to think about it. Consideration of the problems of marriage must lead to the conclusion that it cannot be contracted on a for-better-or-for-worse basis; it must be dissoluble. And a cheap divorce should be granted simply because a person desires it, no questions asked. Granting divorce on such grounds will not lead to chaotic promiscuity. He believes that monogamy, under a favorable balance of males and females in the population, will protect itself. He mentions as a case in point the story of Candida, in which the Reverend Morrel realizes that either he or Eugene must go. In addition, once the sense of bondage is lifted from marriage he believes that people will not be so desirous of seeking a divorce.

At any rate, we must give this solution a try. We must not be afraid, for every advance that civilization has made has frightened "honest folks."

> This is a pity; but if we were to spare their feelings we should never improve the world at all. To let them frighten us, and then pretend that their stupid timidity is virtue and purity and so forth, is simply moral cowardice.[41]

Marriage, as all our other institutions, must be adapted to human nature.

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41. Getting Married, p. 186.

III.

The institution of war presents a different problem from the institutions of marriage or of the medical profession, which are in a deplorable condition because they are managed by people who do not understand them. People do understand war, Shaw insists. He may be right; nevertheless, let us look at his definition of war in order to see if we understand the same thing by the term as he. In his Everybody's Political What's What?(1944) he terms war "a primitive blood sport that gratifies human pugnacity."[1] This statement is practically a paraphrase of a remark he made thirty-four years earlier in the preface to Misalliance (1910): "War is fundamentally the sport of hunting and fighting the most dangerous beasts of prey."[2]

In his writing, Shaw often manifests a concern for war. In Man and Superman (1903) he has the Devil say:

> —I tell you that in the arts of life man invents nothing; but in the arts of death he outdoes Nature herself; and produces by chemistry and machinery all the slaughter of plague, pestilence, and famine.[3]

And a little later in this same scene Don Juan remarks cynically: "The survival of whatever form of civilization can produce the best rifle and the best fed riflemen is assured."[4] The same concern is

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1. Everybody's Political What's What?, pp. 122-3.
2. Misalliance, p. lxv.
3. MP, p. 619.
4. Ibid., p. 625.

present in Back to Methuselah (1921), in which Shaw uses Cain as a symbol representing all war and all killing. Shaw's hatred of war is implicit in Cain's passionate love of his occupation of warmaking:

> I have imagined a glorious poem of many men . . . I will divide them into two great hosts. One of them I will lead; and the other will be lead by the man I fear most and desire to fight and kill most. And each host shall try to kill the other host. Think of that! All those multitudes of men fighting, fighting, killing, killing! The four rivers running with blood! That will be life indeed: life lived to the very marrow: burning, overwhelming life.[5]

Eve adequately puts into words an idea which occurs often throughout the play when she says, "Through him [Cain] and his like, death is gaining on life."[6]

Shaw complains that people do not carefully examine the institution of war: people do not face the truth that "war depends on the rousing of all the murderous blackguardism still latent in mankind."[7] To a man like Shaw, who is not impressed with the high-sounding ideals by which people seek to justify the war they wage, the comment of Burge's in Back to Methuselah, "You cannot win wars by principles,"[8] has complete validity.

Refusal to face the truth is a direct result of what Shaw terms romantic imagination. In his preface to Misalliance (1910) he defines this term: he claims that we use the word imagination in two entirely different senses. When one is able to imagine

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5. Back to Methuselah, p. 24.
6. Ibid., p. 37.
7. Misalliance, p. 10
8. Back to Methuselah, p. 57.

things as they in reality are not, he is using romantic imagination. On the other hand, when one is able "to imagine things as they are without actually sensing them,"[9] he is using realistic imagination. It is the development of romantic imagination that is responsible for patriotism and military glory. That Shaw has no patience with patriotism is evident: he seldom misses an opportunity to disparage it. For example, in his preface to The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles he inveighs against disguising "vulgar pugnacity and greed" as patriotism.[10] And in his preface to Man and Superman (1903) he says:

> What is all this growing love of pageantry, this effusive loyalty, this officious rising and uncovering at a wave from a flag or a blast from a brass band? Imperialism? Not a bit of it. Obsequiousness, servility, cupidity roused by the prevailing smell of money.[11]

In his preface to Misalliance he says that "fatigue, hunger, terror, and disease are the raw material which romancers work up into military glory," that soldiers do not go to war because they are inspired to fight, but because they are afraid of suffering the consequences of refusal.[12] Tyrants can often remain in power, he says in his preface to The Millionairess (1936), simply because the people they rule have been taught "to measure greatness by pageantry and wholesale slaughter called military glory."[13] And this hypocritical pretense of morality is now worse than ever, because with the

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9. Misalliance, p. cxxii.
10. The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isle, p. 7.
11. MP, p. 504.
12. Misalliance, p. cxxiii.
13. The Millionairess, pp. 131-2.

modernization of warfare and the consequent separation of the fighter from direct contact with the victim of his brutalities, there is a correspondingly easier burden on his conscience. Society can never begin to solve its problem of war until it casts aside the superfluous and false accoutrements of military glory and patriotism, until pageantry loses its black magic and we can see it for what it truly is, namely, a form of pretending.

The successful military man, according to Shaw, has nothing to do with romantic imagination: he is an arch-realist, and it is his realism that enables him to see through false pretenses, to arrive at proper decisions, and thus to control the soldiers under him. Even the ordinary soldier is without romantic delusions. In Everybody's Political What's What? (1944) Shaw says that it is the civilians and the women who preserve the tradition of military glory.[14] Bravery and courage are mere legends to the true military man—he is aware that cowardice is a fundamental characteristic of human nature and, as such, there is no stigma attached to it: it is merely an attribute nature has instilled in us in order to enable us to better protect ourselves. In Back to Methuselah, the wiseman, Confucius, says to Burge-Lubin, who has decided not to risk making a certain move: "You have at last become prudent: you are no longer what you call a sportsman: you are a sensible coward, almost a grown-up man."[15] Later in the play one of Shaw's Ancients explains to a short-liver—

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14. Everybody's Political What's What?, p. 129.
15. Back to Methuselah, p. 154.

one who has not lived long enough to understand the problems of the world—how the "psuedo-Christian" civilization practically destroyed itself by war; however,

> The last civilized thing that happened was that the statesmen discovered that cowardice was a great patriotic virtue; and a public monument was erected to its first preacher, an ancient and very fat sage called Sir John Falstaff.[16]

But man will not admit this obvious attribute of cowardice: indeed in Man and Superman Don Juan says that man "will face death to outface that stinging truth . . . Yet all his civilization is founded on his cowardice, on his abject tameness, which he calls his respectibility."[17] It must not be thought, however, that Shaw does not recognize the value of military discipline. He asserts definitely that the world cannot be controlled, cannot accomplish anything, unless it is well organized: and military discipline is a good means to that end. He fully recognizes that a nation which is to survive at present cannot do without the soldier. We can understand the military man for what he is, we can control him, we can use him as a tool; but we need not idealize him as the great benefactor of mankind.

Now let us examine one of Shaw's plays that deals with the stupidity of war and note how the essential points in the above discussion are included. Arms and the Man, a satire on patriotism and war, was written in 1894. As many other English playwrights from the

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16. Ibid., p. 210.
17. MP, p. 621.

days of Ben Jonson had to do, Shaw set his satire in a distant country, Bulgaria. The background of the action is a war in which the Bulgars with Russian officers are fighting the Serbs with Austrian officers. Shaw's satire is immediately apparent when we realize that most of the characters wander through the play completely ignoring this fundamentally ridiculous situation: in fact, Major Petkoff (a "conventional stage soldier") one of the Bulgarian officers, says, with a good deal of satisfaction:

> We shouldnt have been able to begin fighting if these foreigners hadnt shown us how to do it: we knew nothing about it; and neither did the Serbs. Egad, there'd have been no war without them![18]

The women in the play are the chief upholders of romantic notions of patriotism. Raina, the heroine, waxes ecstatic over the success of her fiance in the war; in a moment of passion she tells her mother that "the world is really a glorious world for women who can see its glory and men who can act its romance!"[19] She and her mother, Catherine, carry on the romantic traditions. The men involved in the fighting recognize war for what it is. Sergius, Raina's fiance, tries to rid Catherine of her glorious delusions about war when he tells her: "Soldiering, my dear madame, is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak."[20]

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18. MP, p. 153.
19. Ibid, p. 127.
20. Ibid., p. 152.

The character in the play who voices more of Shaw's opinions than any other is the hero, Bluntschli. Shaw tells us in the preface that Bluntschli "is not a conventional stage soldier"[21]—and it must be remembered that he usually uses the word conventional derogatorily. Bluntschli, as a representative of the Shavian ideal of the successful military man, is a thorough-going realist. War for him is merely a way of making a living; he has no delusions about it. He shocks Raina by telling her that "nine out of ten soldiers are born fools."[22] He is terribly scared when he thinks he is going to be captured and he is not afraid to admit it. And when it comes to a decision as to whether or not he shall carry food or ammunition in his pocket, he chooses food, chocolates at that.

Throughout his career as a playwright Shaw has created characters that reflect his ideas of the military man. A few of the more important ones are General Burgoyne,[23] Caesar, General Mitchener, Private O'Flaherty, the Kaiser, and Private Meek. The one that he seems to be most impressed by is Napoleon. Napoleon figured as the protagonist in Man of Destiny (1895) and is a rather important character in Back to Methuselah (1921). In addition, there are numerous references to Napoleon in many of Shaw's books and prefaces. Shaw looks at Napoleon as a man whose genius lay in military tactics, and

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21. Ibid., p. 119.
22. Ibid., p. 132.
23. Shaw's reference to Burgoyne (MP, p. 347) is an exact repetition of what he said three years earlier about Bluntschli: he "is not a conventional stage soldier."

who successfully rose to power because he understood human nature and could bluff romantic people. He recognized that the one universal passion is fear. He also knew that he did not have to make men fight; they seemed perfectly willing to kill each other, and they could always find a moral justification for their actions. His heartless realism is never more completely brought out than when, in Man of Destiny, he says to the innkeeper: "Blood costs nothing: wine costs money."[24] It is apparent that, although Shaw hates the kind of thing Napoleon stood for, he cannot help but admire Napoleon's understanding of human nature. But Shaw's cynical explanation of Napoleon's popularity—that the world is fond of its miracles and its heroes, that idealization of them has a tradition older than Cain—has a tone of sadness.

England has engaged in three major wars since Shaw's birth in 1856 (the Boer War, and World Wars I and II) and in innumerable minor ones. Shaw's attitude toward all three major wars has been one of approval. This approval does not in any way indicate an inconsistency in Shaw. Although he detests war, he believes that under our present set-up of social organization war is sometimes unavoidable. But there is no use in trying to justify morally a thing for which there can be no moral excuse. In all three wars we find him attacking hypocrisy and false patriotism. Since Shaw's attitude toward the Boer War agrees substantially with his attitude toward World Wars I and II,[25] it will not be necessary to discuss it here. Let us rather turn our attention

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24. Man of Destiny, p. 169.
25. For discussion of Shaw's ideas on the Boer War see Fabianism and Empire (A Manifesto by the Fabian Society), 1900.

to the two more important and recent wars.

Although Shaw's attitude toward war caused no protest during World War II, it caused much consternation during World War I. Soon after World War I began, Shaw got out an article, "Common Sense about the War," which raised a storm of protest.[26] Looking at it now, many years after war-heated tempers have cooled, it is difficult to understand just why the article was received so unfavorably. Of course, there are outspoken accusations to the effect that England is fighting the militarists (Junkers) in Germany when the very same class exists in England, but far from being treasonous, it is a strong plea to the nation to roll up its sleeves and get down to the business of fighting. After soundly scolding the English for attempting to justify the war morally, Shaw states that one of its chief causes, surely not a moral one, is an attempt to maintain balance of power; the real necessity for the war is merely a kill-or-be-killed one. He suggests methods for the speeding up of recruiting. He also suggests that peace terms should be decided upon right away so that the English people may know what they are really fighting for. The essence of his article might be summed up in one sentence: Let's get to work; let's cut out the nonsense. The English must remember that they will have to beat the Kaiser "and not to revile him and strike moral

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26. His pamphlets and articles about World War I have been gathered into one book and published under the title What I Really Said about the War. For discussion of the difficulties in which Shaw was involved because of his remarks about World War I, cf. Hesketh Pearson, op. cit., "The War to End Shaw."

attitudes."[27]

Shaw was dissatisfied with the peace terms and felt that they could only lead to another war. This dissatisfaction is evident in his prediction of World War II in Back to Methuselah (1921).[28] The new propaganda phased Shaw not an iota more than the old. In 1933, six years before World War II, he wrote On the Rocks, in which one of his characters, Old Hipney, says to Prime Minister Bashem: "You cant frighten me with a word like dictator."[29] Soon after the outbreak of the war Shaw wrote an article, "Uncommon Sense about the War," which was published in the New Statesman and Nation for October 7, 1939. This article contains many of the same ideas as "Common Sense about the War." Shaw claims the real reason for the war is the old balance of power concept, but this time the propagandists have insisted that the war was to stamp out "Hitlerism," a new term for an old excuse. He states his hope that "the world will have had an immense gratification of the primitive instinct that is at the bottom of all this mischief: to wit, pugnacity, sheer pugnacity for its own sake."[30] In Everybody's Political What's What? we can find the same sentiments: that the war is "fundamentally not only maniacal but nonsensical,"[31] and that Hitler "cannot be defeated by remonstrances."[32]

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27. "Common Sense about the War," p. 91.
28. Cf. Zoo's speech in Back to Methuselah, p. 209.
29. On the Rocks, p. 261.
30. "Uncommon Sense about the War," The New Statesman and Nation, XVIII (October 7, 1939), p. 484.
31. Everybody's Political What's What, p. 2.
32. Ibid., p. 127. Cf. the remark of Burge (supra, p. 37) and statement of Shaw in "Common Sense About the War" (supra p. 44).

Shaw's attitude toward sport is a corollary to his attitude toward war. In 1882, Shaw wrote the novel Cashel Byron's Profession which deals with prizefighting. Years later, in 1901, he rendered his novel into the form of a burlesque play in blank verse: to it he attached a "Note on Modern Prizefighting." He says that prizefighting, like prostitution, should not be tolerated in a civilized society; but its practictioners are not responsible for its existence; unless society can make it possible for people to earn a good living in a more acceptable manner, society must blame itself for existence of such institutions. Shaw considers pugilism an art which propagates the feeling of pugnacity,

> the great adversary of the social impulse to live and let live; to establish our rights by shouldering our share of the social burden; to face and examine danger instead of striking at it.[33]

In his "Revolutionist's Handbook" (1903) he asserts that "Sport is, as it has always been, murderous excitement; the impulse to slaughter is universal."[34] And Lady Chavender, a character in On the Rocks (1933), complains that the voters know nothing about government and disparages them because:

> Football, prizefighting, war: that is what they like. And they like war because it isn't real to them: it's only a cinema show. War is real to me; and I hate it, as every woman to whom it is real hates it.[35]

The necessity of brutal war must have disheartened Shaw.

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33. The Admirable Bashville, p. 73.
34. MP, p. 718.
35. On the Rocks, pp. 199-200.

There is evidence that World War I had such an influence, for sixteen years after peace had been declared he wrote a play called The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles in which one of his characters says, "we shall make wars because only under the strain of war are we capable of changing the world; but the changes our wars will make will never be the changes we intended them to make."[36] The only good effect of war is that it sometimes brings about temporary socialization of government in order to increase efficiency of operation: it is unfortunate this same necessity is not recognizable in peace time.

Shaw's socialism is his one hope for eventual salvation from war's destruction. In "Common Sense about the War" he maintains that socialism "loathes war," that socialism calls for better education which would help to prevent future war.[37] He has so much faith in his socialism that he states in Everybody's Political What's What? that the only war that could have a moral justification would be a war for equality of income.[38]

But the bad results of war far outweigh the incidental good. And there does not appear to be much hope in the immediate future. Indeed, Shaw states that we must face the fact that war cannot be abolished for sometime to come; our only hope for the present is in

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36. The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles, p. 85.
37. "Common Sense about the War," p. 87.
38. Everybody's Political What's What?, p. 126

its supranational control by an international police force. As long as we continue "to found our institutions on the ideals suggested to our imaginations by our half-satisfied passions, instead of on genuinely scientific natural history,"[39] war, as well as other evil, will persist.

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39. MP, p. 121.

IV.

In the "Preface on the Prospects of Christianity" (1915), which Shaw appended to his play Androcles and the Lion, he discusses the Christian religion. In a characteristically blunt manner he accuses people of taking their religion for granted. Worse yet, he feels that people actually hesitate to reason about their religion. Christianity offers the comforting promise of rewards in a life to come, and, by threatening punishment for sins, helps to keep the poor contented and the crime rate down; therefore, people follow the path of least resistance, they accept their religion without question.

But Shaw is not the kind of man to accept an important religious creed without examining it thoroughly. With the challenging statement, "I am no more a Christian than Pilate was, or you, gentle reader,"[1] he begins to elaborate on his ideas. He gives a psychological explanation of the origin of many beliefs of the Christian religion. For example, he believes that the idea of a Christ coming to save mankind is an old one, much older than Jesus. But, at the time that Jesus lived, conditions were propitious for man to attribute all the Christian doctrines (a composite of ideas from many sources) to him and to make him the Christ, a symbol; "and as it is the doctrine and not the man that matters, and as, besides, one symbol is as good as another provided everyone attaches the same

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1. MP, p. 831.

meaning to it,"[2] Shaw does not trouble himself particularly about the authenticity of the gospels. He considers it only natural that man should postulate a God to explain the operation of physical phenomena; it is also natural to postulate a doer or doers of evil. Man tries to propitiate the evil doers and, in doing so, fears that he has incurred the wrath of the God whom he considers a judge. He therefore tries to allay the anger of his God, to corrupt him, by offering gifts and sacrifices. Shaw strongly objects to this whole idea of propitiation and points out that by donations and charities a form of this attempted corruptions is still going on. He explains the Resurrection by reference to man's primitive faith in the harvest, and in the seed which never seemed to die. Primitive man came to believe

> that God is in the seed, and that God is immortal. And thus it became the test of Godhead that nothing you could do to it could kill it, and that when you buried it, it would rise again in renewed life and beauty and give mankind eternal life . . ."[3]

Some of the concepts of the Androcles preface occur in Shaw's plays. In The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles (1934) Shaw uses the legend of a final judgment day. The play, which is pure fantasy, is primarily a social satire. During the course of the action, the day of Judgment arrives, and Shaw has great fun showing the reactions of certain people on that day. The leaders of the British Empire strongly object to the fact that their empire is being judged by a

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2. Ibid., p. 833.
3. Ibid., p. 844.

group of angels and not directly by God. And the first people to disappear are four young characters who have stood symbolically for love, pride, heroism and empire. But there is also a religious interpretation which may be given to the play. As Shaw puts it in the preface, "In a living society every day is a day of judgment; and its recognition as such is not the end of all things but the beginning of a real civilization."[4] Or, as Hyering says in the play itself: "What we have learnt here today is that the day of judgment is not the end of the world but the beginning of real human responsibility."[5]

The idea of punishment and revenge is brought out in many Shavian plays and prefaces. In "The Revolutionist's Handbook" (1903), which he appended to Man and Superman, he has this to say on the subject: "The Christian doctrine of the uselessness of punishment and the wickedness of revenge has not, in spite of its simple common sense, found a single convert among the nations . . ."[6] His views on prisons, a practical corollary to his ethical ideas of punishment and revenge, may be found in his preface to a book called English Prisons under Local Government, by Sidney and Beatrice Webb. He believes that if any man is too dangerous to be permitted to go among his fellow men at will, it is a nonsensical waste of time to require that useful men spend their time watching him. Undesirable criminals ought to be killed. This opinion, stated with such bluntness, often

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4. The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles, p. 16.
5. Ibid., p. 82.
6. MP, p. 716.

occurs in Shaw's writings.[7] He feels that the idea of punishment can be explained psychologically in a way that not only accounts for man's apparent desire to punish other men in order that they atone for their sin, but also indicates a possible postulation of "One great atonement and one great redeemer to compound for the sins of the world once for all . . ."[8]

Such ideas of Judgment and Atonement are not important ones to Shaw, however. He is not even much concerned with the matter of the divinity of Christ, the point upon which rests the whole basis for acceptance of Christianity as a religion. Shaw calls the debate over the divinity of Jesus an idle controversy. The secular teachings of Jesus are the important consideration. In order to determine what Jesus really taught, Shaw, in the "Preface on the Prospects of Christianity," examines with care the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and comments on the treatment of Jesus in each Gospel, pointing out similarities and discrepancies. He concludes that although the Bible may be an example of "flagrant jerry-building" it still contains much valuable doctrine.[9]

The teachings of Jesus which he feels are of vital importance he summarizes in four points. Point one derives from Jesus' statement that the kingdom of heaven is within man. God and man are one; therefore, man cannot harm his fellow man without harming himself. Point

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7. See particularly the prefaces to Misalliance, p. liv, and The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles, p. 17.
8. NP, p. 842.
9. NP, p. 919.

two is an important one. Money and property should be abolished. Here we can see how Shaw conceives of Jesus as a preacher of communism. This communistic interpretation of Jesus' teachings is evident throughout the preface. In one section, "Jesus as Economist," Shaw says that Jesus preached the right to equality of income, to an equal share of the nation's wealth: "Decidedly, whether you think Jesus was God or not, you must admit that he was a first-rate political economist."[10] Shaw feels that the pure communism which Jesus advocated cannot in the present state of things be immediately realized. There will still be, for some time to come, "regions of supply and demand in which men will need to use money or individual credit, and for which therefore they must have individual incomes."[11] Shaw suggests that "The modern practical form of the communism of Jesus is therefore, for the present, equal distribution of the surplus of the national income that is not absorbed by simple communism."[12] Shaw's third point is "Get rid of judges and punishment and revenge."[13] And his fourth point is "Get rid of your family entanglements."[14]

When we get over the idolatry of Christ and begin to take seriously the doctrines he preached, society will progress. So far, civilization has not followed the preachings of Jesus: "Barabbas is triumphant everywhere; and the final use he makes of his triumph is lead us all to suicide with heroic gestures and resounding lies."[15]

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10. Ibid., p. 889.
11. Ibid., p. 891.
12. Loc. cit.
13. Ibid., p. 879.
14. Loc. cit.
15. Ibid., p. 877.

If Jesus' teachings are approached from a scientific standpoint it will be found that they make good sense.

When we have abolished idolatry, and have accepted certain of Jesus' teachings as sound doctrine, we must not forget the necessity for toleration. Shaw maintains that Jesus was not a proselytizer, that there is nothing in his teachings that would prevent a Mohammedan, a Brahman, a Buddhist or a Jew from accepting them. Jesus himself was crucified because the Jews could not tolerate a man who claimed to be the Son of God. Although he was given a fair trial and every chance to defend himself, he refused to do so, and Pilate, in order to conciliate the crowd, had to convict Jesus on the trumped-up charge of committing treason by claiming to be the King of the Jews. Shaw was often disturbed by the thought that man does not tolerate deviations from the accepted psychological, social, and moral norms. In his preface to Man and Superman (1903) he complains that a man whose ideas do not conform to the majority is considered a madman.[16] And in his preface to Getting Married (1910) he asserts that a man whom we may consider a lunatic might be in reality a prophet who is more sane than we are.[17]

Shaw's ideas on toleration have their fullest expression in Saint Joan (1923). He had long had in mind the idea of writing a play on a prophet. According to his own statement in the preface

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16. Ibid., p. 500.
17. Getting Married, p. 138.

to The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet (1909) he wanted to dramatize the life of Mahomet,[18] but, as he had already had difficulty with the censors,[19] he hesitated to undertake such an arduous task. Hesketh Pearson maintains that Shaw's eventual choice of Joan of Arc as a subject for a play was determined by a casual suggestion of Mrs. Shaw.[20] This may be true, but it can be shown that Shaw was interested in Joan much earlier.[21] The historical Joan epitomized the kind of militant prophet whom Shaw admired, and who he felt had been unjustly treated; she was an ideal subject for a sermon on toleration. The theme of the play is, as Cauchon puts it, that "mortal eyes cannot distinguish the saint from the heretic."[22] And, Shaw adds in the preface:

> Unless there is a large liberty to shock conventional people, and a self-informed sense of the value of originality, individuality, and eccentricity, the result will be apparent stagnation covering a repression of evolutionary forces which will eventually explode with extravagant and probably destructive violence.[23]

Now let us sum up briefly Shaw's attitude toward Christianity: he does not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God; he was, rather, a great prophet whose ethical and social teachings could

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18. The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet, p. 360.
19. Altogether, three of Shaw's plays met with censorship difficulties in England: Mrs. Warren's Profession, The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet, and Press Cuttings.
20. Hesketh Pearson, G.B.S., p. 340.
21. See The Doctor's Dilemma, p. lviii, Getting Married, p. 138, and NP, p. 900.
22. NP, p. 1146.
23. Ibid., p. 1021.

be applied with advantage by present-day society. However, one qualification should be made: before we can practice Christianity we must reduce its principles to modern concepts; we must test the validity of its secular doctrines by applying the scientific criteria of economics, of biology, of criminology, and of psychology, for

> To pretend that a field preacher under the governorship of Pontius Pilate, or even Pontius Pilate himself in council with all the wisdom of Rome, could have worked out applications of Christianity or any other system of morals for the twentieth century, is to shelve the subject more effectually than Nero and all its other prosecutors ever succeeded in doing.[24]

We now know Shaw's secular interpretation of Jesus' teachings, his sanction of Christianity as a social and ethical creed. Since he rejects the institution of the Christian church as a religious organization, let us examine the religion which Shaw has adopted in its place.

Shaw's philosophy of creative evolution, which he accepts as a religion, emerged full-grown in Man and Superman (1903). It is true that in Back to Methuselah (1921), which has as its subtitle "A Metabiological Pentateuch," Shaw added some details to his philosophy, but its important points are all stated in the earlier play Man and Superman.

It is important to know some of the men to whom Shaw is indebted in order that it be clearly understood that the philosophy he adopted was not his own. For the basic theory of creative evolution as a

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24. Ibid., p. 881.

scientific hypothesis he is indebted to Samuel Butler, who in turn is indebted to Lamarck.[25] Schopenhauer's treatise The World as Will (1819) Shaw refers to as

> the metaphysical compliment to Lamarck's natural history, as it demonstrates that the driving force behind Evolution is a will to live, and to live, as Christ said long before, more abundantly.[26]

Nietzsche is the direct source for Shaw's conception of a Superman.[27] And the over-all influence of the French philosopher Bergson has been suggested. Bertrand Russell in A History of Western Philosophy maintains that Back to Methuselah is "pure Bergsonism;" but he makes no further mention of Shaw, and he makes no effort to show the tenets of Bergsonism in Back to Methuselah.[28]

Shaw, like Voltaire, recognizes the necessity of a God; but his conception of the Diety differs greatly from the commonly accepted one. His God is surely not anthropomorphic. In his preface to Androcles and the Lion (1915) he insists "that God is not a picture of a pompous person in white robes in the family Bible, but a spirit; that it is through this spirit that we evolve towards

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25. Of Samuel Butler, Shaw says: "anyone who wants to know what it was like to be a Lamarckian during the last quarter of the nineteenth century has only to read Mr. Festing Jones's memoir of Samuel Butler to learn how completely even a man of genius could isolate himself by antagonizing Darwin on the one hand and the Church on the other." (Back to Methuselah, p. xlviii.)
26. Ibid., p. xxiv.
27. Shaw himself coined the word superman to translate the German word Ubermensch which Nietzsche used.
28. Bertrand Russell's chapter on Bergson (pp. 791-810) is a good short summary of the philosopher's views. He describes Bergson's philosophy as a part of the revolt against reason which began with Rousseau. It is a philosophy which has a pragmatic motivation, a philosophy which believes that action is the supreme good.

greater abundance of life . . .'[29] The word evolve is an important one. Shaw recognizes two fundamentally different theories of evolution: the theory which is most closely associated with Darwin and which holds that selection is circumstantial; and the theory which is most often associated with Lamarck and emphasizes that selection, though perhaps subconscious, is not accidental but the result of a creative impulse of the will.[30] In his preface to Back to Methuselah, Shaw tries to clarify the difference between the two theories of evolution by greatly simplifying the principles and using as an example the Darwinian and Lamarckian explanations which might be given for the long neck of the giraffe. The Lamarkians would maintain that the giraffe acquired his long neck simply by wishing strongly for it, by trying to will it. The Darwinian would maintain that the giraffe's long neck is the result of a struggle for survival. If giraffes ate the leaves of the trees in a certain area for food and their numbers greatly increased, it would be possible that all the leaves up to a given height would eventually be eaten. As a result, only the taller giraffes would be able to continue eating, and the shorter ones would soon die out. The taller giraffes which remained would by necessity mate among themselves, producing offspring which would resemble them in bodily proportions. Thus, the giraffe's long neck would evolve, not according to conscious will, but because of food supply.

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29. MP, p. 890
30. Cf. the preface to Back to Methuselah, passim.

Shaw is opposed to the Darwinian theory, chiefly because of its element of Determinism, "representing man as a dead object driven hither and thither by his environment, antecedents, circumstances . . ."[31] On the other hand, Shaw does not believe that all men possess complete freedom of will: indeed it is society's insistence that all men can refrain from committing crimes when they wish to do so that is responsible for our abominable criminal laws. But he does believe that there is an element of will in evolution. If Darwin's theory is true, Shaw believes that there is little hope for human improvement because improvement can only come about by accident; and if statistics be right, a favorable accident is likely to be counter-balanced by an unfavorable one.

Into his play Man and Superman Shaw intruded an act in which he used the Don Juan legend "in its Mozartian form and made it a dramatic parable of Creative Evolution."[32]

In this act Shaw speaks of his idea that "Life is a force which has made innumerable experiments in organizing itself;"[33] that Life (and he always capitalizes the word) is "driving at brains,"[34] brains

> that shall see, not the physical world, but the purpose of Life, and thereby enable the individual to work for that purpose instead of thwarting and baffling it by setting up shortsighted personal aims as at present.[35]

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31. MP, p. 892.
32. Back to Methuselah, p. 34.
33. MP, p. 626.
34. Ibid., p. 627.
35. Ibid., p. 628.

This Life Force, "often called the Will of God,"[36] is an instinctive driving toward perfection which man is powerless to stop. This may appear to be deterministic, but there is an element of free will: man can desire a means of improvement, and the power of his will to accomplish that desire is recognized. The duty of man, his mission in life, is to try to understand the purpose of the Life Force; his "brain is the organ by which Nature tries to understand itself."[37] The idea that Life may not have a purpose is inconceivable to Shaw; if this were true there would be no reason to live.

Shaw believes that the whole universe is in the grip of a teleological Life Force striving to perfect itself, a Force which has finally evolved man as its most successful experiment thus far. But man is still far from perfect. Civilization is at present decaying and unless man can remedy the situation man will be replaced by another experiment: "The power that produced Man when the monkey was not up to the mark, can produce a higher creature than Man if Man does not come up to the mark."[38] How is man to correct his failure, to make a better world? He must evolve into a superior kind of man, a man who, with superior intellectual power, can solve the problems of civilization; in short, a Superman. This evolution of the Superman is to be achieved by highly selected breeding; it is to be achieved by willing to live better, whether that will be conscious or subconscious. Indeed, the theme of Man and Superman is the pursuit of

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36. Misalliance, p. xviii.
37. MP, p. 645.
38. Back to Methuselah, p. xvii.

a man, John Tanner, by a woman, Ann Whitefield, who is driven mercilessly in her pursuit by an unconscionable Life Force which is striving to breed a superior race. Unless that superior race is bred,

> the world must remain a den of dangerous animals among whom our few accidental supermen, our Shakespears, Goethes, Shelleys, and their like, must live as precariously as lion tamers do, taking the humor of their situation, and the dignity of their superiority, as a set-off to the horror of the one and the loneliness of the other.[39]

An idea of what the Superman may be like can be gotten from an examination of the cycle of five plays which Shaw included under the title of Back to Methuselah. The subtitle, "A Metabiological Pentateuch," gives an idea of Shaw's purpose in writing the cycle. In the preface he offers his play as a contribution to the starting of a "Bible for Creative Evolution,"[40] feeling the need of a play about his religion in which the attention to the theme is not interfered with by over-embellishment as it is in Man and Superman. The first play in the group, "In the Beginning," takes place in the Garden of Eden. The characters are Adam, Eve, and the Serpent. Adam complains of his boredom with life and is appalled at the thought that he must live forever. The subconscious Life Force within him compels him to desire improvement. The serpent tells him that he may have death if he so wills it because anything that one wills or desires strongly enough can be created. Therefore, Adam arbitrarily chooses one thousand years as the length of his lifetime. But

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39. MP, p. 721.
40. Back to Methuselah, p. ci.

before he can have death he must learn how to perpetuate human life; the serpent whispers the secret of reproduction into Eve's ear and she communicates it to Adam. Their first child, Cain, not only murders his brother Abel as in Genesis but also becomes the symbol of all war and all killing. In our last glimpse of the Garden of Eden we find Adam and Eve and Cain in sadness. Eve recognizes that her progeny are dying "before they have sense enough to live;"[41] that they learn how to dig and to fight; that they learn how to feed themselves; but

> Man need not always live by bread alone. There is something else. We do not yet know what it is; but someday we shall find out; and then we will live on that alone, and there shall be no more digging nor spinning; nor fighting nor killing.[42]

The setting of the second play, "The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas," is contemporary. Conrad Barnabas, a noted biologist, and his brother, Franklyn, a former minister—note the combination of a biologist and a theologian to formulate the gospel of a new religion—decide that civilization is destroying itself. They attribute the cause to the fact that man does not live long enough to really grapple with the problems of the world. He dies when he is still a child mentally. The only remedy for the situation lies in a greater life span for man. Careful study leads the brothers to the conclusion that man should have a life span of at least 300 years, and they raise the battle cry of "Back to Methuselah."

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41. Ibid., p. 37.
42. Ibid., p. 34.

How is this increase in life expectancy to be accomplished? Keeping in mind Shaw's credo of creative evolution, one finds the answer obvious: by willing, by desiring longer life, that goal may be achieved. In the third play, "The Thing Happens," we find out that at last two people who have lived over two hundred years. We are shown what the two people who have lived so long are like, how superior they are to their fellow men. The fourth play, "Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman," is set in the year 300 A.D. The world is divided between "short-livers" and "long-livers," and we are left with the impression that the short-livers will soon be exterminated.

The fifth play, "As Far as Thought Can Reach," might well be called Shaw's Utopia. Here we get a picture of what man will be like when he evolves into a more intelligent creature, and of what life will be like when society is free of false conventionality. There are no children in Shaw's Utopia: man emerges from an egg in a state of maturity equivalent to a twenty-year-old of today. He is allowed four years in which to sing, laugh, dance, make love, and reproduce. Then he discovers that he no longer cares for dancing and singing and love-making, that he no longer desires sleep or shelter or clothing. He has long ago discarded his faith in the importance of consanguinity, of doctors, of poverty, of money, of parentage, of decency, marriage, of nationalism. Troubled by nothing but the desire to find out the purpose of life, the Ancient wanders off alone into the woods 'to spend his eons in contemplation,' as he knows he will never die unless he meets with an accident. The

destiny he tries to achieve is to become immortal, and he feels that "The day will come when there will be no people, only thought . . . And that will be life eternal."[43]

These are Shaw's supermen; this is Shaw's Utopia, the logical outgrowth of his philosophy of creative evolution which is his religion. There is no mention of socialism in "As Far as Thought Can Reach." This does not mean that Shaw has discarded his faith in the efficacy of a socialistic society. It merely shows that socialism is to Shaw but a means to an end. The Ancients in Back to Methuselah had advanced to the stage where they no longer needed a government at all. However, we know that there must have been an intermediate stage, during the evolution to the world of the Ancients, in which socialism was practiced. In Shaw's religious allegory The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God, there is a character known only as "the Irishman," who in reality is Shaw himself. Shaw says this about the Irishman:

> But nothing would ever persuade him that God was anything more solid and satisfactory than an eternal but as yet unfulfilled purpose, or that it would ever be fulfilled if the fulfillment were not made reasonably easy and hopeful by Socialism. [Italics not in the original].[44]

Shaw is not forcing his religion into the minds of an unwilling public:

> It is a view like any other view and no more . . . a way of looking at the subject which throws into the familiar order of cause and effect a sufficient body of fact and experience to be interesting.[45]

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43. Ibid., p. 290.
44. Short Stories, Scraps and Shavings, p. 285.
45. MP, p. 506.

He believes, as Voltaire and many other heterodox thinkers have believed before him, that the need of a religion is inherent in man's nature:

> I had always known that civilization needs a religion as a matter of life or death; and as the conception of Creative Evolution developed I saw that we were at last within reach of a faith which complied with the first condition of all the religions that have ever taken hold of humanity: namely, that it must be first and fundamentally, a science of metabiology.[46]

Thus we can see how Shaw, dissatisfied with the established institution of the Christian church, evolved a religion of his own out of modern scientific and philosophical theories.

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46. Back to Methuselah, p. xcix.

C O N C L U S I O N

In retrospect, we can see that Shaw's approach to each of the four institutions is the same: he begins with a rational examination of their basic purpose and function. He attempts to cast out what he feels are superfluous or superstitious accoutrements and objectively analyze fundamental concepts. His analysis leads him to the conclusion that two of the institutions, the medical profession and marriage, fill a real social need; consequently, after reforms have been made, these institutions will be valuable tools of society. War as an institution should be abolished, but its present existence is unavoidable. The institution of the Christian Church should be discarded; Christianity should be kept only as a moral code.

We can see that Shaw's socialistic philosophy is manifest in his thinking on each institution. If doctors are freed from economic dependence on patients, which freedom can be brought about by socialization of medicine, they will no longer need to recommend false prescriptions and useless operations. The old medical superstitions can be eradicated. A frequent cause of marital difficulty is the economic dependence of wife on husband or vice versa; and economic dependence is a cause of prostitution. This concern with equality of income is the concern of a socialist. War can never be eliminated unless society becomes socialistic: socialism "loathes war" and would not tolerate it. Socialism is a necessary stage in the political evolution which must of necessity accompany a biological evolution. Man can never fulfill the purpose of the Life Force unless he evolves into

a superman, and a socialistic society is necessary for that evolution.

Shaw's ideas show little development or change. However, a more thorough study would bring out a change, not in idea but in tone; as Shaw progressed in years his writing sobered. In 1936 we find him disparaging his early credulity; we find him speaking of "the fatheaded stagnation of accursed Victorian snobbery which is bringing us to the verge of ruin." There is no satire here. There is only bitterness.

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