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HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MODERN BRITISH AND GERMAN DRAMA

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Dedicated to

Barbara and Julian

Without whose support, encouragement and help,
this project could never have been completed

And to my Mother

Agnes Janzen

Whose constant support for higher education
initially led me to Graduate School

Abstract

The sense of alienation that permeates much of the drama of our century can be traced back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The German *Sturm und Drang*, in depicting a world of violence, fratricide, betrayal and exploitation, represented a strong reaction to Germany's anaemic and derivative neo-classicism, as well as to the rationalism of the German *Aufklärung*. The perception of a world in crisis where history becomes meaningless or oppressive, is prominent in the plays of J.M.R. Lenz, C.D. Grabbe and Georg Büchner, as well as in the philosophical works of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. The philosophies of Schiller and Hegel, and the economic materialism of Marx and Engels, on the other hand, represent efforts to re-integrate culture and to represent history as progressive.

Many of the major dramatic works of the twentieth century reflect this opposing perception of history as progress or history as crisis. Bernard Shaw, in *Man and Superman*, is intrigued by the possibilities of breeding a race of supermen and leading the human race to new heights of consciousness, but is also concerned that historical progression may be illusory. The plays of Arthur Schnitzler and T.S. Eliot reflect the need to perceive the present period from the perspective of the past. *Der einsame Weg* represents history as paralyzed, and Eliot in *The Family Reunion* demonstrates an excessive reliance on tradition and established institutions to combat the alienation and lack of spiritual focus of twentieth-century man.

Brecht in *Baal,* Kaiser in *Der gerettete Alkibiades* and Dürrenmatt in *Romulus der Große* see history and human existence as governed by meaningless, random, or destructive forces. They combat this lack of meaning through an anarchic and anti-historical attitude. O'Casey and the later Brecht, in translating the historical materialism of Marx and Engels into their literature, qualify socialist optimism with the harsh realities of economic need and human exploitation; the optimism of *Within the Gates* and *Leben des Galilei* is consequently very guarded.

While the historical perspectives of the dramatists under consideration vary considerably, their plays all demonstrate a critical need to find meaning in the history of human existence.

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Contents

Introduction

The concept of the alienated human being has formed a significant literary theme since the late eighteenth century, for it was at this time that history was first conceived as a process rather than a universal condition, a linear progression whose meandering and ultimate destiny began to appear inconclusive and changing. Humanity was consequently separated from what had previously been a unified social and spiritual hierarchy, and a comprehensive world view. The concept of alienation itself, involving the perception of human existence and human destiny as incomplete, rootless, insecure and fragmentary, led, however, to the most thought-provoking philosophical systems and to some of the greatest works of art and literature of the last two centuries.

The perspective of the present work is that the artists of the twentieth century, specifically the major dramatists, have been and are still attempting to resolve within their own work, the major, contradictory, perspectives on history and on the human condition that evolved during the nineteenth century as a result of the recognition of one's alienation from a historical process which now existed independently of the human being. The attempt of modern artists to come to terms with the past is further enriched through the dynamic tension which these dramatists engage with the major events and cultural concerns of the present century, whether this be the *ennui* and apparent purposelessness of *fin de siècle* existence, the apocalyptic elements of German Expressionism, the debacle of World War I and its aftermath – including the Depression and the events initiating World War II – and the ultimate need for people of all nations to deal with the horrendous abuse of human life during World War II, and the associated guilt that emerged out of this conflict.

The repercussions of the turn toward a linear rather than a universal or Deistic, *deus ex machina*, cosmogony were unprecedented; there suddenly existed an apparently insurmountable gulf between man's finite self and his infinite potential, between individual existence and universal concerns, between the assertion of the individual will and the powerful forces of nature and of destiny, or fate. With history perceived as "open" rather than

circumscribed, human nature was also seen as uncircumscribed. The potential existed for "world historical" individuals, or "Supermen," to change the course of history through monumental deeds; on the other hand, human life could as easily be seen as empty and meaningless, with man the victim rather than the hero of the historical process (Gross 11); historical change might as easily embody regress as progress.

An almost axiomatic outcome of the new historical perspective – history as linear, as process, and the individual as alienated within a fragmented culture – was the resulting urge toward a re-integration of the individual and his environment. The lively urge toward a newly regained wholeness, whether through aesthetics, philosophy or through material and economic forces, informs the work of all major nineteenth-century theorists, including Fichte, Schiller, Schelling, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Marx – and of course Oswald Spengler as well, though his *Untergang des Abendlandes* appeared just after World War I. The tension between disintegration and re-integration in its various forms and extremes is also evident in the work of many nineteenth-century dramatists, including Goethe, Byron, Grabbe, Büchner, Ibsen, Strindberg, Hauptmann, Wedekind, Hofmannsthal and Chekhov. The major twentieth-century dramatists to come under discussion will include, within the German tradition, Arthur Schnitzler, Georg Kaiser, Bertolt Brecht and Friedrich Dürrenmatt, and from the United Kingdom, Bernard Shaw, T.S. Eliot and Sean O'Casey.

To determine twentieth-century reactions to the historical theories of the nineteenth century means first of all to survey the dominant philosophical and social trends that shaped the earlier century. This survey begins with the prominent influence of German Idealism and Romanticism during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a period that was dominated by an evolutionary conception of humanity, nature and history, which "saw an organic link between one age and another, with all ages and nations woven into one great chain of historical becoming, ever evolving from lower to higher cultural and social forms" (Malia 73). Hegel systematized and rationalized the earlier egocentric, pantheistic views of man, nature and consciousness that had been formulated by Schiller, Fichte and Schelling. Hegel further defined and focused the concept of the dialectic, of an evolutionary progression based on the principle of conflict and negation. Hegel's followers may be classified as "Left" and "Right" Hegelians, with the socialists and materialists, most notably Marx and Engels, on the left, the nationalists and those who saw in Hegel a reaffirmation of the *status quo* on the right.*

* Michael Harrington identifies "Right Hegelianism" with his definition of the Soviet Union as an "authoritarian collectivism": "The notion that the Soviet model, with all of its

The comfortable conception of history as progress is exactly the part of Hegel's philosophy that Nietzsche attacks most vigorously in his early work, particularly in his essay "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben," which makes up the second part of his *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* (1874)*. Nietzsche's philosophy indicates that both historical knowledge and the awareness of history as process were burdens that restricted an individual's freedom to act. We need history, he stated, "zum Leben und zur Tat, nicht zur bequemen Abkehr vom Leben und von der Tat. . . . Nur soweit die Historie dem Leben dient, wollen wir ihr dienen" (*Werke* I 113).† This is not to say that Nietzsche rigorously denied the concept of historical process; indeed, in his first major work, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872), he views the historical period of Greek Hellenism as the epitome of human civilization, because it maintained a balance of reason (the Apollonian principle) and elemental passion (the Dionysian).‡ This is a true dialectic which reached a synthesis in Socrates, an ambivalent personality for Nietzsche, since Socrates introduced the era of pure reason or speculative history which was then furthered by Plato and Aristotle. By pre-empting passion through reason, Socrates destroyed the balance that had made Greek culture healthy and stable.+ With the rational principle in control, the Dionysian or irrational force could assert itself only in the form of neuroses and the petty perversions

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imperfections, is to be defended as 'real' or 'actually existing' socialism dates from the Brezhnev era. It marks a revival of the old, right-wing Hegelian argument that whatever *is* must be rational. It is also a sign . . . of a very conservative reinterpretation of the bureaucratic revolutionary ideology of Marxism-Leninism" (*Socialism* 60-61n).

* In the English translation of Nietzsche's *Collected Works* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), Adrian Collins renders this title as "The Use and Abuse of History," contained in the volume titled *Thoughts Out of Season*.

† "We need it [history] for life and action, not as a convenient way to avoid life and action. . . . We would serve history only so far as it serves life" (*CW* 5 3).

‡ Nietzsche was not the first German writer to emphasize the irrational, Dionysian element in Greek culture. Friedrich Hölderlin had earlier been attracted to the irrational, ecstatic elements which were associated with the god of mischief and of orgies: "after Wieland had represented the Greeks as elegant epicureans, Lessing as stern Spartans, young Goethe as superhuman titans, and old Goethe as calm and restrained humanists, Hölderlin represented them as romantic, unbalanced, tragic individuals" (Friederich 123).

+ Reinhold Grimm, in a 1989 essay on "The Hidden Heritage: Repercussions of Nietzsche in Modern Theater and Its Theory," argues that Nietzsche did not, in fact, reject Socratism as destroying art, but accepted the Socratic principle as an equal, scientific balance to the Dionysian, both necessary for the finest flowering of Greek – and of modern – drama: "This Dionysian is associated by Nietzsche with frenzy, ecstasy, and cruelty as well as an irrational, indeed mystical, union of actors and spectators alike, whereas the Socratic is defined by him as a scientific attitude, as theory and criticism rooted in a rational world view, and as the optimistic belief in man's perfectibility, in progress and social change. And, to be sure, Socrates and Socratism, however much opposed to the Dionysian, are by no means 'condemned,' . . . nor are they excluded from the realm of art and, specifically, the theater" (*Echo* 72).

of an over-sophisticated, decadent society of mental *epigones*. This is a view of society that emerges strongly in Arthur Schnitzler's *fin de siècle* play *Der einsame Weg*.

While Nietzsche despised the domination of the Apollonian principle, he was nevertheless fascinated by Socrates' personality and considered him an *Übermensch;* though Socrates championed rational thought, he had always to struggle against his sensuous nature to do so. For this reason Nietzsche, at times, speaks of Socrates as "the raving Socrates" or "the demonic Socrates," and describes the philosopher's intellect using the terminology of passion and instinct:

> Anderseits . . . war es jenem in Sokrates erscheinenden logischen Triebe völlig versagt, sich gegen sich selbst zu kehren; in diesem fesselosen Dahinströmen zeigt er eine Naturgewalt, wie wir sie nur bei den allergrößten instinktiven Kräften zu unsrer schaudervollen Überraschung antreffen. (*Werke* I 64)*

Though Socrates himself was an *Übermensch* or "Superman" because he exhibited such an intense polarity of the sensuous and the philosophical, his successor, Plato, asserted only the Apollonian principle in his Platonic "Dialogues," which became the prototype of the new art form, the dialectical drama. George Bernard Shaw, calling his drama the "play of ideas," introduced his particular brand of dialectical drama to the early-twentieth century English stage, while Bertolt Brecht gave this form of drama new meaning in Germany. Dialectical drama, said Nietzsche, was by its own definition optimistic, and through its optimism, precluded or "killed" tragedy.

By the end of the first world war, the theories of Hegel and Nietzsche already had to be filtered through an additional twenty-five to fifty years of time, during which the course of history had been radically altered. A powerful new philosophy of history in the form of Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918-22) was also to influence historians (Dawson, Toynbee, Sorokhin and Bagby) and cultural critics, and to figure in the development of Hitler's Third Reich. Defining history organically, Spengler argued that cultures, like organisms, were born, grew to the flowering stage, and eventually declined.† Contrary to Hegel's optimistic view of the future,

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* "On the other hand, however, the logical instinct which appeared in Socrates was absolutely prohibited from turning against itself; in its unchecked flow it manifests a native power such as we meet with, to our shocking surprise, only among the very greatest instinctive forces" (*CW* 1 105). Brecht establishes his Galileo, too, as one of those "greatest instinctive forces" whose intellect manifests an "unchecked flow," and Shaw has Jack Tanner, in *Man and Superman*, speak of a dawning "moral passion" (73).

† Spengler's eighteenth-century predecessor in advocating an organic view of history was Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), an advocate of irrationalism and anti-classicism, a "great philosophical leader" of the German *Sturm und Drang*. Herder's theory, however, was progressive and evolutionary, with each organic cycle representing a higher form of existence: "The 'organic' interpretation of history and culture which was to culminate in

Spengler saw the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the final period of the decline of the west: "Kommen wir zur Einsicht, daß das 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, vermeintlich der Gipfel einer geradlinig ansteigenden Weltgeschichte, als Phänomen tatsächlich in jeder bis zum Ende gereiften Kultur nachzuweisen ist" (54).* The last stage preceding decline was marked, for Spengler, not by the overtly intellectual, introspective nature that Nietzsche had previously ascribed to his mental *epigones*, but by external action which, in world politics, manifested itself in the imperialistic desire for expansion. He points to Cecil Rhodes as

> den ersten Mann einer neuen Zeit. Er repräsentiert den politischen Stil einer ferneren, abendländischen, germanischen, insbesondere deutschen Zukunft. Sein Wort „Ausdehnung ist alles" enthält in dieser napoleonischen Fassung die eigentlichste Tendenz einer jeden ausgereiften Zivilisation. . . . Hier gibt es keine Wahl. Hier entscheidet nicht einmal der bewußte Wille des einzelnen oder ganzer Klassen und Völker. Die expansive Tendenz ist ein Verhängnis, etwas Dämonisches und Ungeheures, das den späten Menschen des Weltstadtstadiums packt, in seinen Dienst zwingt und verbraucht, ob er will oder nicht, ob er es wieß oder nicht. (52)†

In a note he adds that "Die modernen Deutschen sind das glänzende Beispiel eines Volkes, das ohne sein Wissen und Wollen expansiv geworden ist" (52n).‡ By the end of World War II even greater historical changes had taken place, as the major nations of the world scrambled to restore some order following the defeat of Hitler's bid for German expansion.

The first half of this century was thus a critical period for literary development in general, but perhaps it was most critical to German drama, which initiated the century through an expressionist eruption that was unequalled elsewhere. The changing social and political conditions dramatically affected the historical perspectives of the major dramatists and artists, with those theorists whose thought had defined major perspectives on history,

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Goethe and the representatives of the 'Historical School' (Savigny, Grimm, Ranke) found its earliest and most brilliant advocate in Herder. For him historical periods and cultural cycles develop like organisms, from birth to maturity to decay. But each cycle is a step forward in man's approach toward the perfect humanity" (Friederich 82).

* "the 19th and 20th centuries, hitherto looked on as the highest point of an ascending straight line of world-history, are in reality a stage of life which may be observed in every Culture that has ripened to its limit" (*Decline* 39).

† "the first man of a new age. He stands for the political style of a far-ranging, Western, Teutonic and especially German future, and his phrase 'expansion is everything' is the Napoleonic reassertion of the indwelling tendency of *every* Civilization that has fully ripened. . . . [i]t is not the conscious will of individuals, or even that of whole classes or peoples that decides. The expansive tendency is a doom, something dæmonic and immense, which grips, forces into service, and uses up the late mankind of the world-city stage, willy-nilly, aware or unaware" (37).

‡ "The modern Germans are a conspicuous example of a people that has become expansive without knowing it or willing it" (37n).

Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Spengler, figuring ever more prominently as the backdrop to contemporary literature.

The reaction against alienation on the part of twentieth-century dramatists, and the attempt to re-integrate the personality and to suggest a new integration of culture, takes a variety of forms in the literature under discussion. Some modern writers turn to myth as a viable structure for restoring the unity of man and his metaphysical universe; Shaw sees "heroic vitalism" as a possible path to an optimistic view of history; others try to reconcile man's alienated state through strong political associations, whether these be reactionary, conservative, liberal or socialistic, while some artists simply state that if the world is a "cesspool" and historical forces arbitrary and absurd, then the only feasible outlet is anarchic individualism.

The search for integration through myth derives originally from the high regard that Goethe, Schiller, some of the Romanticists and Nietzsche had for the inherent unity of individual and state in ancient culture, and informs much of the significant drama of the earlier nineteenth century, as well as such twentieth-century dramatists as Hofmannsthal, Yeats and Eliot. The use of myth as a tool for social change and "cultural" enhancement is especially evident in the work of Richard Wagner and his less admirable later adherents. The mythic framework allows the illusion of a return to a previous, cohesive culture in which humans and gods interact comfortably with one another; a cosmic unity is re-established of which, in the words of Walter Pater, "*Heiterkeit*, blitheness or repose, and *Allgemeinheit*, generality or breadth, are . . . the supreme characteristics" (144). The application of myth in modern literature essentially represents an attempt to *de-historicize*, to deny history as process, and return to a mythical past while asserting that that past is, in effect, the present:

> the one essential function of myth stressed by all writers is that in merging past and present it releases us from the flux of temporality, arresting change in the timeless, the permanent, the ever-recurrent conceived as "sacred repetition." Hence the mythic is the polar opposite of what we mean by the historical, which stands for process, inexorable change, incessant permutation and innovation. Myth is reassuring in its stability, whereas history is that powerhouse of change which destroys custom and tradition in producing the future – the future that at present, with the fading away of the optimism of progress, many have learned to associate with the danger and menace of the unknown. (Rahv 6-7)*

* Harvey Gross attacks this opposition of myth and history, disclaiming it as a shallow Marxist invention: "The current critical conflict between 'history' and 'myth' is largely a rhetorical encounter. The History invoked by Marxist and neo-Marxist critics as superior to or more 'real' than the myths which inhabit modern works of the imagination is itself a mythical creation. . . . Rahv, in his polemical zeal, creates his own myth of History in recognizable Marxist form. . . . It is not difficult to see that the Hegelian-Marxist History is, in its lineaments and proportions, as pure a myth as Nietzschean recurrence or Augustine's

This is not to say that mythic concepts have not been utilized intelligently and artistically by a great number of artists, and for a variety of purposes; it is when an author finds his identity, his *raison d'être* in a mythic past that he becomes anti-historical. Reinhold Grimm, in *Echo and Disguise*, aptly demonstrates how Nietzsche uses myth as a "disguise" rather than an "echo," or reliving of the ancient past; the disguise allows an author to use mythic concepts in a subtle, parodistic, comic or even satirical manner to focus attention on the present, much as Brecht uses earlier historical periods as an objective, oblique means of drawing attention to contemporary issues. Grimm's treatment of Nietzsche as "the great despiser and destroyer of all fixations and systems . . . [who is] both heroic and herostatic, playful and earnest, artistic and existential . . . 'unintentional' and 'involuntary' as well as highly conscious and utterly purposive" (*Echo* 17), is a refreshing contrast to Georg Lukács' ponderous, narrowly didactic perspective of Nietzsche as an "irrationalist" and purposeful promoter of German imperialism (*Zerstörung* 270-350).

Shaw, in *Man and Superman* (1901-3) views the openness of history as an opportunity for man, through a combination of eugenics, heroic vitalism and a primitive but powerful "Life Force," to develop human consciousness and capability to a superhuman level. The dizzying prospect he envisions for human development is offset, however, by his recognition of an equal potential for failure and a resulting relapse into chaos. Shaw's work also marks the transition between nineteenth- and twentieth-century modes of thought, and stands as a barometer of how the early-twentieth-century reacted to nineteenth century theories of history prior to the onset of World War I. The optimism of *Man and Superman* is evident in the representation of the "Life-Force" as an instinctive power that pushes society toward a gradually evolving perfection, a view of civilization evolving toward a culminating ideal that resembles both the Hegelian conception of history and Spencer's inversion of determinism more than it does Nietzsche's conception of the *Übermensch* as a being above and beyond the historical process. As such, the play emphasizes its deterministic content within an ironic context. Jack Tanner, the supposed "Superman," cannot escape the machinations of the life force, incorporated in Ann Whitefield. He is unable to act freely on his own behalf, and has finally to acquiesce to forces that are greater than he is, and that will force the inevitable progress of mankind. The universal "Woman," Ann, is portrayed as hypocritical and manipulative, but nevertheless acting instinctively for the greater good of mankind. Shaw's optimism, however, is tempered by a strong cautionary message that derives from Nietzsche's pessimistic theory of "ewige Wiederkehr" or "eternal

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City of God" (15).

recurrence," and recognizes that the drive of "Nature," or the life force, is not in itself sufficient to effect permanent, progressive historical change. Humanity must work with Nature, must *will* itself to change and to improve, otherwise all seeming progress will be nothing more than illusion, and universal disintegration will result. So Shaw, while rooted in the nineteenth century, is attuned, as well, to the fears of global catastrophe and the possibility of the annihilation of human existence that subsequently came to dominate much of twentieth-century writing.

If a mythic suspension of time and heroic vitalism represent two possible responses to a disintegrating culture, the adherence to strong political convictions constitutes another attempt to cope with alienation and with history as change. The potential political spectrum is wide-ranging, from reactionary to conservative, liberal or socialistic, and may also include the utopian extreme. Philip Rahv further categorizes utopians as "Left" and "Right" utopians:

> If the Utopians of the Left (the futurists, as Toynbee calls them) disastrously assume the innate goodness of man in their social schemes, the Utopians on the Right (the archaists in Toynbee's phrase) are ever inclined to assume a fixed human nature that is innately evil, an assumption which has always served as one of the principal justifications of man's inhumanity to man. It is the permanent alibi of those unconcerned with justice. (32)

The mythic and political responses overlap in a variety of areas, for utopians, especially "Right" utopians, are strongly inclined toward an immersion in myth as a reconstituted past or an imaginary future, as are reactionaries, and to an extent conservatives. Within the terms of the present study T.S. Eliot represents a conservative response, which is reinforced through the conscious effort to recreate a modern mythic drama, while Arthur Schnitzler is more indicative of a liberal, or more precisely, a "humanist" approach which values individual freedom and the underlying need to "only connect" – in E.M. Forster's words – through vital personal relationships. Schnitzler's *Der einsame Weg* (1903) and Eliot's *The Family Reunion* (1939) both bear out Nietzsche's observation that an over-abundance of history or historical knowledge is dangerous to a culture because it overemphasizes the contrast between the "inner" and the "outer" man (thought vs. action), and thus weakens the personality. This overly-emphatic – or repressive – consciousness of history thwarts the instinctual life of individual and nation, preventing it from maturing; too much emphasis on historical knowledge leads to a declining, sexually impotent, overly-intellectualized civilization. It encourages the belief in "the old age of mankind," the notion that we are the last survivors, the *epigoni,* of an age that has lost its vitality and is fast moving toward apocalypse. Very little freedom of choice, or freedom of action, is discernible in Schnitzler's play, since characters live "inner" lives that

seldom make real contact with others; their tragedy lies in their inability to connect, to free themselves from an oppressive introspective past. Von Sala is the most introspective representative of this society in the play, and also the most helpless; his interest in history prevents the necessary integration of his personality with the present and immediate past of his own existence. Johanna's suicide, on the other hand, represents her final attempt to assert her own personality, to force von Sala to see her as an individual. *Der einsame Weg* is one of the most pessimistic plays of the early twentieth century in its portrayal of a failed humanism, and stands in sharp contrast to the guarded optimism of *Man and Superman.*

In *The Family Reunion* (1939) Eliot, too, views history and the knowledge of history as a psychological burden, yet where Nietzsche believed that a great individual could occasionally emerge and rise above the demands of history, and Schnitzler felt – or perhaps only hoped – that history could still be revitalized, Eliot's conservatism is evident in his view of history as "fixed," an antipathy to change that Eliot demonstrated in his own life through his excessive reliance on the hierarchical structures of the past. His emphasis on tradition, on established political, social and religious hierarchies, reflects the urge to restrict or deny change, the conservative tendency to shore up previously established structures with rigid rules and guidelines, and often to recreate, through myth, an established, more ideal order. Though the notion of flux, of historical motion remains dominant, the only role left to man in Eliot's waste land is to gain some understanding of his relationship to history, and to atone for his guilt, which is inherited and closely analogous to "original sin." While denying Hegel's progressive philosophy of history, Eliot takes its deterministic aspect to its logical conclusion, recognizing that within the conception of an historical inevitability there exists very little room for individual decision-making or free will. This inevitably changes an optimistic conception into one that has its roots in pessimism. The historical process is cyclical and recurrent; Agatha refers to the family history as "a loop in time." Harry's guilt is inherited from his father, and represents the "original sin" of mankind. The most meaningful action that can be performed is to expiate the guilt, and restore the moral order. Amy is in many ways similar to von Sala of Schnitzler's *Der einsame Weg,* as she tries to preserve the past, making no meaningful contribution to the present or the future. Harry is the catalyst of the play; he experiences the essence and the horror of the past, but appears powerless to change the future.

The socialist response to alienation may be defined, at its most optimistic, by a forward-looking perspective, by the feeling that we must organize the chaos of our present circumstances into a brighter, more coherent future. Man is seen to be the shaper of historical change, not the victim or the "paralyzed force" that he has become in the work of Schnitzler and Eliot.

History is viewed as "open" and full of potential, even if this potential is not realized. The style of the drama is correspondingly open, earthy (even vulgar), episodic, non-naturalistic, indicative throughout that the world is open to change, to constant motion, and that the common man can have a hand in whatever direction history will take. A contradiction immediately becomes apparent, however, for representative writers such as Wedekind, Kaiser, Sternheim, Brecht and O'Casey often appear more pessimistic than hopeful in their attacks on a society in which mass exploitation is the rule. At times they are almost reactionary. In O'Casey's *Within the Gates* (1933/49), the final resolution is a re-affirmation of the past instead of a complete break from it, as the Bishop regains his traditional integrity and authority at the end of the play and once again becomes, in fact as well as in office, "A priest of the Most High God." And Brecht's Galileo feels the paralyzing burden of history strongly enough to caution Sarti that "Die Kluft zwischen euch [der Wissenschaftler] und ihr [die Menschheit] kann eines Tages so groß werden, daß euer Jubelschrei über irgendeine neue Errungenschaft von einem universalen Entsetzensschrei beantwortet werden könnte" (*GW* 3 1340-41).*

In *Within the Gates* O'Casey in fact attempts to re-invigorate tradition rather than deny it, to embue it with the vigour and texture that permeated Elizabethan drama. The Young Whore's fear of demons and of everlasting fire evokes the negative associations of a static world view within which the individual has only the limited freedom of accepting his oppressive position within a despostic hierarchy and a repressive ideology, or to become a rebel and live in fear of eternal damnation. O'Casey successfully dramatizes the gradual widening of the Whore's moral and spiritual consciousness to the point where she can challenge her repressive would-be spiritual mentors, and re-enfuse tradition, in the form of the Bishop, with a renewed vigor and a more humanitarian application of his ideology. In this way O'Casey demonstrates that the expanding of alternatives may ultimately lead to a fuller sense of integration.

Brecht's *Leben des Galilei,* written in Denmark during 1938, while Brecht was an exile from Nazi Germany, and later revised to reflect Brecht's increasing pessimism during World War II, will be examined from the perspective of how completely it presents history as "open" and changeable, and what it perceives the role of the individual – in this case the scientist – to be within this changing future. Brecht demonstrates throughout the play that Galileo does have choices to make, and the choices he makes will help determine the progress of history. Galileo is also, like Nietzsche's portrait of

* "the gulf between you [the scientist] and humanity may one day be so wide that the response to your exultation about some new achievement will be a universal outcry of horror" (*CP* 5 94).

Socrates, dominated by the dichotomy of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, portraying the rational thinker with a sensual nature. Brecht in this play clearly demonstrates his ambivalence regarding the role of science and the scientist within the historical process, for as Matthew Wikander states, "Brecht assaults the idea of individualism in *Galileo* while at the same time personally blaming the historical Galileo for the atom bomb" (8). While Galileo initiates a cultural revolution that has common people reading scientific treatises in the vernacular and discussing astronomy in the marketplace, his ultimate recantation and resulting affiliation, even if in name only, with the authoritarian theocracy of his period – evoking comparison with Hitler's fascism – represents a critical setback for history. *Leben des Galilei* is thus the parable of a failed revolution, which nevertheless affirms the need for change and for increased class consciousness.

There is another possible response to the tension between history as change and a major twentieth-century event such as World War I or World War II. The early Brecht in *Baal* (1918), Kaiser in *Der gerettete Alkibiades* (1920), and Friedrich Dürrenmatt in *Romulus der Große* (1957) cannot find a positive synthesis to the dialectic of history as progress on the one hand, and the destruction caused by war on the other; consequently, they portray strong anarchists in these plays who deny the very concept of an ordered world: *Baal* expresses a strong opposition to any possibility of a metaphysical existence; in *Alkibiades* the historical process itself is treated as absurd; and Dürrenmatt in *Romulus* creates a self-made, self-idealized world-historical individual whose plans to judge and punish his people go grotesquely askew. Yet in presenting an anarchic, absurdist or anti-historical view, these plays nevertheless affirm a preoccupation with history through their strong reaction to the influence of the "progressive" theories of the nineteenth century. More importantly, an absurdist perspective often functions, like a dystopic or anti-utopian view, as a warning against political and social irresponsibility. Anarchism, in literature as in politics, is by its nature a transitional phase, as it has no basis or groundwork on which to develop a coherent philosophical or political structure.

The urge to find meaning in history is, then, especially apparent in the literature that emerged as an aftermath of the first world war, a war which affected virtually every living person and solved nothing, a war which in itself seemed to have no meaning. *Baal* is indicative of the general mood following the non-conclusion of the war. Baal is an anti-historical protagonist, attuned to the forces of nature, but in no way operating as an intermediary between nature and man. Baal will not help raise the consciousness of mankind, and there is no spirituality or pantheism evident in his joining with the forces of nature. Brecht has not written a play that serves as a throwback to German Romanticism and Idealism; he does not cultivate any

of the egotism and solipsism that characterized many romantic artists, and which revived to become the trademark of such early expressionistic dramatists as Hanns Johst, whose play, *Der Einsame*, initially angered Brecht and induced him to write his own version of an artist's *Menschenuntergang*. Brecht's protagonist, Baal, becomes a part of the elemental forces of nature, in both its destructive and in its creative urges, but without any metaphysical connotations. The closest parallel to Baal in nineteenth-century English literature might be Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Like Kaiser, Brecht "is not writing *Baal* to propose an ideal way of life for us, but rather to follow an experience through to its absurd conclusion" (Weideli 7).

Kaiser's *Alkibiades*, also completed in the aftermath of the first world war, specifically examines what Nietzsche had referred to in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* as "the problem of Socrates," the conflict between reason and passion that constituted, for him, the vitality of Greek civilization before the domination of Socrates. Kaiser had wanted to write a play that would compare the death of the *Übermensch* with that of the *Vernunftmensch*, or man of reason. The impact of the play is attained through the ironic contrasts between external appearance and the inner reality; only Sokrates can see the tragic irony of his saving of Alkibiades. As will be the case with Brecht's *Leben des Galilei*, the first part of the play emphasizes that the body, the flesh is transcendent. Sokrates performs his actions because he cannot stand pain, just as Galileo recants because he is afraid of pain; consequently, the thorn in Sokrates' foot asserts, as Hofmannsthal has stated, the "sullen might of cloddish earth." There is a great deal of action in the play, but much of it is *irresponsible* or even absurd action; for every irresponsible act, or act generated by the pain in his foot, Sokrates must fabricate a rationalization. Through the interaction of act and thought, however, Kaiser demonstrates the intense self-knowledge and awareness that characterizes Sokrates' personality, as it does that of Brecht's Galileo. The irresponsibility of Sokrates' actions, however, serves to portray history as an arbitrary process dominated by coincidence, accidents, and above all by absurdity, the absurdity of idealists frantically scrambling to make the historical process meaningful.

Friedrich Dürrenmatt, like Kaiser in *Der gerettete Alkibiades*, is also deeply concerned with the possibility of manipulating history, but unlike Kaiser's distress over historical change that appears to be random and unpredictable, governed only by the desire to avoid pain, Dürrenmatt posits, in *Romulus der Große* (1957), a view of history as determined by one man's moral need to judge his decadent society. Dürrenmatt, in this play that repeatedly evokes images of Nazi Germany, examines the nature of morality and justice, and the consequences that result when one man, however moral, single-handedly decides to change the course of history.

If Shaw's optimism survives only at the expense of the fear that change can as easily be regressive as progressive, then the myth-makers ultimately must determine whether they are resolving the alienation inherent in the historical process or merely avoiding it. Those who look for a solution in political involvement, too, must measure their commitment against the actual events of the twentieth century. Schnitzler, while emphasizing the need to love, portrays, in *Der einsame Weg*, the *failure* rather than the success of personal relationships; O'Casey and Brecht, recognizing the potential for significant change, also face the potential for failure, which may ultimately result in the collapse of civilization, especially given the use of weapons of mass annihilation that Brecht refers to in Galileo's last major speech.

The dramatic works that have been selected for analysis in this study are extremely diverse in nature, especially with respect to style, form and political/philosophical outlook. The criteria for inclusion has been that the plays reflect a significant attitude or position – in content and in style – toward nineteenth-century historical concepts from the perspective of a critical period within the twentieth century, and that they address in some form the question of individual and/or social freedom. Most of these dramas are not "historical" *per ce*; the perspective they present on history and on freedom is more significant than their basis in recorded history. The critical twentieth-century periods, the times at which the pulse, the feelings, of humanity has been the most intense and strongly felt, include the turn-of-the-century or *fin-de-siècle*, before the momentous experience of the first world war, the experience of the war itself, the pessimism and nihilism that followed WWI, especially in Germany, and the prelude to World War II, a second world confrontation that had begun to build toward a climax from the moment the Treaty of Versailles had been signed. Dürrenmatt's *Romulus der Große* is the only post World War II play to be considered here, and its inclusion is due to its historical perspective and to the commentary it provides on Hitler's Germany and World War II.

In style, then, the plays belong to various movements from impressionism to expressionism, and from Shavian dialectics to Brecht's Epic Theatre and Dürrenmatt's theatre of the grotesque. Politically, the dramatic works range from the orthodox to the avant garde, from conservative to anarchic and to socialistic.

Where significant, an attempt will be made to compare various versions of a particular play. A dramatic work differs from other literature in that the work consists not only of the literary text, but also of the staging, direction, the individual characteristics brought to the production by the different actors, and, perhaps most importantly, by the perspective of the time frame, the significant political, social, and cultural events of the period, as well as the geographical location where the work originated, and where it was first

produced. It is therefore important to distinguish between the production that is the closest in time, location and general context to the time during which the text was actually written, and subsequent productions.

The dramatists being considered in this study, then, are significant because of their concern for the future of mankind, and for their exploration of the nature of freedom within the context of the modern world. They are also distinguished by their specific contributions to the European dramatic tradition, for each of them has brought to the world of drama a particular style and innovation that is inseparable from their social/political concerns. Shaw's emphasis on philosophical debate in *Man and Superman* represented a major departure from the drawing room drama conversation of the nineteenth-century English stage. For Schnitzler, impressionism and symbolism became the ideal vehicle for his presentation of the cultured, mannered pre-World War I Viennese society. Kaiser and Brecht, in *Der gerettete Alkibiades* and in *Baal*, respectively, used many of the techniques of German Expressionism and of absurdist drama to display their disillusionment with the progress of mankind from a post-World War I perspective, as Dürrenmatt used a crowded stage and elements of the grotesque to express a similar disenchantment with the one-man totalitarian government of Nazi Germany. Eliot's experimentation with verse drama in *The Family Reunion* represented an attempt to integrate his dependence on tradition with his conception of an incomplete and fractured modern world. Brecht and O'Casey were, perhaps, more sophisticated and successful in their integration of new forms and techniques to express the concerns and the ideals of modernity than were any of their twentieth-century predecessors.

The form of the drama is inseparable from its content, and consideration of the various plays and of the dramatists mentioned above would be incomplete without attention to the innovative techniques through which the content of each of these plays is explicated. The conclusion to the thesis will attempt a comparative summation of the dramatists' conceptions of freedom and progress, and how these conceptions are formalized and expressed through the various modes of presentation.

In the attempt to come to terms with the contradictory theories of history as linear (Hegel) and history as cyclical (Nietzsche), and to demonstrate the importance that these theories had for the major twentieth-century dramatists, this study is designed to contribute to filling a significant gap in the relationship of drama to historicism. While numerous existing criticisms address nineteenth-century and contemporary literature from an historical perspective, there are few which focus explicitly on the theories of Schiller, Schelling, Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx and Spengler, and of those that do, none survey the impact of these theoreticians on the diversity of dramatists and plays addressed in the present work.

Harvey Gross, in *The Contrived Corridor: History and Fatality in Modern Literature* (1971), does emphasize the opposition of Hegel's optimism, expressed in his *Geschichte der Philosophy*, to Nietzsche's pessimistic conviction in "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben," that the accumulation of historical or cultural knowledge inhibits a civilization's vitality: "By the time Nietzsche wrote his *Meditation*, belief in the Hegelian World-Process had already suffered its dialectical transformation; a mysterious but provocative notion (part of the nihilism Nietzsche feared) of historical decline had replaced Hegel's belief in steady progress. Man becomes an epigone; he believes in the old age of the world and in himself as a late survivor, an impotent witness to the power of History" (Gross 8). While Gross's opposition of Hegel and Nietzsche is valid and influenced my own perspective of nineteenth-century historicism, the literature he deals with is considerably different, especially in genre, as it includes Henry Adams' *The Education of Henry Adams*, some of the poetry of T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound, and the novels of André Malraux and Thomas Mann. Gross's book is a valuable addition to the critical literature on art and history, but does not address the sphere of drama.

Max Spalter, in *Brecht's Tradition* (1967), presents an excellent survey of Brecht's predecessors, all of whom resemble Brecht in tone, in the way they view history and human existence, and in the structure of the drama within which they couch their perceptions. As Spalter notes in the introduction to his work:

> The writers discussed herein – J.M.R. Lenz, C.D. Grabbe, Georg Büchner, Frank Wedekind, and Karl Kraus – share with Brecht not only a variety of common theatrical techniques and a common basic form; they share with him also a common temperament and outlook. Like Brecht, they demonstrate in vivid episodes that modern society is reducible to patterns of parasitism and victimization; they make us conscious of the degree to which human character implies the stereotyped expression of powerful social, economic, and psychological forces. They suggest at the same time that the world is such a cesspool that it *must* be changed and that the world is such a cesspool that it *cannot* be changed. Like Brecht, they are all incongruous mixtures of moral outrage and cynical perception. (xi-xii)

Spalter's study, perceptive as it is, is limited to German drama and specifically to those dramatists who lead toward Brecht's form of dramaturgy, thus omitting consideration of more classical dramatists such as Goethe, Schiller, or Hebbel in the nineteenth century, and such twentieth-century dramatists as Schnitzler, Kaiser, Shaw, O'Casey, or Eliot, who stand outside of Brecht's tradition.

Other studies also deal specifically with Brecht and his tradition, including Leroy Shaw's *The Playwright and Historical Change: Dramatic Strategies in Brecht, Hauptmann, Kaiser and Wedekind* (1970), Hans Mayer's

Bertolt Brecht und die Tradition (1961), and Peter Demetz' edition of *A Collection of Critical Essays* (1962). Still others, such as Benjamin Bennett's *Modern Drama and German Classicism: Renaissance from Lessing to Brecht* (1979), are restricted primarily to the German dramatic tradition.

Reinhold Grimm's recent collection of intriguing and challenging essays in *Echo and Disguise: Studies in German and Comparative Literature* (1989), analyze Nietzsche's conception of drama and its influence on such modern dramatists as Brecht, Artaud and Shaw. David Thatcher, in *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914: The Growth of a Reputation* (1970), precedes Grimm in his impressive and comprehensive study of Nietzsche's influence on such English artists as John Davidson, Havelock Ellis, W.B. Yeats, G.B. Shaw and A.R. Orage. This is further supplemented by Patrick Bridgwater's *Nietzsche in Anglosaxony: A Study of Nietzsche's Impact on English and American Literature* (1972). Where Thatcher emphasized the significance of Nietzsche's influence on English writers, Bridgwater minimalizes the impact of the German philosopher on English culture.

Jerome Buckley, in *The Triumph of Time: A Study of the Victorian Concepts of Time, History, Progress and Decadence* (1966), discusses some of the themes which I, too, will be concerned with, but limits himself both to the Victorian period, and to English historians and theorists such as Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), T.B. Macaulay (1800-59), John Henry Newman (1801-90), Matthew Arnold (1822-88), John Ruskin (1819-1900), and Walter Pater (1839-94), rather than tracing the origins of the various historicisms to their roots in the German Enlightenment. Buckley remarks on the obsession of the Victorians "with time and all the devices that measure time's flight" (2), and on the preoccupation of the historians of the period with "the possibility of finding patterns of recurrence or meaningful analogies with their own time" (3). Buckley divides the transigence of time into "public time, or history," which is "the medium of organic growth and fundamental change" (5), and "private time," which "is arbitrary, relative in quality to the passing personal emotion, continuous, yet variable in tempo – now fast, now slow" (7). Buckley also emphasizes the opposition of evolution to revolution, that a belief in history as progress presupposes that "Evolution rather than revolution seemed the true way of history," that "Revolution, the upsetting of a fixed order, presupposed a clash of stable entities and essentially a static view of human nature; by the law of the eternal return, the spin of fortune's wheel, the same forces would continually recur. Evolution, on the other hand, meant an organic growth of all things in time, a development in which the past, though never repeating itself, would persist through each successive modification" (15).

Finally, Matthew Wikander, in *The Play of Truth and State: Historical Drama from Shakespeare to Brecht* (1986), first of all establishes that "the

Shakespeare of the history plays came to be enshrined as the dramatist of the real, whose plays embodied life itself" (2), and then analyzes the efforts of nineteenth- and twentieth-century dramatists like "Schiller, Musset, Büchner, Strindberg, and Brecht" to similarly represent the past "most perfectly in its formlessness" (2). Wikander compares the role of the dramatist of history plays to that of the historian, and notes that "For Shakespeare and Brecht, the incompatible roles of dramatist and historian are one" (2). Wikander sees in Shakespeare's approach to history an ambivalent attitude which creates a dramatic tension between the humanist historian's "fictive" or literary interpretation, and the historian as a mere collector of facts. The humanist historian " 'did not see himself as a collector of facts but as an artist who organized the facts into a coherent and attractive form.' The activity is essentially fictive, easily as fictive as the old invocations of divine providence" (3); the opposite of the idealist's view of history lies in the collecting of facts with no effort to construct them into a meaningful historical pattern, an historical perspective which "threatens Shakespeare's history in the form of repeated images of chaos" (Wikander 3). The tension which Shakespeare maintained between history as a meaningful pattern of events (the humanist view) and history as random, recurring and chaotic, a collection of meaningless facts, was later also maintained in Schiller's historical drama, especially the *Wallenstein* trilogy, and in Strindberg's later plays, most significantly *The Dream Play*:

> Both Schiller and Strindberg offered transcendental alternatives to history, in contrast to the English dramatists [Ben Jonson, George Chapman, Philip Massinger and John Ford], whose antihistorical pastoral yearnings and providential rhetoric aimed merely at pathos. Shakespeare suspended his audience between medieval and Renaissance ways of seeing the past; Strindberg openly adopted a self-conscious, medievalistic providentialism, seeing the hand of God everywhere. Schiller no less than the English dramatists disliked history's unpleasant record of deceptions, but he systematized yearning for higher truth into a coherent philosophical idealism. (5)

Leopold von Ranke attempted to give the study of history the same objectivity which the natural sciences enjoyed, feeling that the historian had no business intruding his personality, judgments or conclusions into the work: "I have," he stated, "wished to extinguish my own self . . . and to allow only things to speak and to allow the mighty forces to appear which in the course of centuries have risen and grown alongside and across one another" (Wikander 6). Allowing the natural laws of history to determine their own meaning, however, also led dramatists like Büchner and Musset to view historical patterns fatalistically, leading to the view of the individual as the victim of annihilating forces: "Where Schiller and Strindberg could challenge the notion of historical necessity through their own highly personal versions of providentialism, Büchner and Musset reached a dramatic and historical

impasse: the anomie and paralysis of Danton and Lorenzaccio . . . figures this impasse" (Wikander 16). Wikander concludes that Brecht's approach to history is closer to Shakespeare's than is that of Schiller, Strindberg, Büchner or Musset, for, like Shakespeare, Brecht neither accepts nor rejects the forces of history, but merely scrutinizes them: "Brecht demanded an audience of scientists, historians, sports fans, who would evaluate not only what they saw but also their ways of seeing it" (Wikander 7).

There is no question, then, that both nineteenth- and twentieth-century theorists and dramatists were pre-occupied with the questions of history and historicism, and further, than a number of early nineteenth century artists already viewed the notion of history as change with skepticism, as leading not to progress, but to alienation and victimization. The twentieth century was to result in a much wider diversification of attitudes toward history and change, a deepening rift that allowed little optimism – except for those who saw some hope in the progressive economic materialism of Marx and Engels – but a much wider diversification of pessimism.

Chapter 1

The Nineteenth Century Background

The nineteenth-century philosophies of history and of historicism emerged as a result of the growing alienation of man's social and spiritual being; they were the expression of the need to reintegrate, to find a new focus and meaning for existence. The forms of disenchantment were remarkably evident in the themes of rootlessness, victimization and futility which characterized the early *Sturm und Drang* artists, themes that are certainly present in the early work of both Goethe and Schiller, before they turned to classicism, as well as in the work of other *Sturm und Drang* playwrights.

While *Sturm und Drang* represented an emotional reaction to the constraints of the classical tradition – which in Germany constitued a weak derivation of French Classicism, emphasizing form rigidly at the expense of content – it nevertheless signified the growing concerns with social inequality and individual isolation which the Enlightenment had denied. Alan Megill sees *Sturm und Drang* and German Romanticism

> not as a natural process of decay and rejuvenation but rather as a conscious attempt to bring to light and to respond to theoretical inadequacies in the Enlightenment position. In short, it is a matter of the "failure" of the Enlightenment, and of various attempts to confront that failure. Viewed from this perspective, the decline of the French Revolution into Terror might be seen as merely the most striking manifestation of the inadequacy of the Enlightenment's social, moral, and political theory. (6)

One consequence of this disillusionment with their age and their culture was the tendency of the artists of *Sturm und Drang* and of Romanticism to view "their own time as an age not of established truth but of transition" (Megill 6).

An age in transition indicates change and movement, and hence the opposition between change as a movement toward re-integration, or change as a form of cultural crisis. The theories of the German Idealists – Schiller, Schelling and Hegel – of Herbert Spencer and Samuel Butler in England, and of the early socialists such as Saint-Simon, Fournier, and Marx and Engels, suggested that change would lead toward progress and completion.

On the other hand, the work of dramatists like J.M.R. Lenz, some early plays of Goethe and Schiller, those of Grabbe, Büchner, Hauptmann and Wedekind, as well as the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, indicate that this "cultural crisis" will not be easily resolved, and that alienation and inequality may define the very basis of human existence.

The historical and philosophical systems of the nineteenth century consequently grew out of the tension between change as progress, and change as crisis, but they also represented the attempt to establish laws of human behaviour and of human morality that would have an equal legitimacy to the objective laws which Newton had established for natural objects. Morality, however, unlike nature, presupposes freedom of choice and of action, a conception of freedom which radically contradicts the possibility of establishing a "science of society" (Megill 10) without itself being abolished. The tension between freedom and the lack of freedom that emerges both in the work of the *Sturm und Drang* playwrights and in the examination by the philosophers of the Enlightenment, of the nature of science (of "unfree objects"), and morality (or "free subjects"), incorporates a dualism which in fact stretched beyond Kant back to Descartes. In the philosophies of Schiller, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, the opposition of freedom to governance by a set of rules is expressed more fully as the problem of subject vs. object, or ego vs. non-ego, which "is also the problem of relating freedom and necessity, ego and nature, Idea and actuality, practical and theoretical" (Megill 15).

Friedrich Schiller, as Megill states, was "one of the first theorists of the idea of modern alienation" (13). In *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1794-5) Schiller traces the history of western civilization, remarking, as Nietzsche was to do later in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872), on the integrated nature of human existence within the civilization of the Greeks, a unity that was fractured by the advance of modern culture. In *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* (1795) Schiller further explores alienation as the sense of disorder and disharmony which is the inevitable result of an advancing and increasingly self-conscious culture that is the very opposite, both to the culture of the Greeks, and to the "naive" perfection of nature.

If the forward-movement of the historical process is evolutionary, it is an evolution that is governed by the dialectics of change, of thesis, anthithesis and synthesis, as later formalized by Hegel. The notion of change, or thesis/antithesis, also carries with it a revolutionary concept, as "Evolution and revolution have significance only in relation to one another" (Reed 40). The identification of revolution with an evolutionary progression serves to reinforce Hegel's perception that warfare between states is necessary for the general good, that it often forms the antithesis which will lead to an eventual synthesis, or continued progression of existence.

The formulation of opposites, of thesis/antithesis, also incorporates the conception of the temporal and the universal; in writing on the aesthetics of the drama, Hegel emphasizes that tragic heroes are imbued with a form of existential guilt that must be expiated through death in order for universal morality and universal progress to reassert itself, that the "general good" is only reinforced through individual tragedy. Hebbel reformulates Hegel's antithesis of the individual and the universal, but in Hebbel's theoretical statements there is little indication of the historical progression that characterizes Hegel's thoughts on history and art.

The revolutionary element inherent in progress is given a materialistic base in the writings of Marx and Engels, who translate thesis and antithesis into terms of class conflict. Their treatment of history is more narrow than Hegel's, for where Hegel addresses history from the all-encompassing perspective of the evolutionary development from minutest organism to ultimate pure thought, Marx and Engels are interested only in tracing class conflict and class consciousness within the realm of human history.

The other major trend in nineteenth-century philosophy, and one that directly opposes Hegel's evolutionary emphasis, is that the world is governed not only by change but also by a continuing sense of crisis. Despite on-going change and even revolutionary upheavals that are meant to eliminate social injustice and inhumanity, no progress is actually detected. This view had its origins in the emotional turmoil of the *Sturm und Drang* artists and philosophers even before the French Revolution, and later gained dramatically in significance through the writings of Nietzsche and Friedrich Hebbel in Germany, and those of Thomas Carlyle in England.

Alienation ultimately results in the "cultural crisis" evidenced in such early *Sturm und Drang* literature as Lenz's drama and the early plays of Goethe and Schiller. This crisis has its roots in the growing skepticism, in the late eighteenth century, in the authority of the Bible and the Word of God, a skepticism that was stimulated by Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), and has been defined by Alan Megill as "the loss of the transcendent dimension, prompted by the notion of *Kritik* as a pervasive power, [which] leads to modern man's homelessness in the world. This is the crisis. It is the loss of authoritative standards of the good, the true, and the beautiful to which reason has access, coupled with loss of the Word of God in the Bible" (xiii). Megill himself disagrees with this perceived origination of the concept of crisis and alienation. His own perspective suggests that a new and distinctive sense of cultural and historical crisis emerged in the *late* nineteenth century:

> Specifically, I see it connected with the collapse, circa 1880-1920, of historicism and of faith in progress that was the widely diffused, vulgarized form of historicism. In the "theological" view, the dominant metaphor for crisis is the

> abyss: the metaphor of humanity stranded in a world without God or other absolutes on which we can depend. In my "historical" reading of crisis, the dominant metaphor is that of the break. This presupposes something to be broken, namely, history; and in order to conceive of the possibility of history's breaking, one needs to think of it as a line or movement. In the theological reading of crisis, historicism is the product of crisis. Historicism emerges when eternal standards collapse and nothing is left outside the flux of historical time. In my reading, historicism is the precondition of crisis, for only when one conceives of history as linear is it possible to think in terms of its being broken. Conceiving of the present as broken, crisis thinkers also conceive of it as undirected, null, degraded. And they tend to project this vision of the present both backward and forward, conceiving of every present – past, present, and future – in this way. (xiii)

Megill's thesis is based on a changing view of history and historicity from the stability of the eighteenth-century *Aufklärung* with its belief in reason and the permanence of a world in which change is not a dominant characteristic,* to the emphasis on change – both as progress and as crisis, or regress – that was the trademark of the late eighteenth century, and most of the nineteenth century. The Enlightenment emphasis on reason and stability saw history as permanent and immutable; it was consequently only through the change from the feeling that the world was immutable to the emphasis on flux, on mutability, that individual and social alienation could begin to define the human condition.

Nietzsche's concept of the "burden" of history, or of historical knowledge, also emphasizes that increased knowledge and awareness do not lead to evolutionary progress, but to an inability to deal with life in a feeling or active manner. This accumulation of knowledge – and the accompanying repressive guilt and sense of responsibility – ultimately results in an overly conscious, overly rational society that is unable to act, or to integrate its non-rational elements. While changes occur, they do not result in evolutionary progress; hence, history is merely a cyclical recurrence of time. This cyclical view of history is mitigated somewhat by Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch*, or superman. Occasionally an individual will emerge who integrates within himself a balance of emotion and reason, and rises to greatness because of this. Socrates was one such individual, and Walter

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* Although Megill also acknowledges that permanence was often more imagined than real during the eighteenth century, just as change and motion were not as ingrained in nineteenth-century thought as is often perceived: "I find unconvincing the contrast between a period in which values were unquestioned and a subsequent period in which the chaos of uncertainty prevailed. From the one side, when did authoritatively accepted universal standards of judgment ever actually exist? The Enlightenment tried to promulgate such standards, but disagreement was rampant over what those standards were; and the same is true of earlier periods in European history. From the other side, many nineteenth-century thinkers still saw themselves as having absolutes to which they might appeal. For example, Hegel adheres to an absolute, the historical process itself" (xiii-xiv).

Kaufmann suggests that Nietzsche viewed himself as the modern embodiment of the *Übermensch*. These individuals, however, do not represent an overall improvement or evolutionary development in the history of mankind. Shaw, in *Man and Superman*, seems caught between Hegel's view of evolutionary progress and Nietzsche's more pessimistic theory of the *ewige Wiederkehr* or "eternal recurrence." Shaw strives to combine the two concepts through the Lamarckian-influenced belief that progress is possible if humanity *wills* it to be so, but if the will is weak, then the seeming progress will be nothing more than illusion, or history repeating itself.

Hebbel, in his "Preface" to *Maria Magdalena*, also emphasized that history is governed by change, and by conflict of the temporal within the universal; however, unlike Hegel, Hebbel does not see change as evolutionary, or leading to a higher state of existence (although his plays appear to belie this theory). Like Hegel, however, Hebbel embues his heroes with an existential guilt that can only be resolved through their death, which reaffirms a universal morality.

The concern of nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophers and artists with the fate of civilization, then, originated in the Enlightenment, the *Sturm und Drang*, and especially in the writings of the philosophers of German Idealism. The difference between the theorists of the nineteenth century and the artists of the twentieth, however, was that within the context of the early nineteenth century, the conception of history as progressive was much more dominant than that of man alienated from himself and from God. Man had once again become – perhaps more so than at any time since Copernicus and Galileo had removed the earth from the centre of the universe during the sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries – the fulcrum or focal point of the world he inhabited. The egocentric, even solipsistic, world depicted by Schiller, Fichte, Schelling and the early German Romanticists, maximized the emphasis on individuality and human consciousness. Through the consciousness of one's emotional self, the individual became ever more aware of nature, to the point where man and nature became one, united, the centre of being. This ascendance of the human spirit was such that it "subsumed all of nature, history and art in one unified whole . . .[and] declared this Spirit to be the highest form of reason, thereby reconciling philosophy with religion" (Malia 73). The emphasis on human consciousness to a large extent actually replaced the conception of God as the controlling force of the universe. The political implications of this metaphysical view of human potential were not to be fully realized until well into the twentieth century, where, in one kind of experiment, at least, the Nazis actually did attempt to displace God.

Schiller and Schelling anticipated Hegel's emphasis on history as progression, and also formulated a rudimentary form of the dialectic of conflict

and negation. However, where Hegel's dialectic was philosophical and objective, Schiller and Schelling's perspectives were aesthetic and idealistic. Schiller refers to the beautiful soul (*die schöne Seele*), which for him indicates the ultimate self-realization, the seamless blending of aesthetics, nature and God into the human consciousness. Martin Malia states:

> It is only in the inner world of the spirit, in the development of a beautiful soul . . . that man is free and fully realizes himself. . . . the truly "beautiful soul" is reasonable, moral, and therefore free, without effort or constraint, in the spontaneous flow of sentiment. . . . [I]n their upper reaches love and the beautiful tend to fuse with the holy and sacred, and reason begins to turn into a new religion. Art, friendship, and love, all three grounded in sentiment, are the ultimate values for Schiller and the only true path to liberty. (41)

Malia points out that Schiller's idealism is innately revolutionary, that if it were to be translated into political terms and into a "program for the real world," as was eventually the case in Russia, it would "lead to 'total' political demands, and in the last analysis to the idea of revolution as the sole possible means for effecting so extraordinary a transformation in the state of man" (55).

It is manifestly evident, however, that Schiller himself never viewed his idealism in terms of "total political demands," despite his opposition of the imperfect modern society of his day to the ideal of perfection. Schiller does emphasize human alienation, however, in his view that the modern, fractured personality is characterized by its freedom, compared to the unified psyche of the ancient Greek, which achieved integration only at the *expense* of freedom. In *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* (1795) Schiller explicitly equates the harmony of the ancients and of nature with a *lack* of freedom, and the chaos of modern civilization with the increasing realization of individual freedom:

> Solange wir bloße Naturkinder waren, waren wir glücklich und vollkommen; wir sind frey geworden, und haben beydes verloren. Daraus entspringt eine doppelte und sehr ungleiche Sehnsucht nach der Natur; eine Sehnsucht nach ihrer *Glückseligkeit*, eine Sehnsucht nach ihrer *Vollkommenheit*. (427-8)*

Schiller equates the longing for *Glückseligkeit*, or happiness, with sensuality, and the longing for *Vollkommenheit*, or perfection, with morality.

In his analysis of freedom as the opposite of happiness and perfection, Schiller also acknowledges the "Mißbräuche in der Gesellschaft" ("abuses of society") which underlay the themes of many of the *Sturm und Drang* plays:

> Frage dich wohl, wenn die Kunst dich aneckelt und die Mißbräuche in der Gesellschaft dich zu der leblosen Natur in die Einsamkeit treiben, ob es ihre

* "As long as we were mere children of nature, we were happy and perfect; we have become free and lost both. From this emerges a double and very unequal longing for nature, a longing for her *happiness* and a longing for her *perfection*" (*Naive* 31).

> Beraubungen, ihre Lasten, ihre Mühseligkeiten oder ob es ihre moralische Anarchie, ihre Willkühr, ihre Unordnungen sind, die du an ihr verabscheust? (428)*

Schiller's idealism, however, sees man demonstrating his freedom through his determination to act morally and justly within an immoral world, asserting his morality under almost impossible conditions:

> allen *Übeln* der Kultur mußt du mit freyer Resignation dich unterwerfen, mußt sie als die Naturbedingungen des Einzig guten respektiren; nur das *Böse* derselben mußt du, aber nicht bloß mit schlaffen Thränen, beklagen. Sorge vielmehr dafür, daß du selbst unter jenen Befleckungen rein, unter jener Knechtschaft frey, unter jenem launischen Wechsel beständig, unter jener Anarchie gesetzmäßig handelst. . . . Jene Natur, die du dem Vernunftlosen beneidest, ist keiner Achtung, keiner Sehnsucht werth. Sie liegt hinter dir, sie muß ewig hinter dir liegen. Verlassen von der Leiter, die dich trug, bleibt dir jetzt keine andere Wahl merhr, als mit freyem Bewußtseyn und Willen das Gesetz zu ergreifen, oder rettungslos in eine bodenlose Tiefe zu fallen. (428)†

Schiller's emphasis on the function of the will to overcome adversity and lead to progress, with the failure to do so leading to "eine bodenlose Tiefe" ("the bottomless pit"), will recur in Shaw's *Man and Superman*, and, with modifications, in Brecht's *Leben des Galilei*.

Schiller's recognition of the deprivations and gross inequalities that define the society of his period is central to his thesis concerning the "naive" and the "sentimental." He perceives Goethe as the supreme representative of the naive appreciation for nature and for the quality of life. The naive individual identifies intuitively with the harmony embodied in nature; he responds to the "real" or natural world around him, and is objective insofar as his identification and organic connection is with his natural environment. The sentimental individual, on the other hand – and Schiller does not use the term in its present, pejorative sense of shallow emotionalism, but rather as open to sensations, to the appreciation of feelings and sensibility – is characterized by his speculative, reflective, reasoning, and above all, "idealistic" nature. The sentimental artist "bases his [ideas] on the ideal, on

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* "Ask yourself carefully, when art disgusts you and the abuses of society drive you to inanimate nature in solitude, whether it is society's deprivations, burdens and trials, or whether it is her moral anarchy, her arbitrariness, her disorder which you loathe in her" (*Naive* 31).

† "you must submit to all the *evils* of culture with voluntary resignation, you must respect them as the natural conditions of the sole Good; you must lament only the *evil* in it but not merely with weak tears. Take care rather that you act purely in the midst of that defilement, freely under that slavery, steadfastly under that capricious change, lawfully in the midst of that anarchy. . . . That nature for which you envy the unreasoning is not worthy of any respect, any longing. It lies behind you, it must always lie behind you. Abandoned by the ladder which carried you, there is now no other choice open to you than to seize the law consciously and voluntarily or to sink without hope of salvation into a bottomless pit" (32).

what he imagines the world should be" (Watanabe-O'Kelly 13). Goethe later – somewhat brusquely, since Schiller ultimately valued the "sentimental" poet above the "naive" poet – also distinguished between the naive and the sentimental: "terms associated with the naive are intuitive, Hellenic, classical, real and objective whereas the sentimental is linked with speculative, Romantic, ideal and subjective" (Watanabe-O'Kelly 13-14).

The naive artist, in his intuitive, immediate apprehension of the harmony of nature, is unaware of any restrictions on his freedom because his actions like his art flow out of this natural harmony. The sentimental artist, on the other hand, is excrutiatingly attuned to the lack of harmony, the unequal and deformed nature of his society, and must therefore, without rejecting his culture, project an ideal world as a goal toward which he will work through the exertion of his will and his freedom of choice. Schiller is not suggesting here that through his will and freedom the sentimental individual can or should return to a Rousseau-inspired version of the innocence of the past, for the ideal is fashioned from a basis in experience rather than in innocence.* The sentimental poet, in striving for this ideal, "is attempting something far more difficult and challenging than the naive poet. Though the latter may achieve perfection in his goals, the failure to which the endeavors of the sentimental poet are ultimately doomed is more noble and more admirable" (Watanabe-O'Kelly 15). The failure to achieve an ideal perfection lies in the inability to attain the unified perspective that we find in classical literature and in French Classicism. On the other hand, the ability to imagine an ideal world, even if unattainable, is a power in itself, hence "Jener [alter Dichter] . . . ist mächtig durch die Kunst der

* Schiller takes care to distinguish his own conception of the ideal from Rousseau's pastoralism, and indicates where he believes Rousseau to be limited in his ideas: "Daher ist auch in dem Ideale, das er von der Menschheit aufstellt, auf die Schranken derselben zu viel, auf ihr Vermögen zu wenig Rücksicht genommen, und überall mehr ein Bedürfniß nach physischer *Ruhe* als nach moralischer *Übereinstimmung* darinn sichtbar. Seine leidenschaftliche Empfindlichkeit ist Schuld, daß er die Menschheit, um nur des Streits in derselben recht bald los zu werden, lieber zu der geistlosen Einförmigkeit des ersten Standes zurückgeführt, als jenen Streit in der geistreichen Harmonie einer völlig durchgeführten Bildung geendigt sehen . . . daß er das Ziel lieber niedriger steckt, und das Ideal lieber herabsetzt, um es nur desto schneller, um es nur desto sicherer zu erreichen" (451-2). ["Therefore in the ideal of humanity which he proposes, there is too much regard for the boundaries of it and too little for its capability, and everywhere is visible more of a need for physical *peace* than for moral *harmony*. It is the fault of his passionate sensitivity that, in order to get rid of the conflict in humanity as soon as possible, he prefers to lead it back to the mindless monotony of its first state rather than to see that conflict ended in the intelligent harmony of an education which has been carried through . . . he prefers to set his goal lower and reduce his ideal in order to reach it all the more quickly and all the more safely" (50).]

Begrenzung; dieser [modernen Dichter] ist es durch die Kunst des Unendlichen" (440).*

In Schiller's hierarchy nature represents perfection, whereas art, in its *semblance* of nature, is a secondary, inferior product; consequently, "Zum Naiven wird erfodert, daß die Natur über die Kunst den Sieg davon trage" (417-18).† However, it is in the morality of nature, not in its power, that perfection resides, and it is this moral force that must dominate over art:

> Es wird also erfodert, daß die Natur nicht durch ihre blinde Gewalt als *dynamische*, sondern daß sie durch ihre Form als *moralische* Größe, kurz daß sie nicht als *Nothdurft*, sondern als *innre Nothwendigkeit* über die Kunst triumphiere. (419)‡

In his reflection on the relationships between ancient and modern cultures, and the function that art has in both its naive and sentimental forms, Schiller ultimately endorses modernity as superior to ancient culture, and the sentimental as superior to the naive, because of the struggle, the exertion of the will, the sense of change as progress, and the infinite possibilities which characterize the imperfect:

> Dieser Weg, den die neueren Dichter gehen, ist übrigens derselbe, den der Mensch überhaupt sowohl im Einzelnen als im Ganzen einschlagen muß. Die Natur macht ihn mit sich Eins, die Kunst trennt und entzweyet ihn, durch das Ideal kehrt er zur Einheit zurück. Weil aber das Ideal ein unendliches ist, das er niemals erreicht, so kann der kultivirte Mensch in *seiner* Art niemals vollkommen werden, wie doch der natürliche Mensch es in der seinigen zu werden vermag. . . . Vergleicht man hingegen die Arten selbst mit einander, so zeigt sich, daß das Ziel, zu welchem der Mensch durch Kultur *strebt*, demjenigen, welches er durch Natur *erreicht*, unendlich vorzuziehen ist. Der eine erhält also seinen Werth durch absolute Erreichung einer endlichen, der andre erlangt ihn durch Annäherung zu einer unendlichen Größe. . . . Insofern aber das letzte Ziel der Menschheit nicht anders als durch jene Fortschreitung zu erreichen ist, und der letztere nicht anders fortschreiten kann, als indem er sich kultivirt und folglich in den erstern übergeht, so ist keine Frage, welchem von beyden in Rücksicht auf jenes letzte Ziel der Vorzug gebühre. (438)+

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* "The ancient . . . is powerful through the art of limitation; the modern through the art of the infinite" (41).

† "It is a prerequisite of the naive that nature is victorious over art" (24).

‡ "It is therefore necessary that nature should not triumph over art through its blind power as a *dynamic* force but through its form as a *moral* force, in short, that it should triumph over art as an *inner necessity* not as an *outward need*" (25).

+ "This path on which the modern poets are moving is, moreover, the same one on which man individually and mankind as a whole must travel. Nature makes him one with himself, art separates and divides him, through the ideal he returns to that unity. Because however, the ideal is an infinite one which he never attains, the cultivated man can never become perfect in *his* own way as the natural man is able to do in his. . . . If, on the other hand, one compares the types themselves with each other, then it emerges that the goal for which man *strives* through culture is immeasurably preferable to that which he *reaches* through nature. One, therefore, has his value because of his absolute attainment of a finite

Schiller also very interestingly links his conception of the sentimental with modes or kinds of literary expression, thus the sentimental poet may utilize either the satiric or the elegiac mode. Satire will either castigate and reprove, or will laugh at, be jocose, in its effort to reform and inspire. The elegy finds its expression either in a nostalgia for a lost perfection and the lament for an ideal which is unattained and unattainable, or as an idyll, where nature and the ideal are projected as actually existing. Underlying Schiller's perspective of nature and of history, then, is a strong consciousness of the importance of the fictive, the literary imagination. Hayden White, in his *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973) has rigorously analyzed the modes of discourse and the literary imagination underlying the great theories of history and historicity of the nineteenth century. White believes, like Schiller, that the recording of historical facts and movements is merely a surface record, a collection of facts without meaning, that the true content of the narration resides in an underlying literary consciousness and mode of expression. Therefore, while the overt historical narrative may proceed by "formal argument," by "emplotment" and by "ideological implication," the underlying literary structure, the "historical consciousness," is expressed through the modes of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, or irony (White ix-xii). Schiller, in defining the categories of naive and sentimental, similarly ascribes to the literary imagination the function of being the carrier for historical and philosophical discourse.

In his definition of the "Idyll" Schiller again substantiates his argument that art cannot lead us back to innocence, to a pastoral paradise; the representation of innocence depicted through the idyll, however, reinforces what was to become Hegel's conception of the Absolute Idea, the need to make perfection the ultimate goal of both the individual and the society in which he lives:

> die Dichter [haben] den Schauplatz der Idylle aus dem Gedränge des bürgerlichen Lebens heraus in den einfachen Hirtenstand verlegt, und derselben ihre Stelle *vor dem Anfange der Kultur* in dem kindlichen Alter der Menschheit angewiesen. . . . Der Zweck . . . ist überall nur der, den Menschen im Stand der Unschuld, d.h. in einem Zustand der Harmonie und des Friedens mit sich selbst und von aussen darzustellen.
>
> Aber in solcher Zustand findet nicht bloß vor dem Anfange der Kultur statt, sondern er ist es auch, den die Kultur, wenn sie überall nur eine bestimmte

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greatness, the other because of his approximation to an infinite one. . . . In so far, however, as the ultimate goal of humanity cannot be reached except by means of that progression and the natural man cannot progress except by cultivating himself and as a result merges with the former, then there is no question as to which of the two deserves greater merit with regard to that ultimate goal" (40).

> Tendenz haben soll, als ihr letztes Ziel beabsichtet. (467)*

The idyll, then, represents for Schiller the culmination or fulfilment, the ultimate "sentimental" insight into cultural reality and idealism which the poet, through reason and consideration, strives for. It represents a harmony that is equivalent to that achieved by naive poetry. Schiller also maintains, however, that this is a goal which can never be completely fulfilled:

> Ihr Charakter besteht also darinn, daß *aller Gegensatz der Wirklichkeit mit dem Ideale* . . . vollkommen aufgehoben sey, und mit demselben auch aller Streit der Empfindungen aufhöre. . . . Aber eben darum, weil aller Widerstand hinwegfällt, so wird es hier ungleich schwüriger . . . die *Bewegung* hervorzubringen, ohne welche doch überall keine poetische Wirkung sich denken läßt. Die höchste Einheit muß seyn, aber sie darf der Mannichfaltigkeit nichts nehmen; das Gemüth muß befriedigt werden, aber ohne daß das Streben darum aufhöre. (472-3)†

Schiller attempts to reconcile, here, but not very successfully, the contradiction that will become a major dilemma in Hegel's thought: if history is progressing toward an ultimate ideal – or Absolute Idea – in which only harmony exists, then how is it possible to maintain any sense of human individuality, or human freedom, which can only exist as diversity?

For Schelling, as for Schiller, the nature of idealism had a strongly evolutionary cast; life begins as unconscious, inorganic matter, and develops, by means of struggle and opposing tensions, through various stages toward an ultimate culmination in which nature, mind and man become one and become absolute; all being and feeling is finally subsumed into the human consciousness (Malia 78-79). History, then, becomes the record of the existence of all life; it is an evolutionary voyage that will ultimately culminate in the highest possible degree of human awareness. Fichte, too, searched for the "absolute foundation of consciousness which itself lies beyond consciousness" (Dupré 14). Like Schiller and Schelling, his reference point for attempting to establish a unity of nature and reason was Kant's "transcendental subject, the unity of apperception" (Dupré 14). In the opposition of objective nature and the subjective ideal, Fichte tended to eliminate nature, and in the political

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* "the poets have removed the scene of the idyll from the bustle of bourgeois life to the simple pastoral state and have assigned it a place *before the beginning of culture* in the childlike age of man. . . . The purpose . . . is always only to represent man in a state of innocence, i.e. in a state of harmony and peace with himself and from outside.

But such a state is not just to be found before the beginning of culture but is also what culture, if it is only to have one definite trend, intends as its ultimate goal" (61-2).

† "Its character therefore consists of the fact that *all conflict between reality and the ideal* . . . is completely resolved and with that, all conflict of the emotions ceases. . . . But for just the reason that all opposition falls away, it becomes infinitely more difficult . . . to produce that *movement* without which no poetic effect can ever be imagined. The highest unity must exist but it may not take away from diversity; the spirit must be satisfied but without the striving towards that satisfaction ceasing" (66).

opposition of objective individual desires to the subjective ideal of the State, he tended to eliminate the freedom of the individual even more completely than Hegel was later to do:

> The State for [Fichte] is the highest expression of the pure impulse of the *Spirit* which moves man into the realm of freedom. Yet, the impulse of the Spirit is so fundamentally opposed to the impulse of nature, which is just as real in man's appetitive life, that harmony can be obtained only by the death of either one of the antagonists. What Fichte calls "freedom," therefore, marks, in Hegel's words, the triumph of reason over life. (Dupré 14).

The progression from Schiller, Schelling and Fichte to Hegel is more a change of perspective than an actual philosophical difference. Schiller, Schelling and Fichte formulated their metaphysical conception of history and knowledge from an intuitive, symbolic perspective. Hegel, on the other hand, applied logic rather than intuition. He presented his conception of the historical evolution or "becoming" of civilization with an objectivity that is lacking in his predecessors; Hegel's metaphysic is couched within an epistemological framework that gives it credence within the fields of philosophy and science.

Hegel's conception of history and the historical process is, nonetheless, both optimistic and "idealistic." In his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Geschichte* (1837/40), he points to the dialectical progression of history, and while the dialectic of necessity encompasses both dissolution (*Untergang*) and renewal – Hegel uses the metaphor of the self-consuming, self-renewing Phoenix to describe the motion of historical progress – the operative concept is that of change, and change is ultimately positive because it embraces new life:

> Die nächste Bestimmung aber, welche sich an die Veränderung anknüpft, ist, daß die Veränderung, welche Untergang ist, zugleich Hervorgehen eines neuen Lebens ist, daß aus dem Leben Tod, aber aus dem Tod Leben hervorgeht.... er geht erhoben, verklärt, ein reinerer Geist aus derselben hervor. Er tritt allerdings gegen sich auf, verzehrt sein Daseyn, aber indem er es verzehrt, verarbeitet er dasselbe, und was seine Bildung ist, wird zum Material, an dem seine Arbeit ihn zu neuer Bildung erhebt. (90-91)*

Hegel's optimism and idealism is evident in this emphasis on renewal despite decay. The concept of "change" for Hegel means a move toward greater self-realization; life evolves toward a final state in which existence and the

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* "But the next consideration which allies itself with that of change, is, that change while it imports dissolution, involves at the same time the rise of a *new life* – that while death is the issue of life, life is also the issue of death. . . . it comes forth exalted, glorified, a purer spirit. It certainly makes war upon itself – consumes its own existence; but in this very destruction it works up that existence into a new form, and each successive phase becomes in turn a material, working on which it exalts itself to a new grade. (*Philosophy of History* 76)

knowledge of existence will become one. This is the ultimate self-realization of all life, of all experience both actual and understood, and is ultimately defined as the Absolute Idea, which resides in the reasoning process and represents both the prime creator and the perfected creation; it is the ultimate, self-conscious realization of the perfection of the universe, the synthesis of the final causes in all changes in experience, integrated with full understanding of these changes. Hegel therefore emphasizes "daß die Vernunft die Welt beherrsche,... daß die Vernunft ... [d]ie *Substanz* ist ... nämlich das, wodurch und worin alle Wirklichkeit ihr Seyn und Bestehen hat – die *unendliche Macht,* indem die Vernunft nicht so ohnmächtig ist, es nur bis zum Ideal, bis zum Sollen zu bringen" (*Phil.* 12-13).* Man's existence finds its meaning in the gradual, explicit realization of the Absolute Idea, for, being the most complex element within the universe, man most closely embodies this realization within himself. Once we realize that the driving urge in all of existence is the self-actualization of the Absolute Idea, then it becomes evident that art, religion, and philosophy are all coherent and necessary elements in this process. But of these, the closest to the Absolute Idea is philosophy, for it is only through knowledge that the Absolute can be fully realized.

Hegel's conception of the universe and of historical process thus incorporates a sense of optimistic inevitability: [Es] kann von der Weltgeschichte gesagt werden, daß sie die Darstellung des Geistes sey, wie er sich das Wissen dessen, was er an sich ist, erarbeitet, und wie der Keim die ganze Natur des Baumes, den Geschmack, die Form der Früchte in sich trägt, so enthalten auch schon die ersten Spuren des Geistes virtualiter die ganze Geschichte" (*Phil.* 23).† If history is a rational process defined as a movement toward the Absolute Idea, then no reversal can be final, and the achievement of perfection is merely a matter of time. The nature of freedom and individuality becomes ambiguous and questionable, even though Hegel simultaneously insists that "die Vernunft ist das ganz frei sich selbst bestimmende Denken" (*Phil.* 17),‡ and again that "Die Weltgeschichte ist der Fortschritt im Bewußtseyn der Freiheit" (24).+ From a political

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* "Reason is the Sovereign of the World.... Reason is the *substance* of the Universe; viz. that by which and in which all reality has its being and subsistence. On the other hand, it is the *Infinite Energy* of the Universe; since Reason is not so powerless as to be incapable of producing anything but a mere ideal, a mere intention" (*Phil.* 9-10).

† "Universal History ... is the exhibition of Spirit in the process of working out the knowledge of that which it is potentially. And as the germ bears in itself the whole nature of the tree, and the taste and form of its fruits, so do the first traces of Spirit virtually contain the whole of that History" (*Phil.* 18).

‡ "Reason is Thought conditioning itself with perfect freedom" (*Phil.* 13).

+ "The History of the World is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom" (*Phil.* 19-20).

perspective, the Absolute Idea is incorporated in the world spirit or *Weltgeist*, which exists in a dialectical relationship to the national spirits of individual states or countries. Each nation state contains its own national spirit in varying degrees of emergence or decline, and warfare between nations is both healthy and necessary. War between states is, for Hegel, "a necessary national phenomenon. It is in fact . . . the means by which the dialectic of history gets, so to speak, a move on. It prevents stagnation and preserves . . . the ethical health of nations" (Copleston 7 I 261). Past wars are viewed as a revitalizing process that has furthered the dialectic of history. In all fairness to Hegel, it must be noted that he was studying the past, not writing a prescription for the future, although Lukács argues that "es gibt keine 'unschuldige' Weltanschauung" (*Zerstörung* 10).* Certainly the twentieth century wars connote horrifying implications of destruction that could not be envisioned within the context of the Napoleonic period, but Lukács, from his modern perspective, lays the blame for Hitler and German Fascism on the line of "irrationalism" – which he defines as "das Einsetzen der 'Übervernünftigkeit' (der Intuition usw.) dort, wo es möglich und notwendig ist, zu einer vernünftigen Erkenntnis weiterzuschreiten" (*Zerstörung* 86)† – that began with Schelling, found its strongest exponents in Nietzsche and Spengler, and comprised the philosophical foundations, in Lukács' view, for Hitler's Third Reich (*Zerstörung* 15).‡ While Hegel incorporated the *Weltgeist* or world spirit as a vital component within his philosophy of history, he appeared to be too nationalistic to entertain the concept of a "world state" which would incorporate the individual nation states.

Hegel, developing further the connections established by Schiller between freedom and morality, stressed that the measure of morality lay in the harmony or lack of harmony between the individual and the general will, a view of freedom and morality that is extremely restrictive. The general will is that which strives toward unity and the Absolute Idea; consequently, opposition to it is morally wrong. Will and morality are externalized through action, and the morality of action, for Hegel, was determined by purpose and intention, not by unforeseeable consequences:

> any change or alteration in the world which the subject brings about can be called his "deed" (*Handlung*). But he has the right to recognize as his "action" (*Tat*) only that deed which was the purpose (*Vorsatz*) of his will. The external world is the sphere of contingency, and . . . it would be contrary to the idea of the self-determining free will to hold myself responsible for the unforeseeable consequences or alterations in the world which are in some sense my deed but

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* "there is no such thing as an 'innocent' philosophy" (*Destruction of Reason* 5).

† "the introduction of 'supr-rationality' (intuition, etc.) when it is possible and necessary to proceed to a rational perception" (*Destruction* 98).

‡ For a viewpoint opposite to that of Lukács, see Kaufmann, *From Shakespeare to Existentialism*, 122-24, and Copleston 7 I 260-61.

> which were certainly not comprised within my purpose. Purpose is thus the first phase of morality. The second is intention (*Absicht*) or, more accurately, intention and welfare or well-being (*das Wohl*). (Copleston 7 I 249-50)

The point about the Hegelian conception of the universe that needs to be re-emphasized is the relationship between history as an inevitable process of self-realization and its relationship to the individual will, a concept that becomes extremely significant for twentieth century writers. To what extent can the individual help to shape history, and how rigidly is he determined *by* the historical process? Hegel recognized the influential role of "world-historical individuals" like Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and Napoleon, but felt that for all their possible areas of uniqueness as individual personalities, which he granted them, when it came to their role as shapers of history, they were in actuality instruments in the hands of the World Spirit, working towards its ultimate self-actualization. The historical importance of their actions transcended any petty motivations out of which the actions may have risen, since "Was ihre Thaten sind, das sind die Völker" (*Phil.* 92).* Copleston notes that this attributing of a positive aspect to all significant historical events is a subtle way of justifying all actions regardless of motivation, intent or consequences:

> . . . if history is a rational process in the sense of being a teleological process, a movement towards a goal which is determined by the nature of the Absolute rather than by human choice, it may appear that all that occurs is justified by the very fact that it occurs. And if the history of the world is itself the highest court of judgment, the judgment of the nations, it may appear to follow that might is right. For example, if one nation succeeds in conquering another, it seems to follow that its action is justified by its success. (267)

In justifying the use of power through this reductionist method Hegel opened himself to the accusation that he supported, or would have supported, a totalitarian form of government.† Hegel's position is especially ambiguous with regard to the freedom of the individual within the historical development of his nation state, despite his previously noted assertion that reason means the free conditioning of thought. Hegel argued that with the increasing complexity of nature, the drive toward the unity or wholeness of the various elements becomes a dominating urge, just as the striving toward the harmony of the Absolute Idea is the elemental urge of the entire universe. The state, then, would exhibit the "identity in difference" that is made possible through

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* "Nations are what their deeds are" (*Phil.* 77).

† Thomas Carlyle's perspective on history is more akin to Hebbel's than to Hegel's, but he, too, claims the prerogative of "might is right," incorporated within a sense of inevitability that might easily be viewed as totalitarian: "In all battles, if you await the issue, each fighter has prospered according to his right. His right and his might, at the close of the account, were one and the same. He has fought with all his might, and in exact proportion to all his right he has prevailed" (*Past and Present* 17).

the nature of the dialectic. It would be governed by the principle of unity, but the people would retain their freedom within this unifying principle. Much of the drama analyzed in this study denies this concept, asserting rather that individual freedom is decreasing, that virtually no freedom of action exists in an increasingly totalitarian world. The inability to act, to take control of one's destiny to any extent at all, is already a major focus in the work of nineteenth-century dramatists like Büchner, Strindberg and Chekhov, as well as such late nineteenth-, early twentieth-century dramatists as Hauptmann, Wedekind and Kraus. The inability to act freely is a major focus of Schnitzler's *Der Einsame Weg* and Eliot's *The Family Reunion*; Shaw, in *Man and Superman*, examines the nature of individual freedom in opposition to the compulsion of the "Life Force."

Nietzsche strongly opposes Hegel's optimism, especially with regard to historical progression and the freedom of the individual. In fact, Nietzsche's focus on crisis and alienation is much more in tune with the twentieth-century perspectives displayed in the plays of Schnitzler and Eliot, where individual freedom is extremely restricted, and where morality and knowledge, or human awareness, become a burden to the individual rather than an evolutionary progression toward an utopian absolute. The remarkable, even prophetic, ability of Nietzsche to predict or identify this twentieth-century malaise is even more singular from the perspective of the period within which he wrote, when Hegelian optimism was at its height. As Edward Alexander points out:

> by the middle of the [nineteenth] century the refusal to view or judge anything as it is and the consistent interpretation of everything – man, nature, society – as being only a stage of some further development had become accepted as the normal way of contemplating and understanding the universe. (144)

Nietzsche opposed not only the optimistic, evolutionary determinism that was so much a part of Hegel's philosophy, but also the dialectic, which was its trademark:

> denn wer vermöchte das *optimistische* Element im Wesen der Dialektik zu verkennen, das in jedem Schlusse sein Jubelfest feiert und allein in kühler Helle und Bewußtsein atmen kann: das optimistische Element, das, einmal in die Tragödie eingedrungen, ihre dionysischen Regionen allmählich überwuchern und sie notwendig zur Selbstvernichtung treiben muß – bis zum Todessprunge ins bürgerliche Schauspiel. Man vergegenwärtige sich nur die Konsequenzen der sokratischen Sätze: »Tugend ist Wissen; es wird nur gesündigt aus Unwissenheit; der Tugendhafte ist der Glückliche«; in diesen drei Grundformen des Optimismus liegt der Tod der Tragödie. (*Werke* I 67)*

* "for who could mistake the *optimistic* element in the essence of dialectics, which celebrates a jubilee in every conclusion, and can breathe only in cool clearness and consciousness: the optimistic element, which, having once forced its way into tragedy, must gradually overgrow its Dionysian regions, and necessarily impel it to self-destruction – even to the death-leap into the bourgeois drama. Let us but realise the consequences of the

With the rejection of the Dionysian urge, art became optimistic and philosophically top-heavy, the antithesis to the original Socratic position. The new synthesis, thought Nietzsche, could be achieved only through the emergence of another *Übermensch*, an "artistic Socrates" who would integrate the philosopher's dialectic with an artistic if tragic awareness: "da bricht die neue Form der Erkenntnis durch, die *tragische Erkenntniss*, die, um nur ertragen zu werden, als Schutz und Heilmittel die Kunst braucht" (*Werke* I 72).*

Aside from the emphasis on the Dionysian as a vital force and art rather than philosophy as the ultimate ideal, Nietzsche's stand has some strong similarities to the Hegelian notion of historical process; indeed, as Walter Kaufmann points out,

> insofar as Nietzsche's attitude was not supra-historical but historical, his approach was dialectical and somewhat similar to Hegel's: he accepted the actual course of events and "would not have anything be different – not forward, not backward, not in all eternity.". . . Nietzsche certainly did not want to subtract the historical development from antiquity to his own time and "go back." (*Nietzsche* 319n)

On the other hand, Nietzsche also felt that the historical process had no point of culmination, unlike Hegel's belief that history represented dialectical progression, a progression that became, in the final analysis, a self-perfecting process. Nietzsche argued that history was cyclical and recurrent. Man could get no satisfaction out of the historical process as *progress*, for there was none. There existed only a certain number of combinations of elements, and when all the combinations were exhausted, the process could only be repeated, hence the term "ewige Wiederkehr," or "eternal recurrence": One "does not envisage salvation in the process, but . . . the world is finished in every single moment and its end attained" (Kaufmann *Nietzsche* 319). History as *process* was therefore not a viable concept for Nietzsche, except insofar as the false (i.e. Hegelian) conception of history must not be allowed to paralyze civilization. Nietzsche also recognized that viewing history as ever recurring resulted in an extremely pessimistic, even nihilistic view of human existence. He battled this pessimism with his theory of the *Übermensch*, after which he wrote in a note to *Zarathustra*: "*After the vision of the overman*, in a gruesome way the doctrine of the *recurrence:* now *bearable!*" (Kaufmann, *Nietzsche* 327).

Nietzsche's optimism, then, if it can be called that, lay in the

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Socratic maxims: 'Virtue is knowledge; man only sins from ignorance; he who is virtuous is happy': these three fundamental forms of optimism involve the death of tragedy" (*CW* I 110).

* "then the new form of perception discloses itself, namely *tragic perception*, which, in order even to be endured, requires art as a safeguard and remedy" (*CW* I 119).

"supra-historical" sphere, in that area of experience that transcended the common and the historical. "*The goal of humanity*," he felt, "cannot lie in the end but only *in its highest specimens*," the *Übermenschen* (Kaufmann *Nietzsche* 319). Some of the *Übermenschen* cited by Nietzsche, like Julius Caesar, were also respected as world-historical individuals by Hegel, but for Nietzsche the significance of each individual – directly contrary to Hegel's view – lay not in his historical role, but in his ability to integrate the various facets of his being, to "organize the chaos of his passions" into a wholeness, a unity. Caesar was an *Übermensch* because, like Socrates, he was "the embodiment of the passionate man who controls his passions: the man who in the face of universal disintegration and licentiousness, knowing the decadence as part of his own soul, performs his unique deed of self-integration, self-creation, and self-mastery" (Kaufmann *Nietzsche* 316).

With this concentration on a supra-historical sphere of existence, Nietzsche's attack on the Hegelian system, and its emphasis on the process rather than the individual, becomes more comprehensible; at the same time, Nietzsche does not negate history, but qualifies it, in "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben":

> Unzeitgemäß ist auch diese Betrachtung, weil ich etwas, worauf die Zeit mit Recht stolz ist, ihre historische Bildung, hier einmal als Schaden, Gebreste und Mangel der Zeit zu verstehen versuche, weil ich sogar glaube, daß wir alle an einem verzehrenden historischen Fieber leiden und mindestens erkennen sollten, daß wir daran leiden. (*Werke* I 114)*

Schnitzler, in *Der einsame Weg*, accepts Nietzsche's criticisms of the Hegelian universe. Like Nietzsche, Schnitzler feels that culture is disintegrating under the burden of history and, if the new generation does not soon emerge, the age of grace will, in Felix's words to Julian, have run out.

There were nineteenth-century philosophical and scientific theoreticians other than Hegel and Nietzsche who affected the views and personal visions of the dramatists under consideration in this work. Charles Darwin, Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer are united in their strong emphasis on evolution as the dominating force of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Comte's Positivism consisted essentially in "an evolutionary view of the past, an ordered scheme for the sciences, and a sociological creed" (Barzun 55). Comte viewed evolution in terms of three distinct historical phases, the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive or scientific (Barzun 55). During the theological stage human conceptions had been mythologized; specific gods or beings were responsible for events and phenomena not easily understood. The metaphysical stage denoted phenomena outside of rational

* "I am trying to represent something of which the age is rightly proud – its historical culture – as a fault and a defect in our time, believing as I do that we are all suffering from a malignant historical fever and should at least recognize the fact" (*CW* 5 4).

or scientific understanding, but attributed only to an unknown or incomprehensible force. The final, or positive stage, was that in which phenomena were comprehended in terms of matter and force, and embodied in natural laws. Different branches of learning arrived at these stages independently and at different times, with biology still in the metaphysical stage. Darwin's theory of "Natural Selection" was therefore seen as bringing biology into the highest evolutionary stage.

Darwin's single most outstanding contribution was beyond doubt his theory – founded on years of close observation of many forms of plant and animal life – of "Natural Selection," postulated in his first work, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859). The full title is significant for the key phrases that have since been consistently identified with Darwin and with evolution: "Origin of Species," "Natural Selection," "Favoured Races," and "Struggle for Life" or, as Spencer later modified it, "Survival of the Fittest," which was further adapted by Tennyson to read "Nature red in tooth and claw." Darwin took the concept of evolution itself for granted in his work and focussed, rather, on the *means* by which different species of plant and animal life could survive and be modified ("Origin of Species" does not refer to the origin of life, but to the variations that exist in different *species*), that is, Natural Selection.

The public – and especially scientists and philosophers – had long been prepared to think of life in evolutionary terms. The entire German Romantic movement was based on the concept of life as an eternal state of "Becoming," an ever evolving process that was never static. Goethe wrote extensively of evolution, as did Lamarck – whose theory of modifications through use and disuse Spencer, Butler and Shaw, among others, later adopted – Erasmus Darwin (Charles' grandfather), Lyell, Comte and Spencer. Evolution as an alternative to the *Genesis* account of creation had therefore been familiar, and at least to some extent accepted in the intellectual tradition. Darwin, however, though never intending to refute the *Genesis* account, refocussed the issue in moral and religious terms through the "organizing of biological observations and evolutionary thinking around the central fact of natural selection" (Barzun 32). Darwin himself, while maintaining the objectivity of the scientist, viewed the results of his research in a very optimistic light, and in the conclusion to *The Origin of Species* he states:

> As all the living forms of life are the lineal descendants of those which lived long before the Cambrian epoch, we may feel certain that the ordinary succession by generation has never once been broken, and that no cataclysm has desolated the whole world. Hence we may look with some confidence to a secure future of great length. And as natural selection worked solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress toward perfection. (473-4)

The concept of "*natural selection from accidental variations*" was both the key to Darwin's work and the primary point of attack for his critics, both moral and religious. Much more difficult to accept than evolution – which, after all, might still have the guiding hand of both Divinity and Destiny as its first and directing cause – was the knowledge that human existence and its development were arbitrary and accidental, determined by chance variations in the existence of species that had preceded the current level of evolution. This left no scope for a Deity, for Providence, or even for the feeling that history is purposeful, that social or individual life has a meaningful end toward which it strives. The strongest charge against Darwin was thus that life, including consciousness, was now to be viewed in materialistic terms, as the result of chance variations and observable biological changes.

For natural selection to be a viable concept of human development, the random variations in the biological composition of species must be carried forward through heredity, so the qualities of the fittest would be continued. In the first edition of *The Origin of Species* Darwin argued that random, biological variations within species, passed on through heredity, determined the ultimate survival or the extinction of species; by 1865, however, he was beginning to waver in the conviction that change and development were strictly hereditary (Barzun 67), and he subsequently suggested that "acquired characteristics" and the influence of the environment on organisms might also be determining factors. The notion of acquired characteristics had been introduced by Lamarck as early as 1809; Lamarck believed if a giraffe continually stretched its neck in its efforts to obtain food, this stretched neck – or in the case of a blacksmith, the increased strength in his arm – would be inherited by its progeny. This would mean that through effort, practice, and especially through need – or by extension, through *will* – man could begin to control his own evolution. Although Darwin had at first categorically rejected this possibility, he gave it some credence in his subsequent publication, *The Descent of Man* (1871), which constitutes, as Leo Henkin suggests, "a judicial summing up of the entire question of man's origin" (55). Two years after Darwin's *Descent*, Henry Drummond published his own version of human descendence, entitled *The Ascent of Man* (1873), in which he explicated the evolution of man into a moral and spiritual realm, where a physical "survival of the fittest" is replaced by the doctrine of universal love, based largely on Spencer's reinterpretation of Darwin (Henkin 220).

Spencer's primary contribution to philosophy was his continuation of Comte's work, that is, a synthesizing of all the sciences – beginning with inorganic life through organic, to ethics, and including metaphysics – under one unified set of laws, that of evolution. Together with Comte, Spencer helped provide the nineteenth-century Naturalists with a scientific *method*, under which

> man becomes an object to be observed, described and analysed in total neutrality; his behaviour can be understood like the workings of a machine, and it is similarly determined (by heredity, milieu and "moment") (Furst 20).

This is the method which Spencer himself utilized in his comprehensive analysis of the evolution of all life, "one and continuous, from nebula to man, from star to soul, from atom to society" (Henkin 30).

Spencer issued the prospectus for his *Synthetic Philosophy* in March, 1860, about half a year after the publication of *The Origin of Species*. By this time, however, most of Spencer's views were already well known, as his *Social Statics* had been published in 1850, parts of his *Principles of Biology* in 1852 and 1859, and the *Principles of Psychology* in 1855. The prospectus of 1860, however, made clear the vast range with which Spencer meant to deal.

Through his definitions, in *First Principles*, of the "Knowable" and the "Unknowable," Spencer reiterated a philosophical dichotomy that has existed from the time of Plato, that of the noumenal and the phenomenal worlds. Kant had re-emphasized the two spheres of existence, which then gained a richer expression in the theory of opposites posited by Schelling, who, as previously noted, believed that idea and matter exist within each other, and that "Being" exists in the form of polarities or antinomies. Lasar Roth has noted a "logical continuation" from Schelling through Hegel to Spencer, with all three philosophers drawing heavily on Kant. The significance of this connection lies in its evidence that, despite Spencer's absorption of Comte's Positivism, he is as much linked to the Romantic tradition as he is to materialism, thus providing the connection between Darwin and the Idealist philosophers.

The law that governs all change in the universe, claims Spencer, is that of evolution and dissolution. Evolution is integration from homogeneity to heterogeneity, or a process of change from the simple to the more complex. Dissolution, or disintegration, results in a lapse back into "indefiniteness and incoherence" (Hudson 23). Dissolution, however, accompanies evolution; an organism which evolves, or becomes more complex, but loses the unity between its various parts that is essential to its complexity, must necessarily disintegrate. Evolution and dissolution are the forces underlying all changes in the universe, and are continually in conflict with each other. The preoccupation with the laws of evolution appears to identify Spencer as a materialist, but at the end of the first volume of his philosophy he reminds us that in the phenomenal world we are dealing with symbols, and that "they are only signs of the Unknowable Reality underlying them all" (Hudson 27). Despite Bernard Shaw's apparent scoffing – through the character of Jack Tanner – at the bust of Herbert Spencer in *Man and Superman*, it is evident that Shaw's fear that progress may be an illusion is based partly on Spencer's

and Hegel's emphasis on dissolution as an integral part of the evolutionary process.

Spencer's views concerning the "Survival of the Fittest" were largely a reformulation of Darwin's "Natural Selection" theory (Hudson 36), but in restating it, Spencer placed far greater emphasis on environment and milieu than Darwin had, reaching back to the Lamarckian concept of acquired changes being passed on to succeeding generations of the species. Organic matter, said Spencer, is "a substance which is beyond all others changeable by the forces acting on it from without" (Hudson 31). This makes the environment the agent of change, of evolution, with the organism the object that is being changed through the environmental forces. This in turn strongly modifies the randomness or accidental nature of variations, making evolution a much more purposeful process of adaptation to external circumstances than is evident in *The Origin of Species*. Life, in Spencer's philosophy – and this is again reminiscent of Schelling as well as of Lamarck – is "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations," and "is perfect only when the correspondence between outer and inner is perfect" (Hudson 32). This balance or tension between an organism and its environment is the phenomenal manifestation, symbolizing the noumenal reality which "cannot be conceived in physico-chemical terms" (Hudson 33).

As the environment becomes more complex, organisms must increase in complexity in order to adapt, and in doing so, they further increase the heterogeneity of their environment. The modifications for adaptation, though not as random as Darwin would have them, are transmitted through heredity; however, Spencer places far greater emphasis on the heredity of *acquired* characteristics than Darwin did. Spencer's work is especially significant because of its vast scope, its attempt to synthesize all the sciences, social sciences, philosophy and economics through the theories of evolution and natural selection. Like many post-Darwinians, Spencer also advocated *laissez faire* economics, a strong capitalistic economy, as the best means of encouraging and speeding up the process of natural selection. It was on this account that Shaw, with his strong commitment to Socialism, opposed Spencer's view, and mocked Roebuck Ramsden in *Man and Superman* for displaying a bust of Spencer in his study.

The basis of Spencer's philosophy of social evolution is a demand for maximum freedom and individuality *after* initial coercion. In the earlier stages, the individual must be "educated by force and fear" through state authority, ecclesiastical control, and the social pressures of custom and ceremonial institutions. These external controls are lessened as individuals recognize the inherent utility embodied in them, and voluntarily adopt altruism as the basic principle of social existence. The external controls, having become obsolete, are then dropped, the final outcome being complete

individual freedom. The implied focus here is that all base or selfish desires that might infringe on the rights of others will have been refined out of existence. This rationalization of the will, of freedom of choice and individual freedom is again similar to Hegel's view of freedom within unity, and carries the same implicit approval of totalitarian enforcement, even if it is meant to be temporary. Michael Harrington points out how the same kind of rationalization was used by Lenin after the Russian Revolution, to impose a " 'temporary' dictatorship over the people in the name of the people." This was, as he notes, "a radical, and tragic, redefinition of the meaning of socialism" (*Socialism* 66), and resulted in the shaping of a rigid and at times horrifying "authoritarian collectivism"* that Lenin could not have predicted.

Where Darwin has been accused of robbing man of his purpose in life by stressing the randomness of the evolutionary process, Spencer, in *The Principles of Ethics*, did the very opposite, encouraging always an "increasing fulness of life" as the "end of evolution." This fulness was not primarily the fulness of every individual life, but rather of life as a whole, and had its basis in a society dedicated to altruism. The "end" of moral evolution is a conduct that is naturally and instinctively moral:

> . . . a state of human nature and social organisation . . . such that the individual has no desires but those which may be satisfied without exceeding his proper sphere of action, while society maintains no restraints but those which the individual voluntarily respects. (Hudson 74)

This state, when reached, is known as the "evolutionary millenium," and is again analogous to Hegel's conception of "freedom within unity."

The results of this view – as well as of an extremely optimistic exploitation of Darwin's *Origin of Species* – are especially evident in the flourishing of such utopian literature in the later 19th and early 20th centuries as Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871) and Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1871), as well as Grant Allen's *The British Barbarians* (1895), H.G. Wells' *A Modern Utopia* (1905) and George Bernard Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* (1921). In the idealized world of this literature man was debrutalized, and the "mechanism of natural selection . . . supplemented by an ethical process for the elimination of the unfit" (Henkin 234). This literature also depended on the Lamarckian view of man as able to improve himself and his environment through effort, practice and will:

> Wells' creed of creative evolution, in common with that of Butler, Shaw, and the Vitalists, is the optimistic one that the moulding of our selves and our future lies in our own hands and that if man will only want and try hard enough he can so evolve as to gain complete power over himself and his environment. (Henkin 243)

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* Harrington's term for authoritarian forms of socialism in which the original intent of "government for the people by the people" has long ceased to be a reality.

Evolutionary philosophy affected virtually all literature of the later 19th and early 20th Centuries. The varying expressions of this theory within the literature of the time reflects the public attitudes that resulted from the new philosophy: utopian literature insisted with uncircumscribed optimism that man, finally in control of his own destiny, had only the most glorious of futures before him; literature of vitalism emphasized the "survival of the fittest" principle adapted to the practical business world. When treated ironically, as in John Galsworthy's *The Man of Property*, this literature almost approaches the pessimism of the naturalistic writers, who saw in natural selection not hope but despair, both because it reduced man to the status of an animal, and because, seeing the world for what it was, they found that the arbitrariness of the selection process made any effort on the part of individuals seem futile. In this sense naturalistic literature prefigures the literature of the absurdists.

The utopians' sense of optimism and confidence in the future of human existence was countered not only by the Naturalists, but also by a number of writers who soon recognized the seeds of the anti-utopia or dystopia that are inherent in the supposed progression toward a perfect society. Darwin's scientific confirmation of the reality of human evolution, combined with the emphasis by Spencer and Lamarck on helping evolution through human effort and will, led to a great deal of speculation on how the human race could be improved and controlled through eugenics, or selective breeding. Breeding only the strongest, most intelligent members of the human race was often the first part of the eugenics equation; helping nature dispose of those who were *not* fit to survive was the second half. For those willing to follow the evolutionary concept to its ultimate conclusion, the formula for progression too often reduced to "breeding the best, and killing the rest," a formula that some twentieth-century dictators and theorists have shown themselves all too willing to apply, with horrifying results. Far from Hegel's "freedom within unity," or Spencer's insistence that all individuals, through their increased altruism, would willingly participate in the progression of the race, the theories have been ruthlessly and narrowly applied through total oppression of individual freedom, with both the "fittest" and the "unfit" judged on nationalistic and racist grounds rather than on intelligence and strength. Thus, nineteenth-century "liberal" and humanist theories were too often utilized within twentieth-century totalitarian systems to justify human oppression. As Alok Rai, in his discussion of Orwellian pessimism, states, for Western liberals the concept of totalitarianism "provides the negative utopia that substitutes for the eroded humanist aspiration of classical liberalism" (18). Eric Bentley refers to Carlyle's equally authoritarian belief that "freedom means compelling men to do right" (*Century* 49).

If Darwin defined history as natural or scientific evolution, Karl Marx

defined it as social evolution. Both Darwin and Marx, however, viewed evolution from a materialistic, as opposed to a philosophical, perspective. Jacques Barzun makes the point that Darwin, Marx and Wagner "made final the separation between man and his soul" (5), because their theoretical formulations were based on materialism and on forces over which the individual had little or no control, rather than on intuition or on self-knowledge. Marx himself acknowledged this materialistic determinism in his *Critique of Political Economy* of 1859:

> Men, in the social production which they carry on, enter into definite relations which are indispensable and independent of their wills; and these relations correspond to a definite stage in the development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society – the real foundation . . . to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. (quoted in Barzun 145)

Marx felt that because he emphasized the social being rather than human consciousness, he was setting Hegel "right side up" (Barzun 182).* Where Hegel's conception of humanity and of history was metaphysical, Marx's was materialistic: "the criticism of heaven is transformed into the criticism of earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics" (*Karl Marx: Early Writings* xiii). Certainly it is evident how easily some of Hegel's comments in the *Philosophy of Right* (#41) on ownership, labour and alienation could be adapted to a materialistic conception of economics. Copleston summarizes Hegel's views on the relationship of individuals to "material things" as follows:

> A man can relinquish his right ... to a house. He can also relinquish his right to his labour for a limited time and for a specified purpose. For his labour can then be looked upon as something external. But he cannot alienate his total freedom by handing himself over as a slave. For his total freedom is not and cannot properly be regarded as something external to himself. Nor can his moral conscience or his religion be regarded as an external thing.
>
> In Hegel's somewhat odd dialectical progression the concept of alienation of property leads us to the concept of contract (*Vertrag*). (7 I 246)

There is a strong deterministic element inherent in the philosophies of both Hegel and Marx, deterministic in the sense that human evolution was a progression toward a future utopia. Man is free to make his own choices, go his own way, only to a very limited, often questionable degree because he is caught up within historical forces that are greater than he is.

Marx's conception of the dialectic, which he again adopted from Hegel, became a somewhat oversimplified view of man as social being. Society

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* The metaphor of turning the theory of a predecessor's upside down is a popular one. Shaw, after reading Marx's *Das Kapital*, remarked that it was "the only book that ever turned me upside down" (Holroyd 130), and Rosa Luxembourg noted that for Lenin "the socialist state is the capitalist state stood on its head" (Harrington, *Socialism* 68).

consisted basically of two opposing groups, the ruling and the ruled, or the capitalists (or landowners) and the proletariat (or workers). Here was the thesis and antithesis, which could only be resolved through a synthesis, the dissolution of these opposing forces into a higher form of social being. Moreover, each stage in the social/historical development of man was a measurable item; social evolution did not allow for arbitrary leaps and bounds:

> A social state never dies before there has been fully developed within it the sum of all the productive forces that it contains. New relations in production, superior to the former ones, never come into being before their material reason for existence has developed in the womb of the old society. . . . As a general thesis one can consider the Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and bourgeois modes of production as the progressive steps of the economic formation of society. And the relations of bourgeois production constitute the last form of the productive process to be based on antagonism. (Barzun 147)

The great exception to Marx's conditions for the emergence of this kind of socialist state was, of course, the formation of the Russian Republic, through the Revolution of 1917, which catapulted a nation that met none of Marx's criteria of readiness for the rule by the people, into full soviet statehood. The results of this kind of "artificial" socialist revolution within an economically backward, non-industrialized country, have been disastrous in many respects, as first Lenin, and then Stalin, attempted "to achieve rapid economic development [for Russia] under conditions that do not permit the classic Western road to modernity" (Harrington, *Socialism* 61). In the revolution in China the base of Chinese communists was also formed by peasants – under the leadership of Mao-Tse-Tung – rather than by the proletariat, and to keep the socialist movement from becoming a "peasant" movement, the leadership rather than the people dictated policy, as it had in Russia.

Marx's division of society into opposing groups of the oppressors and the oppressed, based on economic grounds, was not new; what was innovative in Marx's ideology, however, was that this division and conflict should be made into a theory of progress for humanity, just as Hegel emphasized the need for warfare within the progression of human consciousness, in the quest for absolute knowledge.

Another factor that separated Marxism from other economic and political theories like those of Saint-Simon and Fourier was Marx's specified determination of a revolution as the final element of social evolution. The revolution would then lead to the socialist utopia, the classless society. By the turn of the century, the majority of socialist factions had become more moderate than Marx in this regard, substituting the possibility of gradual social change and political reforms for the necessity of a life and death struggle of the oppressed against the oppressors. Certainly G.B. Shaw and

the Fabians felt that social change could be effected through reform and political pressure rather than through a revolution.*

The turn-of-the-century, then, represented the period in which many of the conflicting intellectual and cultural tendencies discussed in this chapter reached their height. The rational optimism of Hegel's evolutionary view of history was still powerful, and this optimism was further bolstered by the vitalist current of thought that used the research of Darwin and the philosophy of Spencer to suggest that man's potential for evolution was limitless. Utopian literature consequently flourished.

At the same time, Darwin's research, evaluated from a scientific perspective, left little doubt that evolution, though it ultimately resulted in better adapted, higher forms of life, was accidental and haphazard, a process that in no way accounted for the intervention or even the presence of a god or a divine being. Einstein's theory of relativity in 1905 was further proof that "the old faith that rational inquiry could eventually solve all problems had been displaced by an awareness that absolute knowledge is unattainable and that all scientific information is relative to the human observer" (Cox x). The validity of science itself was being used to prove human limits and human frailty. Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* was published in 1900, and again scientific research had been used to disprove the validity of utopian thinking, and to remind society that all evidence of evolutionary progress notwithstanding, the human psyche could still be deciphered and understood only in a very incomplete form. Freud showed that the irrational – and hence in large measure the unknown – part of the mind was much more powerful that the rational part:

> Psychoanalytic teaching shifted the balance of power in the human psyche . . . and thus undermined the orthodox belief of western man, established since Greek times, in the priority of reason. The primitive mind, according to Freud, is imperishable, and not only openly dominates in dreams and disease, but subtly interpenetrates and distorts apparently rational processes. In the last resort it has the mastery. (Hearnshaw 236)†

Freud's research also points to a third current of thought prevalent

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* When Shaw visited the Soviet Union in 1931, however, he praised Stalin for the equality that he felt was an important part of the Soviet system. The Soviet visit also seemed to change his viewpoint regarding the process of social change. As Robert Whitman states: "After his visit to the Soviet Union in 1931 he and the Webbs reluctantly abandoned the principle of 'the inevitability of gradualness,' and acknowledged that violent revolution might under certain circumstances be better than no revolution at all, and that it was becoming increasingly evident that the available options were shrinking rather than expanding" (53).

† Eric Bentley points out that Thomas Carlyle, in his elevation of the intuitive, irrational elements of heroism and hero-worship, is a nineteenth-century precursor of Freud's, that Carlyle "believed in the primacy of the 'unconscious,' a term which he must be among the first to use" (*Century* 76).

during this period. This consisted of a rebellion or protest against science and against rationalism, a resurgence of romanticism that grew out of opposition to the scientific age. Where Freud's analysis of the unconscious was objective and scientific, the perspective of the neo-romanticists was to affirm life and experience in an intuitive manner, as a "Life Force":

> The romantic rebellion . . . with its distrust of mechanistic systems . . . coincided at the *fin de siècle* with the rapidly advancing scientific demolition of the Newtonian universe. Through the discoveries of Planck, Einstein, and Freud, rational man undermined his own world. Science seemed thus to confirm important tendencies in philosophy and art. Henri Bergson developed his idea of "creative evolution," which rejected the notion of "objective" knowledge: the only reality is the *élan vital,* the life force. (Eksteins 31)

The new romanticism was characterized by an emphasis on intuition and the primitive as representative of the unconscious mind, a rejection of modern civilization and rational thought, and by the notion of life as relative to a changing world rather than as "fixed." In philosophy William James argued that "an idea has meaning only in relation to its consequences in the world of feeling and action" (Cox xi). Cox and Dyson further identify, in an ironic and humorous anecdote of how Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890) disproved the workings of a divine God, that Frazer's "contradictions typify the age. With his touching faith in reason and good sense he proved to the twentieth century how powerful are the irrational and savage elements in human civilization" (xi). These ironic contradictions typify the intellectual background against which the dramatists who make up this study developed their theories and ideas.

The intellectual contradictions dominating nineteenth-century thought were already amply reflected in the drama of the nineteenth century, from the early *Sturm und Drang* plays to the late nineteenth-century eruption of realistic, naturalistic and expressionistic drama represented by such talents as Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Hauptmann, Wedekind and Karl Kraus.

Werner Friederich, in his *History of German Literature*, enumerates the typical *Sturm und Drang* themes as comprising "Hatred between brothers, the supreme proof of the corruption of modern civilization, . . . Social inequality and moral corruption, . . . Wronged and forsaken women, . . . Superhuman aspiration and presumptuous self-confidence, . . . Rebellion against moral restrictions, . . . [and] Struggle against political injustice and tyranny" (88). These themes predominate in such plays as J.M.R. Lenz's *Der Hofmeister* (1774) and *Die Soldaten* (1776), Schiller's *Die Räuber* (1781) and *Kabale und Liebe* (1783), and Goethe's *Egmont* (1787) and *Faust* (1808).

Lenz's plays focus on specific aspects of alienation, anticipating the pessimism, sense of isolation of the individual, and the ultimate resignation of the protagonist to a process of victimization over which he has no control.

Max Spalter has pointed out how all Lenz's characters appear to behave like marionettes, moving and talking jerkily as if under compulsions other than their own, and so they are, for they are manipulated by social and economic forces as well as by their own instincts. In *Der Hofmeister*, Wenzeslaus "communicates his mental state by the very rhythms of his speech and by linguistic idiosyncrasies. Wenzeslaus . . . has a need to repeat himself . . . he has so much to say at times that he falters over a single word" (Spalter 14). Lenz deals with themes and ideas that are far in advance of his period, with Läuffer of *Der Hofmeister* and Marie Wesener of *Die Soldaten* both driven by their sexual instincts and their desire to improve their social standing within a society that is built upon a strict social hierarchy. The bizarre ending of *Der Hofmeister*, with Läuffer castrating himself to end the domination of his sexual instinct, and then marrying for "love" as opposed to lust, represents a caustic assault on the part of the author on the pseudo-idealistic values espoused by the upper and middle classes. In *Die Soldaten,* Lenz satirically proposes the formation of a group of acquiescent courtesans to travel with the army and fulfil the soldiers' sexual needs, as a presumed reform measure to prevent their exploitation of women in the towns and populations through which the army passes. Lenz's shocking themes and the open, episodic form of his dramaturgy, which completely spurns any association with the Aristotelian unities, emphasized the exploitive nature of human existence and the hapless plight of the individual within his society. Spalter concludes that

> Lenz begins in German drama a tradition in which the animality of man is not softened by optimism or idealism, a tradition which faces squarely up to stark facts without sentimental coatings. This tradition will emphasize again and again that European society is sick to the core, confirming forcefully the judgment of a character in *The New Menoza* that Europeans leaving their continent should be quarantined, so morally diseased is their nature. (34)

Goethe's *Faust* Part 1 (1808), is a more ambivalent portrayal of injustice and victimization, but within a much more unified world view. Nevertheless, this play, too, portrays a cynicism and nausea for humanity, especially in the character of Mephistopheles, but also apparent in Faust's egotistical view of his superiority to others. While *Faust I* (1808) and *Faust II* (1832) are each complete dramas in their own right, the first part is clearly indicative of Goethe's earlier, pre-1800, perspective in which he was still reacting against the insipid German neo-classicism in a typically *Sturm und Drang* manner, not yet able to fully integrate the chaos within and around himself into a satisfactory form of aesthetic unity and coherence. The second part, on the other hand, exemplifies the balance, as well as the aesthetic and moral unity that may be attributed to the increasing influence of classical art and culture on his work, an influence that was originally transported to German culture

through Wieland's interest in ancient Greece, and through Winckelmann's research in Rome, and the subsequent publication of his *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke* (1754) and *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (1764).* Through his studies of classical Greece he was able to forge in *Faust II* a drama in which, as Stephen Spender remarks, "the objective world in which the past, religion and art, and the science that can transform nature are greater than subjective preoccupations" (x). Pater likewise sees in Goethe the ultimate "union of the Romantic spirit, its adventure, its variety, its deep subjectivity, with Hellenism, its transparency, its rationality, its desire of beauty – that marriage of Faust and Helena, of which the art of the nineteenth century is the child" (152). Georg Lukács claims Goethe as an antecedent of historical materialism, remarking that Goethe's "Abneigung . . . gegen die 'rationalistische' Philosophie seiner Zeit . . . beruht eben darauf, daß er, wenn auch lange Zeit bloß instinktiv, die dialektischen Kategorien in der Entwicklung der Lebewesen, der historischen Auffassung der Natur suchte" (*Zerstörung* 112).† Spengler likewise claims Goethe as a precursor of his own organic view of history, declaring that Goethe possessed "dem nicht voreingenommenen Blick":

> Was er die *lebendige Natur* genannt hat, ist genau das, was hier Weltgeschichte im weitesten Umfange, *Welt als Geschichte* genannt wird. . . . Nachfühlen, Anschauen, Vergleichen, die unmittelbare innere Gewißheit, die exakte sinnliche Phantasie – das waren seine Mittel, den Geheimnissen der bewegten Erscheinung nahe zu kommen. *Und das sind die Mittel der Geschichtsforschung überhaupt.* Es gibt keine andern. Dieser *göttliche* Blick ließ ihn am Abend der Schlacht von Valmy am Lagerfeuer jenes Wort aussprechen: „Von hier und heute geht eine neue Epoche der Weltgeschichte aus, und ihr könnt sagen, ihr seid dabei gewesen." Kein Heerführer, kein Diplomat, von Philosophen zu schweigen, hat Geschichte so unmittelbar werden gefühlt. (35)‡

Faust I encapsulates the *Sturm und Drang* theme of the superhuman

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* Walter Pater, in *The Renaissance*, records how a meeting between Winckelmann and the nineteen year old Goethe, much anticipated by the latter, was abruptly forestalled by Winckelmann's murder in Vienna in 1768, while he was on his way to Leipzig to meet Goethe (*The Renaissance* 133-4).

† "distaste for the 'rationalist' philosophy of his age . . . stemmed from the fact that Goethe was seeking – albeit, for many years, merely instinctively – the dialectical categories in the development of living beings and the historical view of nature" (*Destruction* 126).

‡ "an eye perfectly free from prepossessions. . . . That which Goethe called *Living Nature* is exactly that which we are calling here world-history, *world-as-history*. . . . Sympathy, observation, comparison, immediate and inward certainty, intellectual *flair* – these were the means whereby he was enabled to approach the secrets of the phenomenal world in motion. *Now these are the means of historical research* – precisely these and no others. It was this *godlike* insight that prompted him to say at the bivouac fire on the evening of the Battle of Valmy: 'Here and now begins a new epoch of world history, and you, gentlemen, can say that you 'were there.' ' No general, no diplomat, let alone philosophers, ever so directly felt history 'becoming' " (25).

quest for knowledge and power – with the egotism of the protagonist ultimately leading to his downfall – and the theme of the innocent maiden who is seduced and then deserted. The psychological landscape portrayed through the play is one of isolation and alienation. Faust is isolated through his lofty and consuming obsession to experience the ultimate in sensation and in knowledge. His elevated, passionate dialogue is, however, repeatedly undercut by the Devil's cynicism and his apparent misreading of Faust's desire for knowledge with the desire for crass wealth and vulgar sexuality:

> Euch ist kein Maß und Ziel gesetzt.
> Beliebt's Euch, überall zu naschen,
> Im Fliehen etwas zu erhaschen,
> Bekomm' Euch wohl, was Euch ergetzt.
> Nur greift mir zu and seid nicht blöde! (58)*

Mephistopheles' cynical view of life, and the seedy drinking establishments and people to whom he exposes Faust upon the completion of their pact, serve to distance the audience from identifying with Faust's elevated self-opinion, and to focus thought, instead, on the lack of idealism that characterizes much of human nature. While Faust expresses his thirst for knowledge and power in elevated and humanistic language – "Mit meinem Geist das Höchst' und Tiefste greifen, / Ihr Wohl und Weh auf meinen Busen häufen, / Und so mein eigen Selbst zu ihrem Selbst erweitern, / Und, wie sie selbst, am End' auch ich zerscheitern" (59),† – the Devil exposes this supposedly charitable intent by offering to teach Faust "Großmut und Arglist zu verbinden, / Und Euch, mit warmen Jugendtrieben, / Nach einem Plane zu verlieben" (59).‡

Goethe also illuminates, in the character of Margareta, the fragile boundary between innocence and madness. Innocence has no basis in experience, and is consequently restricted, in Schiller's words, by its very perfection. When Margareta's unified but limited moral perspective is destroyed, she has no experiential reality to resort to, and stands, rather, before an abyss within which all moral distinctions are annihilated, and all deeds perceived as having an equally amoral status because she can no longer comprehend their significance. Insanity is the inevitable result.

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* "Wealth shall be yours, beyond all fear or favour,
Be pleased to take your pleasures on the wing,
Voluptuous beauty taste in everything,
And may you flourish on the joys you savour.
Fall to, I say; but plunge, and don't be coy" (89).

† "I'll sound the heights and depths that men can know, / Their very souls shall be with mine entwined, / I'll load my bosom with their weal and woe, / And share with them the shipwreck of mankind" (90).

‡ "To blend deceit with magnanimity, / And with the ardour of a passionate man / To fall in love, – according to a plan" (90).

But the fragility of Margareta's personality and her tragic fate are not the only factors that give this play its sense of being incomplete, of lacking the fully cohesive moral unity of classical tragedy. Margareta's ultimate decision to allow herself to be executed, rather than running away with Faust, is clouded in the obscurity of her mental condition, and does not, because of this, give the play a true sense of a restored order. Goethe emphasizes the imbalance even further by allowing the innocent idealist to become the victim, whereas the exploiter of her innocence, the hero with the tragic flaw, is allowed to escape unscathed by social calumny, to deal with his own conscience beyond the final scene of the play.

I refer again to Hayden White's identification of the modes of historical discourse as the tragic, the comic, the romantic, and the ironical. While *Faust I* is clearly a tragedy, the extensive use of the ironical mode in Goethe's presentation of the Devil, Mephistopheles, adds a completely new dimension to the play, for irony, satire, and cynicism are indicative of disturbing and unresolved elements that function to negate classical harmony. The Devil's consistently cynical personality could really not be drawn except through the ironical mode, and in the opposition of the Devil's cyncism to Margareta's idealism, Goethe presents us with a dialectic of idealism and cynicism, with Faust himself as the mediating agent, the catalyst who, in his drive for self-fulfilment, is callous enough to sacrifice the innocent victim for his own ends, but also sufficiently idealistic to experience the enormity of the injustice he has caused through his hypocrisy, in initially misrepresenting himself to Margareta. He never does acknowledge to her the role that the Devil played in his relationship with her. Goethe's dramatization of Margareta's excrutiating descent into madness and murder is as concise and psychologically "real" as is Shakespeare's depiction of Ophelia's madness in *Hamlet*.

Goethe's ultimate world view was one that valued the principle of unification, expressing a basic conviction that "All things weave themselves into a whole" (Spender viii); this view was also opposed to the Newtonian scientific method of "pure inquiry," for Goethe felt that "it was the duty of science to search for metaphors in nature illustrating the underlying unity in everything" (Spender viii). In a letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt on March 17, 1832, Goethe explained the aesthetic theory underlying his artistic conception, especially relating to the creation of *Faust II*, which reflects also his insight into the relationship of the conscious and unconscious self, as well as a Lamarckian reflection on the ability of man to improve himself over a period of time:

> Every action, and so every talent, needs some inborn faculty which acts naturally, and unconsciously carries with it the necessary aptitude. . . . The earlier man becomes aware that there exists some craft, some art, that can help him toward a controlled heightening of his natural abilities, the happier

> he is. . . . The best genius is that which absorbs everything within itself, knows how to appropriate everything, without this in the least impairing its fundamental dispositions, called its character, but rather enhancing and furthering them throughout as much as possible.
>
> Here begin the manifold relations between the conscious and the unconscious. Take for instance a talented musician, composing an important score; consciousness and unconsciousness will be like warp and weft, a simile I am fond of using.
>
> Through practice, teaching reflection, success, failure, furtherance and resistance, and again and again reflection, man's organs unconsciously and in a free activity link what he acquires with his innate gifts, so that a unity results which leaves the world amazed. (Spender 40)

In England the publication of Lord Byron's drama of the first human murderer, *Cain* (1821), like Goethe's *Faust* a drama about the quest for knowledge and the purpose of human existence, evoked a storm of outrage and denunciation from clergymen and orthodox critics. Shelley, however, called it "apocalyptic; it is a revelation not before communicated to man" (Nichols xlvii), and Sir Walter Scott, to whom it was dedicated, hailed it as a "grand and tremendous drama. . . . [Byron] has certainly matched Milton on his own ground" (Nichols xlvii).

In the Preface to the play, Byron already indicates his disaffection with history as a coherent, progressive force through his iteration that "the author has partly adapted in this poem the notion of Cuvier, that the world has been destroyed several times before the creation of man" (255). Byron is consequently one of the first writers to use the evolutionary metaphor to portray history as random and regressive rather than as a symbol of progress, for the play strongly challenges the concept of a unified world view, a coherent perception of history, and the nature of idealism itself. Byron shows man to be a victim of forces greater than himself, alienated within a world that is disjointed for no apparent reason.

At the beginning of the play, Cain is disgruntled because of the meanness of his situation, which is, in fact, the human condition. Displaced from the Garden of Eden, he is separated not only from perfection, but also from justice, since to suffer a fate which he had no hand in deciding seems to make existence meaningless. Above all, he is obsessed, like Goethe's Faust,* with the need to *know*, to understand *why* man's fate is to live in penury and hardship, with the gates of Eden clearly visible but unscalable. The play

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* Goethe and Byron had great respect for each other's work, with Byron dedicating *Sardanapalus*, originally published in the same volume with *Cain*, to "the illustrious Goethe," and Goethe in turn translating parts of Byron's *Don Juan* into German. Friederich notes that "Between Goethe and Lord Byron there existed a bond of personal friendship and mutual admiration – for Byron, like Faust's Euphorion, to Goethe seemed best to represent the happy synthesis of Germanic Romanticism and Greek Classicism, of modern European progress and ancient Mediterranean culture" (118).

is dominated by Cain's desire for knowledge and understanding:

> The snake spoke *truth*; it *was* the tree of knowledge;
> It *was* the tree of life: knowledge is good
> And life is good; and how can both be evil? (256)

He later concludes that even the promise that the tree was one of knowledge was false, that expulsion from paradise was not accompanied by knowledge:

> It was a lying tree – for we *know* nothing.
> At least it *promised knowledge* at the *price*
> Of death – but *knowledge* still: but what *knows* man? (264)

The play is exceedingly bleak in its portrayal of human alienation, and its examination of the values endorsed by tradition and by Christianity. Cain, grower of fruits and vegetables, sees his offering scorned by God while his brother Abel, shedding blood, has his offering accepted. Cain's prayer invoking God's blessing on his offering denounces these inverted values:

> If thou lov'st blood, the shepherd's shrine, which smokes
> On my right hand, hath shed it for thy service
> In the first of his flock, whose limbs now reek
> In sanguinary incense to thy skies;
> Or if the sweet and blooming fruits of earth,
> And milder seasons, which the unstain'd turf
> I spread them on now offers in the face
> Of the broad sun which ripen'd them, may seem
> Good to thee, inasmuch as they have not
> Suffer'ed in limb or life, and rather form
> A sample of thy works, than supplication
> To look on ours! If a shrine without victim,
> And altar without gore, may win thy favor,
> Look on it! (269)

Ironically, the brother who will not shed blood for an offering, sheds the blood of his brother. Byron suggests, through this play, that if the hero's tragic flaw is his quest for knowledge and understanding, then his banishment from the rest of humanity is a reflection of the insufficiency of human existence rather than of ultimate justice and a restored equilibrium. The entire play is a denial of the philosophical idealism that Schiller and Hegel espoused, for here knowledge does not lead to a more coherent world, and the concept of the "naive" appreciation of nature has its outcome in ignorance. As Lucifer informs Cain,

> the rest
> Of your poor attributes is such as suits
> Reptiles engender'd out of the subsiding
> Slime of a mighty universe, crush'd into
> A scarcely-yet shaped planet, peopled with
> Things whose enjoyment was to be in blindness–
> A Paradise of Ignorance, from which
> Knowledge was barr'd as poison. (263)

Cain is existential in its depiction of existence as meaningless and unprogressive; and, in its portrayal of the human being as a victim of ignorance and a defunct mythology, it has close associations with the drama of Lenz, Grabbe and Büchner.

Max Spalter places both Christian Dietrich Grabbe (1801-36) and Georg Büchner (1813-37) into the tradition of writers of episodic, non-Aristotelian, socially conscious dramatists which he sees stretching from Lenz to Brecht. In *Napoleon oder die Hundert Tage* (1831) Grabbe shows a mastery of crowd scenes and episodic battle scenes that was strongly influenced by Shakespeare's historical drama.* Grabbe allows comments from diverse individuals in the first packed scene of *Napoleon* to set the themes and the mood of the play, which like Lenz's plays and Byron's *Cain* annihilate the concept of history as progressive. Grabbe's opening scene shows

> Napoleon, war and adventure, all contrasted with the unending rhythm of life, symbolized by the return of spring, and with the unending monotony of an "eternal recurrence." Life's rhythms and man's boredom are interrupted only by the repeated resurgence of the revolution, which is symbolic of both the capriciousness and the demonic in man. (Cowen 119)

In Act II,i, the old Gardener reminds his niece of the dramatic changes that have occurred within one year, from 1814 to 1815, prompting her to compare the succession of rulers to the flowering of annuals: "So – 1814 und 1815, das ist der Unterschied. – Es geht wohl mit den Herrschern wie mit den Blumen – jedes Jahr neue" (222).†

Roy Cowen, comparing Grabbe's Napoleon to Schiller's Wallenstein, remarks that "Schiller's characters are set off against history; but Grabbe's are in its midst" (126), indicative of Schiller's classical, closed form of the drama where the hero's death restores and reinforces the coherence of his universe. Grabbe, on the other hand, denies that there is order in the universe, dramatically portraying, through Napoleon's last major speech after his defeat at Waterloo, the author's own vision of history as relentless and cataclysmic on the one hand, and boringly recurrent on the other:

> Da stürzen die feindlichen Truppen siegjubelnd heran, wähnen die Tyrannei vertrieben, den ewigen Frieden erobert, die goldne Zeit rückgeführt zu haben – Die Armen! Statt eines großen Tyrannen, wie sie mich zu nennen belieben, werden sie bald lauter kleine besitzen – statt ihnen ewigen Frieden zu geben, wird man sie in einen ewigen Geistesschlaf einzulullen versuchen – statt der goldnen Zeit wird eine sehr irdene, zerbröckliche kommen, voll Halbheit,

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* Spalter, least, insists that Grabbe was "a German dramatist whose work was obviously influenced by Shakespeare" (39), despite his writing of an anti-Shakespeare criticism in 1827 which condemned Shakespeare's growing reputation in Germany as "Shakespeare Madness."

† "So, 1814 to 1815, that's the difference. Rulers are like flowers – new ones every year."

albernen Lugs und Tandes – von gewaltigen Schlachttaten und Heroen wird man freilich nichts hören, desto mehr aber von diplomatischen Assembleen, Konvenienzbesuchen hoher Häupter, von Komödianten, Geigenspielern und Opernhuren – – bis der Weltgeist ersteht, an die Schleusen rührt, hinter denen die Wogen der Revolution and meines Kaisertumes lauern, und sie von ihnen aufbrechen läßt, daß die Lücke gefüllt werde, welche nach meinem Austritt zurückbleibt. (326)

The ending of *Napoleon* does not establish a feeling of stability or of an order restored. Rather, it reinforces the instability of the opening scenes with the foreshadowing, in Napoleon's chilling reference to the "World Spirit," of further wars and bloodletting that points to Nietzsche's "crisis" philosophy much more convincingly than it does to Hegel's conception of war as a revitalizing process. Grabbe in fact addresses in this and other plays many of the issues that would later become part of Nietzsche's philosophy, including the prophecy that the twentieth century would be dominated by crises. Grabbe portrays Jouve as especially vicious, as he kills a tailor and then incites the crowd: "Hacket dem verräterischen Schneider die Finger ab und steckt sie in den Mund also Zigarren der Nation!" (248). As Max Spalter notes, "Grabbe's point is that history is literally a brutal farce; that beneath the trappings of progress it is always the same old world; that man is at the mercy of demonic forces; . . . that pure instinct is eternally waiting to explode into primitive behavior; that the modern age will have to cope with the dynamics of mass action; and, most prophetically, that the modern age will be characterized by the interplay of so many forces as to make life nightmarishly chaotic" (57-8).

If Grabbe portrays man as the victim of history, Büchner does so even more forcefully, for Büchner was not as intrigued with the elements of heroism and hero-worship that made Grabbe's position with respect to his historical protagonists so ambivalent. In *Danton's Tod* Büchner, too, deals with a world historical figure, but Danton in this play is an anti-hero; the only heroic action he performs is to die well. Michael Patterson says of *Danton's Tod* that watching or reading it "is like seeing the final moments of resignation of a classical five-act tragedy expanded to fill the whole performance without the action that incurs guilt and without *anagnorisis,* the moment of recognition that brings quiescence. For Danton there is nothing but nihilism: 'The world is chaos. It will give birth to a god called 'Nothingness' ' [IV, 5]" (4).

Danton's Tod portrays a world of alienation, suffering and ultimately resignation, a world in which, as in much of Brecht's drama, conventional patterns of behavior are abruptly shattered. It contains coarse sensualism and infinite tenderness, both attempts to combat human isolation. In the first scene Danton tells his wife, Julie: "Wir wissen wenig voneinander. Wir sind Dickhäuter, wir strecken die Hände nacheinander aus, aber es ist

vergebliche Mühe, wir reiben nur das grobe Leder aneinder ab, – wir sind sehr einsam" (6).* If the play is existential in its portrayal of human isolation, however, it also celebrates vital sexuality, opposing the easy promiscuity of Danton and his friends to Robespierre's rigid puritanism:

> LACROIX: Und außerdem, Danton, sind wir lasterhaft, wie Robespierre sagt, d.h. wir genießen; und das Volk is tugendhaft, d.h. es genießt nicht, weil ihm die Arbeit die Genußorgane stumpf macht. . . .
> DANTON: Es haßt die Genießenden wie ein Eunuch die Männer. (19-20).†

The sexuality does not, however, deny love and tenderness. Danton's wife kills herself to join him in death,‡ and Camille's wife, Lucille, goes mad and is led away by a "Citizen's watch" at the end of the play, chanting "Es lebe der König" (63) or "Long live the King!" an ironic reference to the failure of the Revolution.

The play is compelling in its depiction of social injustice and inequality on the one hand, and on the other, showing man as merely a victim of forces greater than himself, with no power to determine his own fate. The second scene illustrates clearly Büchner's own revolutionary alliance with the fate of the common people, and his recognition that their plight is poverty rather than spiritual deprivation. When the "citizens" break up the fight between Simon and his wife, a fight initiated by the disclosure that their daughter is supporting them through prostitution, the citizens clearly point to the true cause of exploitation: "Ja, ein Messer, aber nicht für die arme Hure! Was tat sie? Nichts! Ihr Hunger hurt und bettelt. Ein Messer für die Leute, die das Fleisch unserer Weiber und Töchter kaufen. Weh über die, so mit den Töchtern des Volkes huren! Ihr habt Kollern im Leib, und sie haben Magendrücken" (9-10).+

Along with this concern for the plight of the common people, however, there exists the conviction that all effort is futile, that history, as in Grabbe's plays, is a force to which man can only acquiesce. Danton's guilt because of his hand in the massacre of over a thousand people in September, 1792, functions to paralize him, to make him incapable of forestalling Robespierre

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* "We know very little about each other. We are lumbering, thick-skinned animals, we reach out our hands to touch but the strain is pointless, we blunder about rubbing our coarse skins up against each other. We are very much alone" (9).

† "LACROIX: And Danton, we are what Robespierre says we are, we're true libertines, we enjoy life; but the people are virtuous, they don't enjoy life at all, work dulls them, all their organs of pleasure are clogged-up with dullness. . . .
DANTON: They hate pleasure seekers like a eunuch hates men" (27).

‡ This was a departure from Büchner's sources, for the real Danton's wife remarried and outlived him by many years.

\+ "Yes, a knife. But not for the whore, what's she done? Nothing. It's her hunger that whores and begs. A knife for them who buy the flesh of our wives and children. A knife for the rich who whore with the daughters of the people! Your bellies cling to your spines with hunger, theirs groan and bulge" (14).

in his plot to execute Danton and his associates. His dream, in which he first strides the globe, then is reminded of his deed, is Nietzschean in its recognition of the abyss and the demonic forces that victimize man:

> Unter mir keuchte die Erdkugel in ihrem Schwung; ich hatte sie wie ein wildes Roß gepackt, mit riesigen Gliedern wühlt ich in ihren Mähnen und preßt ihre Rippen, das Haupt abwärts gewandt, die Haare flatternd über dem Abgrund; so ward ich geschleift. Da schrie ich in der Angst, und ich erwachte. Ich trat ans Fenster – und da hört ich's, Julie.
> Was das Wort nur will? Warum gerade das? Was hab ich damit zu schaffen? Was streckt es nach mir die blutigen Hände? (33)*

If Danton acknowledges his guilt, however, he also recognizes that he is the victim of forces greater than himself, that choice and freedom are so restricted that resignation is the only possible response: "Puppen sind wir, von unbekannten Gewalten am Draht gezogen; nichts, nichts wir selbst! die Schwerter, mit denen Geister kämpfen – man sieht nur die Hände nicht, wie im Märchen" (33).†

Possibly the most harsh image of hostile forces crushing the potential for man to communicate with others and share his isolation is that of the executioner pushing Danton and Hérault apart as they try to embrace before their death. In Danton's last words – to the executioner – Büchner suggests, as he does throughout *Danton's Tod* and *Woyzeck*, that life is really crueller than death: "Willst du grausamer sein als der Tod? Kannst du verhindern, daß unsere Köpfe sich auf dem Boden des Korbes küssen?" (62).‡

There existed, then, a considerable body of what we might call the drama of alienation, or drama of crisis, before the philosopher of crisis, Nietzsche, was even born, in 1844. Nor is the summary presented here complete, for only the most represenative works have been referenced. All of Grabbe's later drama is permeated with the savagery and demonic power of an uncontrollable sense of history. Büchner's *Woyzeck* points to both naturalism and expressionism in its depiction of the individual as victim. Hebbel's plays, while adhering much closer to the Aristotelian unities than do those of Lenz, Grabbe or Büchner, nevertheless show a world out of joint, and end in an unresolved manner. In *Judith* (1840) the heroine gives in to her own sexuality, and to her fascination for the primitive and amoral strength

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* "The earth's globe was panting as it span, in space. My limbs were gigantic. I pounced on the globe and rode it bareback like a runaway horse. I gripped its flanks with my legs, I clutched its mane, my hair streamed above the abyss. I shouted in terror: and woke. Then I got up, went to the window and heard that word, Julie. Why that word? What does that word want of me, why does it reach out its bloody hands?" (44).

† "We are puppets of unknown forces. We ourselves are nothing, nothing! We are the swords with which invisible spirits fight – and we can't even see their hands" (44).

‡ "Will you be crueller than death? Will you stop our heads kissing in the basket?" (79).

of Holofernes, but then kills him for debasing her as a woman. Her moral dilemma – and its resolution – is more complex than that of most classical tragedy. In *Herodes und Mariamne* (1848) the play ends with no self-recognition, on Herod's part, of his failure as a man and a husband. The play points, instead, to further senseless bloodletting in Herod's order to kill all the male children under two years old in Bethlehem. The lack of resolution, and the portrayal of changing historical and cultural patterns in these plays suggests the unsettled nature of modernity more than the unity of the ancients.

During the Nietzsche and post-Nietzsche period, all the trends and influences discussed in this chapter were evident in plays by such modern dramatists as Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Hauptmann, Wedekind, and Kraus. This was a period in which the drama found a new life, and part of the reason for the new vitality lay in the refocussing of the concepts of history as progress and history as regress that had its origins in the historicisms of the nineteenth century. Perhaps the major transitional figure from the concepts of the nineteenth century to the view of history as crisis in the twentieth century, was George Bernard Shaw.

Chapter 2

History as Creative Evolution: The World of Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*

George Bernard Shaw's long life (1856-1950), and the span of his creative writing period, combined with the prolific number of plays he wrote, as well as the copious amount of commentary he produced, make him an especially apt subject for a study of how nineteenth century thought affected artists of the twentieth century. Like Ibsen's, Shaw's ideas represent a critical bridge from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, not only because he engaged broad currents of thought that represent the transition so completely, but also, and more importantly, because his own ideas, especially in *Man and Superman* and its attendent documents, reflect so accurately the critical transition from the optimism of the nineteenth to the pessimism of the twentieth century. Because of Shaw's pivotal significance in the transition from nineteenth- to twentieth-century thought, both the play and the documents that come with it, the "Epistle Dedicatory" and the "Revolutionist's Handbook," will be examined in some detail, the intent being to analyze Shaw's ideas in relation to their background as well as their implications for the future.

Shaw, more than the other artists considered in this study, seems caught between Hegel's view of evolutionary progress and Nietzsche's more pessimistic vision of history as "eternal recurrence," which implies that in the end life may be meaningless because there exists no overall "design" to human evolution, and no sense of progress.* Nietzsche does alleviate this nihilism through his theory of the "occasional" Superman, the exceptional individual who, while super human in his own right, does not actually lead to the elevation or progression of the race or species. While Shaw was caught between these extremes of optimism and pessimism, he took some refuge in

* Eric Bentley disagrees with this reading of Nietzsche, insisting that "the doctrine of progress, which [Nietzsche] claims to despise, is really true on an infinitely bigger scale than the previous apostles of progress had ever dreamed, since man is to progress to superman" (*Century* 120). Walter Kaufmann's reading of Nietzsche, however, does not see Nietzsche pointing to the elevation of the race in general, but only of a few specimens, who through their "will to power," excel and tower over the masses.

the early evolutionary perspective of Jean Lamarck who in 1809 declared that even in the animal world, the concept of volition, or the *will* to progress, to evolve in a specific, *chosen*, direction, was not only possible, but was in fact the determining motivation behind the progressing development of different species, and the ultimate development of the human race (Henkin 25). Lamarck's theory of the hereditary improvement of existence through willed, acquired changes found its place, in Shaw's view of "Creative Evolution," as the human *will* that can help create a race of Supermen, and thus propel genuine human development; the influence of Nietzsche, however, remains just as strong in Shaw's insistence that, unless this will is exerted strongly and genuinely enough, all seeming progress in the past, or the possibility of future progress, is nothing more than illusion, an *ewige Wiederkehr* or "eternal recurrence." Nietzsche's metaphor in *Zarathustra*, that "Der Mensch ist ein Seil, geknüpft zwischen Tier und Übermensch – ein Seil über einem Abgrunde" (*Werke* I 551),* also suits Shaw's view of evolutionary development. The progression of humanity is possible if we concentrate on it and want it badly and boldly enough, but if we do not, we fall into the abyss of atavism or human annihilation.

At the time that Shaw was writing *Man and Superman*, he was also reading Hegel (second hand, via Ernest Belfort Bax's scholarship), as well as the works of Nietzsche in translation. It is not presumptuous, therefore, to conclude that Shaw's depiction of the "Life Force" derives largely from Hegel's view of evolutionary progress, while his fear that the progress could be an illusion, an abyss of despair, comes from Nietzsche's more pessimistic vision. Shaw was more a collage artist than an originator of new ideas or theories, and his genius is perhaps more evident in the arranging, the manipulating, of the various parts, the ideas and theories of others, than in developing the original concepts. A number of critics have illustrated Shaw's eclectic historical and philosophical background through reference to the Max Beerbohm cartoon titled "Life-Force, Woman-Set-Free, Superman, etc.," depicting Shaw and Georg Brandes, with Brandes characterizing Shaw's intellectual background by his clothing: "Coat, Mr. Schopenhauer's, waistcoat, Mr. Ibsen's, Mr. Nietzsche's trousers...." Shaw's answer to Brandes is "but look at the patches."† There is little doubt that Shaw's reading in literature,

* "Man is a rope, fastened between animal and Superman – a rope over an abyss" (*Zarathustra* 43).

† Cartoon appears in *Max Beerbohm: A Survey* (London: William Heinemann, 1921), No. 44. Some critics who comment on the cartoon are Robert F. Whitman, *Shaw and the Play of Ideas* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1967), p. 28, and David S. Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914: The Growth of a Reputation* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 190. Dr. Oscar Levy presents a harsher view of Shaw's eclecticism, suggesting that Shaw could not really steal ideas from his continental contemporaries and predecessors because he could not understand their theories: "If Shaw had tried to burgle their houses ... he

history and philosophy is extremely varied, and that he has "lifted" and borrowed ideas and philosophies, has modified and amalgamated them to compile his own theory – or "religion" might be a more appropriate word – of creative evolution. Robert Whitman has documented, in *Shaw and the Play of Ideas,* Shaw's debt to such German philosophers as Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche; David Thatcher, in *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914,* has indicated the extent to which Shaw was involved in actually promoting English translations of Nietzsche's works in England; and J.L. Wisenthal, in *Shaw's Sense of History,* has indicated how well Shaw knew and was influenced by the writings of the two most prominent English Victorian historians, T.B. Macaulay and Thomas Carlyle. As Whitman notes, however, "hopping like a crow across Shaw's work, trying to pick up all the seeds of his thought, is apt to be a fruitless enterprise, serving to emphasize only their diversity, and not what is more interesting: the degree to which the disparate elements are molded into an intellectually ordered structure" (28).

Shaw's first four prose works, the novels, were written during the period from 1879 to 1884. His first play, *Widowers' Houses,* was produced in 1892, and he never really stopped writing until his death at age 94 in 1950. His first major criticism *cum* philosophical statement was *The Quintessence of Ibsenism,* published in 1891. This commentary on Ibsen's work, which is more informative for what it says about Shaw than about Ibsen, already contains Shaw's own views on history, on the Life Force and Creative Evolution in fairly complete form. The first definitive play to contain these ideas in cogent form was *Man and Superman* (1901-3), sub-titled *A Comedy and a Philosophy.*

Shaw was knowledgeable about evolutionary concepts at a very early age, and was familiar with an amazing body of literary and critical works. Blake and Shelley were influential in determining his early views of human existence and history, and in the preface to the 1911 edition of *Man and Superman* Shaw identified Shelley as a major contributor to what he called a "Bible of the religion of Creative Evolution" (Whitman 75), to which he felt his own *Man and Superman* was also a creditable addition. Shaw viewed Shelley as a rebel against social and moral conventions, an iconoclast who made his own decisions and forged his life and art apart from or even against, conventional values. Shelley was, in Shaw's words, a

> Republican, a Leveller, a Radical of the most extreme type. He was even an anarchist ... up to the point which he perceived Anarchism to be impracticable.... if he had been born half a century later he would have been advocating Social-Democracy with a view to its development into the most democratic form

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wouldn't have known what to steal from them, and would probably have run away with a worthless brass poker instead of their golden treasures" (Quoted in Thatcher 296).

of Communism practically attainable and maintainable.*

Shaw's greatest admiration, during his youth as during his adult period, had been for the rebels of society, those who have the strength to turn against social conventions and determine their own future. These are the individuals who, within his later schemata, become the "Supermen" who are instrumental in moving human existence toward a higher level of consciousness. The Superman in Shaw's conception of humanity is a rebel with a specific social purpose; through his rebellion against the common and the conventional, he brings about a new level of awareness. In this sense he is distinctively oriented to his social environment, even while he rebels against it, unlike another type of social rebel such as Brecht's Baal, who negates society.

If Shaw was a significant transitional figure from a philosophical perspective, he was no less so from a political and economic basis. He read a French translation of Marx's *Das Kapital* in the British Museum in 1883,† and the impact of this new theory of class struggle and social values was immediately and transparently evident in the next book he wrote, the last of his novels, *An Unsocial Socialist* (1884). Shaw's wholesale acceptance of Marx's view of history and of socialism would soon be modified considerably, in light of his continued reading and thinking, his work within the Fabian Society, his ongoing debates with friends and opponents of socialism, and through some of the new social contacts that he made.

In 1883 Shaw met H.M. Hyndman, who, together with William Morris, was setting the scene for the socialist movement in England. Shaw also met, within the newly-established Social Democratic Federation, the relatively well-known "unofficial philosopher" of this movement, Ernest Belfort Bax, who had spent some time in Germany studying German history and philosophy, primarily the philosophy of Kant and of Hegel. By the end of 1884 both Shaw and Bax were participating in socialist discussion groups and knew each other well.

Hegel's optimistic view of history had made a strong impression on Shaw, and became part of Shaw's definition of the "Life Force" in *Man and Superman*. During 1886 and 1887 Shaw had read, at Belfort Bax's request, the latter's *Handbook of the History of Philosophy*, which was being revised for a new edition, and which "probably represented Shaw's introduction, apart from some early reading in John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, to

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* "Shaming the Devil About Shelley," in *The Albermarle*, 2, no. 3 (Sept. 1892), p. 91.

† Shaw's biographer, Michael Holroyd, states: "Shaw's German not being up to deciphering an original text, he studied the first volume of *Das Kapital* in Deville's French translation" (130). Shaw in 1905 also denied having read Nietzsche's *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* in the original "for want of the necessary German" (*CPP* 1 303). David Thatcher, on the other hand, argues that Shaw "made the admission, which seems to have been universally overlooked, that he had read some Nietzsche in the original" (188, 188n).

the work of formal philosophy" (Whitman 153). Bax's book contained a major section on the German philosophers of Idealism, with the bulk of this section devoted to Hegel, and Shaw's reading of these chapters would certainly have supplemented the knowledge of Hegel he had accumulated from his previous reading of Marx.

Much of Hegel, and much of Bax's interpretation of Hegel, would have been congenial to Shaw. Where Shaw might have objected to Hegel's emphasis on the State as opposed to the individual because of its nationalistic bias, Bax's interpretation of this concept was that the well-being of the community must take priority over individual self fulfilment, and this only reinforced Shaw's belief that it was social conditions rather than the individual that must be changed, that "it is healthy social conditions which make good men" (Bax *Religion* x). Bax interpreted Hegel from a materialistic perspective, noting that "The ethic and religion of Socialism seek not the ideal society through the ideal individual, but conversely, the ideal individual through the ideal society"* (*Ethics* 19).

The philosophy that emerges in *Man and Superman* appears to contradict completely this emphasis on the need to change the material conditions of existence, for Shaw here addresses specifically the need for mankind to change, to evolve both spiritually and materialistically. One of Shaw's closest affinities with both Hegel and Nietzsche is that, like them, he cannot believe solely in materialism; therefore, despite his commitment to socialism, he viewed humanity within a metaphysical dimension as well. While the conceptions of "socialism" and "rugged individualism" are contrary in themselves, it is not unusual to find them embodied in the work of a single artist. Jack London, whose *Call of the Wild* topped the bestseller list the same year that *Man and Superman* was completed (1903), was another writer whose penurious childhood made him identify with the brotherhood of man, while his books, with the exception of a few that are based on socialist propaganda, exhibit the survival of the fittest philosophy allied with capitalism. For Shaw socialism formed the basis for his theory of creative evolution; Paul Hummert, in *Bernard Shaw's Marxian Romance*, quite correctly states that "Marxism forms a strong link between Shaw's indictment of conventional religion and the formulation of his own unconventional creed, Creative Evolution, for capitalism must be broken up before Shaw's church can thrive" (131). But Shaw's perception of humanity also exceeded the materialistic bounds of socialism; consequently, he saw the need to improve the man as well as the social conditions.

Shaw viewed the development of a race of supermen as a viable means of improving the moral, ethical and practical basis of society, and of promoting

* Bax, *The Ethics of Socialism*, 3rd ed. (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1893), p. 19.

greater thought and individuality *within* society; this concept is therefore an extension of his socialism into the area of metaphysics, a means whereby the community or state may continue on its evolutionary path toward pure thought. Despite Shaw's insistence on socialism as the only workable method for improving existence, he did not buy the doctrine whole, for he was not content to believe that the only reality was a *social* reality, that once the exploitation of one class by another had been eliminated and a classless society had been established, the human race had attained the height of its existence. Shaw half accepted and half rejected Marx's materialism; material conditions certainly had to improve, and exploitation had to be eliminated, but this was only one more step, for Shaw, in man's evolutionary march toward perfection, toward the Absolute.

Shaw was already familiar with the principles of evolution through his reading of Darwin and Spencer. Hegel's ideas, coming to Shaw via Bax, allowed Shaw to extend his own philosophy well beyond Darwinism and beyond Marxism toward a comprehensive, half materialistic but also half spiritual conception of evolution that encompassed all of existence, beginning with unconscious organisms, and reaching toward an ever-evolving, ever improving form of life that integrated man with his spiritual as well as his material and social nature. Shaw saw no point of culmination in the evolutionary process, no reason why there should have to be an end to it all: "There need be no end. There is no reason why the process should ever stop."* Shaw defines his Life Force along the lines of the Hegelian dialectical progression, which, contrary to Darwin's determinism, is motivated by reason, so strongly motivated that it becomes a passion:

> Reason ... is Infinite Power.... Reason is the *substance* of the Universe;... it is the Infinite Energy of the Universe.... While it is exclusively its own basis of existence, and absolute final aim, it is also the energizing power realising this aim; developing it not only in the phenomena of the natural, but also of the Spiritual Universe – the History of the World. (Bax, *Handbook* 331)

Hegel defines "reason" as the power that encompasses goal, impulse and energy, an "energizing power." Shaw's definition of the Life Force combines both passion and intellect; he identifies "Nature" as an elemental force that operates instinctively to promote life, but nature needs to be complemented by the rational, human will in order to control and maintain historical progress. Shaw, like Hegel, considered reason the "energizing power" that organizes the continuum from nature to humanity, to philosophy. Don Juan states, just before leaving hell for heaven, "I, my friend, am as much a part of Nature as my own finger is a part of me" (169);† reason helps to organize

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* *The Religious Speeches of Bernard Shaw*, pp. 35 and 39

† Unless otherwise noted, all references are to Shaw's *Man and Superman: A Comedy and Philosophy*. Harmondsworth; Penguin, 1971 [1903].

nature or intuition, the feeling, emotional side of humanity which Don Juan identifies with the feminine principle: "I had ... never consciously taken a single step until my reason had examined and approved it. I had come to believe that I was a purely rational creature:... I said, with the foolish philosopher, 'I think, therefore I am.' It was Woman who taught me to say 'I am; therefore I think' " (154). While Shaw sees no necessary point of culmination to human progress, he does not, at the time of writing *Man and Superman*, view this as a progression from feeling toward reason, but a continuing progression incorporating the unity of intuition and reason. Intuition is feminine, and Shaw's Superman cannot continue to progress without Superwoman at his side.

Shaw's knowledge of Nietzsche, and the influence that Nietzsche's work had on Shaw, is at the same time transparent and difficult to assess precisely. In the first place, the order of the translations of Nietzsche's works into English was determined largely by the popularity of Richard Wagner in the United Kingdom. The first of Nietzsche's works to reach the English public in their own language was *The Case of Wagner* in 1895; next came *The Twilight of the Idols, Nietzsche Contra Wagner, The Antichrist,* and *Thus Spake Zarathustra* in 1896; *The Poems* and *The Genealogy of Morals* appeared in 1899. The remaining English translations of Nietzsche's works appeared after the completion of Shaw's *Man and Superman*; these works would not, therefore, have been an influence on the first edition of Shaw's play, since Shaw's German was not adequate for reading the originals.*

Shaw viewed Nietzsche as another social rebel, an iconoclast who, as he says of Don Juan in his "Epistle Dedicatory" to Arthur Bingham Walkley in *Man and Superman*, "though gifted enough to be exceptionally capable of distinguishing between good and evil, [Don Juan] follows his own instincts without regard to the common, statute, or canon law; and therefore, whilst gaining the ardent sympathy of our rebellious instincts ... finds himself in mortal conflict with existing institutions, and defends himself by fraud and force as unscrupulously as a farmer defends his crops by the same means against vermin" (10).

Early critical references to Nietzsche in England were not positive, with Ashton Ellis' comment† summing up Nietzsche's early reception in England.

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* The Preface to *Major Barbara*, however, dated 1906, reveals Shaw's familiarity with Nietzsche's "slave morality" concept as expressed in *Beyond Good and Evil*, which was not published in English translation until 1907. Excerpts, however, would certainly have appeared earlier, allowing Shaw to comment in 1906: "even the less recklessly superficial critics seem to believe that the modern objection to Christianity as a pernicious slave-morality was first put forward by Nietzsche. It was familiar to me before I ever heard of Nietzsche" (*Collected Plays and Prefaces* 1 303).

† Ellis was the English editor of the Wagnerian Society's quarterly *The Meister*.

Ellis referred to Nietzsche as "that mental corrupter of seemingly the whole present output of Germans."* When the first two Nietzsche translations appeared in 1895/96, *The Case of Wagner* and *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, the English reception was explosive, and for the most part, virulent. Nietzsche had attacked Wagner's emphasis on nationalism and on a master race of Germans, as well as Wagner's well-known anti-Semitism and the other proto-fascist elements that Nietzsche has so often been accused of himself. English critics viewed this as a personal vituperative attack on Wagner, rather than as an attack on cultural and social values. They condemned Nietzsche out of defensiveness for Wagner, who was at the height of his popularity in England. Thus the part of Nietzsche's work that was of greatest immediate interest to English audiences because of Wagner's popularity, also became the greatest obstruction to the future appreciation of Nietzsche in England.

Shaw reviewed both of the first two volumes of Nietzsche's works to be translated into English, but Shaw had also been one of Wagner's strongest supporters and promoters in England; consequently, he too seemed reluctant to defend Nietzsche strongly at this early time.† Shaw's reviews show neither a great appreciation for, nor a very clear understanding of these works; he tended to be somewhat condescending about the German philosopher:

> Nietzsche had sat at the feet of Wagner, whose hero, Siegfried, was also a good Diabolonian. Unfortunately, after working himself up to the wildest enthusiasm about Wagner's music, Nietzsche rashly went to Bayreuth and heard it – a frightful disillusion for a man barely capable of 'Carmen.'‡

Shaw does not provide a real critical evaluation of either of the two Nietzsche volumes, but he did make some points of comparison between Ibsen, Nietzsche and Wagner, finding Wagner's Siegfried similar to Ibsen's pioneer, and both of them precursors to Nietzsche's superman. In *The Perfect Wagnerite* (1898) Shaw also links Wagner's Siegfried to the concept of breeding supermen and super-supermen, that forms a basic theme of *Man and Superman*. The business of these super beings, states Shaw, is:

> the breeding of men whose wills and intelligence may be depended on to produce spontaneously the social wellbeing our clumsy laws now aim at and miss. The majority of men at present in Europe have no business to be alive; and no serious progress will be made until we address ourselves earnestly and scientifically to the task of producing trustworthy human material for society.

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* Quoted in Thatcher 179.

† Shaw's own philosophy would finally prove more conducive to an appreciation of Nietzsche than it was of Wagner. See William Blissett, "Bernard Shaw: Imperfect Wagnerite," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XVII (1958), 192.

‡ "Giving the Devil His Due," iii.

> In short, it is necessary to breed a race of men in whom the life-giving impulses predominate, before the New Protestantism becomes politically practicable.*

While Shaw's reviews of Nietzsche's works did little to enhance a true understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy, he did further knowledge of Nietzsche in England because Shaw was so widely read. Nietzsche was still considered, by the majority of English critics, as "a lunatic, a sadist, and a writer of meaningless bombast" (Thatcher 185). By 1898, however, Shaw supported the formation of a Nietzsche Society in England, writing in a letter to *The Eagle and the Serpent* that "a Nietzsche Society might ... repeat on the ethical plane the success of the Fabian Society on the political one."† Shaw also supported and encouraged publication of Thomas Common's anthology of Nietzsche selections in English in 1901, and was thanked, by Common, "for the interest he has taken in the work, and for the valuable suggestions he has furnished with reference to arrangement and other matters."‡ Shaw seems to have been in a bit of a quandary with regard to Nietzsche and his philosophy. He was obviously excited and to an extent disturbed by the German philosopher, and consequently encouraged – even promoted – publication of his works in England. On the other hand, he did not seem to fully understand Nietzsche, a problem that was certainly related to Shaw's early appreciation for, and specific Shavian relationship to, the works of Ibsen and Wagner in particular, and to the conception of history and creative evolution that Shaw had already developed for himself prior to having read Nietzsche. David Thatcher remarks that "Shaw had begun to take Nietzsche seriously as early as 1901. This is the time of his association with Common, and with the beginning of the composition of *Man and Superman*, the most recognizably 'Nietzschean' of all Shaw's works" (189). In his reviews and his references to Nietzsche, however, Shaw had not really demonstrated, by 1903, a comprehensive knowledge of the philosopher. Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, which contains the most explicit analysis of his view of history and the burden of knowledge in the essay "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil," was not translated until 1909, as was also the case with *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.

Shaw does identify, in the Epistle Dedicatory to *Man and Superman*, some of the writers and artists who influenced his work, and whose works he himself either admired or disparaged. Nietzsche, together with Schopenhauer, is praised by the playwright:

> Bunyan, Blake, Hogarth, and Turner (these four apart and above all the English classics), Goethe, Shelley, Schopenhauer, Wagner, Ibsen, Morris, Tolstoy, and

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* *The Perfect Wagnerite*, in *WBS*, XIX, 227.

† *Eagle and the Serpent*, no. 2 (April 15, 1898), 27.

‡ *Nietzsche as Critic, Philosopher, Poet and Prophet*, compiled by Thomas Common (London: Grant Richards, 1901), lxv.

> Nietzsche are among the writers whose peculiar sense of the world I recognize as more or less akin to my own.... [Bunyan's] whole allegory is a consistent attack on morality and respectability, without a word that one can remember against vice and crime. Exactly what is complained of in Nietzsche and Ibsen, is it not? (29, 32-33)

It is clear from this passage that Shaw's attraction to Nietzsche is as an opponent of social conventionality. Shaw emphasizes his own position in this tradition against conventionality by recording how "Even atheists reproach me with infidelity and anarchists with nihilism because I cannot endure their moral tirades" (34).

In *Man and Superman* and its accompanying documents, the "Epistle Dedicatory to Arthur Bingham Walkley," the "Revolutionist's Handbook," and "Maxims for Revolutionists," Shaw explores a number of themes that comprise, in total, the essence of his theory of Creative Evolution as it had been developed by 1903.

There was nothing very new in Shaw's formulations on evolution in *Man and Superman*. All the themes he discusses had been previously addressed by Victorian novelists in England, as well as by Europeans and Americans. Leo Henkin has produced an informative study on *Darwinism in the English Novel, 1860-1910*, in which he analyzes both the attitudes that emerged as a result of Darwin's research, and the major themes resulting from nineteenth century evolutionary thought. One of the major themes that finds expression in the Victorian novel is the realization that if the development of life has been evolutionary in the past, Darwin's research dictates that life will continue to evolve, and the human race may also be supplanted and superseded by a superior form of being. Other themes include Hegel's "might is right" formula is re-interpreted in light of Darwinism, and used to justify *laissez faire* economics, or capitalism. Utopianism, the "survival of the fittest," the Superman, selective breeding, elimination of the unfit or "diseased" elements of society, the concept of the "master race," nationalism and the anti-utopia were all themes that were explored at varying depths in the literature of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Shaw, too, addresses most of these issues within his comprehensive view of history and evolution. Some of his more extreme views regarding selective breeding, the elimination of diseased "stock," elimination of property and marriage, and the psychology of the male and the female within the search for the Superman, have a heightened impact because they are presented not only in the drama itself, but also in factual form within the thinly-disguised theoretical essay, the "Revolutionist's Handbook."

Man and Superman as a whole consists of three separate parts, each of which presents a distinct and separate perspective of Creative Evolution and its accompanying concepts. The first perspective is through the prefatory

"Epistle Dedicatory" which presents the artist's own justification of the artwork and the theory behind it. The second perspective is presented through the play itself; the effect of the artwork and the integration of actions and ideas within the play is distinctly heightened through the "Don Juan in Hell" scene, which expands the play significantly within both an historical and a philosophical dimension. The third perspective on Creative Evolution is offered through the "Revolutionist's Handbook," ostensibly written by John Tanner, a member of the "Rich Idle Class." Attributing this handbook to one of his chief characters allows Shaw to experiment with opposing viewpoints without having to defend them all as his own. Putting the "Handbook" in Tanner's name also allows Shaw to "test" some ideas on the English *litteratti* without suggesting that these ideas are necessarily the culmination of his own theories; the "Revolutionist's Handbook" thus becomes just one more "point of view," as Shaw himself states: "Not that I disclaim the fullest responsibility for his [Don Juan's] opinions and for those of all my characters, pleasant and unpleasant. They are all right from their several points of view; and their points of view are, for the dramatic moment, mine also" (26).*

Shaw's adaptation of evolutionary thought is, as stated earlier, much more derivative of Jean Lamarck than of Darwin. Lamarck's conception of the development of species altered, but did not really oppose, the "Grand Design" concept of existence, the belief that a god or omnipotent force was controlling the development of humanity. Shaw was opposed to the eighteenth-century *"deus ex machina"* god, "the god who helped those who could not help themselves, the god of the lazy and incapable" (215), but he nevertheless felt there must be a purpose, a design, to life, and like Nietzsche, Shaw believed this purpose or goal of humanity must be expressed through the highest, the most fully developed, specimens. Consequently, opposition to the concept of the Superman meant opposition to the purpose of existence, and this opposition could only come from the uninformed, anti-intellectual masses, usually slavishly following a religious creed or ideal. Eric Bentley documents the history of the domination of the superior few by the inferior many:

> There followed [after Luther] various forms of transmogrified Christianity: the counter-reformation with asceticism and the *auto-da-fe*; the enlightenment with its rationality and its Christian morals; Romanticism, Evangelicalism, Socialism, Democracy. Leibnitz and Kant replanted the Christian tree, and Rousseau watered it with his tears. The weak, by their numbers and their revolutionary Pauline Christianity, came to be masters of the strong. (*Century* 148)

Shaw views evolution as purposeful, but not in the Christian sense of a

* Arnold Silver suggests Shaw wrote the "Handbook" after the play was completed, in order to give his hero, Tanner, more credibility as an intellectual and an iconoclast (127n).

design that is based on faith, individual salvation and heaven as the ultimate reward. For Shaw, as for Lamarck, evolutionary changes will take place as the need and purpose dictate. Species can adapt to their environment, and pass these adaptations along to their descendents in the form of acquired characteristics.

In adapting this Lamarckian view of evolution to the development of humanity, then, Shaw notes, in the "Revolutionist's Handbook," that the eighteenth-century *deus ex machina* god gave way, in the nineteenth century, to the scientific disbelief in any deity, consequently man now had to work to keep himself, rather than merely to pray for help; he must "change himself into the political Providence he formerly conceived as god, and such change is not only possible, but the only sort of change that is real" (215). This is true historical change, where increased knowledge leads to a completely different, and more enlightened, way of life. Shaw contrasts this kind of change to institutional changes, where successive forms of social dominance may take place, "from slavery to serfdom, from serfdom to capitalism, from monarchy to republicanism, from polytheism to monotheism..." (215), but these changes amount to no more than the "changes from Tweedledum to Tweedledee" (215), because they are not caused by changes in the people, and because they do not change the basic relationship of the exploiters to the exploited, a theme that remains dominant throughout *Man and Superman*. The actual change and growth of individuals and societies, as in the change from belief in God to belief in oneself, however, are genuine *evolutionary* changes. These changes, states Shaw, "are real; for here Man has played the god, subduing Nature to his intention and ennobling or debasing Life for a set purpose" (215). Evolution as an arbitrary process, as Darwin had viewed it, could lead to random patterns of progress or regress. However, if the process of evolution could be planned, controlled, and predicted, the final results could be astronomical: "If such monsters as the tramp and the gentleman can appear as mere by-products of Man's individual greed and folly, what might we hope for as a main product of his universal aspiration?" (215). Shaw views history as a process that can be controlled and changed by controlling evolutionary development, whether this development be physical, mental or spiritual.

The moral and political dilemma which this view of evolution presents is that if human progress can be guided and pre-determined, who will do the guiding and the determining? The dilemma is similar to that faced by Hegel, and involves an element of faith in the goodness of humanity. As Walter Kaufmann, in *From Shakespeare to Existentialism*, states, Hegel "finds the aim of history in its 'result,' " and his "attitude depends on the religious faith that in the long run, somewhere, somehow freedom will and must triumph" (115). This reliance on faith has left Hegel, as it has Shaw, open to detractors

who view this as an invitation to a totalitarian form of government. Kaufmann here defends Hegel against such detractors, one of whom, Karl Popper, views Hegel as a protofascist, a precursor of German Fascism. Kaufmann notes that Hegel "does not believe that things are good because they succeed, but that they succeed because they are good" (115). There are, however, elements about Hegel's philosophy, as about Shaw's, that do seem to be self-justifying, where the result proves the contention, or the philosophy.

Hegel and Nietzsche have at various times been analyzed within the context of how their theories have been interpreted from the perspective of promoting a totalitarian political construct. Walter Kaufmann has demonstrated that while Hegel received a totalitarian-oriented reading from Karl Popper in his *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, this interpretation was not justified because it consisted of sloppy and deliberately misleading scholarship (*From Shakespeare* 109-28). Nietzsche's view of the *Übermensch* was more of a factor within the Nazi's educational system from 1933 to 1945. Carlyle and Wagner, however, more than Hegel and Nietzsche, could be assumed guilty of a protofascist attitude, and promoting a totalitarian form of government.* Carlyle's emphasis on the need for heroes, and for hero worship, and the consequent stress on equating hero-worship with loyalty and the religious concept of Faith, are prime instruments that could be used to promote an authoritarian family structure and an authoritarian form of government. Carlyle emphasizes that the hero must have the "wisdom to discern truly what the Time wanted, valour to lead it on the right road thither" (*Heroes* 13), but who is to be the judge of the hero's wisdom? On the part of the people, Carlyle emphasizes that "No sadder proof can be given by a man of his own littleness than disbelief in great men" (*Heroes* 13). Hitler certainly capitalized on these arguments, as well as on the proto-fascist theories of Langbehn, Lagarde, Gobineau, Förster (Nietzsche's brother-in-law), and Chamberlain, as the practical propaganda for their programs of "heroic vitalism."

The danger inherent in the Lamarckian view of evolution is summed up by an early nineteenth-century historian, von Haller, who, in his *Restauration der Staatswissenschaft*, uses the evolutionary theory to justify a totalitarian theocracy:

> As in the inorganic world the greater represses the smaller, and the mighty the weak, etc., thus among the animals, too, and then among human beings, the same law recurs in nobler forms.... This is thus the eternal, immutable order of God, that the mightier rules, must rule, and always will rule. (Quoted

* Although Lukács, in his *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*, as mentioned in the previous chapter, defines a line of "irrationalists" that stretched from Schelling to Nietzsche, its strongest proponent, and from Nietzsche through Spengler and Heidegger to culminate with Hitler.

in Kaufmann, *From Shakespeare* 115)

This was a "survival of the fittest" philosophy that pre-dated Darwin's *Origin of Species* by almost forty years, but it represented survival and dominance not by accident, but by grand design, a rationale for a religious dictatorship. Hegel rightly objected to Von Haller's concept of evolution on moral and ethical grounds, stating: "One sees from this alone, and also from what follows, in what sense might is spoken of here: not the might of the moral and ethical, but the accidental force of nature" (Kaufmann, *From Shakespeare* 115).

With a view of evolution that allows for the directed improvement of human existence, it becomes easy to understand Shaw's disillusionment with democratic society, which he viewed as a uniform mass of uninformed and unqualified voters. This kind of government for him resulted in a situation where undeserving politicians were elected because they pandered most successfully to the egos, the vanities, and the selfishness of the electorate. In the meantime the truly capable, deserving individuals who stood above the masses in their ability to govern, were overlooked, unless by coincidence they were poseurs as well as capable politicians, in which case they might be chosen, but simply because of their public appeal, not because of their actual capabilities. On the other hand, Shaw also viewed the older governing systems, the monarchies and oligarchies as equally defective; an enlightened despot might improve conditions for his subjects *for a while*, but no permanent development would take place until the people themselves, the base of humanity, could be educated and improved to the point where they could carry the responsibility for their well-being and further development. All else represented, for Shaw, merely the *illusion* of progress. Shaw is at one with Hegel, Carlyle, and Nietzsche in his opposition to historical democracy within a capitalistic structure, because it reduced all voters to the same level, but Shaw was equally sceptical of the governmental model favored by Hegel, the constitutional monarchy.

Hegel believed the constitutional monarchy to be the most rational form of political constitution, again leading to accusations that he may have "canonized the Prussian State of his time." Within the constitutional monarchy, Hegel preferred a "corporative State as more rational than democracy after the English model" (Copleston 7 I 256-57). This meant that rather than all individuals participating in government directly, as in a democracy, within a corporate structure groups of individuals were represented as corporations, and the corporations then had representation within the monarchy. The advantage of this form of government was that it produced a compromise between the extremes of government by dictatorship and government by democracy. Hegel's form of a constitutional monarchy allowed more people at various levels to participate in the governing process.

Shaw, however, does not appear to have considered the constitutional monarchy – or Hegel's adaptation for this form of government – as a viable method of rule by representation, and concentrates, instead, on the need to educate or "breed" an intelligent electorate:

> It is impossible to demonstrate that the initiative in sex transactions remains with Woman,... without being driven to very serious reflections on the fact that this initiative is politically the most important of all the initiatives, because our political experiment of democracy, the last refuge of cheap misgovernment, will ruin us if our citizens are ill bred. (22)

While Shaw despises monarchy rule ("The aristocracy ... had its mind undertrained by silly schoolmasters and governesses, its character corrupted by gratuitous luxury, its self-respect adulterated to complete spuriousness by flattery and flunkyism" [23]), he does not see any improvement in the democracy that superseded rule by the aristocracy, because democracy is dependent "on the votes of the promiscuously bred masses" (23):

> what our voters are in the pit and gallery they are also in the polling booth. We are all now under what Burke called "the hoofs of the swinish multitude." (23)

This disparaging attitude to the common people, the electorate, is reinforced in the "Revolutionist's Handbook," where Shaw again emphasizes that "Democracy cannot rise above the level of the human material of which its voters are made" (227), and that "The politician who once had to learn how to flatter Kings has now [in a democratic society], to learn how to fascinate, amuse, coax, humbug, frighten, or otherwise strike the fancy of the electorate," that "he who holds popular convictions with prodigious energy is the man for the mob" (227). In the play itself Tanner says to Ann: "what sort of world are you going to get, with its public men considering its voting mobs, and its private men considering their wives? What does Church and State mean nowadays? The Woman and the Ratepayer" (76). Given this élitist perspective, one might expect to see Shaw situated more in the conservative than the socialist tradition. But while he has no high regard for the common man's intellect, he also recognizes the dangers of demagoguery, despotism and oligarchy. "We have been driven to Proletarian Democracy," he states, "by the failure of all the alternative systems" (226). Even socialism or Fabianism could not produce a more positive form of government until man could be changed, educated, and "bred" to the point where he would no longer be "common," so the electorate would no longer represent unthinking, mob rule. Within the social and political environment of the world of *Man and Superman*, however, Shaw still prefers the democratic rule by peasants over rule by the aristocracy, because "our very peasants have something morally hardier in them that culminates occasionally in a Bunyan, a Burns, or a Carlyle" (23).

Shaw's search for a new political system, a new blueprint for history, thus has its roots in a sense of disillusionment with both rule by aristocracy and rule by democracy, because democracy simply means that the peasants vote in the aristocrats, instead of voting in representatives that will champion their own rights:

> The multitude thus pronounces judgment on its own units: it admits itself unfit to govern, and will vote only for a man morphologically and generically transfigured by palatial residence and equipage, by transcendent tailoring, by the glamour of aristocratic kinship. (24)

It is from the perspective of this dual disillusionment with previous and existing forms of government that Shaw develops his own approach toward politics and history. Shaw approached history from a philosophical perspective; the future of the human race was not necessarily to be determined by economics, by socialism or a socialist perspective, but through the gradual and continuous building of human self-awareness and self knowledge (although this would ultimately lead to some form of socialism or "shared" interest in governing). For this kind of historical/philosophical progress to take place, however, people would have to *will* it:

> Any pamphleteer can shew the way to better things; but when there is no will there is no way.... Progress can do nothing but make the most of us all as we are, and that most would clearly not be enough even if those who are already raised out of the lowest abysses would allow the others a chance. (24)

In the Foreword to the "Revolutionist's Handbook" Shaw expresses his typically Fabian stand that social revolutions, the overthrow or substitution of one social system for another, can be achieved through peaceful, gradual, *political* activism as effectively as they can through violent confrontation. He compares the French Revolution to a general election, stating:

> The French Revolution overthrew one set of rulers and substituted another with different interests and different views. That is what a general election enables the people to do in England every seven years if they choose. Revolution is therefore a national institution in England; and its advocacy by an Englishman needs no apology. (213)

This comment indicates a higher regard for the electorate on Shaw's part than he was wont to display in the "Epistle Dedicatory" to the play. Shaw, in the guise of Tanner, then further dilutes his definition of a revolutionary by equating him with a religious zealot: "Every genuine religious person is a heretic and therefore a revolutionist" (213). Shaw's point, however, is that the common people must become revolutionaries, must *become* thinking individuals who are not part of a uniform mass. It is with this in mind that he states: "Any person under the age of thirty, who, having any knowledge of the existing social order is not a revolutionist, is an inferior" (213), and the operative phrase here is "who, having any knowledge of the existing

social order," because this knowledge is the critical difference between an unthinking individual and someone educated to make his own decisions. Clearly, in the Foreword to this work, Shaw/Tanner is juggling terminology and definitions, shaking the terms free from their common associations in an effort to force people to think and reconsider the entire social-religious-political hierarchy, and to re-assess their own existing system of values.

Shaw's conviction that the masses cannot adequately rule themselves, nor allow themselves to be ruled for their own good, is at the heart of his emphasis on creative evolution. The base, the common element of humanity must be elevated, must be raised for humanity to progress, to reach new heights of awareness, and a new consciousness of itself. This is not in itself a radical concept, and forms, in fact, the basis of the socialists' call for a revolution of the proletariat. Rosa Luxembourg made the same distinction between bourgeois class rule and Lenin's proletarian dictatorship:

> Bourgeois class rule does not need the political schooling and education of the entire mass of the people beyond very narrow limits. For the proletarian dictatorship, that schooling and education is the life-giving element, the air without which it cannot live. (Harrington *Socialism* 68)*

In 1903, at the time that *Man and Superman* was completed, Shaw believed that mass consciousness *could* be raised, but his approach to raising the consciousness of the people was not education alone, but selective breeding; anything less than this, he felt, could not be successful. Benevolent despots had in the past been unsuccessful in elevating humanity because they had not – except for Alfred Noyes, on a small scale – bred successive generations of superior beings. Even Noyes had only been partially successful:

> If Noyes [head of the Perfectionist Experiment at Oneida Creek] had had to organize, not a few dozen Perfectionists, but the whole United States, America would have beaten him as completely as England beat Oliver Cromwell, France Napoleon, or Rome Julius Caesar. Cromwell learnt by bitter experience that God himself cannot raise a people above its own level. (223-24)

Shaw believes that the masses in the end inevitably defeat the heroism of great men. Because the people do not will their own improvement, do not recognize their historic significance, they thwart, through their ignorance, the heroism of great leaders and thus prevent the progress of the race.†

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* Luxembourg adds that the socialist ideal is not a dictatorship, however temporary, but an informed or educated socialist democracy: "It is the historic task of the proletariat when it comes to power, to replace bourgeois democracy with socialist democracy, not to abolish democracy itself" (Harrington *Socialism* 68-9).

† David Owen, in a newspaper commentary on Margaret Thatcher's defeat by her own members of parliament in the Fall of 1990, asserts a very opposite view to Shaw's: "The Greeks understood it all. Great men and women are not brought down by lesser mortals, they are brought down by themselves. Margaret Thatcher was never going to be slain by a Geoffrey Howe or a Michael Heseltine, but she could always kill herself" (*Edmonton Journal*,

One of the essential components of Shaw's Creative Evolution is that of the "Life Force," a theme that figures prominently in *Man and Superman*. The Life Force appears to be a dual concept for Shaw, a force that operates either instinctually or one that can be "willed." The Life Force is Shaw's substitute for the "grand design" concept of the Christians and the teleologists; it is the drive that puts meaning and purpose into existence.

Evolutionists viewed existence as a continuum from inorganic life to organic, and finally to human life. Within this conception of existence early progress had, according to Shaw, to be determined by a natural force, the instinctive groping towards higher life forms. Lamarck had argued that even within the animal world an elemental form of "will" or intentional purpose was discernible. An animal that "wanted" something badly enough, such as the giraffe stretching its neck to reach the higher branches on trees, would eventually "acquire" the characteristic that would allow it to obtain its objective, and this characteristic would subsequently be passed on to future generations. Samuel Butler, too, became convinced that "design is intrinsic" to evolution, and his conception of design, too, "held the cause of variation in plant and animal life to be effort, purpose, struggle of the organisms themselves for higher adaptation to conditions or bodily modification, made necessary by change in environment or circumstances" (Henkin 210). Butler explained the inheriting of acquired characteristics through his theory of "unconscious memory," which has the offspring carrying with them the unconscious memory of the experiences and adaptations of their parents. This unconscious memory of ancestors, building up from generation to generation, allows the offspring easily to acquire the skills and characteristics of their ancestors.

The instinctive, "Natural" actions that helped organisms adapt to and survive within their changing environments, represented the Life Force at its most elemental level. Once existence had progressed from instinctive behavior to conscious, rational thought, the intuitive, primitive Life Force was, in Shaw's view, no longer able to ensure the continuing progress of the species, for the human race now held its future, and the future of the planet, in its own power. This is where the element of will becomes dominant; despite the seeming progress that has been made since the dawn of civilization, we contain within ourselves the seeds and forces of destruction that battle against the need, or will, to progress further. This battle of the forces of degeneration versus those of progression, forms the crux of the dialogue between the Devil and Don Juan in the hell scene, where the Devil argues that man's destructive urges dominate him psychologically, while Don Juan speaks for the higher, more idealistic part of the psyche that desires and

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works for progress. The dialectic of this scene is a masterful, external explication of Freud's dichotomy of the Id and the Superego, and like Freud, Shaw also recognizes that either force may win the battle. Shaw's "will" is, in fact, comparable to Freud's Superego, even if it is not as fully developed or repressive a concept. The Devil takes the view that progress is merely an illusion, while Don Juan asserts that a genuine Life Force does exist, that seeks to elevate life to further levels of consciousness. The Devil argues that humanity believes in destruction much more than it does in life, that

> man's heart is in his weapons. This marvellous force of Life of which you boast is a force of Death: Man measures his strength by his destructiveness ... the power that governs the earth is not the power of Life but of Death; and the inner need that has served Life to the effort of organizing itself into the human being is not the need for higher life but for a more efficient engine of destruction. (143-44)

Don Juan counters this argument, that "man's heart is in his weapons," by asserting that man is really a coward, that he "will suffer himself to be degraded until his vileness becomes so loathsome to his oppressors that they themselves are forced to reform it" (145). What distinguishes man, however, and what can make the coward brave, is his belief in an idea, or an ideal. If the ideal is a universal ideal, and his belief in it intense enough, man will overcome his cowardice and fight to the death: "men never really overcome fear until they imagine they are fighting to further a universal purpose – fighting for an idea, as they call it" (145). If men believe strongly enough in "liberty and equality," they will fight and die for that belief: "Later on, Liberty will not be Catholic [or universal] enough: men will die for human perfection, to which they will sacrifice all their liberty gladly" (146). Do[illegible] contradicts himself here as he argues, first of all, that man's heart is [illegible]is weapons but in an ideal, and then argues just as vehemently tha[illegible]will fight to the death in their "fanatical" support for this ideal: "Man, who in his own selfish affairs is a coward to the backbone, will fight for an idea like a hero. He may be abject as a citizen; but he is dangerous as a fanatic"* (147). By the turn of the century there were sufficient examples of fanatical warfare in the cause of fervid nationalism or fundamentalism to discredit the virtue of war for an ideal. Today, after recognizing how fanatically the followers of such totalitarian leaders as Hitler and of Stalin fought, even when defeat at times was certain, we can see even more clearly that war in the cause of progress is an illusion. In condemning warfare for the "wrong" reasons and praising it for the "right" reason, the war for an ideal, Shaw endorses authoritarianism as strongly as Carlyle did. There is little difference between fighting for an abstract notion of human perfection and fighting for Carlyle's

* See also Silver, 151-3.

idea of heroism. Both concepts demand such complete involvement and such a set purpose that they do not allow for reflection or consideration. These are the abstractions that authoritarians use to best advantage for propaganda purposes, for as Don Juan says: "if you can show a man a piece of what he now calls God's work to do, and what he will later on call by many new names, you can make him entirely reckless of the consequences to himself personally" (147). Don Juan might have been well advised, at this point, to consider seriously the Devil's advice to the Statue, to "Beware of the pursuit of the Superhuman; it leads to an indiscriminate contempt for the Human" (171). The scene is crucial in that it points out how the complete dominance of the Superego, the rational side of man, can lead to authoritarianism as easily as can the domination of the Id. And this, of course, is the charge that has been made at times regarding the philosophy of Hegel and of Spencer, that the belief in reason, in the ultimate "goodness" of man necessitates the curtailing of his freedoms, even if this process is voluntary and seemingly "for the good of the many."

In the letter to Arthur Bingham Walkley which prefaces the play, Shaw states that "Nature" is the impetus, the Life Force, that impels the artist to his work. Shaw further notes that "what produces all these treatises and poems and scriptures of one sort or another is the struggle of Life to become divinely conscious of itself instead of blindly stumbling hither and thither in the line of least resistance" (22)l He argues, here, against the Darwinian nature of evolution through "accidental variations," since Nature, for Shaw, represents a force that passes from being an instinctive or "natural" force to one that is willed, because it is "divinely conscious of itself." This consciousness, as Shaw notes, is represented most evidently in the artist, or playwright. Shaw's Hegelian statement here seems to mock the insistence in the "Revolutionist's Handbook" on progress as illusion. Walter Kaufmann has argued that "Hegel and Plato abound in admittedly one-sided statements that are clearly meant to formulate points of view that are then shown to be inadequate and are countered by another perspective" (*From Shakespeare* 99). Shaw's method of categorically advancing opposite points of view has much the same purpose; it is the playwright using the principle of dialectics, the iteration of opposites which may achieve their eventual resolution in a synthesis, a further, but also temporary, conclusion.

The hell sequence in Act III actually focuses very specifically and narrowly on the Life Force concept. Don Juan wants to transfer from hell to heaven because heaven is the Absolute Idea in the Hegelian canon, the place where he can spend "eons in contemplation" (140). Juan, unencumbered by pursuit from Woman in this act, becomes the spokesman for the Life Force: "so would I enjoy the contemplation of that which interests me above all things: namely, Life: the force that ever strives to attain greater power of

contemplating itself.... Not merely the need to do, but the need to know what I do, lest in my blind efforts to live I should be slaying myself" (141). Don Juan compares the *will* that controls the Life Force to the human brain, or control center. Had he had the terminology to do so, he might well have called it the "Superego":

> there is the work of helping Life in its struggle upward. Think of how it wastes and scatters itself, how it raises up obstacles to itself and destroys itself in its ignorance and blindness. It needs a brain, this irresistible force, lest in its ignorance it should resist itself.... Here is the highest miracle of organization yet attained by life, the most intensely alive thing that exists, the most conscious of all the organisms; and yet, how wretched are his brains! (141)

The more highly developed the organism, the stronger the clash between Id and Superego, or in Spencerian terms, the more complex the organism becomes, the more difficult it is to maintain the integration of the various elements, and the greater the risk of disintegration. Herbert Marcuse echoes the same viewpoint when he states: "the most effective subjugation and destruction of man by man takes place at the height of civilization, when the material and intellectual attainments of mankind seem to allow the creation of a truly free world" (*Eros* 4). The further along the evolutionary path, the greater the danger that our form of life will destroy itself:

> So far, the result of Life's continual effort, not only to maintain itself, but to achieve higher and higher organization and completer self-consciousness, is only, at best, a doubtful campaign between its forces and those of Death and Degeneration. (148)

Juan emphasizes "Death and Degeneration" as the opponents of the Life Force, the negative element of the dialectic. In Hegelian terms life involves "change," and change encompasses both creation and dissolution.

Shaw finally depicts the Life Force as being powerful, but in its primitive form, non-rational. Don Juan, who has just related how it was Woman who taught him the truth "I am; therefore I think," demonstrates this non-rational position further with the story of how, standing "face to face with Woman, every fibre in my clear critical brain warned me to spare her and save myself" (154). His reason, morality and conscience worked together to form this decision, based on his rational knowledge of Woman as she now exists and as she would exist in old age, but as Juan says, "whilst I was in the act of framing my excuse to the lady, Life seized me and threw me into her arms as a sailor throws a scrap of fish into the mouth of a seabird.... I saw then how useless it is to attempt to impose conditions on the irresistible force of Life" (155). This speech is crucial to the development of the play, as it pre-figures Tanner's surrender at the end of the play, as he, too, gives in to the powerful drive of the Life Force.

If the Life Force is the agent representing purpose and design in *Man*

and Superman, its primary human representative is the female. Shaw equates the female, or "Woman," with fecundity, instinct, intuition, and most importantly, with "Nature," which seems for Shaw to incorporate all the previous elements. There is a pantheistic element to Shaw's identification of Woman with Nature, and the number of times the word "Nature" recurs in Shaw's writing, and especially in *Man and Superman* and its attendant documents, is ample proof of his comprehensive view of existence as incorporating the simplest life forms to the most complex, from inanimate being to metaphysical existence. Woman, for Shaw, and he may have been influenced here by both Weininger and Schopenhauer, is the natural agent through which the Life Force represents itself, because the woman's first instinct is to find a suitable mate to father her children, then to bear children, to protect them, and thus to further the species. Her desire for a mate is not a desire for "love" or for companionship, but rather an instinct for preservation through procreation. Shaw in theory denies the existence of romantic love. He portrays woman as ruthless in her pursuit of her goal; once the male has fulfilled his procreational role, she is as willing to dispense with him as she was earlier eager to ensnare him. In his descriptions of the relationships of men and women, Shaw is more attuned to Darwin's "survival" concepts than he is to the more altruistic views on evolution held by Lamarck and Spencer; hence, once man has helped woman to conceive, his only remaining function is that of provider. Otherwise, he would be dispensable. "If women could do without our work, and we ate their children's bread instead of making it, they would kill us as the spider kills her mate or as the bees kill the drone" (92), says Tanner to Octavius, and adds: "And they would be right if we were good for nothing but love."

Jack Tanner, as the artist/philosopher spokesman, the articulator, of the Life Force concept, further suggests to Octavius that women make you "will your own destruction," to which Octavius masochistically replies: "But it's not destruction: it's fulfilment." This reply provides Tanner with the opportunity to further define woman's role within the Life Force:

> TANNER: Yes, of h e r purpose; and that purpose is neither her happiness nor yours, but Nature's. Vitality in a woman is a blind fury of creation. She sacrifices herself to it: do you think she will hesitate to sacrifice you?
>
> OCTAVIUS: Why, it is just because she is self-sacrificing that she will not sacrifice those she loves.
>
> TANNER: That is the profoundest of mistakes, Tavy. It is the self-sacrificing women that sacrifice others most recklessly. Because they are unselfish, they are kind in little things. Because they have a purpose which is not their own purpose, but that of the whole universe, a man is nothing to them but an instrument of that purpose. (61)

Tanner enunciates clearly that men serve a purely functional purpose for the woman. Women may grieve when their mate dies, but this is not grieving for a loved one, but for a lost opportunity to serve the Life Force:

> They [women] tremble when we are in danger, and weep when we die; but the tears are not for us, but for a father wasted, a son's breeding thrown away. They accuse us of treating them as a mere means to our pleasure; but how can so feeble and transient a folly as a man's selfish pleasure enslave a woman as the whole purpose of Nature embodied in a woman can enslave a man? (61)

In the hell scene Don Juan extends this argument regarding the purpose of men and women, stating that for Woman, "Man is only a means to the end of getting children and rearing them" (147). Shaw demonstrates, here, his knowledge and acceptance of the theory that early societies were matriarchal, and that the earliest culture may have been a female culture, with the male developing at a later time, a "Mother Right" theory of culture that had been explicated by the nineteenth-century theorist, J.J. Bachofen,* and which has seen a strong resurgence in the feminist literature of the modern period. Don Juan refers to this theory to support his contention that Woman is the dominant power behind the Life Force:

> Sexually, Woman is Nature's contrivance for perpetuating its highest achievement. Sexually, Man is Woman's contrivance for fulfilling Nature's behest in the most economical way. She knows by instinct that far back in the evolutional process she invented him, differentiated him, created him in order to produce something better than the single-sexed process can produce. (147)†

There were other precedents, as well, for declaring woman as superior to man. In Bulwer-Lytton's utopian novel, *The Coming Race* (1871), the female within this "advanced society" is shown to be superior to the male (Henkin 236). According to Shaw, or Don Juan, in *Man and Superman*, though Man was originally created for a specific purpose, that of propagating the race, he has since extended himself beyond that limited purpose, to the point where he becomes in the main the woman's enemy:

> First Man has multiplied on her hands until there are as many men as women; so that she has been unable to employ for her purposes more than a fraction of the immense energy she has left at his disposal by saving him the exhausting labor of gestation. This superfluous energy has gone to his brain and to his muscle. He has become too strong to be controlled by her bodily, and too imaginative and mentally vigorous to be content with mere self-reproduction.

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* *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right* (Princton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 196. Forms of "Mother Worship," or female-dominated societies form a recurring theme in some of the utopian literature of the English Victorian period, occurring also in W.H. Hudson's *A Crystal Age* (1887). The emphasis on female characteristics is indicative of the "gentler" qualities associated with women compared to the "aggressive" or "survival of the fittest" concept surrounding the male within a Darwinistic milieu, and is also associated with the prominent role that a number of Victorian writers, including Shaw, attribute to the female in regard to the "selective breeding" process.

† Margaret Atwood, in her *Handmaid's Tale*, likewise refers to man's secondary, menial role as she has one of her characters comment: "A man is just a woman's strategy for making other women" (114).

(148)

Ann Whitefield, the female representation of the Life Force in *Man and Superman*, is not altogether a satisfactory portrayal of the force that is destined to direct humanity toward the superhuman. Ann is unsatisfactory, or at least incomplete, in this role because she provides little evidence of the superior intelligence, perception or other exceptional qualities that could be passed on from a mother to her prospective Superman son. Ann's dialogue reveals her to be, in fact, very ordinary, with conventional social values, absolutely no opinions of her own on politics, philosophy, art or any other subject, and with seemingly conventional nineteenth-century views regarding romantic love, sex and marriage. While this portrait of Ann as instinctual rather than intellectual is purposeful on Shaw's part, corresponding to his conception of creative evolution which has Woman feel rather than think, it also exposes Shaw's own stereotyping of the female as irrational, emotional [illegible]rthy (although Ann's cunning schemes in fact show her to be very [illegible] and not very earthy). Where Shaw, in the letter to Walkley and in "Revolutionist's Handbook," describes Woman as amoral and not interested in romantic or egotistical forms of love, those are the only perceptions of love that Ann actually reveals, and her interest in Tanner's dialogue always brightens when his talk centres on love and marriage. Ann's dialogue is very limited, and her overt effect on other characters is ostensibly evident only in the way she repeatedly deflates Tanner's rhetoric through her coy banalities. Violet's conversation, within her role as the main character of the subplot, is much more significant than Ann's, but then Violet is the primary representative for those who claim privileged status within a capitalist-dominated economy, and Shaw imbues her with the "toughness," the no-nonsense character with which he describes these personalities in many of his other plays.

After watching – or reading – the play, we wonder, at the end, what it is about Ann that nevertheless allows her to emerge as an important character, for despite her lack of significant dialogue, she does exude "force." She has an impetus that initiates actions and events on the part of the other characters. Octavius, Ramsden and Tanner all revolve around her and react to her; Tanner, in the most important action initiated by Ann, begins the journey that ends in the Sierra dream sequence. Shaw wanted to present Ann as a force of nature rather than as an intellect, and if he erred it was probably in making her coy and conniving instead of direct, and utterly conventional with regard to social values rather than portraying a morality apart from that of her society. Certainly the lying, the conniving, the manipulating of others are designed to illustrate the single-mindedness, the ruthlessness, and the amorality of the Life Force, and Ann is certainly ruthless, even cruel, in her treatment of others, especially Octavius.

Ann is different things to different people, as Shaw takes pains to point out in his stage directions. Shaw himself views her as "Everywoman," the representation of womanhood and of the Life Force: "*Vitality is as common as humanity; but, like humanity, it sometimes rises to genius; and Ann is one of the vital geniuses*" (54).

For Octavius Ann is

> *an enchantingly beautiful woman, in whose presence the world becomes transfigured, and the puny limits of individual consciousness are suddenly made infinite by a mystic memory of the whole life of the race to its beginnings in the east, or even back to the paradise from which it fell. She is to him the reality of romance, the inner good sense of nonsense, the unveiling of his eyes, the freeing of his soul, the abolition of time, place, and circumstance, the etherealization of his blood into rapturous rivers of the very water of life itself, the revelation of all the mys[illegible] and the sanctification of all the dogmas.* (54)

If for Octavius Ann is the "[illegible]" woman, to her own mother she is, "*to put it as moderately as possible [illegible]g of the kind*" (54). Ramsden is as illusion-ridden about wo[illegible] Octavius is; therefore, he can idealize Ann, but villify Violet when he believes she has acted immorally. While Shaw emphasizes Ann's vitality – as the embodiment of the Life Force – he also notes that to other women Ann appears deceitful and cunning, "*what the weaker of her own sex sometimes call a cat*" (54).

Shaw consistently portrays Ann as manipulative and unscrupulous, but possessing a vitality that makes men virtually helpless in her presence. She incorporates, for Shaw, the ruthlessness and vitality of the "exceptional" woman, a sharp contrast to the straightforward, socially conscious but "hard as nails" Violet, whose ambition is that of the "ordinary" woman who wishes only to marry, have children, and become part of the leisured, idle class. However, while Ann is meant to incorporate the ruthless, unscrupulous force of "Nature," the Life Force, this is, like Tanner's revolutionism, a watered down version of the Life Force, to the extent that there is danger, as Silver notes, of her emerging as petty and catty, rather than as an elemental force. Her role in the play often degenerates to the point where her primary function is that of puncturing Tanner's inflated rhetoric, and while this artificial device works successfully to enhance the comic elements of the play, it also prevents Ann from saying anything substantial, or even slightly unconventional, especially in the first two acts.

Despite Ann's lack of effective dialogue, however, her personality exudes confidence and, above all, the ability to control people and events. The imagery through which Shaw describes her is, as Silver has suggested, imagery of pursuit and of capture. Ann has "*ensnaring eyes and hair*" (54), and beneath her surface respect and self-control she has a feline, predatory quality. Tanner describes her as a "boa constrictor," and as a spider waiting for the fly. Robert Brustein, noting the danger, the threat, associated with the use of the spider

imagery to describe women by writers like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Strindberg, finds Shaw's use of the same metaphor relatively tame. Shaw's "spider-woman is not the dominating, amoral, and conscienceless *belle dame sans merci* of the Romantic agony, but rather the independent, intelligent, and well-mannered gentlewoman of the Victorian imagination, whose 'unwomanliness' consists mainly in her active pursuit of a husband" (214). Arnold Silver, however, disagrees with Brustein on the element of danger inherent in Ann's personality. He views Ann's undercutting of Tanner as threatening and dangerous, noting that while the "overt imagery associated with women is of spiders, bees, hungry lions, and tigers, with the male regarded as 'the marked-down quarry, the destined prey,' " the "implicit and more functional metaphor is of woman as undercutter of the male, as castrator (the dominant image relating to Ann is the boa constrictor, which neatly links both the overt and the implied image clusters)" (126). Tanner himself sums Ann up as follows: "You seem to me to have absolutely no conscience – only hypocrisy; and you cant see the difference – yet there is a sort of fascination about you" (69).

Ann controls her environment – and her relationships – by giving others pet names, which in turn allows her to treat them like pets – or manipulate them like toys – rather than as equals. So Octavius becomes Ricky-ticky-tavy, and Roebuck Ramsden becomes "Annie's Granny." Ann capitalizes on the powerful psychological function of pet names being used to restrict one's social environment and relationships, to allow for maximum control and manipulation of others. While this use of pet and baby names is usually a potent weapon in the hands of parents, and mothers in particular, Ann uses the stratagem here in much the same way; this is the major reason why Jack Tanner does not want a nickname bestowed on him by Ann; he is not prepared, at this point, to be controlled by Ann, and recognizes the extent to which she controls and manipulates the other characters in the play. Shaw identifies the effete of society – the Ramsdens, Octaviuses and Hectors – who are weak and helpless, with a lack of character that actually becomes a form of masochism. Ramsden and Octavius consequently glory in their nicknames, because they *want* to be controlled. They actually enjoy and luxuriate in their solipsistic blindness and lack of judgment. So when Ann has shrewdly obtained both Ramdsen and Tanner's agreement to serve as her joint guardians, she celebrates by emphasizing all the pet names she has given them:

> I shall have my dear Granny to help and advise me. [*She casts a glance at Tanner over her shoulder.*] And Jack the Giant Killer. [*She goes past her mother to Octavius.*] And Jack's inseparable friend Ricky-ticky-tavy [*he blushes and looks inexpressibly foolish*]. (58)

It is also Ann who first emphasizes the Don Juan connection to John

Tanner. Ann has just ensured that Octavius will continue to be Ricky-ticky-tavy – in answer to her query: "Do you want to be treated like a grown-up man?" he instantly pleads: "Oh please call me Ricky-ticky-tavy. 'Mr. Robinson' would hurt me cruelly" (59) – and that Ramsden will continue as "Annie's Granny," when she says to Tanner: "if you like, I'll call you after your famous ancestor Don Juan" (59). When a collapsed Tanner agrees to being called "Jack" instead of "Don Juan," Ann remarks to her mother: "You see, Mamma, they all really like to have pet names" (59). Tanner recognizes the manipulative element inherent in pet names, as he tells Octavius: "you are half swallowed already – in three bites – Bite One, Ricky; Bite Two, Ticky; Bite Three, Tavy; and down you go" (60). Tanner, however, makes the mistake of thinking that because he has avoided a pet name – avoided being labelled and condescended to by Ann in that particular fashion – that he has evaded other, more serious, dangers as well. Tanner points to the masochistic element inherent in love when he tells Octavius, as stated earlier, that Woman "makes you will your own destruction" (60), and it becomes very evident during the course of the play that Tanner, too, has *willed* his union with Ann, although perhaps not as enthusiastically as the other two.

As the representative of the Life Force, Ann's ultimate control over Tanner is foreshadowed in the first act, where she puts first her boa and then her arms around his neck and states: "you should not jest about our affection for one another. Nobody could possibly misunderstand it" (77). Tanner, usually perceptive in recognizing Ann's control over others, is indescribably dense in not perceiving her designs on him, and first replies "My blood interprets for me," and then adds: "Poor Ricky Ticky Tavy" (77), indicating that he still believes that she is pursuing Octavius rather than himself. Little wonder that Ann states: "I wonder are you really a clever man!" (78), for while Tanner may be clever in some areas, he is certainly deficient in others.

Woman, then, represents the Life Force in its natural or instinctive state, and for this reason Shaw emphasizes Ann's cunning, her schemes and the control she exerts over others as a "natural" part of her personality, rather than as artifices that are planned and executed in a rational manner (although these acts have, of course, to be rationally planned to some extent). Where Ann's schemes are exposed, as in her refusal to let her sister Rhoda ride in the automobile with Tanner, she neither feels nor acts guilty, but simply lies or evades the truth and carries on with her plan (or alters it, as the case may be). In the capitalistic, "survival of the fittest" world of this play, Ann is superbly equipped to survive and to achieve her goal of capturing the intended male, Tanner, for her aggressive instincts predominate. She is the embodiment of Don Juan's conception of womanhood as forcing man to the realization that "I am, therefore I think," because her aggressive pur-

encourages him to feel more than to think. If Ann deflates Tanner's rhetoric throughout the play, Shaw nevertheless envisages a healthy union of her vitality with Tanner's cerebral capabilities, for Tanner is the philosopher, and she the female artist.*

Shaw is adamant that the Life Force alone, or its representative, Woman, is not sufficient to ensure the continuing progress of the human race. This is where the human "will" needs to be exercised positively and consistently to ensure the progression of humanity. The artist is for Shaw the bridge between the "Woman" concept and the rational will, for the artist relies on intuition, but his art exhibits the drive for self-knowledge and self-consciousness that allows the "struggle of Life to become divinely conscious of itself" (22). The artist's instinctive drive to produce, to add to the consciousness of life, is a continuation of the woman's instinctive drive to propagate; the combination of woman's sexuality and man's artistry consequently leads to a new form of fertility: "the replacement of the old unintelligent, inevitable, almost unconscious fertility by an intelligently controlled, conscious fertility" (226). The emphasis on the will, on conscious decision-making, is the element that really projects Shaw's theory into twentieth-century modes of thought, for with the necessity to make monumental decisions concerning the future of the human race, there enters the possibility that the wrong decisions – or even the failure to make conscious choices – can result in catastrophe, even in the end of the world as we know it. The emphasis on the will, on the necessity to make choices, may lead to the commitment of twentieth-century socialist writers, the negative commitment of fascist artists and leaders, or to the lack of commitment, the spiritual waste land of a Prufrock.

In Shaw's own writing, the failure to exercise one's will in a moral battle for humanity leads to a realization that evolution is an illusion, that the seeming progress of the past amounts to no more than Nietzsche's concept of events occurring over and over.† In his fear that under the illusion of progress the human race may actually be disintegrating rather than advancing, Shaw's perspective is surprisingly akin to Nietzsche's, as well as to Dürrenmatt's, as formulated in *Romulus der Große*.

Eternal recurrence refers to the concept that there can be no "uniform, universal and absolute moral system" (Copleston 7 II 176) in the Hegelian sense. Instead, history is cyclical. Nietzsche considered this pessimistic view of life and history as a test of one's strength and optimism, of the ability of an individual to affirm life even though life offered no ultimate reward:

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* Shaw's arguments for the female as incorporating emotion and instinct and the male as representative of thought, lead to some confusion with regard to the female artist, for surely, in order to create art, the artist must give her work some kind of rational form.

† See also Brustein, 215.

> the theory of eternal recurrence was a test of strength, Nietzsche's power to say "yes" to life instead of the Schopenhauerian "no." Could he face the thought that his whole life, every moment of it, every suffering, every agony, every humiliation, would be repeated countless times throughout endless time?... If so, it was a sign of inner strength, of the triumph in Nietzsche himself of the yea-saying attitude of life. (Copleston 7 II 169)*

The pessimism – even nihilism – inherent in this philosophy was personally repugnant to Shaw, yet he was obviously familiar with it, and in the dream sequence he has the Devil playing the advocate for Nietzsche's view:

> all history is nothing but a record of the oscillations of the world between these two extremes. An epoch is but a swing of the pendulum; and each generation thinks the world is progressing because it is always moving. But when you are as old as I am; when you have a thousand times wearied of heaven, like myself and the Commander, and a thousand times wearied of hell, as you are wearied now, you will no longer imagine that every swing from heaven to hell is an emancipation, every swing from hell to heaven an evolution. Where you now see reform, progress, fulfilment of upward tendency, continual ascent by Man on the stepping stones of his dead selves to higher things, you will see nothing but an infinite comedy of illusion. You will discover the profound truth of the saying of my friend Koheleth, that there is nothing new under the sun. Vanitas vanitatum – (168)

The impression that Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence left on Shaw was considerable, and is expressed over and over in his concern that unless we are mentally and morally committed to human development, all progress may, indeed, be nothing more than illusion. *Also Sprach Zarathustra* had appeared in English translation in 1896, and Shaw had been involved in working with Thomas Common on the latter's anthology of Nietzsche selections as late as 1900-1901, so the theory of history as cyclical would have been very fresh in his mind, and while it did not fit his own view of progressive history, it was a conception he had to wrestle with, and one which gained sufficient significance in his own thought that he felt he had to address it, both in the play and in the Revolutionist's Handbook.† Shaw viewed life positively in so far as it *should* be possible to rise to continuously higher evolutionary levels, provided man wanted the changes badly enough, and Don Juan counters the Devil's – or Nietzsche's – conception of the eternal recurrence of historical epochs with the Hegelian argument that there must

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* Philippa Foot views Nietzsche's "yea-saying" attitude in a much more positive light than does Kaufmann, making Nietzsche a virtual optimist: "Nietzsche was one who wanted to be an *affirmer*, not a caviler, who repeatedly praised lightness of spirit, and wrote much about dancing and laughter. When he put forward his strange theory of the eternal recurrence of all things ... this was most significantly a rejection of gloomy nihilism" (18).

† Shaw does, finally, see Nietzsche as a "Life Force worshipper," for as the Devil says, Nietzsche "came here first, before he recovered his wits. I had some hopes of him; but he was a confirmed Life Force worshipper. It was he who raked up the Superman" (172). This view is, however, a misinterpretation of Nietzsche's pessimism.

be greater meaning to life and nature, that "my brain is the organ by which Nature strives to understand itself":

> Were I not possessed with a purpose beyond my own I had better be a ploughman than a philosopher; for the ploughman lives as long as the philosopher, eats more, sleeps better, and rejoices in the wife of his bosom with less misgiving. This is because the philosopher is in the grip of the Life Force. (169)

Shaw's conviction that man *will* improve is, however, tempered by the recognition that if man does not desire his improvement strongly enough, the alternative is the very real possibility of an evolutionary failure, and a consequent relapse toward atavism:

> If there be no will, we are lost. That is a possibility for our crazy little empire, if not for the universe; and as such possibilities are not to be entertained without despair, we must, whilst we survive, proceed on the assumption that we have still energy enough to not only will to live, but to will to live better. (245)

Shaw returns over and over to his contention that unless mankind as a whole is willing to change, and *wills* his own change, no real progress is possible. Shaw here advocates a *collective* will, the will to become a race of supermen, a society that forges or *wills* its own morality. Without that kind of will,

> Man will return to his idols and his cupidities, in spite of all "movements" and all revolutions, until his nature is changed. Until then, his early successes in building commercial civilizations ... are but preliminaries to the inevitable later stage, now threatening us, in which the passions which built the civilization become fatal instead of productive. (234-35)

Although Shaw identifies the will to progress with a metaphysical element in the human psyche, his fear that progress may be an illusion is rooted strongly in his disparaging view of capitalism as destructive of human potential. Paul Hummert has noted that "Don Juan's description of hell is a description of capitalist society" (132). Hell is the natural abode for those who practiced the "deadly virtues" while on earth, the hypocritical virtues of justice, duty, compassion, and all the Christian values which both Shaw and Nietzsche criticized as stifling human progress. But hell is also the home for all who are vain (in hell they can choose the age they wish to remain forever), slothful, corrupt and devious, for in hell they can indulge themselves for eternity. In a sense Shaw anticipates Herbert Marcuse's 1960s analysis, in *One-Dimensional Man*, of a capitalistic society whose success has resulted in a one-dimensional mode of existence. Instead of utilizing the profits of capitalism to rejuvenate the system and bring about a measure of equality, those who have been successful "are held in thrall by golden chains, by the satisfaction of false, manufactured needs; they are victimized by a technology that manipulates them every moment of the night and day; they have become visionless, conformist, programmed" (Harrington *Socialism* 114). In the "Revolutionist's Handbook" Shaw likewise states that "A civilization in which

lusty pugnacity and greed have ceased to act as selective agents and have begun to obstruct and destroy, rushes downwards and backwards with a suddenness that enables an observer to see with consternation the upward steps of many centuries retraced in a single lifetime" (235). This echoes Nietzsche's nihilistic perspective of forthcoming universal disintegration. Both Shaw and Nietzsche appear as prophets of the new century, predicting mass confrontations which were previously unimagined, except by such early-century dramatists as Grabbe, and perhaps Büchner. Nietzsche's perspective is that we must say "yes" to a life of stoicism, of eternal recurrence, in the face of, or in defiance of the coming destruction, whereas Shaw is warning that if we do not face up to our known historical record, and determine to change society (through breeding a nation of Supermen), *then* conflagration will be the result. Shaw believes that universal atavism can be avoided, whereas Nietzsche believes it cannot, but that it may lead to a better future in the end. Shaw does express the same concern as Nietzsche, that when the old, traditional values have died – for Nietzsche, the spread of the "God is dead" truth, and for Shaw the spread of the truth that evolution is an illusion – the result is nihilism, and with nihilism comes destruction of the existing order:

> What is likely to happen when this conviction [that human progress is an illusion] gets into the minds of the men whose present faith in these illusions is the cement of our social system, can be imagined only by those who know how suddenly a civilization which has long ceased to think (or in the old phrase, to watch and pray) can fall to pieces when the vulgar belief in its hypocrisies and impostures can no longer hold out against its failures and scandals. (244)

In line with Shaw's concern about evolutionary regression, then, is his argument that all past evolutionary development, all human history, in fact, has been little more than a great illusion, simply because the results can be wiped out so quickly and easily. Our history, he reminds us, is a record of minor fixups due to social and political necessities, of leaders and politicians responding to pressures from below, rather than a history in which heroes and their subjects, working together with unselfish motives, have really wanted and tried to improve the quality of life for all people: "the moment we look for a reform due to character and not to money, to statesmanship and not to interest or mutual fear, we are disillusioned" (236).

If Shaw views the positive application of the human will as a Hegelian, metaphysical elevation of humanity, he sees the *lack* or failure of the will as the result of our inability to overcome capitalism, and the failure of capitalism itself and with it of civilization, because the "survival of the fittest" concept has turned to decadence, to the belief, as illustrated throughout *Man and Superman*, that the privileged few have the license to live lives of idleness and insignificance at the expense of the many who consequently struggle for

survival against impossible odds. This combination of decadence existing alongside poverty will result in an inevitable collapse, or the Nietzschean cycle of eternal recurrence, as "war and competition, potent instruments of selection and evolution in one epoch, become ruinous instruments of degeneration in the next" (235). Shaw appears here to echo Marx's envisioned collapse of an over-industrialized society and the resulting revolution of the proletariat, but Shaw differed from Marx on the necessity of revolution and viewed this kind of conflagration not as clearing the path for a classless, utopian rule of the proletariat, but as an atavistic relapse into a primitive state.

The division of society into the poor and the idle rich is not only destructive in itself, but furthers the destructive spiral, where the sole objective of not only the upper class, but also the middle class individual is to progress to the point where he can leave off working, and live from the labor of others:

> There is no sincere public opinion that a man should work for his daily bread if he can get it for nothing. Indeed, it is just the other way: public opinion has been educated to regard the performance of daily manual labour as the lot of despised classes. The common aspiration is to acquire property and leave off working. (Shaw, *The Impossibilities of Anarchism*, Fabian Tract No. 45 [London: The Fabian Society, 1893], p. 14.)

Not only is the prosperity of one class always maintained at the expense of another class, but the love of money breeds, in both classes, the negative values of "Obsequiousness, servility, cupidity roused by the prevailing smell of money. When Mr Carnegie rattled his millions in his pockets all England became one rapacious cringe" (*M&S* 26). It is this degrading attitude toward prosperity that Shaw finds so repulsive.

In the Epistle Dedicatory to *Man and Superman,* Shaw notes that the opposite of idleness is to make one's life as useful as possible; this is one of the greatest joys a person can achieve:

> This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. And also the only real tragedy in life is the being used by personally minded men for purposes which you recognize to be base. (32)

Shaw's views and his presentations of the "Idle Rich" are amply reinforced through the three segments of *Man and Superman.* In the Epistle Dedicatory Shaw describes a society in which men want only to become rich so they may be idle, and women want only to be married and have children. Within the play itself Violet incorporates both the female urge to pursue the male, and the male urge to be rich and idle. Her "pursuit" of the male has occurred before the opening of the play, but Hector Malone, like Octavius

Robinson, has become little more than an unconscious parasite of a capitalistic society. Neither of these men has any realistic conception of what the struggle to survive means, and if it were not for the social support structure they have inherited, they would be doomed to quick elimination from the evolutionary struggle. They are the ultimate effete of their society, the hopelessly helpless, without intellect, without any practical skills, and without the drive to survive in a struggle for existence, and Hector's unrealistic insistence that he wants to earn his own living does little more than confirm his impotence. Apart from the fact that they lack intellect as well as vitality, they prefigure the decadence and inability to act intelligently that defines some of the characters in Schnitzler's *Der einsame Weg*. The function of Hector and Octavius in the play, apart from the comic effects they provoke through their solipsism and lack of realism, is to demonstrate how decadent capitalism has become, when the struggle to survive and improve has been replaced by utter ineffectuality.

Violet, however, incorporates more fully than the other characters the ethic of capitalism and of privilege, and her marriage to Hector is her means of access to this privileged society, and to a life of leisure. She, unlike Hector, is accustomed to struggle, to fight for what she wants, and is determined not to lose it; however, her mode of survival is as doomed to destroy the society in the end as is Hector's, for she is fighting for a life of privilege that can only be accomplished through the poverty of the many. She consequently tells Hector: "You can be as romantic as you please about love, Hector; but you mustnt be romantic about money.... as to facing a struggle and poverty and all that sort of thing I simply will not do it. It's too silly" (104). When Hector suggests that he could earn a living, she is horrified: "Do you mean to work? Do you want to spoil our marriage?" (104). Violet's struggle to become part of the "Idle Rich" is indicative of the middle classes struggling for upward mobility, and while Shaw previously suggested, tongue-in-cheek, that this sentiment was a "sensible" foundation for society, he ends by delivering a typically Shavian denunciation of a society with these priorities:

> the resolve of every man to be rich at all costs, and of every woman to be married at all costs, must, without a highly scientific social organization, produce a ruinous development of poverty, celibacy, prostitution, infant mortality, adult degeneracy, and everything that wise men most dread.(17)

John Tanner, too, belongs in the category of the "Idle Rich," and as the author of the "Revolutionist's Handbook," he displays his credentials, "M.I.R.C. (*Member of the Idle Rich Class*)" (211), as proudly as any author or scholar might display his degrees and titles. Tanner reinforces this perception by introducing himself to Mendoza, at the beginning of Act III, as "a gentleman: I live by robbing the poor" (114). Certainly this introductory exchange between Mendoza and Tanner emphasizes, in almost Brechtian fashion, how little

difference there is between a brigand and a gentleman; both make their living from the labors of others, and in the end these "others" are always the poor, the working class. Interestingly enough Tanner, the self-proclaimed revolutionary and iconoclast, nowhere in the play identifies himself as wanting to belong anywhere *but* in the upper or leisured class. George Watson, in a caustic analysis of the sixties' New Left movement in Britain, derisively defines the typical leader or philosopher of the New Left as a middle-aged revolutionary who

> continued to claim and to exercise a right to condemn the system that rewarded him handsomely and provided him with the free press and broadcasting system through which to condemn it.... The sage, in short, held revolutionary views, or at least enjoyed the reputation of holding them, without performing any revolutionary function. (36)

While Watson, himself a British conservative, is deliberately harsh regarding the New Left, his definition does explicate the position occupied by John Tanner in *Man and Superman.** The extent of Tanner's revolutionary ideas, as expressed in the play itself, includes defending a woman he at the time believes to be pregnant by an unknown lover whose identity she refuses to reveal. Tanner opposes conventional, class-oriented morality, but in no way spreads truly revolutionary ideas. Nor does he attempt to define himself at any time as an individual outside of or truly opposed to the class system, or to the social hierarchy that is dictated by wealth. There is little indication here that Tanner has taken the opening sentence of his own handbook seriously, that "A revolutionist is one who desires to discard the existing social order and try another" (213). The closest he comes to a redistribution of his own wealth is his offer to help young Hector financially when the latter rashly and idiotically decides to dispense with his father's fortune, and support himself and his new wife by working for a living.

There is another side, however, to Tanner's willing and public admission that he is a revolutionist who at the same time is a full member of the Idle Rich class. To give up one's own property and wealth would be nothing more than a futile gesture; if wealth and property are to be divided and shared, this must be done on a massive scale rather than by isolated individuals. A more appropriate use of individual wealth is to use it to promote the cause, and at the end of the play Tanner announces that any wedding gifts he and Ann receive "will be instantly sold, and the proceeds devoted to circulating free copies of the Revolutionist's Handbook" (208). Shaw presents Tanner from a satirical perspective on the one hand, as an individual who wants to be both a revolutionary and a gentleman, and as a genuine reformer on the

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* Heinrich Heine has been similarly classified by Werner Friederich as "a theoretical, parlor revolutionary . . . [with] a horror of the masses" (139).

other hand, who recognizes that for the present he will be more effective in his category of the idle rich than if he were to give away his money and position. But if Ann Whitefield is an incomplete woman-artist, Tanner is as incomplete and as ineffective as a revolutionary. He is, however, as stated earlier, Shaw's instrument for promoting revolutionary concepts to the public within the context of a social comedy. But if Tanner is often Shaw's mouthpiece, the author just as often distances himself from his protagonist by treating him satirically. Consequently Tanner, Mendoza and Straker discuss the spread of socialism in an ironic manner, suggesting that it is fast becoming a "fashionable," hence a hypocritical, or decadent, political position, and that this is its attraction for men like Tanner and Mendoza:

> MENDOZA:... We naturally have modern views as to the injustice of the existing distribution of wealth: otherwise we should lose our self-respect. But nothing that you could take exception to, except two or three faddists.
> TANNER: I had no intention of suggesting anything discreditable. In fact, I am a bit of a Socialist myself.
> STRAKER [*drily*]: Most rich men are, I notice.
> MENDOZA: Quite so. It has reached us, I admit. It is in the air of the century.
> STRAKER: Socialism must be lookin up a bit if your chaps are taking to it.
> MENDOZA: That is true, sir. A movement which is confined to philosophers and honest men can never exercise any real political influence: there are too few of them. Until a movement shews itself capable of spreading among brigands, it can never hope for a political majority. (116-17)

This conversation becomes even more of a parody in light of the later disclosure that Mendoza has actually set himself and his brigands up as a syndicate that has been purchased by the elder Hector Malone.

If idleness is one symptom of a decadent society for Shaw, any form of birth control is equally decadent because it inhibits the power of the Life Force, and Shaw therefore identifies contraception with degeneration of the race and with the passions of the "voluptuary," the individual for whom "the instinct of fertility has faded into a mere itching for pleasure" (225). The sex drive is, in Shaw's view, a functional part of the Life Force and not to be tampered with through birth control. Those who artificially interfere with and obstruct the workings of the Life Force will themselves end up its victims:

> The modern devices for combining pleasure with sterility, now universally known and accessible, enable these persons to weed themselves out of the race, a process already vigorously at work; and the consequent survival of the intelligently fertile means the survival of the partizans of the Superman. (225-26)

The view that "voluptuaries" and those who abuse the working of the Life Force will by their very nature weed themselves out of the evolutionary stream is an ascetic conception that is akin to that of Nietzsche, who also states that "Among men, too, the higher types, the lucky strokes of evolution, perish most easily as fortunes change. They are exposed to every kind of

decadence: they are extreme, and that almost means decadents" (*WM* 684)

Don Juan echoes Shaw's concern regarding the use of birth control, viewing it from a cataclysmic perspective as the mightiest opponent to the Life Force:

> The day is coming when great nations will find their numbers dwindling from census to census; when the six roomed villa will rise in price above the family mansion; when the viciously reckless poor and the stupidly pious rich will delay the extinction of the race only by degrading it; whilst the boldly prudent, the thriftily selfish and ambitious, the imaginative and poetic, the lovers of money and solid comfort, the worshippers of success, of art, and of love, will all oppose to the Force of Life the device of sterility. (158-59)

The failure of humans to exert their will, their sense of purpose and belief in mankind, results, as Shaw states repeatedly, in reverse evolution, or history as illusion; when the opposite happens, however, when people do will their own progress, then evolution can become a controllable, predictable force. This in turn leads to the possibility of realizing a super-human individual, and to building up a race of Supermen. Shaw freely admits taking the term "Superman" from the English translation of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* concept (*CPP* 1 303), but notes that "The cry for the Superman did not begin with Nietzsche, nor will it end with his vogue. But it has always been silenced by the same question: what kind of person is this Superman to be?" (216). Shaw's description is not synonymous with Nietzsche's although there are some points of comparison. Shaw believes that Superman-type qualities must be both physical and intellectual, "Some sort of goodlooking philosopher-athlete, with a handsome healthy woman for his mate, perhaps" (216). If nothing else, maintains Shaw, this definition, vague though it may be, is an improvement over the conventional view of superiority as determined by social class values; the superior individual within a capitalistic class system is the individual who has been "born" to occupy a certain station in life, and with this privilege of birth come also the perfect social manners, the social mask of the "perfect gentleman" or the "perfect lady." Shaw maintains that "The proof of the Superman will be in the living; and we shall find out how to produce him by the old method of trial and error" (216).

Shaw is aware that the hero or Superman cannot exist in isolation, but must be supported by the rest of society. The critical problem surrounding the historical hero has been a lack of support and a lack of affirmation of his heroic character by society, and this has prevented past heroes from effecting the permanent kind of social change that Shaw feels is essential to the progress of man. The social affirmation of heroism expresses itself through the conscious *will* of the people to better themselves, and to strive to achieve Superman characteristics. Shaw recognizes that man wants an ideal Superman, but is not, at present, willing to back up this desire with any full

commitment:

> Man does desire an ideal Superman with such energy as he can spare from his nutrition.... He is never without an array of human idols who are all nothing but sham Supermen. (225)

As humans we embody a vision of heroism and impose a substitution of Superman-like qualities onto the idols we choose to idealize; man, therefore, will "make no objection to the production of a race of what he calls Great Men or Heroes, because he will imagine them, not as true Supermen, but as himself endowed with infinite brains, infinite courage, and infinite money" (225). We look for and identify with the illusions of heroism, rather than pursue the actual qualities of the hero ourselves.

One of the more common misconceptions of superiority at the turn of the century was summed up by the cliché of the "stiff upper lip," the English tendency to view life and morality in terms of sports, "playing the game," and maintaining a stoical indifference to hardship and suffering. This is a hypocritical notion of heroism, and not one that can be embraced by Shaw's Superman.* In Act I of *Man and Superman* Shaw parodies this hypocritical stance in Octavius. When Violet confesses to being pregnant but will not reveal her lover's name, Tanner confronts a distraught Octavius who, his optimism collapsed in the face of his sister's impropriety, is nevertheless trying to maintain a "stiff upper lip":

> TANNER: My dear Tavy, your pious English habit of regarding the world as a moral gymnasium built expressly to strengthen your character in, occasionally leads you to think about your own confounded principles when you should be thinking about other people's necessities. The need of the present hour is a happy mother and a healthy baby. Bend your energies on that; and you will see your way clearly enough.
>
> [*Octavius, much perplexed, goes out.*]
>
> RAMSDEN [*facing Tanner impressively*]: And Morality, sir? What is to become of that?
>
> TANNER: Meaning a weeping Magdalen and an innocent child branded with her shame. Not in our circle, thank you. Morality can go to its father the devil.
>
> RAMSDEN: I thought so, sir. Morality sent to the devil to please our libertines, male and female. That is to be the future of England, is it?
>
> TANNER: Oh, England will survive your disapproval.

Tanner's point, speaking for Shaw here, is that a heroic stance means standing

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* Eksteins, in *Rites of Spring*, points to the vital place that sports occupied in the life of the English by the turn of the century: "Sports ... were to serve both a moral and a physical purpose; they would encourage self-reliance and team spirit; they would build up the individual and integrate him into the group. 'Athleticism is no unimportant bulwark of the constitution,' mused Charles Box, a cricket writer, in 1888. It 'has no sympathy with Nihilism, Communism, nor any other 'ism' that points to national disorder.' On the contrary, sport developed pluck, determination, and public spirit; sport, as the *Times* put it on the Monday after the English football final of 1899, was of great value 'in the battles of life.' " (121).

above the kind of conventional morality that condemns people for improprieties; this kind of false morality – or "herd morality" as Nietzsche would call it – merely impedes the work of the Life Force.

Shaw's view of heroism, then, is that great men do exist, but these heroes are always beaten by the common denominator of the hypocritical morality of the masses they both serve and lead. The world's great individuals are inevitably wasted and defeated because the people cannot – or will not – rise and respond to their heroism. The solution, for Shaw, as it has been for other Marxist theoreticians, is that the people must somehow be educated and elevated to the point where they all share in some measure the characteristics of the hero, of a Cromwell, a Napoleon or a Caesar:

> until the heart and mind of the people is changed the very greatest man will no more dare to govern on the assumption that all are as great as he than a drover dare leave his flock to find its way through the streets as he himself would. Until there is an England in which every man is a Cromwell, a France in which every man is a Napoleon, a Rome in which every man is a Caesar, a Germany in which every man is a Luther plus a Goethe, the world will be no more improved by its heroes than a Brixton villa is improved by the pyramid of Cheops. The production of such nations is the only real change possible to us. (224-25)

Shaw echoes Nietzsche's view of the "Ideal European," and his list of great men, including Caesar, Goethe and Napoleon, are the same as those selected by Nietzsche. Shaw and Nietzsche both see an almost irreconcileable opposition, as well, of the qualities of a hero or Superman, and the morality of the people, the masses.

In *Beyond Good and Evil* and in *The Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche suggests a two-tiered moral structure, consisting of a "master-morality" and a "slave-morality," that helps to define Shaw's conception of the Superman:

> The higher type of man creates his own values out of abundance of his life and strength. The meek and powerless, however, fear the strong and powerful, and they attempt to curb and tame them by asserting as absolute the values of the herd. "The revolt of the slaves in morals begins with resentment becoming creative and giving birth to values." (Copleston 7 II 176)

Nietzsche does away, here, with the myth that men are created equal, and judging from Shaw's lack of enthusiasm for "Proletarian Democracy," it would be fair to suggest that Shaw would be happy to endorse Nietzsche's point of view. Nietzsche sees a very basic difference in men, that some men have the moral strength to create their own values, whereas most people need to band together as a herd, and assume a group morality. When Nietzsche speaks of the *Übermensch* as being "Beyond Good and Evil," he means that a higher morality exists than that embraced by the majority; he is not necessarily saying, however, that his *Übermensch* is beyond any moral law:

> what he has in mind is rising above the so-called herd-morality which in his

> opinion reduces everyone to a common level, favours mediocrity and prevents the development of a higher type of man.... It is only the higher type of man who can safely go beyond good and evil in the sense which these terms bear in the morality of resentment. And he does so in order to create values which will be at once an expression of ascending life and a means of enabling man to transcend himself in the direction of Superman, a higher level of human existence. (Copleston 7 II 177)

Shaw, in turn, declaims that "the real Superman will snap his superfingers at all Man's present trumpery ideals of right, duty, honor, justice, religion, even decency, and accept moral obligations beyond present human endurance" (225).

Shaw and Nietzsche both view Christianity as the epitome of conventional, hypocritical morality,* and therefore a deadly opponent to vitality or the Superman concept. Christianity subverts the Superman by "depreciating the body, impulse, instinct, passion, the free and untrammelled exercise of the mind" (Copleston 7 II 177). Christianity enshrines a uniform, common morality that recognizes only the rational part of the human being, and not the dionysian, instinctive part of man. Being subject only to reason, Christianity denies half of human morality, and is thus a disintegrating rather than an integrating force. In *The Antichrist* Nietzsche states that "with God war is declared on life, Nature and the will to live! God is the formula for every calumny against this world and for every lie concerning a beyond!" (Copleston 7 II 178).

Nietzsche believed that Christianity was a belief already dying in the West, and that the acknowledgement that "God is Dead" was becoming commonplace. But with the passing belief in God and Christianity, the "breakdown of belief in the Christian moral values exposes man to the danger of nihilism, not because there are no other possible values, but because most men, in the West at least, know no others" (Copleston 7 II 180). Nihilism, however, could take different forms, and could also incorporate a positive element, "a pessimistic acquiescence in the absence of values and in the purposelessness of existence" (Copleston 7 II 180). Megill gives Nietzsche's anti-Christian stand an even more extreme focus, as he remarks that Nietzsche's perspective is "a statement of faith, albeit a negative faith. In announcing the death of God, Nietzsche is declaring his conviction that the present is in a state of absolute dereliction, that it lacks any redeeming features, anything that might allow us to reconcile ourselves to things as they are" (33). The positive or active nihilism, which is the "appropriate attitude for modern, and post-modern existence," suggests that rather than

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* Although Megill notes that in Nietzsche's case, "The great initiators of moral codes (most obviously, Jesus) escape his reproaches, for it is only the later rigidification that he objects to" (31).

"drawing back from the void, we dance upon it" (Megill 34). Nietzsche consequently prophesied that the twentieth century would see cataclysmic warfare as a result of the lack of belief, and as part of the search for a new ideology to believe in: "There will be wars such as there have never been on earth before. Only from my time on will there be on earth *politics on the grand scale.*" These wars, destructive as they would be, would "clear the way for a new dawn, for the transvaluation of values, for the emergence of a higher type of man. For this reason 'this most gruesome of all guests,' who stands at the door, is to be welcomed" (Copleston 7 II 180). Where for Nietzsche this kind of universal conflagration was a necessary prerequisite to the emergence of a higher form of humanity, Shaw, instead, warns that this kind of catastrophe may be the result if we do not affirm our faith and commitment to the Superman concept.

Nietzsche's Superman is defined in terms of the "Will to Power," for it is this will that distinguishes the master-morality from the slave-morality. And part of the will to power consists of the passion for knowledge, not in Hegel's sense of attaining ultimate self-knowledge or self-consciousness, but rather knowledge in the sense of mastery, of imposing order:

> We desire to schematize, to impose order and form on the multiplicity of impressions and sensations to the extent required by our practical needs. Reality is Becoming: it is we who turn it into Being, imposing stable patterns on the flux of Becoming. And this activity is an expression of the Will to Power. (Copleston 7 II 183)

The "flux of Becoming," is an aspect of the integration of the self, of integrating the rational as well as the passional elements of our personality. But in the will to power we integrate not only the fractured parts of our own personality, but seek to extend this organization to the universe as a whole.

Shaw also views the integration of one's personality as an essential component of the Superman. In a "survival of the fittest" ethos the people who survive are not those with the strongest passions, into which category Shaw places both the "glutton" and the "voluptuary," those whose passions for food, sex and other substances are of paramount importance. The survivors are those who can control their passions, and integrate them, in a Nietzschean sense, into a comprehensive personality that incorporates both feeling and reason. Shaw, however, gives Nietzsche's conception of integration a more materialistic, Marxist oriented reading: "the survival of the fittest means finally the survival of the self-controlled, because they alone can adapt themselves to the perpetual shifting of conditions produced by industrial progress" (226n).

Nietzsche adapted from Lamarck and Spencer, rather than from Darwin, his perspective on how evolution could help to control and integrate the fractured personality: "The essential factor in the vital process is precisely

the tremendous power to shape and create forms from within, a power which *uses* and *exploits* the environment" (*W* III 889). Nietzsche, however, opposed the optimistic conception of evolution as progress, using much the same argument that Shaw has stated regarding the fittest being the most self-controlled, not those with the greatest power or the greatest passions:

> the assumption that natural selection works in favour of the progress of the species and of its better-constituted and individually stronger specimens is unwarranted. It is precisely the better specimens which perish and the mediocre which survive. For the exceptions, the best specimens, are weak in comparison with the majority. Taken individually, the members of the majority may be inferior, but when grouped together under the influence of fear and the gregarious instincts they are powerful. (Copleston 7 II 186)

Shaw and Nietzsche are surprisingly alike here in stating that the individual hero is no match for the masses, the majority. Shaw noted that historical heroes were defeated by the conformity of the masses, and Nietzsche here states essentially the same concept.

If Shaw and Nietzsche see the hero as defeated by the masses, Hegel, on the other hand, views his *Weltgeschichlichen Individuen*, "World Historical" individual, as the interpretor for and the conqueror of his historical period:

> Public opinion contains everything false and everything true, and to find what is true in it is the gift of the great man. Whoever tells his age, and accomplishes what his age wants and expresses, is the great man of his age. (Quoted in Kaufman, *From Shakespeare* 120)

Hegel, like Nietzsche and Shaw, cites as examples of world historical individuals, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and Napoleon. These historical individuals, states Hegel, are "used" by the World-Spirit – much as modern ministers and theologians may speak of people being used as instruments of God – to enhance the progress of history. Hegel looks at world figures from an historical perspective to determine that they have been used as instruments of the World-Spirit, despite their individual passions, both positive and negative, their egos, their inconsistencies and at times cruelties. They are great because they have influenced the course of history in a positive way: "Nothing great ... is accomplished in this world without passion. But the passions of the great figures of history are used as instruments by the World-Spirit and exhibit the cunning of Reason" (Copleston 7 I 266).

World historical individuals are not necessarily themselves aware of the historical consequences of their actions, or of their importance within the historical process. Whatever Julius Caesar's own interests and motivation, "the cosmic Reason or Spirit in its 'cunning' used these interests to transform the Republic into the Empire and to bring the Roman genius and spirit to the peak of its development" (Copleson 7 I 266). Projecting Hegel's historical

view into the Stalinist era, Copleston states:

> It is certainly not absurd to claim ... that the historian is or ought to be more interested in what Stalin actually accomplished for Russia than in the psychology of that unpleasing tyrant. But Hegel's teleological view of history implies in addition, of course, that what Stalin accomplished *had* to be accomplished, and that the Russian dictator, with all his unpleasant characteristics, was an instrument in the hands of the World-Spirit. (7 I 267).

We might then defend Shaw, in his own advocacy of Stalin after his visit to the Soviet Union in 1931, in the same vein. Possibly Shaw recognized the cruelty, suffering and the millions of deaths caused by Stalin, but made his defense of the dictator, as Hegel well might have, contingent on the historical perspective that the process, however it was implemented, had to be accomplished. and that Stalin was merely the instrument necessary to fulfil the historical process. Michael Harrington, commenting on Stalin's totalitarian methods, concurs with Hegel's historical perspective that "one sees the rise of Stalin not as the work of diabolical conspirators but as a historical process." Harrington differentiates between historical process and morality, however, as he adds: "That is not to rationalize the attendant crimes in the name of necessity" (*Socialism* 73). Hegel's endorsement of world historical individuals lacks this moral distinction, and seems to endorse, rather, an after-the-fact philosophy that "might is right":

> a great revolutionary, for example, may be a bad man. But from the point of view of world-history his deeds are justified, for he accomplishes what the universal Spirit requires. And if one nation conquers another, its action is justified inasmuch as it is a moment in the dialectic of world-history, whatever moral judgments are passed on the actions of the individuals involved when they are considered, so to speak, in their private capacities. (Copleston 7 I 268)*

The critical difference, however, in the way Hegel viewed the hero as opposed to the perception of Shaw and Nietzsche, was that Hegel defined him as a potent force furthering the progress of history, whereas Nietzsche and Shaw both saw the great man, the "accidental Superman," as defeated by the moral conformity of the masses.

As a consequence of their disillusionment with the common or herd morality, both Nietzsche and Shaw look to a higher form of existence that would supersede or replace humanity as it presently exists. Nietzsche states that "Man is something which must be surpassed; man is a bridge and not a goal" (*W* II 445), but by this he did not mean, as Copleston explains,

> that man will evolve into Superman by an inevitable process. Superman is a myth, a goal for the will.... Superman cannot come unless superior individuals

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* The recent collapse of the Soviet Union certainly denies even Hegel's justification of greatness from an historical perspective, since these historical events have, after the fact, *not* justified Stalin as moving history forward.

> have the courage to transvalue all values, to break the old table of values, especially the Christian tables, and create new values out of their superabundant life and power. The new values will give direction and a goal to the higher man, and Superman is, as it were, their personification....Superman would be Goethe and Napoleon in one.... He would be a highly-cultured man ... skilful in all bodily accomplishments, tolerant out of strength, regarding nothing as forbidden unless it is weakness either under the form of 'virtue' or under that of 'vice', the man who has become fully free and independent and affirms life and the universe. (Copleston 7 II 187-8)

The notion that humanity must be replaced, that it is only one more stage in the evolutionary ladder, was not uncommon after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, but for some writers this resulted in a negative view of evolution, rather than a positive one. Samuel Butler, in *Erewhon* (1871), in some ways an early version of *Space Odyssey 2001*, described how man's inventions of limbs, of machine extensions to his being, could result in a turnabout of power where the machine threatens to become the master. H.G. Wells, in *War of the Worlds* (1896), shows the Martians attempting to replace man, because the Martians are a more advanced species, a "disembodied brain – an armless, legless body with a chinless, noseless face" (Henkin 262), indicative of the dominance of the body by the brain. These novels embody the same warning that Shaw has, that if we do not commit ourselves to the *moral responsibility* of saving our species, and possibly our planet, we, too, may be annihilated and replaced by a superior form of being.

Some twentieth-century artists, too, asserted their belief – or fear – that humanity could be replaced by superior life forms. In 1915, just into World War I, D.H. Lawrence posits a creative spirit that can exist separately, and independently, from the human race. Lawrence has Rupert Birkin, in *Women in Love*, brooding beside the body of his dead friend Gerald Crich, and contemplating the annihilation of humanity:

> God can do without man. God could do without the ichthyosauri and the mastodon. These monsters failed creatively to develop, so God, the creative mystery, dispensed with them. In the same way the mystery could dispense with man, should he too fail creatively to change and develop. The eternal creative mystery could dispose of man, and replace him with a finer created being. Just as the horse has taken the place of the mastodon. (469-70)

Evolution is inexorable, and does not require man at the centre. *Heartbreak House*, written at virtually the same time, presents a similarly prophetic warning about the passing of the human species, as Hector fiercely remarks, near the beginning of Act III: "Either out of that darkness some new creation will come to supplant us as we have supplanted the animals, or the heavens will fall in thunder and destroy us" (*CPP* I 578).

The recognition that there could be, and probably will be, life after man, represented a radical departure from the ideas of German Idealism. Schelling and Schiller had viewed life as originating in inorganic matter,

but its ultimate purpose or end was an absolute form of humanity. Wells, Butler, Lawrence and Shaw seemed willing to entertain the idea of a world without humanity, an historical concept within which man might only be one part or segment of the evolutionary process. The nature of the literature, however, is such that this conception of life after man is more in the form of a warning than a prophecy.

In *A Modern Utopia* (1905) Wells also posits a fictional successor to the present species, and mounts, as Leo Henkin states, a "scathing attack on imperialists and nationalists," because they "assume the existence of a best race – always their own – and conceive it their function to exterminate the inferior races" (Henkin 262). George Watson, a conservative, notes that elsewhere Wells himself also recommends extermination of inferior races to allow for the development of a future socialistic utopia:

> H.G. Wells, in *Anticipations* (1902), made in the bluntest terms a case for socialist extermination in the cause of racial fitness. Those "swarms of black, and brown, and dirty-white, and yellow people, who do not come into the new needs of efficiency" will simply have to go: "The world is a world, not a charitable institution, and I take it they will have to go. The whole tenor and meaning of the world, as I see it, is that they have to go." (132)

Those whom Wells lists as destined for extermination are, as Watson points out, the "incurables, alcoholics and persons with transmissible diseases, all of whom will have to be 'removed from being' " (132); Watson further argues that "This is a view highly compatible with *Das Kapital* and still more compatible with the totality of Marx's views recently unearthed by modern scholarship" (132). It was predictable that the scientific proof of human evolution, and the subsequent possibility of controlling evolution, should soon lead to the nationalistic hypothesis that the human race as it presently existed could be replaced, in time, by a vastly superior form of humanity derived from a "specific" race, a "pure" race, resulting, ultimately, in a "Master Race," with the foregone conclusion that "inferior" races would consequently need to be eliminated. This theory was eagerly embraced by writers and artists like Wagner, Gobineau, Förster and Chamberlain, as well as by the Nazi theorists of the Third Reich. Marx, as Watson has noted, also spoke of racial superiority and of the extermination of the inferior races as he distinguished "revolutionaries" from "ethnic trash" on racial grounds in his essays on "Hungary and Panslavism," and "Democratic Panslavism":

> Among all the nations and petty ethnic groups of Austria there are only three which have been the carriers of progress, which have played an active role in history and which still retain their vitality – the Germans, the Poles and the Magyars. For this reason they are now revolutionary.
>
> The chief mission of all the other races and peoples – large and small – is to perish in the revolutionary holocaust.... this ethnic trash always becomes and remains until its complete extermination or denationalization, the most

> fanatic carrier of counterrevolution, since its entire existence is nothing more than a protest against a great historical revolution. (*Russian Menace* 59, 64)

Neither Nietzsche nor Shaw, however, viewed the Superman in racist terms; in fact, both of them emphasized the desireability of cross fertilization of races to produce a superior being who would be the "good European." Surprisingly enough for a philosopher who was acclaimed as a precursor by the Nazis, Nietzsche in no uncertain terms stated his belief that the Germans had only attained their present level of civilization through mixing their blood with that of the Slavs:

> The Poles I considered the most gifted and gallant among Slavic people; and the giftedness of the Slavs seemed greater to me than that of the Germans – yes, I thought that the Germans had entered the line of gifted nations only through a strong mixture with Slavic blood. (Quoted in Kaufman, *Nietzsche* 284)

Kaufmann, in his study of *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, includes a chapter on "The Master Race" in which he proves conclusively that Nietzsche was strongly opposed to evolution along racial lines.

Shaw, too, emphasized that the Superman could reach his highest level of existence only through cross fertilization. Thus he recommended that "a robust, cheerful, eupeptic British country squire, with the tastes and range of his class," might be the ideal mating partner for a "clever, imaginative, intellectual, highly civilized Jewess," and that their son "might be very superior to both his parents," though he also doubted "that the Jewess would find the squire an interesting companion, or his habits, his friends, his place and mode of life congenial to her" (219). Distinctions based on class values were as inconsequential as those based on racial values, consequently the class system must not prohibit the mating of the healthiest specimens in the search for the Superman.

Critical to Shaw's conception of the Superman is the process for how the Superman will evolve and how development of a higher species of humanity can be controlled and maintained. The only way in which this process can be monitored, according to Shaw – and again this was not a new concept – is through selective breeding. It was from Nietzsche that Shaw adapted his own theory of breeding a race of Supermen; Nietzsche had suggested that the *will* was the connecting thread between selective breeding and a higher development of man: "what type of man shall be *bred*, shall be *willed*, for being higher in value.... Even in the past this higher type has appeared often – but as a fortunate accident, as an exception, never as something *willed*.... From dread the opposite type was willed, bred, and *attained*: the domestic animal, the herd animal, the sick human animal – the Christian" (Nietzsche, *Antichrist* 3.4). What for Nietzsche is the "herd animal," is for Shaw the common electorate, the mass of people that is cajoled

and flattered by the politicians, until they are elected. Out of this common mass will emerge at times an "accidental Superman," states Nietzsche, an exception to the rule; this individual is, "in relation to mankind as a whole, a kind of overman. Such fortunate accidents of great success have always been possible and *will* perhaps always be possible" (*Antichrist* 3.4). These "accidental Supermen" do not, however, further the progress or maintenance of human existence.

Shaw, like Nietzsche, acknowledges the existence of "accidental Supermen," but Shaw also looks for a Superman who is not accidental, whose advent and further advancement can be predicted and controlled, and who will, ultimately, replace rather than merely complement the human race as it presently exists:

> unless we are replaced by a more highly evolved animal – in short, by the Superman – 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. (242)

Shaw's description of these "accidental supermen" is similar to Nietzsche's description of the *Übermensch* as an exceptional individual who exists within his time because of his unique gift of integration. The *real* Supermen, though, are those individuals who will be the result of the controlled breeding process, of the "great central process of breeding the race: ay, breeding it to heights now deemed superhuman" (160), as Don Juan puts it. This breeding will result in a complete *body* of Supermen, who, through continued breeding, will ultimately change the nature of the world. In this light Shaw also perceives a new and expanded role for a socialistic form of government:

> The only fundamental and possible Socialism is the socialization of the selective breeding of Man: in other terms, of human evolution. We must eliminate the Yahoo, or his vote will wreck the commonwealth. (245)

Nietzsche, too, had arrived at the solution of breeding an *Übermensch* through his recognition of the need "to provide an incentive for man to raise his state of being, to cross the cleft from the animals to true humanity" (Kaufmann *Nietzsche* 325). "A doctrine is required," maintained Nietzsche, "strong enough to have the effect of *breeding*: strengthening the strong, paralyzing and breaking the world-weary" (*WM* 862). Kaufmann notes, however, that for Nietzsche, breeding is "at least as spiritual as it is physical," and that it is not a concept that actually affects his view of history, or opposes the doctrine of eternal recurrence: "The eternal recurrence was not meant to be a 'noble lie' and it has been seen that Nietzsche had the greatest scorn for such unholy means" (Kaufmann 325-25).

Shaw begins his own explication of the need for selective breeding by

emphasizing the deficiencies and outmodedness of Darwinism and Spencerism. Darwin's theory of evolution emphasized the random nature of evolutionary development, while Herbert Spencer's revision of Darwinism – which subsequently led to vitalism – made history an inevitable process. Shaw disparaged both of these options, and consequently ridiculed the portrait of Spencer in Ramsden's study as representing old, worn-out ideas.*

Shaw's disillusionment with the democratic process forced him to develop a viable alternative to, or an improvement of, democracy, and selective breeding was, for him, the answer, for this seemed the only method of raising the social and political consciousness of the masses sufficiently to make their participation in the governmental process a significant contribution. Being a responsible voter within a democracy requires the same qualities that we look for in the political leaders themselves, for voting represents delegating authority to others, and to delegate responsibly, the voter must "at least recognize and appreciate capacity and benevolence in others, and so govern through capably benevolent representatives" (25). "Plutocratic inbreeding," stated Shaw, had "produced a weakness of character that is too timid to face the full stringency of a thoroughly competitive struggle for existence and too lazy and petty to organize the commonwealth co-operatively" (25). The way in which Shaw then proposes to obtain an "electorate of capable critics" is through the breeding of an electorate of Supermen, for as he states in the "Revolutionist's Handbook":

> To that recurrent catastrophe we shall certainly come again unless we can have a Democracy of Supermen; and the production of such a Democracy is the only change that is now hopeful enough to nerve us to the effort that Revolution demands. (228)

The sections in the "Revolutionist's Handbook" in which Shaw discusses selective breeding reads much like Jonathan Swift's satirical "Modest Proposal" for improving living conditions in Ireland. Shaw refers to people as breeding "stock" in this document as he proposes to raise the level of humanity much as one would the qualities of a herd of cattle. Shaw advocates the selective breeding of the most physically and mentally fit men and women of England, which will have the effect of gradually improving human beings through successive generations, and moving society toward a time when a true race of Supermen may evolve. In recent years Margaret Atwood, in her chillingly dystopic novel of *The Handmaid's Tale*, follows the theory of

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* Shaw acknowledges that his own ideas, too, may become outmoded and conventional: "To younger men they are already outmoded; for though they have no more lost their logic than an eighteenth century pastel has lost its drawing or its color, yet, like the pastel, they grow indefinably shabby, and will grow shabbier until they cease to count at all, when my books will either perish, or, if the world is still poor enough to want them, will have to stand, with Bunyan's, by quite amorphous qualities of temper and energy" (34-35).

breeding, of matching "stock," to its ultimate conclusion, where as breeding priorities or qualities are increasingly valued, the humans who make up the breeding stock are just as increasingly depersonalized and dehumanized. As Atwood's protagonist writes, "We are two-legged wombs, that's all: sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices" (128).

Selective breeding, however, was only one part of any eugenics program, as has already been noted. The other part of the program deals with the elimination of the "undesireable" elements of society. This was again a common theme in the evolutionary literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The society of Robert Ellis Dudgeon's *Colymbia* (1873), uses infanticide to dispose of the unfit; that of Percy Greg's *Across the Zodiac* (1885) uses euthanasia; W.H. Hudson in *The Crystal Age* (1887) suggests means of preventing the unfit from being born by allowing only the women with special qualifications to marry and become mothers. George Du Maurier, in *The Martian* (1897), presents a society in which adults with any physical or mental defects voluntarily refrain from having children. H.G. Wells, in *A Modern Utopia* (1905), also sets up stringent rules and prerequisites for having children.

Shaw does not advocate, as other writers had and as the Nazis did 35-40 years later, the destruction of the weak, infirm and "inferior" elements of society. He does not fear that the weak and the infirm will affect the healthy specimens with their illness; he views this problem, rather, as self-correcting:

> When the conception of heredity took hold of the scientific imagination in the middle of the last century, its devotees announced that it was a crime to marry the lunatic to the lunatic or the consumptive to the consumptive. But pray are we to try to correct our diseased stocks by infecting our healthy stocks with them? *Clearly the attraction which disease has for diseased people is beneficial to the race.* If two really unhealthy people get married, they will, as likely as not, have a great number of children who will all die before they reach maturity. This is a far more satisfactory arrangement than the tragedy of a union between a healthy and an unhealthy person. [Italics mine] (218-19)

Shaw follows this chilling argument for the disposal of the unfit with the rationale that this method also allows for human errors in judgment, making it even superior to sterilization – though it may cost more:

> Though more costly than sterilization of the unhealthy, it has the enormous advantage that in the event of our notions of health and unhealth being erroneous (which to some extent they most certainly are), the error will be corrected by experience instead of confirmed by evasion. (219)

In an eerie kind of way Shaw's comments here almost read like a post-mortem analysis and critique of the Nazi experiments with eugenics, rather than an original proposal made 35 years before the event. These views must, as Shaw stated in his letter to Walkley, be taken as a "point of view,"

but even within this context they seem extreme, although, considering the various eugenics solutions being offered at the time, Shaw's is actually one of the more conservative options. Shaw is not very specific, however, as to what degree of unfitness or inferiority would actually constitute a "disease," and his only suggestion for dealing with those who are physically healthy but have no superior qualities, is that they will, through attrition, end up in workhouses, the refuse heaps of the human factories.

Having established the need and the method for breeding the Superman, Shaw turns his attention to how this procedure may be initiated. He suggests, first of all, establishing a "State Department of Evolution" that will exist to plan and implement the necessary breeding experiments. Shaw envisages a more than adequate supply of subjects willing to take part in the experiments, due to various possible incentive programs, which would provide these subjects with an improved standard of living, and even encourage them to produce more than one child: "If a woman can, by careful selection of a father, and nourishment of herself, produce a citizen with efficient senses, sound organs, and a good digestion, she should clearly be secured a sufficient reward for that natural service to make her willing to undertake and repeat it" (246). After initial experiments prove successful, he proposes that selective breeding should eventually become an increasingly lucrative element of private enterprise. If government "would pay for birth as it now pays for death" (246) it would help improve the standard of living at the same time that it would promote selective breeding by way of promoting "human stud farm[s]," which could be, for the sake of the prim and the conventionally proper, "piously disguised as a reformed Foundling Hospital," to make it more socially acceptable. These stud farms would be properly inspected and regulated. There would be some waste, states Shaw, some sub-standard products that would need to be discarded, and in his proposal for dealing with sub-standard humans Shaw's satire of the English economic system is as keen as Swift's was for the Irish:

> when an ordinary contractor produces stores for sale to the Government, and the Government rejects them as not up to the required standard, the condemned goods are either sold for what they will fetch or else scrapped: that is, treated as waste material; whereas if the goods consisted of human beings, all that could be done would be to let them loose or send them to the nearest workhouse. But there is nothing new in private enterprise throwing its human refuse on the cheap labor market and the workhouse; and the refuse of the new industry would presumably be better bred than the staple product of ordinary poverty.

Selective breeding already takes place in England, as Shaw points out, but for the wrong reasons, and by the wrong subjects. The aristocracy is socially pressured or "forced" to marry aristocracy, and in the case of royalty this pressure to marry the "right" individual of royal blood amounts to legislated pressure: "Let those who think the whole conception of intelligent

breeding absurd and scandalous ask themselves why George IV was not allowed to choose his own wife whilst any tinker could marry whom he pleased?" (248). If this concept were merely extended to all people, and the prerequisites determined by physical and intellectual standards rather than by class and blood lines, the plan for selective breeding could be easily instituted. Shaw's proposal for the Superman is based on both racial and class equality, and if racial cross-breeding were likely to produce the healthiest offspring, the same must be true for class cross-breeding: "there should be no possibility of such an obstacle to natural selection as the objection of a countess to a navvy or of a duke to a charwoman" (219). In recommending this kind of cross-class breeding, Shaw again negates the myth of the "purity" of human bloodlines:

> we know now that there is no hereditary 'governing class' any more than a hereditary hooliganism. We must either breed political capacity or be ruined by Democracy, which was forced on us by the failure of the older alternatives. (24-25)

While he expects early opposition to his proposal from people with outdated views on decency and morality, Shaw believes there is at the same time "a general secret pushing of the human will in the repudiated direction; so that all sorts of institutions and public authorities will under some pretext or other feel their way furtively towards the Superman" (246). Thus the will inherent in the Life Force concept continues to operate within people and groups in an unconscious manner.

If breeding of the Superman is to be successful, and consistently applied, it will mean the abolition of property and of marriage as we know it; Shaw is not, however, espousing the socialist perspective here, as he moves from the materialistic perspective of history to the metaphysical. In the "Revolutionist's Handbook" Shaw/Tanner talks about an ultimate evolutionary view of history that is greater than its individual parts. Within this long, Hegelian view the socialist perspective has its own part to play, and may help the forward progress of history, but in the long run socialism becomes merely one of the elements, not the process itself. The human race must aspire further than mere physical/social/economic well-being; it is in this philosophical and spiritual realm, the heightening consciousness of human existence, that Hegel had previously emphasized, where Shaw finds a primarily political and economic doctrine to be insufficient. Referring to his previous assertion that the human race evolved from the implicit belief in a *deus ex machina* God to a scientific disbelief in the deity, Shaw now remarks that man "will presently see that his discarded formula that Man is the Temple of the Holy Ghost happens to be precisely true, and that it is only through his own brain and hand that this Holy Ghost, formally the most nebulous person in the Trinity, and now become its sole survivor as it has

always been its real Unity, can help him in any way" (217). Only reason, action and spirituality, the complete individual working as one, can affect a true evolutionary development. And for this evolutionary development to occur and to continue, the social and class emphasis on property, on marriage, and on conventional morality and behavior must be swept away in favor of the greater goal. "If the Superman is to come," states Shaw:

> he must be born of Woman by Man's intentional and well-considered contrivance. Conviction of this will smash everything that opposes it. Even Property and Marriage, which laugh at the laborer's petty complaint that he is defrauded of "surplus value," and at the domestic miseries of the slaves of the wedding ring, will themselves be laughed aside as the lightest of trifles if they cross this conception when it becomes a fully realized vital purpose of the race. (217-18)

Intelligent breeding must, in order to be successful, cut across all rules of property, class society and morality. All people, regardless of race or class, must be regarded as equal in the search for physical and intellectual/philosophical excellence. While Shaw believes that this kind of cross-breeding is integral to the development of the Superman, he does not, however, suggest that the countess should *marry* the navvy, or the duke the charwoman, or the intelligent "Jewess"* the eupeptic English squire. Rather, breeding must take place outside the bounds of marriage; breeding consists of a strictly physical union for purposes of producing superior offspring. Nor do potential parents need to love, or indeed even like, each other, since temperament has nothing to do with the quality of the children:

> There is no evidence that the best citizens are the offspring of congenial marriages, or that a conflict of temperament is not a highly important part of what breeders call crossing. ... In conjugation two complementary persons may supply one another's deficiencies.... [m]arriage, whilst it is made an indispensable condition of mating, will delay the advent of the Superman as effectually as Property, and will be modified by the impulse towards him just as effectually. (219)

In Shaw's introduction to Act III of the play, he likewise suggests that a heterogeneous mixture of class and temperaments, as represented by the brigands, is a more suitable basis for an emerging Superman than the rigid class structure of England, notwithstanding the fact that within this heterogeneity there are one or two "*it would be wiser to kill without malice in a friendly and frank manner; for there are bipeds, just as there are quadrupeds, who are too dangerous to be left unchained and unmuzzled*" (110). Those unfit to live are not only the diseased, but also the criminal elements of society, although Shaw's comment here that some of the brigands are too dangerous to live is far from being borne out in the action of the play,

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* Although *Webster's New World Dictionary* describes the term "Jewess" as "often a patronizing or contemptuous term," Shaw here appears to be using it in a neutral context.

where the brigands demonstrate ineffectuality far more than they do danger.

Although Shaw insists that the breeding process cannot be tied to marriage, he does not want to eliminate marriage itself. Shaw argues that marriage, or domesticity, must be separated from the procreational process, so that sex would occur between designated partners to further creative evolution, while domestic arrangements, or marriage, would continue to exist as they had heretofore, but without physical sexuality. Sex, or conjugation, as Shaw refers to a sexual relationship, is "essential to nothing but the propagation of the race; and the moment that paramount need is provided for otherwise than by marriage, conjugation, from Nature's creative point of view, ceases to be essential in marriage" (221). Shaw argues that sex and domesticity are, in fact, separate functions within society, and that the sexual act is impersonal, even a form of warfare between the partners; therefore, there should be little public opposition to separating sex from marriage. He does not indicate how he would propose to control sex or conjugation *within* the domestic arrangement, since within a controlled breeding environment it would become more and more important that offspring be generated *only* by means of designated partners. Shaw's lack of sexual contact with his own wife has been documented by himself as well as by others. Shaw stated, in 1930, that: "As man and wife we found a new relation in which sex had no part. It ended the old gallantries, flirtations, and philanderings for both of us" (Silver 135). Arnold Silver asserts that the decision to abstain from sex was not Shaw's, but his wife Charlotte's: "The Irish Don Juan had been more than caught: he had been emasculated" (135). Whatever the reason, it would appear that in the "Revolutionist's Handbook" Shaw is arguing the distinctions between "domesticity" and "conjugation" from his own experience rather than from the common norm. So Shaw separates the institution

> into its two functions of regulating conjugation and supplying a form of domesticity. These two functions are quite separable; and domesticity is the only one of the two which is essential to the existence of marriage, because conjugation without domesticity is not marriage at all, whereas domesticity without conjugation is still marriage (222).

In Act II of *Man and Superman* Tanner delivers a speech about the stormy, jealous relationships of mothers and daughters, attributing all these interpersonal problems to the institution of marriage. This is done partly tongue-in-cheek on Shaw's part, since in his stage directions he has Tanner "*working himself up into a sociological rage*" and thus largely subverting his demagoguery through comedy, this is, along with Tanner's initial defense of Violet having a baby out of wedlock, as close as Shaw felt he could come within the parameters of the social comedy, to proposing a separation between sex and marriage:

> Oh, I protest against this vile abjection of youth to age! ... A horrible procession

> of wretched girls, each in the claws of a cynical, cunning, avaricious, disillusioned, ignorantly experienced, foul-minded old woman whom she calls mother, and whose duty it is to corrupt her mind and sell her to the highest bidder. Why do these unhappy slaves marry anybody, however old and vile, sooner than not marry at all? Because marriage is their only means of escape from these decrepit fiends who hide their selfish ambitions, their jealous hatreds of the young rivals who have supplanted them, under the mask of maternal duty and family affection. (96-7)

Obviously the separation of sex and marriage would solve the opposition by birth of parents to children, and would resolve conflicts within all filial relationships, since children born outside the bounds of marriage would become the responsibility of the state, rather than of their natural parents.

In the hell scene of the play Don Juan becomes the spokesman for the separation of sex from marriage. He reiterates the familiar Shavian refrain that "Marriage is the most licentious of human institutions" and that "The confusion of marriage with morality has done more to destroy the conscience of the human race than any other single error" (156). The institution as it exists is not only unnecessary, but evil, since it makes prisoners of the partners, and specifically of the man: "If the prisoner is happy, why lock him in? If he is not, why pretend that he is?" (157). Juan also enunciates Shaw's views on the contradictory and misleading functions of sex and marriage, which in his mind should be treated separately, because they are, in themselves, distinct and contradictory concepts. Marriage is a social, almost impersonal institution: "the woman of noble birth marries as the man of noble birth fights, on political and on family grounds, not on personal ones" (162). Sex, while just as impersonal, is a natural, passionate force that has nothing at all to do with "romantic vowings and pledging and until-death-do-us partings.... the sex relation is not a personal or friendly relation at all" (160). Juan does, however, identify the sex drive with the Life Force, because of its instinctual passion and its procreational function:

> In the sex relation the universal creative energy of which the parties are both the helpless agents, overrides and sweeps away all personal consideration, and dispenses with all personal relations. (161)

Nietzsche, while not wishing to separate sex and marriage, otherwise viewed the institution similarly to Shaw. In the chapter of *Zarathustra* titled "Of Child and Marriage," Nietzsche insists, like Shaw, that sex must have procreation as its specific purpose:

> *"Nicht nur fort sollst du dich pflanzen sondern hinauf"* – you should propagate yourself not only onward but upward: procreation need not be a senseless continuation of an essentially meaningless story and an addition of more and more zeros – it can really be a creation.

And like Shaw again, Nietzsche views marriage as an often debasing – or at least debilitating – experience for the male because of the inequity that

a marriage partnership often results in:

> Worthy I deemed this man and ripe for the sense of the earth: but when I saw his wife, the earth seemed to me a house for the senseless....This one went out like a hero in quest of truths, and eventually he conquered a little dressed-up lie. His marriage, he calls it. (quoted in Kaufmann, *Nietzsche* 310)

However, Nietzsche also recognized the need for marriage, and declared that where the marriage partners were both exceptional individuals their union could lead to the future emergence of an *Übermensch*:

> Although "for the most part two animals find each other," marriage *can* be creative and "holy": namely, when two single ones meet – two who have *become* single ones by overcoming the duality of the inward and the outward, thought and action, ideal and reality ... mutually intensifying the "longing for the overman," eager that their children should not only represent another generation but surpass them, their marriage is a true marriage, and they have something to live for together: educating themselves, each other, and their children. (Kaufmann, *Nietzsche* 311)

Shaw developed his theory of selective breeding because of his opposition to a democratic form of government, and in presenting his Superman as an alternative to democracy, he is at one with both Nietzsche and Carlyle:

> There is no public enthusiast alive of twenty years' practical democratic experience who believes in the political adequacy of the electorate or of the bodies it elects. The everthrow of the aristocrat has created the necessity for the Superman. (248-49)

However, the Superman was also to lead back to democracy, for an electorate of capable, responsible voters would not only recognize the most capable leaders, but would presumably also have the wisdom, altruism, and sense of social responsibility to vote for, support and aid those most capable of governing. This assumption, however, leads right back to Hegel's conception of the Absolute Idea and the ideal State in which all citizens will "freely" support their State hierarchy because they have developed the awareness and the wisdom to recognize it as right. Shaw's more materialistic approach to the ideal state, with man accelerating the natural process through selective breeding, finally allows even less freedom to act and think as an individual than does Hegel's philosophy.

In *Man and Superman*, Don Juan most completely represents the qualities that Shaw feels his supermen would display. Shaw was attracted to the Don Juan figure because of the rebelliousness and the lack of conformity which the historical Don Juan incorporated. However, Shaw chooses to emphasize this rebelliousness as a philosophical posture in his protagonist, rather than as the traditional, egoistic, libidinous drive of the historical Don Juan:

> Philosophically, Don Juan is a man who, though gifted enough to be exceptionally capable of distinguishing between good and evil, follows his own instincts

> without regard to the common, statute, or canon law ... and defends himself by fraud and force as unscrupulously as a farmer defends his crops by the same means against vermin. (10)

Shaw's Don Juan or Superman is, despite his rebellion, a highly *moral* individual, whose goal is to distinguish between *universal* good and evil, rather than the standards that have been set down by human/social institutions. By implication, then, he "finds himself in mortal conflict with existing institutions" only insofar as these institutions are hypocritical or morally defunct.

Where the historical Don Juan risked Hell to enjoy himself on earth – which implies an explicit belief in a traditional heaven and hell – Shaw portrays a Don Juan whose heroism consists of "daring to be the enemy of God" (11). Shaw considers Mozart's Don Juan as "the last of the true Don Juans," because it was followed by Goethe's version of the Don Juan figure in the form of Faust, where the implications of the heroic individual went "far beyond mere love-making into politics, high art ... and recognition of an eternal womanly principle in the universe" (12).

Shaw's Don Juan or Superman continues this more modern vision of portraying the rebellious hero as someone far more significant, for good or for evil, than a vain lover who risks all, merely for sensual gratification. Don Juan is both a "philosopher" and an "artist," the philosopher being characterized by thought and reflection, and the artist by feeling. Both philosophers and artists may belong in the category of the "genius," the outstanding individual who incorporates a higher consciousness within himself, and is also driven by forces that are greater than himself, by "Nature." In the grip of the Life Force, the artist/philosopher stands, instinctively, over and beyond the bounds of conventional propriety; he is, like Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, "beyond good and evil." The Life Force also drives the exceptional woman, who has been

> selected by Nature to carry on the work of building up an intellectual consciousness of her own instinctive purpose. Accordingly, we observe in the man of genius all the unscrupulousness and all the "self-sacrifice" (the two things are the same) of Woman ... a sublime altruist in his disregard of himself, an atrocious egotist in his disregard of others. (20)

The artist is driven by the forces of Nature just as the Woman is, and in the artist, the "Woman meets a purpose as impersonal, as irresistible as her own; and the clash is sometimes tragic. When it is complicated by the genius being a woman, then the game is one for a king of critics.... what is true of the great man who incarnates the philosophic consciousness of Life and the woman who incarnates its fecundity, is true in some degree of all geniuses and all women" (20-21).

What "Nature" demands of the artist is a "driving toward truth" (22),

and this moral impetus arms him against the "common man's danger of capture" by a woman. The woman genius is also protected by nature against "the common woman's overwhelming specialization" (22), the drive to capture a male. The exceptional individuals, the artist male and the artist female, have the power and the drive to move human existence forward, but are also, by their nature, so driven by their own work that they sacrifice everything else to it. This is where, as Shaw explains, "the clash is sometimes tragic" (20), but the artist, by the nature of his work, tends to add to the consciousness of mankind; if the union of artist with the exceptional woman is accompanied by Shaw's *will* to progress, it can function to move humanity, and succeeding generations, toward the race of Supermen.

Jack Tanner is by all standards an incomplete, unsatisfactory representative of Shaw's ideal Superman. Not only is his rhetoric continually deflated by Ann, but no one in the play treats his ideas at all seriously; Ramsden occasionally opposes Tanner's unconventional views with his own very conventional opinions, and Octavius naively takes exception to some of Tanner's views on love and sex, but Tanner is not, finally, much of a rebel. He is, however, inordinately successful, in Act I, in his verbal maneuvering to obtain Ramsden's reluctant support for Violet, and his articulate adroitness, from a stagecraft point of view, produces some of the finest comic moments of the play. These comedic elements save the play from becoming too philosophically pedantic and top heavy; conversely, from the philosophic point of view, the play as comedy often prevents Shaw from espousing his theories as consistently as he might have liked to, and this is possibly why he introduced the "Don Juan in Hell" scene. Arnold Silver is certainly correct when he notes that the scene in which Violet is first chastised for her "immorality," and then turns the tables on the other characters, is "undoubtedly the best comic moment in Act I, when Tanner as advocate of enlightened morality is himself deflated after he has congratulated Violet for being pregnant" (125). But Tanner is only defeated after he has had his own supreme moment of articulate success against Ramsden. Until this moment Tanner has been the unquestioned voice of liberalism and of revolutionary idealism; he has adroitly shamed Ramsden into supporting Violet:

> ANN: Dont be so headstrong, Jack. She's upstairs.
> TANNER: What! Under Ramsden's sacred roof! Go and do your miserable duty, Ramsden. Hunt her out into the street. Cleanse your threshold from her contamination. Vindicate the purity of your English home. I'll go for a cab.
> ANN [*alarmed*]: Oh, Granny, you mustnt do that.
> OCTAVIUS [*broken-heartedly, rising*]: I'll take her away, Mr Ramsden. She had no right to come to your house.
> RAMSDEN [*indignantly*]: But I am only too anxious to help her. [*Turning on Tanner*] How dare you, sir, impute such monstrous intentions to me? I protest against it. I am ready to put down my last penny to save her from being

driven to run to you for protection.

TANNER [*subsiding*]: It's all right, then. He's not going to act up to his principles. It's agreed that we all stand by Violet. (64-5)

Tanner again turns the tables on Ramsden when the latter suggests that to find Violet's lover they have only to look for a "man of notoriously loose principles," which, according to his sense of propriety, could be Tanner himself; Tanner, on the other hand, counter supposes that they look for "any man notoriously lacking in self-control" (66), or Ramsden. Ramsden's choking reply is aptly summed up by Tanner: "Guilt itself could not stammer more confusedly" (66).

Shaw uses the episode of Violet's pregnancy to dramatize once more the point that he makes in the "Revolutionist's Handbook," that breeding can and should be separated from marriage. In the drama the characters wrongly assume that Violet is not married, which allows Shaw the opportunity to dramatize the social reaction to pregnancy without marriage, which Tanner summarizes as follows:

TANNER [*with angry sarcasm*]: Dreadful. Appalling. Worse than death, as Ramsden says. [*He comes to Octavius.*] What would you not give, Tavy, to turn it into a railway accident with all her bones broken, or something equally respectable and deserving of sympathy? (64)

With the conventional opposition to unmarried pregnancy defined, Tanner expands on some of the advantages, from the Revolutionist's point of view, of what Violet has done: "We suddenly learn that she has turned from these sillinesses [amateur painting and music] to the fulfilment of her highest purpose and greatest function – to increase, multiply, and replenish the earth" (64). Later he justifies Violet's lover with the words: "He's done his part, and Violet must do the rest" (65). He opposes any move to force the unknown lover to marry Violet, on the ground that if he is a "scoundrel," as Ramsden and Octavius have passionately declared, then "we are to marry your sister to a damned scoundrel by way of reforming her character?" (65). Violet, he states, "is going to do the State a service; consequently she must be packed abroad like a criminal until it's over."

The climax to this scene is especially noteworthy because Shaw has built up to it so carefully. After Tanner's splendid and prolonged defense of Violet, her final response to this solicitude culminates in one of the finer comic moments of modern drama:

TANNER:... you were right to follow your instinct; ... vitality and bravery are the greatest qualities a woman can have, and motherhood her solemn initiation into womanhood; and ... the fact of your not being legally married matters not one scrap either to your own worth or to our real regard for you.

VIOLET [*flushing with indignation*]: Oh! You think me a wicked woman, like the rest. You think I have not only been vile, but that I share your abominable opinions. Miss Ramsden: I have borne your hard words because I knew you would be sorry for them when you found out the truth. But I wont bear such a horrible insult as to be complimented by Jack on being one of the wretches

> of whom he approves. I have kept my marriage a secret for my husband's sake. But now I claim my right as a married woman not to be insulted.
>
> ...
>
> TANNER [*in ruins*]: I am utterly crushed. I meant well – I apologize – abjectly apologize.
>
> VIOLET: I hope you will be more careful in future about the things you say. Of course one does not take them seriously; but they are very disagreeable, and rather in bad taste, I think. (82-3)

Violet speaks for the rest of the characters as she states they do not take Tanner's opinions seriously. This propensity of the characters in the play to give Tanner's views little credence, is the primary difference between the play itself and the hell scene, for in the dream sequence the ideas *are* treated seriously. Silver notes that despite Tanner's descendence from Don Juan, as far as the progression from man to Superman is concerned, "Shaw was recreating Don Juan as Tanner's successor, not his ancestor" (148). If Tanner reveals only glimmerings of the Superman, Don Juan is the more complete representative of what the Superman would be like.

Writing within the parameters of a turn-of-the-century social comedy, Shaw created in Tanner a protagonist who was living within a conventional social and moral structure, and within an imperfect, capitalistic economic environment, factors that were in themselves significant enough to prevent the active acceptance of the ideas which he so freely espouses. If Tanner's ideas are not favourably received by the characters in the play, however, they are nevertheless argued as Shavian ideas in front of the English theatre-going public. Whatever the actual events of the play, then, Shaw is disseminating revolutionary ideas that were important to him, and which he believed the public should be thinking about. Like Brecht, Shaw emphasized that theatregoers were to think and evaluate while watching a play, rather than simply being caught up in the emotional impact of the drama. In his Preface to *Mrs. Warren's Profession* Shaw states: "So effective do I find the dramatic method that I have no doubt I shall at last persuade even London to take its conscience and its brains with it when it goes to the theatre, instead of leaving them at home with its prayerbook as it does at present" (*Plays*, III 7).

The pursuit of the artist/genius by the woman/genius, or of Tanner by Ann, is introduced in the first scene of the play. Ramsden's outrage at Tanner's temerity in showing up at his house gives Octavius the opportunity to remark, with greater perception than is his normal wont: "He's [Tanner] so desperately afraid of Ann. There must be something the matter" (47). This comment initiates Tanner's attempts to escape the female, and Ann's contrivances to trap him, which make up the main plot of the play. Brustein comments that "The joke on Tanner, of course, is that all the time he is theorizing about the Life Force, he is being ensnared by it, until he is finally enmeshed in

that machinery whose cogs and screws he has so accurately described. Thus, Shaw demonstrates how the self-conscious theoretician is caught up, against his will, by an unconscious, irrational force" (219).

Shaw as usual provides a detailed description of Tanner in his stage directions, and it becomes immediately evident that Shaw applies a number of qualities to Tanner that would be indicative of what he views as "Superman"-like qualities; the reference to Tanner being *"possibly a little mad"* is almost certainly a reference to Nietzsche who had died, insane, only two or three years earlier:

> [Tanner's] *lofty pose of the head, and the Olympian majesty with which a mane, or rather a huge whisp, of hazel colored hair is thrown back from an imposing brow, suggest Jupiter rather than Apollo. He is prodigiously fluent of speech, restless, excitable ... possibly a little mad.... A sensitive, susceptible, exaggerative, earnest man: a megalomaniac, who would be lost without a sense of humor.* (47)

While this description is overly generous to Tanner when compared to his actual portrayal in the play, it does provide some indication to the director that Tanner would be best played as a contradiction of appearance and action, by someone whose high seriousness could be effectively undercut by his own dialogue as well as that of others in the play. Tanner does reveal himself as perceptive on some counts, but fairly dense in other areas. His perception of Ann appears to be based on a dialectic of attraction and repulsion, the repulsion possibly originating, as Octavius has suggested, out of fear, the fear of being captured by her. He is fully aware of how she connives and manipulates, but is not *consciously* aware, until told by his Chauffeur, that all this manipulation is for the purpose of ensnaring him. Tanner storms at Ramsden when he first enters the house:

> You dont know Ann as well as I do. She'll commit every crime a respectable woman can; and she'll justify every one of them by saying that it was the wish of her guardians. She'll put everything on us; and we shall have no more control over her than a couple of mice over a cat. (48)

Tanner's apparent ability to see through Ann and her manipulations suffers a severe blow in Act II, where he catches her out in a blatant lie about forbidding her sister, Rhoda, to be alone with him. Ann easily convinces Tanner that it was really her mother who originated this order, leading to his oratory on the relationships of mothers and daughters, and fathers and sons, a theme central to Shaw's Superman concept, suggesting the separation of marriage from sex, and a move from a family structure to a wider social structure. Tanner's easy acceptance of Ann's argument, and his ensuing wrath against mothers, is also a necessary ploy to further the plot of the play, since it leads him to rashly and preposterously, so he thinks, propose that Ann travel with him "to Marseilles and across to Algiers and to Biskra,

at sixty miles an hour" (97), a proposal which she promptly accepts. Mrs. Whitefield then discloses Ann's further deception of Tanner by suggesting that Tanner should take Rhoda for a drive occasionally.

How much of a revolutionary, or even a true iconoclast, is Tanner in this play? Certainly he opposes nineteenth-century conventional values. In an early speech to Ramsden, he talks about shame or repression, admitting that even he is not entirely free of it:

> Yet even I cannot wholly conquer shame. We live in an atmosphere of shame. We are ashamed of everything that is real about us; ashamed of ourselves, of our relatives, of our incomes, of our accents, of our opinions, of our experience, just as we are ashamed of our naked skins.... The more things a man is ashamed of, the more respectable he is. Why, youre ashamed to buy my book, ashamed to read it: the only thing youre not ashamed of is to judge me for it without having read it; and even that only means that youre ashamed to have heterodox opinions. (52)

At the same time, Tanner points out very quickly that despite his lack of social repression, or more accurately because of it, he is more real, more honest than Ramsden is: "You know perfectly well that I am as sober and honest a citizen as yourself, as truthful personally, and much more truthful politically and morally" (53). Shaw attempts here to distinguish, not as successfully as he might, between the morality of Tanner, which is the morality "beyond good and evil," the morality of a Superman, and the conventional, hypocritical morality of the common individual, the "herd-morality" of Ramsden. Tanner later expands somewhat more effectively on this distinction through his conversation with Ann regarding his pubescent dawning of "moral passion." Although Tanner cultivates his self-image as a revolutionary with confidence and "impudence," and calls Ramsden an outdated Polonius, in action Tanner is not as much an exceptional individual or a revolutionary as he might like to think. He appears a rebel and an iconoclast in contrast to the extreme conventionality of the characters he plays against, but not when he is measured against the book he has purportedly written, the "Revolutionist's Handbook."

Unlike Brecht's Baal, a true rebel who rejects social values and morals, and identifies, instead, with natural and primitive elements, Tanner's identification, despite his rebellious posturing, is very much with and against the people of his own social class and standing. In his first private conversation with Ann, Tanner reveals his own vulnerability to conventional social and moral standards as he and Ann reminisce about his youthful pranks. He is very aware of his own sense of respectability as he painfully recalls: "You are going to remind me that some of the most disgraceful [exploits] did [happen].... A sensitive boy's humiliations may be very good fun for ordinary thickskinned grown-ups; but to the boy himself they are so acute, so ignominious, that he cannot confess them – cannot but deny them

passionately" (71). Tanner also notes that his youthful experiences with Ann ended at the time when the prime directive of the Superman made itself felt, the assertion of moral passion: "the change that came to me was the birth in me of moral passion; and I declare that according to my experience moral passion is the only real passion" (73). Tanner speaks of a passion for morality in the same terms that Brecht's Galileo speaks of the passion for knowledge:

> TANNER: Our moral sense! And is that not a passion? Is the devil to have all the passions as well as all the good tunes? If it were not a passion – if it were not the mightiest of the passions, all the other passions would sweep it away like a leaf before a hurricane. It is the birth of that passion that turns a child into a man.
>
> ANN: There are other passions, Jack. Very strong ones.
>
> TANNER: All the other passions were in me before; but they were idle and aimless – mere childish greedinesses and cruelties, curiosities and fancies, habits and superstitions, grotesque and ridiculous to the mature intelligence. When they suddenly began to shine like newly lit flames it was by no light of their own, but by the radiance of the dawning moral passion. That passion dignified them, gave them conscience and meaning, found them a mob of appetities and organized them into an army of purposes and principles. My soul was born of that passion. (73-4)

Moral passion is the integrating force that overwhelms all other forces; when it incorporates the strengths of the artist with the drive of the Woman's instinct, it can create the moral Superman, who demolishes the idols of conventionality, and stands over and above the common or "herd" morality.

The way to a higher morality for both Nietzsche and Shaw involves the initial destruction of the common morality; thus, Tanner says to Ann:

> I am ten times more destructive now than I was then. The moral passion has taken my destructiveness in hand and directed it to moral ends. I have become a reformer, and, like all reformers, an iconoclast.... I shatter creeds and demolish idols. (74)

The need to destroy and demolish creeds and idols is also endemic to Nietzsche's *Übermenschen* or philosophers, who have found

> ihre Aufgabe, ihre harte, ungewollte, unabweisliche Aufgabe, endlich aber die Größe ihrer Aufgabe darin gefunden, das böse Gewissen ihrer Zeit zu sein. Indem sie gerade den *Tugenden der Zeit* das Messer vivisektorisch auf die Brust setzten, verrieten sie, was ihr eigenes Geheimnis war: um eine *neue* Größe des Menschen zu wissen, um einen neuen ungeganenen Weg zu seiner Vergrößerung. Jedesmal deckten sie auf, wieviel Heuchelei, Bequemlichkeit, Sich-gehen-lassen und Sich-fallen-lassen, wie viel Lüge unter dem bestgeehrten Typus ihrer zeitgenössischen Moralität versteckt, wie viel Tugend *überlebt* sei. (*Werke* 104).*

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* "have found their task, their hard, unwanted, inescapable task, but eventually also the greatness of their task, in being the bad conscience of their time.

By applying the knife vivisectionally to the chest of the very *virtues of their time,* they betrayed what was their own secret: to know of a *new* greatness of man, of a new untrodden way to his enhancement. Every time they exposed how much hypocrisy, comfortableness,

In a Nietzschean manner Tanner appears to be both reformer and rebel, and he views his role as reformer to be destructive before it can become a truly integrating, constructive force; consequently, his present purpose is "to shatter creeds and demolish idols."

Walter Benjamin likewise places the nature of destruction into a modernistic, revolutionary perspective that is similar to Tanner's, emphasizing that destruction is an essential element in the creation of new opportunities, new roads leading to future goals:

> The destructive character sees nothing permanent. But for this very reason he sees ways everywhere. Where others encounter walls or mountains, there too, he sees a way. But because he sees a way everywhere, he has to clear things from it everywhere. Not always by brute force; sometimes by the most refined. Because he sees ways everywhere, he always positions himself at crossroads. No moment can know what the next will bring. What exists he reduces to rubble, not for the sake of the rubble, but for that of the way leading through it. (Quoted in Frisby, 1)

Tanner's iconoclasm, however, lives much more in his speech than in his actions, and in this respect he is the imperfect Superman whose effectiveness lies in the propagation of ideas, rather than in their enactment.

In Act II, Tanner defines the role of the artist for Octavius, again in terms of both destruction and creation. He points to the artist as the individual who can help society – or the "state" as Hegel would call it – move to a higher level of consciousness, of self-awareness: "the artist's work is to shew us ourselves as we really are. Our minds are nothing but this knowledge of ourselves; and he who adds a jot to such knowledge creates new mind as surely as any woman creates new men" (62). But there is a cost to creation, as there is to morality. In Hegel's conception of history as "change," he cautions that this change encompasses both creation and dissolution, and that the dissolution or destruction is a vital element of the creative process. So here Shaw makes much the same point, as Tanner enunciates the cost of creation:

> In the rage of that creation he [the artist] is as ruthless as the woman, as dangerous to her as she to him, and as horribly fascinating. Of all human struggles there is none so treacherous and remorseless as the struggle between the artist man and the mother woman. Which shall use up the other? that is the issue between them. And it is all the deadlier because, in your romanticist cant, they love one another. (62)

Despite Tanner's railing against Ann, however, his dialogue reveals that he has, subconsciously at least, pre-planned or arranged that he should become one of Ann's guardians, and this suggests that he is not only the

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letting oneself go and letting oneself drop, how many lies lay hidden under the best honored type of their contemporary morality, how much virtue was *outlived*" (*Beyond Good and Evil* #212).

pursued, but also an instigator. During his first conversation with Ramsden, Tanner states: "It's all my own doing.... I said the proper thing was to combine the experience of an old hand with the vitality of a young one" (49). This statement in itself is both one of reform, and of self-culpability, but not the statement of a man who has no interest in the woman in question. When Ann directly asks if he is refusing her as a ward, he again admits his own hand in the decision: "I let myself in for it; so I suppose I must face it" (58). Nor does Tanner reject social values sufficiently to simply walk away from the responsibility thrust on him by a will. Instead, as he said, it was his own fault, or even his own arrangement. Tanner's almost overt suggestion here to Whitefield that he be included as a guardian of Ann's is neither as accidental or as ingenuous as it at first seems to be. In making the suggestion to Whitefield to combine the experience of the old with the vitality of the young, Tanner certainly meant the combination of Ramsden with himself; subconsciously at least, if not consciously, he was already at that time planning for and arranging Ann's future.

This point is significant, for while Shaw paints the "Woman" as the Life Force, the aggressor and pursuer of a suitable mate, he also shows Tanner as recognizing, and actively involved in, this selection process before the play even opens, and this despite Shaw's own assertion to Walkley that the play "is to deal with sexual attraction ... in a society in which the serious business of sex is left by men to women, as the serious business of nutrition is left by women to men" (17). This statement is typically tongue-in-cheek on two counts: Tanner certainly does not leave the business of sex to women, nor do the women leave nutrition to the domain of the men, as is amply evidenced by Violet's insistence that her marriage to Hector be sanctioned and accompanied by the full financial weight of the elder Hector's fortune. Much of Tanner's rhetoric is pretense (but the pretense significantly heightens the comic action of the play); his display of wanting to avoid Ann and wanting to avoid responsibility for her is just that, a display, although at this point Tanner is still under the misconception that all Ann wants is "to load up all her moral responsibilities on me, and do as she likes at the expense of my character" (49). Ann herself recognizes Tanner's reluctance to let go of others when she states: "You are always abusing and offending people; but you never really mean to let go your hold of them" (79).

Rather than actually avoiding Ann or refusing the role of guardian, Tanner persistently points to the moral obligations the will places him under:

> Yes, and what will she say to that? what d o e s she say to it? Just that her father's wishes are sacred to her, and that she shall always look up to me as her guardian whether I care to face the responsibility or not. Refuse! You might as well refuse to accept the embraces of a boa constrictor when once it gets round your neck. (49)

Tanner, in fact, allows himself to be reluctantly persuaded to accept a role that he himself had a major hand in planning. And when Ramsden confronts Tanner with the fact that Whitefield's will was made under Tanner's influence, the latter neither denies nor truly regrets this, simply pointing out that the monetary allowances of Whitefield to Ramsden and to Octavius were also made under his influence. When he tells Octavius: "You wont get it [the money], my boy, if Ramsden upsets the will" (50), he is really admitting that he does not want the will changed, and that his outrage is little more than an act. Tanner also, in a display of "Superman"-like morality, points to the fact that Ramsden alone would be an inadequate guardian for Ann, because there is "Not an idea in his head later than eighteensixty. We cant leave Ann with no other guardian to turn to" (51). And perhaps most importantly of all, in his first speech alone with Ann, Tanner admits that "I should miss you if I lost you" (69); if Tanner is the victim, the pursued one, he is playing a role as much as Ann is.

This appears to point, then, to a process in which the sexual initiative between the two main characters of the book, Tanner and Ann, is initiated or shared equally by both characters, but for the sake of the comedy and of the audience the roles must be played to the utmost. The subtle irony of the play is that Tanner actually takes the traditionally feminine role in this relationship, that of *pretending* that the other individual is the initiator, when in fact he has been working behind the scenes with the same objective in mind. Shaw debunks, at the same time as he reinforces, the polite pretense, the "feeble romantic convention that the initiative in sex business must always come from the man" (17).

This is also evidence of another case in which the artist betrays the theorist. As theorist Shaw viewed woman as the aggressor, the pursuer. As artist he consciously attempted to corroborate the theory, but the evidence of the art itself betrays him. He is not quite true to his own play as he points out that even in "Shakespear's plays the woman always takes the initiative," that "In his problem plays and his popular plays alike the love interest is the interest of seeing the woman hunt the man down" (17). And Shaw innocently sees no reason why woman would act any differently in his own plays: "I find in my own plays that Woman, projecting herself dramatically by my hands (a process over which I assure you I have no more real control than I have over my wife), behaves just as Woman did in the plays of Shakespear" (18).

But Tanner's suspicions of Ann, and his ambivalence with regard to entering the game of the pursuer and the pursued, dates back to a time when they were both children, when he first discovered how manipulative she could be, and how "diabolically clever at getting through his [Tanner's] guard and surprising his inmost secrets" (70). For her part Ann also admits to

Tanner that at bottom she used her cunning and contriving in the hope that she would ultimately discover, or perhaps induce, some truly heroic qualities in him: "I never wanted you to do those dull, disappointing, brutal, stupid, vulgar things. I always hoped that it would be something really heroic at last" (71).

Shaw portrays his two major characters, Ann and Tanner, as personalities in a state of change, incomplete in themselves, but leading toward the fullness of the "Woman-artist" and the "Superman." If Tanner's exploits as a child were pranks instead of acts of heroism, the heroic quality is nevertheless evident in his aspirations, his philosophical considerations of morality, and his gradually accumulating recognition that he is an instrument in the hands of the Life Force, and must become a willing, active partner in its work through his union with Ann.

Tanner does not recognize himself as the artist figure in this play, but his allusion to Octavius as artist is an ironic, and not extremely subtle, indication to the audience that the real artist is Tanner (and through a slightly further imaginative extension, the audience is led to realize that the real artist is Shaw himself, for Shaw encouraged directors to give the Tanner character the clothes and mannerisms that Shaw himself sported). Ann later mock's Octavius's pseudo artistry as a "poetic temperament," a "very nice temperament, very amiable, very harmless and poetic ... but it's an old maid's temperament," to which Tanner replies: "Barren. The Life Force passes it by" (204). Certainly it would take a mighty leap of the imagination indeed to view Octavius in the terms in which Tanner describes the artist:

> TANNER: ... But you, Tavy, are an artist: that is, you have a purpose as absorbing and as unscrupulous as a woman's purpose.
>
> OCTAVIUS: Not unscrupulous.
>
> TANNER: Quite unscrupulous. The true artist will let his wife starve, his children go barefoot, his mother drudge for his living at seventy, sooner than work at anything but his art. To women he is half vivisector, half vampire. He gets into intimate relations with them to study them, to strip the mask of convention from them, to surprise their inmost secrets, knowing that they have the power to rouse his deepest creative energies, to rescue him from his cold reason, to make him see visions and dream dreams, to inspire him, as he calls it.... Since marriage began, the great artist has been known as a bad husband. But he is worse: he is a child-robber, a blood-sucker, a hypocrite, and a cheat. Perish the race and wither a thousand women if only the sacrifice of them enable him to act Hamlet better, to paint a finer picture, to write a deeper poem, a greater play, a profounder philosophy! (61-2)

Some of the words Tanner uses here, like "vivisector," "vampire," and "blood-sucker," evoke associations of a growing tradition of vampire literature, which Lord Byron had been instrumental in originating, and with which Shaw would have been familiar through his reading of Byron. Byron himself was the prototype for the vampire-artist that Tanner describes here, for, according to Mario Praz, Byron's psychological abuse of his half-sister Augusta

– with whom he had almost certainly, though final proof is not available, carried on an incestuous relationship that resulted in the birth of a child – and his wife Annabella – in front of whom he openly flaunted his relationship with his sister – was apparently "for art's sake," to create the conditions of extreme human trauma that would become the artist's material (73). Praz identifies Byron as one of the " 'fatal' heroes of Romantic literature" (74), and his description of this personality, which evokes associations with Julian Fichtner of Schnitzler's *Der einsame Weg* as well, is virtually identical to Tanner's description of the artist:

> They diffuse all round them the curse which weighs upon their destiny, they blast, like the simoon, those who have the misfortune to meet with them ... they destroy themselves, and destroy the unlucky women who come within their orbit. Their relations with their mistresses are those of an incubus-devil with his victim. (Praz 74-5)

Tanner, however, is not a hero of Romantic literature, and his speech in this instance represents another example of Shaw's ability to distance himself from his hero, as well as to identify with him. The element of the "fatal" hero/artist becomes an ironic commentary on Tanner's view of himself.

By the end of Tanner's speech, moreover, he appears to have forgotten that it is *Octavius* whom he has been crediting with being a ruthless artist. The irony of Octavius – or even of Tanner – being associated with the vampire artist is heightened when we remember that Shaw, too, lived with and was supported by his mother until he was almost middle-aged, and might himself be identified with the artist who uses others unscrupulously to further his own art. Despite the ironic associations within the play itself, however, Shaw is also serious about this view of the artist, and he repeats his argument for the vampire-artist almost word for word in his "Epistle Dedicatory" to Bingham Walkley (20), using George Sand as an example of the woman artist, woman genius. The artist, in adding to the general sum of knowledge, of consciousness or universal self-knowledge, promotes an evolutionary development of mankind, a self-consciousness that is akin to the kind of development that Hegel had envisioned. Shaw sees the relationship between the woman as genius and the male artist as potentially destructive; if, as Tanner insists here, "Of all human struggles there is none so treacherous and remorseless as the struggle between the artist man and the mother woman" (62), then the outcome is almost bound to be destructive. The dialogue regarding the male artist and the female genius is crucial to the play because it again focusses Shaw's dichotomy, his ambivalence, between history as progress and history as illusion, or regress. The union between the exceptional male and the exceptional female is fraught with danger; if it succeeds, it may lead humanity to new heights, along the path to the Superman, to Hegel's Absolute Idea; if it fails, it can lead to regress, to the nihilism of

eternal recurrence.

Shaw clarifies this dichotomy through the growing intensity of the final scene between Ann and Tanner, where the pursuer finally corners her prey. Tanner's growing recognition of his role in Ann's life is evidenced through his comparison of himself to the condemned man, and his acknowledgement that "We do the world's will, not our own. I have a frightful feeling that I shall let myself be married because it is the world's will that you should have a husband" (203). Shortly thereafter he proclaims "The Life Force. I am in the grip of the Life Force," a concept which Ann clearly does not understand, as she replies "it sounds like the Life Guards." The dialogue continues to build toward its inevitable climax:

> TANNER [*despairingly*]: Oh, you are witty: at the supreme moment the Life Force endows you with every quality. Well, I too can be a hypocrite. Your father's will appointed me your guardian, not your suitor. I shall be faithfull to my trust.
> ANN [*in low siren tones*]: He asked me who I would have as my guardian before he made that will. I chose you!
> TANNER: The will is yours then! The trap was laid from the beginning.
> ANN [*concentrating all her magic*]: From the beginning – from our childhood – for both of us – by the Life Force.
> TANNER: I will not marry you. I will not marry you.
> ANN: Oh, you will, you will.
> TANNER: I tell you, no, no, no.
> ANN: I tell you, yes, yes, yes.
> TANNER: No.
> ANN [*coaxing – imploring – almost exhausted*]: Yes. Before it is too late for repentance. Yes.

Ann's reference to the Life Force here represents her next to final ploy to psychologically force Tanner's acquiescence, as she earlier demonstrated no "rational" knowledge of the concept. The intensity of this scene, which could be played as a pseudo tragedy, is meant to convince the audience that the stakes are far greater than those of a conventional marriage proposal, however coerced that proposal may be. The scene exemplifies Shaw's contention that the battle between the female and the male artist is one that has historical consequences, and not one that can be passed off in terms of "happiness," for as Ann says, "It [marriage] will not be all happiness for me. Perhaps death" (206). Tanner suggests the potentially devastating historical consequences when he states, "If we two stood now on the edge of a precipice, I would hold you tight and jump.... Let it kill us" (206). The entry of all the other characters on stage at this point brings the play back into the realm of comedy, and gives Ann the excuse to faint, a swoon which may or may not be real, but allows her to carry off her final contrivance, her final lie, the announcement that she has promised to marry Tanner, with little opportunity, in all the confusion, for him to protest. Shaw has deftly combined, in this scene, superb social comedy with the significance of his Life Force

theory.

In the context of Tanner's campaign against the necessity of marriage in Act I, it is ironic – and somewhat of a "cop-out" on Shaw's part – that in the final act Tanner does not propose "mating" with Ann for procreational purposes, but rather submits meekly to the conformity of marriage. The alternative relationship outside the bonds of marriage would have suited Shaw's theories of the Life Force and of sex outside of marriage for purposes of procreation, much more accurately. Instead, Shaw maintained the convention of marriage in this play, but minimized its significance as much as he could by having Tanner insist on a civil rather than religious ceremony, few attendees, and the immediate conversion of any gifts into their monetary value to help circulate the "Revolutionist's Handbook." Given Ann's ability to manipulate, however, and her own conventional social values, we should not consider any of these demands on Tanner's part as the final word.

Trying to summarize the world of Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*, to find a synthesis in the theory and the drama, is an intimidating prospect, because this dramatist and theoretician is made up of so many contradictions, not all of which are easily resolved. Eric Bentley points out how, in his first edition of *A Century of Hero Worship*, he praised Shaw because "he combined the good points of democracy with the good points of authoritarianism, while being miraculously immune from the faults of both" (14). It is difficult to see how it is possible to do this, but Bentley's comment certainly uncovers one of Shaw's major areas of contradiction. How is it possible for a socialist to hate democracy, for an individual who dedicated as much of his time and energy to the cause of socialism as Shaw did, to advance a theory of "heroic vitalism"? Arnold Silver, whom I have quoted a number of times in this chapter, psychoanalyzes *Man and Superman* as Shaw's method of dealing with his recent marriage to Charlotte Payne-Townshend; the theory of the Life Force and the Superman is Shaw's psychological fantasy for rationalizing the non-sexual nature of his marriage. While elements of Shaw's theory are surely derived from personal experience, this analysis nevertheless appears far too tenuous and incomplete. Silver also recognizes strong misogynistic and misanthropic elements in the play, suggesting that Shaw "meanly characterizes the heroine and emasculates all of the men," that he "upholds civilization ... in order to disparage women's contribution to it, yet when he speaks directly of civilization he betrays his hostility against the human race itself" (161).

Certainly there is hatred in Shaw's play and in his theoretical writing. He speaks of hating both the rich and the poor, of the necessity of killing some of the brigands in *Man and Superman* out of hand, and categorically states that "the majority of men at present in Europe have no business to be alive" (*Perfect Wagnerite*, *WBS*, XIX 227). Possibly Shaw takes too seriously

Tanner's conviction that with the dawning of moral passion there is first of all the need to destroy before there can be the potential to create. However, Shaw's hatred is against injustice and inequality, not against people. He hates the situations, the conditions, that force people to act meanly and beneath themselves. And if in his theory of the Superman Shaw advocates a form of heroic vitalism, the final objective of this theory is to be a democracy of Supermen. Shaw's hatred for democracy is not for the process, but for the inability of the majority of people to contribute meaningfully to a democracy.

But the contradictions evident in the playwright and in his work are also the contradictions of the period, and help illuminate the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Politically, Shaw recognizes that democracy, socialism and authoritarianism are all defective forms of governing people, and in this recognition he prefigures the twentieth-century battles that will be fought in the names of these ideologies. For his own answer Shaw reaches back to the optimism of Hegel, to the belief that if humanity can evolve, spiritually as well as materialistically, that men will then be capable of ruling themselves democratically, because they will have developed the humaneness necessary to making decisions for the general rather than for the individual good. In advocating this conclusion, however, Shaw falls into the same trap that Hegel and many utopian writers fall into; how is it possible for people to want what is good for everyone, and still maintain freedom and individuality?

Nor is Shaw certain that this optimistic goal can ever be attained, and if it cannot, there exists the very real danger that humanity will regress instead of progress, that the ultimate truth may be represented more by Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence than it is by Hegel's theory of the Absolute Idea. These were the ambiguities and complexities facing the intellectuals on the threshold of the new century, and Shaw in his personality and his writing embodies these contradictions more completely than virtually any dramatist of his period.

Chapter 3

History and Cultural Criticism: Arthur Schnitzler's *Der einsame Weg* and T.S. Eliot's *The Family Reunion*

Arthur Schnitzler and T.S. Eliot were both diagnosticians of the moral and spiritual conditions of their time, and of a universal human condition. Both viewed humanity in terms of a spiritual wasteland, an existence in which loneliness and insecurity, as well as an excruciating sense of the meaninglessness of life, predominated. Eliot's lines from "The Hollow Men," "Alas! / Our dried voices, when / We whisper together / Are quiet and meaningless / As wind in dry grass / Or rats' feet over broken glass," sum up the agonizing isolation, the complete insulation of the self from others, that is also so much a part of Schnitzler's *Der einsame Weg* (1901). Both Eliot and Schnitzler are likewise pre-occupied with the painful self-consciousness, the introspective nature of their primary protagonists, though in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Prufrock's self-analysis and dissection of his insecurities may be even more ruthless than that of von Sala in *Der einsame Weg*. Both artists regard empty, meaningless sexual encounters, the "meaningless eroticism and soulless mechanization of instinctive drives" (Urbach 19), as symptomatic of a universal spiritual malaise. Nowhere is this more clearly documented than in Eliot's Prufrock persona, who has "known the arms already, known them all,"* a weariness with the futility of casual sex that Schnitzler expresses most emphatically in his *Anatol* sequence and in the round robin of sexual encounters that make up the play *Reigen*. Both Schnitzler and Eliot, moreover, recognize that meaning and vitality, for individuals and for societies, are closely related to a significant perspective of time and history. In both of these artists, the emptiness, the futility of the lives of their characters is a reflection of the artist's own perspective on history, on politics, and on the sense of the impending catastrophe. George Watson has claimed that "no age of Western literature has been obsessed

* Peter Ackroyd notes that in Eliot's early poetry "the images are of broken glass, of doorways and alleys, of the sound of children's voices, all of them gaining their power from a note of sexual adventure or sexual arousal which fills the observer with unease" (38).

by a myth of catastrophe as the early twentieth century, in its largely secular way, was obsessed by it" (102); Watson refers, here, specifically to English literature between World War I and World War II, but certainly Schnitzler shares with Eliot this extreme concern with a cataclysmic future, and both artists dissect the deplorable failure of their respective cultures to recognize the historical significance of time running out. Moreover, their characters cover up the emptiness of their existence, their futile response to historical necessity, through non-stop role-playing and disguises. For Prufrock "There will be time, there will be time / To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet," two lines of poetry that combine the artifice and play-acting of what should be human interaction with the meaninglessness of any significant historical continuum. In *Der einsame Weg* the same futility is displayed by Stephan von Sala, who off-handedly proposes marriage to a passionate young woman when all his plans and interests are not in the future, but in the past. Time past and time present become one and the same for some of the characters in this play, for they cannot distinguish between the past and the present, except insofar as the past represents the time when they envisioned success and hope for the future, both of which are unfulfilled because of selfish decisions these individuals made to try to ensure that very success. In deserting his pregnant fiancé, Julian Fichtner rationalized that he was doing what was necessary to save himself and his artistry. He never achieves the necessary self-recognition to realize his error, and repeats the same mistake twenty years later when, in a similarly egotistical and selfish bid to find meaning in life, he tells Felix the story of the boy's real parentage, in the hope that this will tie Felix to him. Both of these actions are staged, artificial bids to grasp at life, at vitality, equivalent to Prufrock's preparing of "a face to meet the faces that you meet," but without Prufrock's recognition that this is merely an attempt to disguise, through artifice and self-deceit, the fact that there may be nothing vital left to grasp. But Schnitzler as much as Eliot emphasizes the tendency — even the debilitating pre-occupation — of his culture toward introspection, debilitating because this self-consciousness appears to arrest the possibilities of any direct action. Both artists, then, focussed on the decadence, the lack of vitality, the sense of illusion that pervaded their respective cultures, and both artists related this crippled form of existence to the lack of a vital historical perspective. Where Schnitzler's analysis of turn-of-the-century Viennese society maintains its objectivity through different points of view incorporated within the various characters, Eliot obtains the same kind of depersonalized objectivity through his Prufrock persona, and the various "voices" that are represented in his poetry, which function almost like dramatic personalities; Eliot's poems have often been characterized as dramatic monologues, and the move from poet to dramatist was a natural evolution of his ability to project different points of view within

his art.*

For turn-of-the-century Viennese artists the terms "conservative" and "liberal" did not mean as much as did the word "aesthetic," for it was through aesthetic values and appreciation that artists like Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, Klimt, Kokoshka and Gustav Mahler defined themselves in opposition to what was basically a conservative society, a society characterized by the "loss of direction [and] the fading of values" (Francis 2). Mark Francis characterizes the intellectual "innovators" of this period, those who might be said to comprise the Viennese "Enlightenment," as "non-historical," because they "broke their bonds with nineteenth-century liberal culture" (2).

Austria's politics and economics were determined by its emperor, Franz Joseph, whom Frederic Morton characterizes as "Manipulative, industrious, strangely modest, inexorable, decent [and] stodgy" (7-8). Staunchly conservative, Franz Joseph was the master of band-aid solutions, viewing inaction and political inertia as the key to maintaining the stability of his vast and diversified empire; he manipulated, compromised and procrastinated in order to cover up problems rather than to resolve them. Despite his extreme conservatism, however, Franz Joseph promoted an advanced educational system, which was designed to promulgate the German language and German culture in all regions of the empire as a method of stabilizing and controlling individual nationalisms.† His son and heir apparent, the Crown Prince Rudolf, was thus given an excellent liberal education – as were many of the upper- and upper-middle-class gentlemen of the empire – which in turn led him to policies and political opinions that were directly opposed to his father's conservatism. The Austrian educational policy thus allowed for the flowering of the Viennese Enlightenment, an upsurge in the arts, in science, psychology and philosophy that eventually would have had to lead to social and political changes, although S.A.M. Adshead has also recognized a "strong traditionalist streak in the Viennese enlightenment" (22). Political change, therefore, was slow to take effect, for the Viennese intellectuals, despite their heightening of aesthetic consciousness, had very little political impact, or even political awareness, due to the peculiar nature of Viennese society, where the strength

* Walter Stein's elaboration on the dramatic structure of Eliot's poetry is certainly worth noting: "From his early monologues, 'Prufrock' and 'Portrait of a Lady,' to 'Gerontion' and the elaborate interplay of voices and memories in *The Waste Land*, his poetry is already intensely dramatic. 'The Hollow Men' and the 'Ariel' poems may be seen as dramatic poems of conversion, obliquely related to *Sweeney Agonistes* (1926-7), an experimental, fragmentary 'melodrama' (as Eliot himself describes it), hovering between secular satire and religious terror mystery, which impresses itself with a haunting, disciplined flamboyance of its own" (438-9).

† Philip Manger notes that had it not been for Austria's advanced educational system, "writers like Rilke, Kafka, Horvath and Roth would not have been part of German literature" (49).

of the feudal estates, with their own dependent, separate communities, prevented the growth of a strong proletarian culture within either the estates or the urban areas. Consequently, the strength of the growing proletarian movements that were exerting more and more political pressure and promoting greater class consciousness in other countries, was lacking in Austria, and Viennese intellectuals were therefore denied opportunities in politics and business:

> In the nineteenth century, capitalism had come, but it was an elitist capitalism; industry had come, but it was a low-technology, sweated-labour industry.... Business was either bureaucratic or banausic. Much more attractive were the professions and the services: medicine, law, education, entertainment and information.... Vienna generated a uniquely intellectual bourgeoisie. Cut off from the land by the great estates, it was quite different from the Russian *intelligentsia*, which was really only a counter bureaucracy and the illegitimate branch of the aristocracy. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Vienna had become an intellectual cyclotron. It concentrated within itself a high percentage of the most intelligent and energetic people in the empire, and even from beyond it, denied them opportunities in politics and business, and so left them little to do but think. (Adshead 30-31)

Despite the progress in education and the professions, then, the paramount concern of the Habsburgs was to keep the disparate cultures of the empire together; the massive, static character of the dynasty appeared to be the most powerful force against the outbreak of individual nationalisms, and was consequently viewed as the most positive attribute of the empire by such writers as Franz Werfel; Franz Joseph symbolized the consummate embodiment of this inertia:

> for Werfel, the binding element of the monarchy was not merely that it provided continuity and permanence, and hence security, but that it was incapable of moving, changing and progressing; that everything within it was almost rigidly fixed, immutable and static. Its strength was "a wise and grandiose inertia which showed itself in its masterly ability to defer solutions, erode conflicts and let them crumble away." In the disrespectful vocabulary of the Austrian this inertia was characterised by the classical concept of muddling along (*Fortwursteln*). Thus the negative phenomenon of involuntary immobilism was converted into something positive, endowed with a deeply significant content and raised to a revelation of higher wisdom. Limitations and deficiencies became advantages and virtues; a cause or a symptom of an unstable political constellation was transformed into a cure for it. Werfel attributed the inertia to the consciousness "that every step, even the smallest, was a step towards the abyss." (Manger 49-50)

Where Hegel, and also Shaw, saw cultural movement, flux, any kind of change as essential to progress, the Habsburg conception, governed by its own special set of circumstances, was that change could only be dangerous, and would lead to catastrophe. Crown Prince Rudolf, a notable exception to this aura of equanimity with compromise and procrastination, did try to

work toward some liberal solutions to the problems facing Austria, but could not do so openly, since that would constitute opposing the official monarchical position; even his covert activities and opinions resulted in rumors of treason and sedition. Rudolf was, however, anxious to face and to attempt to solve problems, stating at a precocious age of fifteen the socialistic perspective that "The many poor rightly see their enemy in the few who consume their substance" (Morton 9), and later, that "A tremendous change has to come ... a social restructuring" (Morton 9). Rudolf recognized that economically, politically and territorially Austria was much less progressive than other great nations such as Italy, England, France, Germany and Russia, who were all adding territories to their colonial structures. However, while the general populace adored Rudolf, and emulated his elegant dress styles and his mannerisms, they remained for the most part unaffected by his political and cultural views, which, in any case, he could not express openly or unambiguously, because of his compromising position as heir to the throne. Rudolf's call, at an International Electric Fair in Vienna, to "Let an ocean of light and progress pour forth from these streets" (Morton 37) had little impact. Rudolf, like his father, was not above using manipulative means, as he opposed his father's reactionary policies with his own liberal arguments which he published, anonymously, in the *Neue Wiener Tagblatt*, of which his friend and confidante, Moritz Szeps, was the editor (Morton 36).*

Philip Manger has stated that the Habsburg empire was dominated by three main motifs or components: "supra-nationality, 'bureaucratism' and hedonism" (48). Austria's "supra-nationality" consisted of the attempt to supersede and transcend the individual nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian empire, to keep the empire functioning as a unit despite the disparate, multiple nationalities of which it was composed, most of which were in themselves extremely nationalistic. The bureaucratic component consisted of the army, the civil servants, and the Catholic church hierarchy, or, as Manger adds, tongue-in-cheek, of Austria's "standing army of soldiers, sitting army of bureaucrats, kneeling army of clerics" (48). In *Der einsame Weg* Professor Wegrat is a combination of bureaucrat and artist, and as such is viewed and treated somewhat disparagingly by the "artists" in the play, Sala and Julian Fichtner.† The third component of Habsburgian Austria, and

* Steven Beller, in his study of *Vienna and the Jews*, points out that intellectuals had a greater freedom of expression regarding culture and politics than did their fellow Germans: "The old cosmopolitan openness to western ideas was seen as being preserved in Vienna, when in Germany a liberal approach had been abandoned in favour of a patriotic adherence to the idealist system-builders. In politics as well Austria afforded an independent base, where the views of what Germany *ought* to be, as opposed to what it was, could be more freely aired, notably in the pages of Moritz Szeps' *Neue Wiener Tagblatt*" (161).

† Julian says of Wegrat, in Act IV of the play: "Leute von der Art Wegrats sind nicht dazu geschaffen, wirklich zu besitzen – weder Frau noch Kinder. Sie mögen Zuflucht,

especially of Vienna, was a "sensuous, self-indulgent hedonism" (51), characterized by Strauss waltzes and the idealization of the "beautiful blue Danube." This was a form of life dominated by "pomp and pleasure, frivolity and the carefree gratification of the senses, of good food and wine, charming chambermaids and amorous adventures, ... a sweet and pagan earthly paradise" (Manger 51). Schnitzler accentuates the strong sexual element inherent in Viennese life through his introduction of the *süsse Mädl*, the "sweet girl," the incorporation of an elegant form of prostitution that was specific to Austrian society. The migration of lower class girls from the rural estate communities to the urban areas resulted in an excess of working class females in most Austrian cities. Many of these girls were not averse to affairs with upper class gentlemen, affairs in which there was usually some kind of a mutual if unspoken agreement that the return on the girl's side would be an elegant, sophisticated life style for the duration of the liaison, while the prospect of a future marriage to someone in her own class was not really diminished by the affair. The gentleman, on the other hand, was allowed the polite illusion of being passionately in love with a young lady who had been untouched by others, though this was, in most cases, only one more of the illusions that contributed to a life of illusion.

There is a counterpoint, however, to the sensuous eroticism of Viennese life, and that is the sense of melancholy, almost a "gentle melancholia," that also pervades much of Schnitzler's work, and is especially evident in his artist heroes, from Anatol to Julian Fichtner. Schnitzler's characters experience multiple levels of feeling, from superficiality to extreme sensitivity, and as Urbach notes, "The favorite mood of superficiality is melancholy, which derives from boredom. Melancholy is the mood of the surface, which conceals the underlying mood of depression that drives one into megalomania" (42). The melancholic element is magnified, within works like *Der einsame Weg*, through the impressionistic symbolism of falling leaves, soft breezes, ponds which mirror people's images, lanes of acacia trees, and by conversational inferences that gradually heighten the sense of despair and pessimism. The feeling of melancholy brings with it

> a consciousness of decadence and over-civilisation, decline and impending catastrophe. This mood is just the other side of the coin, in fact the main determinant of the euphoric celebration of life, of pleasure-seeking as an escape from the feeling of doom, of that hedonism which, "as the apotheosis of the

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Aufenthalt bedeuten – Heimat nie.... Es ist ihr Beruf, Wesen in ihren Armen aufzunehmen, die von irgend einer Leidenschaft müde oder zerbrochen sind. Aber sie ahnen nicht, woher sie kommen" (821).

"People like Wegrat really weren't made to have a wife and children. They just like them to be a refuge, a temporary stopping-off point, never a home.... It's their calling to take people who are exhausted or broken by some sort of passion into their arms. But they don't understand where these people have come from" (36).

> flesh and the spirit of caprice, forms both the climax and finale of Austrian epicurean, catholic and apolitical paganism" (Magris). (Manger 51)

The combination of decadence and amoral pleasure-seeking, the absence of genuine values or a moral framework, was accompanied by "adulterated" passion, in the words of T.S. Eliot's Gerontion, a fascination with perverted passion, various forms of titilation, and ultimately with death. With one of the highest suicide rates of any major city during the late nineteenth century, the Viennese population's search for artificial thrills and stimulations often resulted perverse forms of entertainment, and a fascination with the process of and the symbols of death. Crown Prince Rudolf, for example, in the years before his suicide, kept a human skull in his offices. The urge for novelty and for emotional stimulation is evident, in *Der einsame Weg*, in Johanna and Sala's desire to experience "horror," and in Julian Fichtner's desertion of Gabrielle because life with her would curtail the novelty of new experiences, of new stimulants.

The sensuous, erotic, opulently decadent nature of Viennese upper- and upper-middle-class society is the part of Austrian social life that has been communicated most strongly to succeeding generations of Westerners. Reinhard Urbach points to the "Splendor, decoration, and exuberance [that] concealed deception, falseness and hypocrisy" (18). Within the decadence of this culture, life became unreal, a constant and never-ending role-playing where reality was permanently exchanged for the illusion:

> Pleasure is cultivated as a game, with simple rules, refined forms, and complicated consequences. The partners are stripped of their individuality and become types. Affection is replaced by desire, fidelity by flirtation, and marriage by affairs. A life devoted to the moment replaces that devoted to permanence, constant change replaces binding union. There is empty talk instead of genuine conversation, lethargy instead of concentration, stylization instead of naturalness, associations instead of ideas. (Urbach 19)

Schnitzler emphasizes the role-playing elements of Viennese society through the prominent role he assigns to actresses in a number of his dramas, including *Anatol, Reigen*, and *Der einsame Weg*. For Schnitzler the actress is, as Urbach notes, "the prima donna of a play-acting society, superior to all others because of the advantage she gains from her acting ability" (83). Schnitzler incorporates the same concept of life as a game of truth and illusion in the final speech of Paracelsus, in the one-act play by the same name, where Paracelsus states:

> Es war ein Spiel! Was sollt' es anders sein?
> Was ist nicht Spiel, das wir auf Erden treiben, ...
> Wir wissen nichts von andern, nichts von uns;
> Wir spielen immer, wer es weiß, ist klug. (*DW* I 498)*

* It was a game, what else could it have been?

The aura of illusion and role playing in Schnitzler's work incorporates a strong underlying pessimism, the feeling of "impending doom," of the death of a culture. Sarah Gainham argues that this sense of foreboding, of doom, was not really present in pre-World War I Viennese society, as was later suggested: "The legend of decadence, of waltzing on the powder barrel until the shots at Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 blew it into the air and the dancers with it, was constructed after 1919" (6). S.A.M. Adshead likewise notes that "Contrary to a widespread myth, there was little sense of impending doom in pre-war Vienna" (22). This makes Schnitzler's perceptions all the more remarkable, for his plays and stories, especially *Der einsame Weg*, incorporate a strong sense of imminent catastrophe. In Gainham's reconstruction of the murder-suicide of Mary Vetsera and Crown Prince Rudolf, she explores the elements of self illusion, hypocrisy, the veneer of triviality concealing dangerous passions, intrigue involving various levels of society, and the consummate role-playing that Urbach has described above. Gainham is acute in recognizing the functional purpose of much of the triviality, the small talk, the banality of everyday existence, as being at least partly necessitated by the dual monarchy of Austria and Hungary, a civilization that encompassed immense diversity. Like Franz Joseph's practice of compromise and non-action, the emphasis on "small talk" tended to negate the racial and language differences of the empire. Gainham maintains that the elevation of triviality into an art form was, in fact, a necessary condition of any kind of communication within this mixture of people with different nationalities:

> Small talk was an art in Vienna, an applied art and a useful one. It grew from the polyglot nature of official society at all levels.... It would be impossible to mix with half a dozen different nationalities with differing mother tongues in office or garrison all day and every day without developing pleasant and neutral manners and a collection of subjects to talk about. The subjects must also be neutral, of universal if slight interest. (5)

Schnitzler was a middle- or upper-middle-class Jewish intellectual who was also a member of the professional class, a medical doctor. Schnitzler's father had come from a working class background, been educated, and became a famous laryngologist, many of whose patients were prominent Viennese aristocrats, as well as actors and actresses; Arthur Schnitzler was consequently in the company of theatre personalities and the aristocracy from an early age. Like many of the Jewish intellectuals of the time, before the mid- to late-1880s, Schnitzler identified himself with the German cultural history and to a certain extent with the contemporary concerns regarding a united Germany, although, unlike the young Theodor Herzl, Schnitzler also

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What's not a game, which here on earth we play?...
We know naught of the other, naught of ourselves,
We only play, but he who knows is wise.

became very cognizant, as a university student, of the different manner in which the Jewish and the Aryan intellectuals viewed the rise of German nationalism.*

While Schnitzler and T.S. Eliot express many of the same social concerns and attitudes, their own respective characters differed radically. Schnitzler, as a young man, was very much a part of the social and intellectual life of Vienna. He had an affinity with many of his own heroes, both the Anatol/artist types and the more mature, complementary characters who, through their objectivity, expose the shallow subjectivity of the artists (Max stands in opposition to Anatol, Dr. Reumann and Professor Wegrat in opposition to Julian Fichtner). Schnitzler had numerous affairs – often with actresses – before he married Olga Gussman in 1903, the same year that *Der einsame Weg* was completed, and his attitude toward sex during the late 1880s and early 1890s was superficial and egotistical to the point where he both wrote erotica and recorded every one of his sexual encounters with his own *süsse Mädl* of that period, Jeanette Heyer, in his diary, a sexual accounting that totalled 474 encounters for a ten month period during 1888-89 (Morton 316). Neither was he hesistant about parading his sexual life before the public through a play like *Anatol*, which appears to be partly biographical (Schnitzler published some of his early poetry under the pseudonym of Anatol [Falkenberg 135]). His life after marriage, however, appears to have been stable and comfortable, with the major traumas being caused primarily by the moral condemnation – by the public and by government – of a number of his plays and stories, some of which were banned from publication or production for many years.

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* Steven Beller articulates quite clearly the position of the Jewish intellectuals with respect to Austria's history as a nation: "It is clear that Jews in Austria saw German nationalism, for the most part, in a quite different light from most of their Aryan colleagues. The sense of the individual's need to overcome himself had more meaning for people who did indeed have to overcome what they saw as their Jewish selves. This was not a problem for an Aryan nationalist, who was simply defending his own innate superiority when he supported Schönerer. While Jews such as Adler and Friedjung cherished the idea of a united Germany because of the social and cultural goals this would realize, Schönerer and his supporters were fighting a historic battle to preserve the kind of society, and German domination, which capitalism threatened; they were interested in preserving a pre-capitalist system, rather than creating a post-capitalist one. In this they were prepared to define their Germanness in a way which forestalled any threat to their inherited cultural superiority, which prevented any outsiders invading their exclusive claim to be the ruling class. They made being German a racial quality. Through antisemitism the differences within the nationalist camp were made crystal clear. Jews had thought they were joining a movement of cultural and social revolution to create a Germany united in the new culture. Now they were confronted with a movement which believed in the *Gemeinschaft* of the blood alone" (161-2).

Intellectually, the young Schnitzler formed part of the Vienna intellectual group known as *Jung Wien* or Young Vienna, along with other writers, poets and dramatists such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Hermann Bahr, and Karl Kraus. Together with these friends, Schnitzler formed part of the "café" society of Vienna – when he was not attending to medical duties – an intellectual elite whose members spent a major part of their days in Vienna cafés "reading books and newspapers, writing books and articles, meeting friends and lovers, discussing God and the world, and indulging in the eminently sociable way of life which Viennese society had perfected" (Falkenberg 130). Schnitzler evidently enjoyed his culture and society at the same time that he recognized its emptiness and futility. The haunting quality of much of Schnitzler's drama derives from the fact that he was such an integral part of the society that he recognized as being part of the past, a society that was doomed.

Though Schnitzler participated fully in the society within which he grew to manhood, he was also coolly objective about it, objective enough to analyze it, to sift through the psychological data and create personalities that not only reflected turn-of-the-century Vienna, but commented on it, analyzed it through word and action. If Schnitzler did not take a distinct political stand, politics not playing a great part in pre World War I Vienna, his political consciousness could be characterized as leading to a form of cultural enlightenment, much as Mark Francis and Barrie Stacey define Freud's political and cultural consciousness:

> First, [Freud] emphasized reason and intellect... Secondly, Freud possessed a cultural humanism; literature and the arts were combined with anti-clericalism, a desire for economic and social reform and a sympathy for the underprivileged and oppressed. Thirdly, he insisted upon the universal in human experience and upon the psychological unity of human kind. This was in opposition to the myths of racial differences and discrimination. (125)

Schnitzler, too, was a "cultural humanist," sharing with Freud a concern, not so much for the underprivileged and oppressed, as for those whose oppression was psychological, who lived a life of illusion or of mental anxiety. Like Freud, Schnitzler analyzed the psychological "nervousness" of his culture, and while he had no detailed prescription for a cure, psychoanalysis has at least taught us that recognition of the disease is already an essential element of the cure.

Der einsame Weg is a turn-of-the-century play that reflects both Hegelian and Nietzschean elements in its attempt to define the cultural decadence of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. Schnitzler was certainly familiar with the work of both Hegel and Nietzsche, and his plays demonstrate a close affinity with Nietzsche's pessimistic assessment of man and society. Herbert Reichert, in an article on "Nietzsche and Schnitzler" (1963), notes that in *Der Weg ins*

Freie, which Schnitzler was working on in 1903, the same year that he completed *Den einsame Weg*, he refers to Nietzsche in a number of instances, indicating familiarity with Nietzsche's philosophy and his view of morality. Dr. Stauber, the character in the work who discusses Nietzsche, "praises him as belonging to those geniuses who had the courage of their convictions [but also] regards him as historically conditioned and limited" (Reichert 100). Although there is no direct reference to Nietzsche in *Der einsame Weg*, the play nevertheless strongly endorses Nietzsche's approach to history, as defined through his observation in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, that an over-abundance of historical knowledge is dangerous to a culture because it exaggerates the contrast between the "inner" and the "outer" man and thus weakens the personality; Nietzsche equates historical knowledge with heightened introspection, which thwarts the instinctual life of individual and of nation, preventing it from maturing; it encourages "der jederzeit schädliche Glaube an das Alter der Menschheit" (136),* the notion that we are the last survivors, the *epigoni*, of an age that has lost its vitality and is fast moving toward apocalypse; and finally, it results in self-irony and cynicism, an intellectual sophistication that is far removed from any vital, instinctual core of being.†

Schnitzler's play was written thirty years after Nietzsche's critique, and fully reinforces the feelings expressed in the earlier work, for the concept of a declining, sexually impotent, overly intellectualized civilization of *epigoni* had only gained greater credence over the intervening years to the close of the century, a feeling that Eliot also recognized and epitomized, during the inter-war years, through lines such as: "Shape without form, shade without color / Paralyzed force, gesture without motion ..."

While Nietzsche views the dangers of over-civilization, or effete civilization, with revulsion, Hegel, too, views the time of greatest self-consciousness, when the State is in its most mature form, as the period when it also begins to decline. In his Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel points to this process of dissolution, but in doing so he negates Nietzsche's view of the *Übermensch* by remarking that just as people are the product of their own period, so is philosophy: "so ist ohnehin jedes ein Sohn seiner Zeit; so ist auch die Philosophie, ihre Zeit in Gedanken erfaßt. Es ist ebenso töricht zu wähnen, irgendeine Philosophie gehe über ihre gegenwärtige Welt hinaus, als, ein Individuum übersorubge seine Zeit" (*Grundlinien* 15)‡ This

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* "the belief in the old age of mankind" (39).

† Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Werke in zwei Bänden*, I (München: Carl Hauser Verlag, 1967), p. 136. English translation taken from *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. by Dr. Oscar Levy, Vol. 5, part 2, "The Use and Abuse of History," translated by Adrian Collins, pp. 3-100.

‡ "every individual is a son of his time [and] it is just as foolish to suppose that a

recognition of passing time periods and the passing and declining of States on Hegel's part should also alleviate the concern of some critics who felt that he might have been idealizing one time and State, Prussia, too greatly. But Hegel's view of history is dialectical, and as such each State must eventually be negated and opposed by another, must give way for a further, even higher civilization to emerge: "a society becomes self-conscious ... only when it has reached maturity and looks back, as it were, on itself, at a time, that is to say, when a form of life has already actualized itself and is ready to pass into or give way to another" (Copleston 7 I 259). But it is in Hegel's belief that the succeeding society will reach an even greater level of self-consciousness than the preceding one, that his philosophy differs so completely from Nietzsche's.

Schnitzler was a contemporary and a later acquaintance, via correspondence, of Sigmund Freud, and Schnitzler's drama embodies the insights of "depth psychology" as clearly as does Freud's scientific research. Schnitzler, a medical doctor (Laryngologist) himself, wrote a defense in 1888 of Freud's early experiments with cocaine therapy (Morton 27), and Freud, who later lived within walking distance of Schnitzler's home but carefully avoided him because he viewed Schnitzler as his own *Doppelgänger* (Williams 2), wrote to him:

> when I became absorbed in your beautiful creations I always believed that I found behind the poetic appearance the same presuppositions, interests and results that I have known as my own. Your determination like your scepticism – what people call pessimism – your obsession with the truths of the unconscious, with the instinctive nature of man, your undermining of the conventional cultural securities, the adherence of your thoughts to the polarity of love and death, all that touches me with an uncanny familiarity.... I have gained the impression that all I have discovered by tedious work with other people you have known by intuition – or rather as a result of precise self-observation. (Quoted in Falkenberg 132)

Far from the apparent optimism of Shaw, Schnitzler is largely concerned to uncover and expose the unconscious mind of his characters, to analyze the passions and neuroses of *fin-de-siècle* Viennese society, and his work consequently embodies much of the pessimism of a Schopenhauer and a Nietzsche that formed the alternative current of thought to that of Hegel during the beginning of the new century.

In *Der einsame Weg* Von Sala is the most complete representative of Nietzsche's late age of mankind, the individual who can no longer act to change history, but who can only stand by and watch with knowing helplessness as his civilization disintegrates. There is no true integration

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philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as it is to suppose that an individual can overleap his own time" (*Philosophy of Right* 11).

evident in von Sala, between the inner, introspective personality and the external being that manifests itself in forthright action. The title of the play is indicative of the split, for the road is lonely for all the characters. The lack of open conflict in the play results from the fact that the characters all live "inner," almost unconscious, lives that seldom make vital contact with other lives around them. In general this is even more true of the men (especially Sala and Julian Fichtner) than the women, but because the men cannot adequately relate their inner, subjective world to the external world, they end up destroying those who can, the women who are still vital beings and who depend on the men to reciprocate and reinforce their vitality. The play in fact shows us the final stages of a disintegrating society, where the later stages of decay actually (though inadvertently) destroy whatever vitality still exists. Sala is intellectually sensitive but has virtually no emotional life; consequently, his casual proposal of marriage to Johanna destroys her, because she is forced to realize and consciously acknowledge his lack of feeling, and that just after she has passionately declared her love for him. Sala's self-conscious pride in his icy detachment from others, and his lack of confidential friends, is ironic, because in his isolation, his inability – or lack of inclination through defensiveness – to communicate fully with others, he has created a psychological prison for himself, instead of a freedom from others that he needs to protect.

Sala at one time apparently had a more vital existence as an officer in the regiment to which Felix presently belongs, but this period of his life has now largely lost its meaning; it is a vitality he can no longer feel, but only connect with through memory and at that, only vaguely, like Gerontion's dreams of vitality: "es war recht schön, wenn ich so zurückdenke" (762).* Sala's lost wife and child appear to exist in his mind as indistinctly as his earlier career, indicating that he either felt little attachment to them at any time, or that that period of time belongs to the past and now has little significance.

A fundamental ambivalence exists in Sala's view of history and the past that gives his character a greater complexity, though not necessarily more vitality, than Julian Fichtner's. Sala would seem to negate his own, immediate existence in favor of ancient history, or, stated differently, his interest in history prevents the necessary integration of his personality with his present life. Even the future has significance only insofar as it offers a

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* All quotations taken from Arthur Schnitzler, *Die Dramatische Werke* Bd. I (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1962). English equivalents are from an unpublished translation by Simon Williams, called *The Lonely Road*, that was used as the script for the April 29 - May 7, 1977 Studio Theatre production of the play at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, also produced by Simon Williams.
"thinking back on it, it was very fine" (2).

greater opportunity to examine history, to immerse himself in history as a distraction and a comport, not as a key to the understanding of present existence. Sala has an antiquarian attitude and somewhat prissy intellect that wants to discover only in order to preserve the past as sacred relics, not to re-invigorate the present. Johanna senses Sala's confusion of priorities without, however, understanding it:

> Sie bauen sich ein Haus und graben versunkene Städte aus und schreiben seltsame Verse, – und Menschen, die Ihnen so viel gewesen sind, liegen schon seit sieben Jahren unter der Erde und verwesen, – und Sie sind beinahe noch jung. Wie unbegreiflich ist das alles! (765)*

Sala's building of a house that reaches into the distance of the forest is parallel to his interest in the 312 steps leading to the buried city. Both should represent the primitive, the unbridled forces of the past, but for Sale they are merely indicative of psychological distance, and the greater the distance from the present, from vitality, the safer Sala feels. Even his determination to experience the last hours of his life as intensely as possible, leading to his admonition to Dr. Reumann to remind him of his imminent death – "Ich finde, man hat das Recht, sein Dasein vollkommen auszuleben, mit allen Wonnen und mit allen Schaudern, die darin verborgen liegen" (801)† – is a determination to spend these last hours in Bactria, in a further exhuming of the past, rather than in vital concerns or relationships with other people. Nietzsche emphasized that "*Nur aus der höchsten Kraft der Gegenwart dürft ihr das Vergangene deuten:* nur in der stärksten Anspannung eurer edelsten Eignenschaften werdet ihr erraten, was in dem Vergangnen wissens- und bewahrenswürdig und groß ist.... Sonst zieht ihr das Vergangne zu euch nieder" (146).‡ In his excessive bond to the past, Sala does exactly what

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* "You build yourself a house, and excavate buried cities, and write strange poetry ... and people who meant so much to you have already been lying under the ground for seven years ... rotting. And you are almost young still. It's all so incomprehensible" (4).

† "I believe we have the right to live our lives to the utmost, with all the joys and all the horrors which lie hidden within them" (25).

‡ "*You can only explain the past by what is highest in the present.* Only by straining the noblest qualities you have to their highest power will you find out what is greatest in the past, most worth knowing and preserving.... otherwise you will draw the past to your own level" (5)

Hitler, too, explained the past from the perspective of the present, but grossly distorted Nietzsche's interpretation of "straining the noblest qualities you have to their highest power" as he reconstructed and mythologized historical events to the point where "history becomes nothing but a tool of the present, with no integrity whatsoever of its own.... History ... became merely an extension of Hitler's own personality and his own fate. In this context the deed took the place of deliberation" (Eksteins 313). This is the very opposite of what happens to von Sala, where excessive deliberation actually prevents the enactment of the deed: "The very essence of National Socialism," says Eksteins, "was perpetual motion, vitalism, revolt" (313).

Nietzsche warned about, reducing history to his own level. Schnitzler, like Nietzsche and Freud, recognizes the dangerous spell that the past can cast on individuals and societies, and how debilitating this fascination with the past can be, and in von Sala he has created a powerful devil's advocate for the past. If Schnitzler as a literary psychoanalyst can be compared to Freud – as he often has been – then Schnitzler's attitude to the past would also be similar to Freud's:

> For Freud, the past, which could not be forgotten, was unfortunate. The past is bad; a neurotic is someone enslaved by the past. It is only living in the present which is healthy. In this sense the archaeologist differs from the psychoanalyst. The former is neutral about the past, while the latter is necessarily hostile to the past as an inherited incubus. By implication Freud was unwittingly an opponent of the Habsburg empire. If this empire lived on the past, if devotion to its laws was a matter of custom and habit, if obedience was inherited, then Freud's therapeutic views led to the conclusion that one should neither be shackled nor repressed by it. (Francis and Stacey 120)

Von Sala's ideas and his personality are static – the house he builds is *exactly* the house he planned years ago, and in itself also emphasizes Sala's pre-occupation; the busts of the Roman emperors again point to the fascination with history; the landscaping indicates distance (Williams 5), and the pool, with its inability to retain a reflection of the immediate past, symbolizes Sala's inability to integrate his existence with his immediate environment. His static antiquarianism results in a levelling of real values:

> Wenn Sie im Mittelpunkt der Erde wohnten, wüßten Sie, daß alle Dinge gleich schwer sind. Und schwebten Sie im Mittelpunkt der Welt, dann ahnten Sie, daß alle Dinge gleich wichtig sind. (769)*

Simon Williams notes that Sala's "recognition of the world of relativity where moral demands have no place, has made of him an entirely objective observer of human conduct" (9), but that this objectivity is not in itself admirable, since Sala himself is treated ironically – and as an imperfect spokesman for humanity – by the playwright.

Sala's lack of an emotional existence is again shown up by Johanna when she says to him, in Act IV, "Ich will später einmal vor mir selbst erschauern müssen. So tief erschauern, wie man es nur kann" (816).† Johanna wants to experience all the passion, intensity and horror which life has to offer, in a supra-historical sense that transcends historical knowledge. She freely and passionately embraces Nietzsche's conception of *amor fati* and of eternal recurrence, declaring that "ich für meinen Teil kann mir alles andere

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* "If you were living at the centre of the earth, you would know that all things are of equal weight. And if you were suspended in the middle of the universe, you would realize that all things are of equal importance" (7).

† "I want there to be a time when I have to be horrified at myself" (33).

eher vorstellen als dies, daß ich nun zum ersten Male auf der Welt sein sollte" (764).* Johanna's belief in reincarnation – or eternal recurrence – and her psychic ability, in this play that deals with the nature of self-illusion, ironically embue her with a greater perception regarding the nature of truth and existence than the would-be artists in the play have. She and her half-brother Felix represent Nietzsche's new generation of greater vitalism in this play, Johanna through her emotional vitality, and Felix through his physical vitality and clear, rational approach to life. Johanna wants to establish her own moral absolute in the Nietzschean sense of experiencing the furthest extremes of personality possible, to discover the "Wurzeln die innerste Natur" (Nietzsche 117).† The experience of horror asserts for her a moral order that transcends conventional morality, the morality to which Sala is still firmly bound despite his self-image as a free, creative spirit. Nietzsche alludes to this sense of horror as well, in his *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, as he states emphatically that beneath the ordered surface of life there exist instinctive forces that are "wild, primitive and completely merciless. One looks at them with a fearful expectancy as though at the cauldron in a witch's kitchen.... for a century we have been ready for world-shaking convulsions" (Quoted in Copleston 7 II 173). In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche succinctly identifies the inability to act decisively with the recognition, or the experience, of a horrible truth that can only lead to nausea rather than to action:

> Die Erkenntnis tötet das Handeln, zum Handeln gehört das Umschleiertsein durch die Illusion – das ist die Hamletlehre, nicht jene wohlfeile Weisheit von Hans dem Träumer, der aus zu viel Reflexion, gleichsam aus einem Überschuß von Möglichkeiten, nicht zum Handeln kommt; nicht das Reflektieren, nein! – die wahre Erkenntnis, der Einblick in die grauenhafte Wahrheit überwiegt jedes zum Handeln antreibende Motiv. (*Werke* I 41)‡

The horror of Sala's past life, which Johanna invites him to look back on, cannot even approach the moral abyss which she imagines, for while he cannot vitally integrate his personality with his present existence, neither can he extend himself beyond the burden of historicity, the over accumulation of knowledge that prevents action or objectivity. Sala's answer to Johanna's question regarding the past horror experienced in his life is almost casual, prefaced by the incidental phrase, "Manchmal wohl. Aber gerade in solchen Augenblicken des Schauerns liegt eigentlich nichts hinter mir zurück, – alles

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* "there's one thing above all else I'd rather not believe in, and that is the fact that this is the first time I've lived in this world" (3).

† "the roots [of her] ... inner nature" (9).

‡ "Knowledge kills action; action requires the veils of illusion; that is the doctrine of Hamlet, not that cheap wisdom of Jack the Dreamer who relfects too much and, as it were, from an excess of possibilities does not get around to action. Not reflection, no – true knowledge, an insight into the horrible truth, outweighs any motive for action" (*Birth* 60).

ist wieder gegenwärtig. Und das Gegenwärtige ist vergangen" (816).*

Both Johanna and Sala annihilate time as linear continuity, and believe in the supremacy of the present moment, but for Johanna the moment is capable of exploding into passion and intensity, while for Sala the lack of distinction between present, past and future is the result of a neutralization of feeling, a withdrawal from issues and contacts that demand any intense commitment. He feels himself free to ask Johanna to marry him because he can approach the matter in an entirely non-emotional manner. For him it is a matter of convenience, even a kindness on his part, not the violent colliding and joining of personalities that Johanna has longed for, and here, indeed, her own intuitive awareness has for once failed her, for Sala is not the *Übermensch* she has imagined him to be, but an impotent, overly-intellectual epigone of a decaying civilization – though he self-consciously sees both himself and Julian in Nietzschian terms as being "von Gnaden des Augenblicks Götter – und zuweilen etwas weniger als Menschen" (778).† While Schnitzler is clearly toying here with Nietzschean themes of the *Übermensch* and of the morality of the superman, this reference is a parody of Nietzsche's philosophy, for while Sala and Fichtner view themselves in virtually god-like, superman terms, Schnitzler's treatment of them undercuts this concept, making it clear that these are ordinary, flawed mortals who suffer from the illusion of greatness. Fichtner and Sala see themselves, as artists, as "beyond good and evil," but their actions and their dialogue – especially on Julian's part – prove them to be selfish and egotistical rather than incorporating Nietzsche's concept of *Selbstüberwindung*, the transcending of one's own desires to establish a morality that is beyond the conventional. Although Schnitzler, as Reichert states, "shared with Nietzsche ... his contempt for conventional morality" (97), Schnitzler's vision is if anything even more bleak than that of Nietzsche, for instead of being supermen, his protagonists are ordinary mortals who *think* of themselves as supermen.

Johanna's own vitality cannot reinvigorate her social environment because no one responds to her emotionally. Her discovery of Sala's lack of feeling for her, a lack of feeling that has nothing to do with the despair she had imbued him with, is her experience of "horror," the uncovering of the roots of her inner self. It is certainly plausible, indeed probable, given the symbolism surrounding her death, that Johanna does not commit suicide out of despair, but out of an ultimate assertion of her personality. She cannot influence others through her life, but in death she finally breaks through Sala's timeless continuum by forcing the pool to retain her image. Her death

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* "Of course, sometimes. But such moments never contain anything of the past – everything is constantly in the present. And the present is the past" (33).

† "gods in the grace of the moment .. but so much less than men at other times" (12).

finally elicits an emotional response from Sala, from Felix and from Wegrat, bringing a sense of purpose and definition to these lives that had not existed previously. Where the deaths of Mrs. Wegrat and Irene Herms had been negative conclusions, hers was a positive one, for it represented assertion rather than escape. At the same time, however, Sala's description of Julian's portrait of Irene Herms is an adequate metaphor, in its depiction of human isolation and captivity, of all three women:

> SALA: ...Ein junges Weib in einem Harlekinskostüm, darüber eine griechische Toga geworfen, ihr zu Füßen ein Gewirr von Masken. Ganz allein, den starren Blick auf den Zuschauerraum gerichtet, steht sie auf einer leeren, halb dunkeln Bühne, zwischen Kulissen, die nicht zueinander passen. Ein Stück Zimmerwand, ein Stück Wald, ein Stück Burgverließ...
> FELIX: Und der Hintergrund stellt eine Landschaft im Süden vor, mit Palmen und Platanen...? (770)*

The women all personify a lack of identity, an isolation and rigidity within an incongruous and threatening environment; they are half afraid, half hopeful of the future.

Julian Fichtner's personality represents much the same attitude toward history as does Sala's, that is, the intolerable urge to negate the present moment as a vital force through the anticipation of the future, in his case, rather than the past. Like Sala, Julian cannot commit himself to vital relationships, though he is not as detachedly honest with himself as Sala is. Julian flirts constantly with possibilities, but always escapes when the moment of commitment approaches. It is in the nature of his personality that, had Felix responded to the revelation of his parentage as was expected by Julian, the latter might, finally, have retreated from this commitment as well. Julian's one significant moment as an artist coincided with the empathy he must at one time have felt with Irene Herms – the result of which was the portrait discussed above. Like Sala, too, Julian quickly objectifies and generalizes his experiences and his failures in order to strip them of their emotional and guilt associations, remarking to Sala on his present association with Gabriele Wegrat: "Nur einmal sprachen wir von der Vergangenheit – sie ohne Vorwurf, ich ohne Reue; als wäre jene Geschichte andern begegnet" (779).† And later he tells Felix: "Du darfst nicht daran denken, daß es deine Mutter war, du mußt mich anhören, als wäre es die Geschichte von fremden

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* "SALA: It's of a young woman in a harlequin costume, with a Greek toga thrown over it, a jumble of masks at her feet. She's standing quite alone, staring out into the auditorium, rigid – on an empty stage, half-dark, between wings that don't match. A bit of the wall of a room here, a bit of forest there, a bit of a dungeon ...
FELIX: And in the background there's a landscape of the south ... with palms and plane trees...." (7).

† "We only talked about the past once, she without reproach, me without regret. As if the whole thing had happened to other people" (12).

Leuten – dann wirst du alles verstehen" (810).* Julian asks for commitment and understanding from others, but can give none himself. Wegrat describes him in terms of an unfulfilled potential, unfulfilled because he cannot fully commit himself, either to his art or to other people: "Nie hab' ich jemanden gekannt, auf den das Wort »vielversprechend« so zutraf wie auf ihn.... das Unglück war, daß er sich auch in seinen Arbeiten sozusagen nur vorübergehend aufhielt" (771-2).†

If Sala's quest for some feeling of vitality is concretized in the mystery of the 312 steps leading to the mysterious buried city, Julian too tries to assert life, not through identification with primitive culture, but rather with the elemental environment: "Bin sogar Bergsteiger geworden auf meine alten Tage. Eine Woche hab' ich auf einer Alm verlebt..." (780).‡ And again like Sala, he sees himself, because he is an artist, as a Nietzschean *Übermensch:*

> Mein Leben ist bis zu einer gewissen Epoche wie in einem Rausch von Zärtlichkeit und Leidenschaft, ja von Macht dahingeflossen. Und damit geht es zu Ende.... Soll wirklich von aller Glut, mit der ich die Welt umfaßt habe, nichts übrig bleiben als eine Art törichter Grimm, daß es vorbei sein, – daß ich, ich menschlichen Gesetzen so gut unterworfen sein muß als ein anderer? (780)+

Julian's intoxication with passion, however, was not an assertion of vitality, but the egotistical, manipulative power of his personality, a power that resulted more from the *lack* of self-realization than from the discovery of his inner nature. He destroys past memories rather than respecting them – as Felix does, without allowing them to become a restrictive burden preventing present actions – because his past actions would not bear up well under close scrutiny. Even his occasional attempts at self-deprecation are ironic because he sentimentalizes and twists them, making them sound like virtues: "Die Gabe, dauerndes Glück zu geben oder zu empfangen, lag wohl nicht in mir" (797).**

If Sala views history with the attitude of the antiquarian, the collector, Julian does so from the point of view of the sentimentalist, Schnitzler's embodiment of the melancholic personality, who continually colors past actions with cloying hypocrisies and sentiments that present him as the hero,

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* "You mustn't think of this woman as your mother. Just listen to me as if my story is about total strangers – that way you'll understand" (30).

† "I've never known anybody who fitted the description, 'of great potential,' so well.... The trouble was, even in his own work, he was a passer-by" (8).

‡ "I've even become quite a mountaineer in my old age. I spent a whole week up on the mountainside" (13).

\+ "Up to a certain point in time my life passed in an intoxication of tenderness, passion and powerful feeling. And then it came to an end.... Must I submit to the laws of humanity like everyone else?" (13).

** "The gift of either giving or receiving lasting happiness doesn't lie within me" (23).

rather than the villain, of these episodes. Julian smilingly relates to Felix, how "mit schicksalshafter Notwendigkeit glitten wir in Sünde, Glück, Verhängnis, Verrat – und Traum" (810).* His betrayal of Gabriele is justified by the "leichte Schauer" (811), the "gentle horror" he felt – compare this to Johanna's sense of horror – at the prospect of committing himself to another individual. And the opposite extreme is once again, as for Sala, represented by the "limitlessness" of the road, leading "ins Unbegrenzte – zu tausend unbekannten, unsichtbaren Straßen, die alle in diesem Augenblick noch zu meiner freien Verfügung standen.... um es so zu leben, wie es mir bestimmt war, braucht' ich völlig Sorglosigkeit und Freiheit wie bisher" (811).† Felix and Wegrat realize by the end of the play that genuine human bonds are not restrictive, but enhance one's freedom; Julian, on the other hand, demands freedom from all responsibility, but in doing so is all the more subject to the burden of history. He is unable to experience the present moment to its full extent because he is constantly involved in the revising and justifying of his historical past – making fate the scapegoat – and anticipating the future: "Im Augenblick, da ich das Ende vorhersah, war es gewissermaßen schon da. Auf etwas warten, das kommen muß, heißt, es tausendmal, heißt – es in Wehrlosigkeit und Überdruß und Zorn erleben" (811).‡ Schnitzler implies that this emphasis on the past and the future dissipates Julian's creative energies, so that he has little left for present creativity. Then too, imagination comes out of a social environment, not from isolation. Julian is an egoist because he feels a sense of power in the enticing and the subsequent jilting of Gabriele – and certainly of Irene Herms as well – but his power is again the power to manipulate, not to create.

Herbert Reichert views Schnitzler as being genuinely fond – even admiring – of Julian, stating that Schnitzler "leans over backward to justify Fichtner's conduct.... He [Fichtner] had found himself faced with a great decision and had decided that to be untrue to himself would have caused greater unhappiness to all concerned than it would have if he had yielded to pity" (104). Schnitzler, however, is portraying individuals who are representative of the society within which he lives – and Schnitzler himself certainly enjoyed Vienna's social life, even while he dissected it – and while his attitude toward his characters is not moralistic in a doctrinaire sense, it

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* "with fatal inevitability, we drifted into sin, happiness, misfortune, betrayal and dreams" (30).

† "Leading to a thousand, unknown, invisible roads, which were still, at this moment, freely at my disposal.... in order to live in the way fate had decided for me, I needed complete absence of responsibility, and freedom, as before" (30).

‡ "the moment I anticipated the end it was, to a certain extent, already there. Waiting for something to come means living it over a thousand times, helpless, bored and angry" (30-31).

was his moral or humanitarian vision which made him so sensitive to the decadence of his society, and allowed him to define as acutely as he did such self-serving, self-forgiving personalities as Julian. The portraits of Julian and of von Sala are exceptionally revealing, for Julian through his conversations with Felix and Sala, and through his recitation of his own past, shows himself to be deceitful, irresponsible and egotistical, and above all suffering from the illusion of being a Nietzschean *Übermensch*. Schnitzler is neither condemning nor forgiving; he merely portrays the individual as he exists.

Felix is perhaps the greatest "realist" of the play, integrating thought with action, but not seeming to overvalue either. Joining the Lancers is not a romanticized experience for him, but "das Vernünftigste von allem, was ich bisher angefangen habe" (760).* Felix refers to the planned trip to Bactria through a quotation as a voyage "In rätselhafte Fernen..." (802),† but qualifies this somewhat sentimental vision by the semi-ironic, semi-hopeful tone in which he utters the sentence, and by the fact that the sentiment is set off, or distanced, as a quotation. He is immediately concerned, as well, about the implications of leaving behind those he knows and loves, though he is reassured on this score by Dr. Reumann's emphasis that "Nichts entfernt Sie sicherer von Menschen, die Ihnen teuer waren, als das Bewußtsein, durch eine Pflicht in ihre Nähe gebannt zu sein" (802).‡ Felix recognizes, too, in his answer to Julian's self-justifications, the implicit perversion of moral values contained in the latter's behavior toward Gabriele; though Felix's remark *appears* to exonerate Julian, it condemns by implication:

> So hat sie geschwiegen. Geschwiegen, als sie von der Trauung heimkam, – geschwiegen, als das Kind geboren wurde, – geschwiegen, als der Geliebte das Haus ihres Gatten nach zehn Jahren wieder betrat, – geschwiegen bis zum letzten Tag... Solche Schicksale gibt es allerorten, und man muß nicht einmal ... verworfen sein, um sie zu erleben oder um sie zu verschulden. (812-13)+

Julian's characteristically easy acceptance of this seeming exoneration of any guilt on his part is again indicative of his propensity for self-delusion. He views the situation only from his own, subjective perspective, rather than recognizing the hurt which he has caused first Gabriele, then Irene Herms, and now Felix.

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* "the most sensible thing I've done so far" (1)

† "Into the mysterious distance ..." (26).

‡ "Nothing is more certain to separate you from those you love than the feeling that you are bound to them by duty" (26).

\+ "Silent when she came home from the wedding, silent when the child was born, silent when the lover entered her husband's house again ten years later ... silent to the end.... Situations like that are common and one doesn't have to be ... perverted to live in them or be guilty of them" (31).

Simon Williams is quite correct in emphasizing the symbolic significance of space and constriction in *Der einsame Weg* (5). The concepts of space, limitlessness, vastness, roads leading outward, are all indicative of individual freedom, the promise of the future, of adventure, and especially of the exploration of unknown or unfulfilled potential, a concept possibly most cryptically defined through Wegrat's characterization of Julian as "vielversprechend" or "of great potential," for the potential powers of freedom are all too often illusory, as they are for Julian. Julian's potential has fizzled at the end of this play, with the failure of his final bid to tie Felix to him. Johanna, who like Julian recognizes that "erst, wenn man an niemandem hängt, ist die Welt weit und der Himmel unendlich" (815),* finally recognizes this sense of freedom for the illusion it is and drowns herself in Sala's pool in her effort to make herself vital to Sala, to force him to remember her. The impression of her image in the pool turns into the reality. Sala, too, views his existence in terms of space and limitlessness, but in his case the space is historical, as his entire preoccupation is with the past, and the urge to uncover more of the past, to discover whether there are more than the 312 steps leading to the buried city. When Felix informs him that he will not be going on the expedition, his illusion, too, collapses, and life loses its meaning; where Sala had earlier urged Dr. Reumann to let him know how much time he had left to live, so he could exercise his right "sein Dasein vollkommen auszuleben" (801), to live his final hours to the utmost, he finally declines that option in favor of suicide, or escape. Professor Wegrat, too, has felt the potential of limitless freedom, as he felt, during a youthful conversation with Julian, that he, too, could attain an aesthetic freedom: "Die Welt tat sich gewissermaßen weiter auf als sonst" (808).† Freedom, however, exacts its own conditions and prices, and Wegrat recognized that to attain this prize, "man mußte ... etwas frecher sein und selbstbewußter und sich hineinwerfen..." (808).‡ Immediately after this revelation, Schnitzler changes from images of space and distance to those of constriction, of a "narrow path" and a "frame" as Wegrat describes the impression that Gabriele made on him:

> Und da kam Gabriele heraufgeschritten, auf dem schmalen Weg zwischen den Akazien, vom Dorfe her, den Strohhut in der Hand, und nickte mir zu. Und alle meine Zukunftsträume schwebten nur mehr um sie, und die ganze Welt war wieder wie in einen Rahmen gefaßt und war doch groß genug und schön genug... (808)+

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* "the world is wide and the sky is infinite only when you belong to no one" (33).

† "Somehow the world seemed to be much vaster than before" (29).

‡ "You ... had to be a bit more arrogant and self-assured and throw yourself in" (29).

\+ "And then Gabrielle came walking up from the village, along that narrow path between the acacia trees; she had her straw-hat in her hand and she nodded at me. And all my dreams of the future stopped floating around me, and once again the whole world

Space, distance, the sense of limitlessness all heighten the illusion of freedom. Wegrat, however, has realized that the more realistic freedom necessitates some boundaries and limitations; consequently, where Julian deserted Gabriele because he was unwilling to entertain any strictures on his freedom, Wegrat opts for a form of freedom within commitment. As a result of his sense of commitment – which is commitment without guilt or obligation – to those around him, his life gains in richness, until at the end of the play, when Felix, now aware of his true parentage, feelingly calls him "Mein Vater," his response, the final sentence of the play, is: "Müssen solche Dinge geschehen, daß mir dieses Wort klingt, als hört' ich's zum erstenmal...?" (836).*

Felix has a more constructive understanding – and experience – of space, of freedom, of history and historical knowledge than any of the other characters in the play. He reminds Johanna of how the two of them had always dreamed of going out into "die weite Welt" together (804), how he, too, had his dreams; like Wegrat, however, he also realizes the necessity of a "frame" for freedom, and a limit to distance. He combines insight with action, values the past for what it can teach him and the memories it holds, but does not allow it to incapacitate him in the present. He has, as Julian himself has remarked, "den Sinn für das Wesentliche" (781),† and this allows him to cut through Julian's sentimental revisionism, and place the revealed knowledge of his true parentage into its proper perspective:

> Ein lebhafter Traum wäre zwingender als diese Geschichte aus verflossenen Tagen, die Sie mir erzählt haben. Es hat sich nichts verändert ... nichts. Das Andenken meiner Mutter ist mir so heilig als zuvor. Und der Mann, in dessen Haus ich geboren und auferzogen bin, der meine Kindheit und meine Jugend mit Sorgfalt und Zärtlichkeit umgeben hat und der meine Mutter – geliebt hat, gilt mir gerade so viel, als er mir bisher gegolten – und beinahe mehr. (813)‡

Schnitzler's social perspective is again comparable to Freud's here, in emphasizing that one's experiences and learned behavior are far more significant to a developing personality than one's biological makeup. Felix's vitalism, his ability to face the past while living constructively in the present, are the result of his psychological development in the home of Gabriele and

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was contained within a frame, and yet it was big enough and beautiful enough..." (29).

* "Do things like this have to happen so that I can hear that word as if it has been spoken for the first time..." (44).

† "a sense of the essential in life" (14).

‡ "A vivid dream has more reality than this story of the past you've just been telling me. It has changed nothing ... nothing. The memory of my mother is just as sacred. And as for the man in whose house I was born and brought up, who surrounded my childhood and youth with care and tenderness, and who loved my mother, as for him, he is of just as much worth to me as he was before – almost more so" (31).

Professor Wegrat, not of his biological parentage, and Felix's recognition of this factor underlines Schnitzler's negation of the validity of any form of eugenic development of humanity.

Felix's proposed trip to Bactria becomes a voyage of re-discovery of the self in light of the new knowledge he has received, and again the experience becomes a cultural as well as an individual event. When he states that "Hier hat man die Lüge ins Ewige getrieben.... und die Lüge bin ich selbst, solange ich für einen gelte, der ich nicht bin" (832),* he is essentially speaking for the entire cast of the play, and for an entire society.

The symbolism of space and distance, then, operates on a variety of levels. While unbounded distance or space represents the *illusion* of freedom, the obvious physical restrictions of the Wegrat garden with its small, completely enclosed space, is a constant reminder of the limitations of the individuals who inhabit this space. Those, however, who can transcend this limitation, primarily Wegrat and Felix, represent whatever hope there might be for the future.

Felix develops as the conscience of his repressive, decadent society, and together with conscience, there exists also a sense of judgment, for he in fact passes sentence on both Julian and Sala. In rejecting Julian as his true parent, Felix condemns him to live the rest of his life in futility, and to finally be forced to recognize the emptiness of his existence. Felix's relationship with Sala is more ambiguous, but when he tells Sala, after Johanna's death, "Herr von Sala ... wir werden nicht unter einem Zelte schlafen" (833),† he in effect condemns Sala for the latter's off-handed treatment of Johanna, which had led to her death. Despite the external reality of the situation, which is that Sala is dying of a heart condition – which like Clifford Chatterley's impotence in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* symbolizes the condition of the civilization which he represents – the condemnation is still evident in the formal, abrupt, unapologetic manner in which Felix delivers the sentence, and in Sala's acceptance of his guilt, witnessed in the way he offers his hand, while couching his response in the verbiage of the duel: "O, Sie können ruhig meine Hand nehmen. Die Angelegenheit ist ja so ritterlich geordnet als nur möglich. – Nun?... Es ist nicht einmal üblich, die Hand demjenigen zu verweigern, der zu Boden liegt" (834).‡

In view of the portrayal of Felix as the last hope of salvation for a decayed society, it becomes essential to explore Sala's ambiguous comment

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* "The lie has been perpetuated here ... and the lie is me, myself, as long as I am considered to be the person I am not" (42)

† "Mr. von Sala, we will not be sleeping in the same tent" (42).

‡ "Oh, you can take my hand without any qualms. The whole business has been settled as chivalrously as possible. – Well?... It isn't done to refuse your hand to a person who's down" (43).

about him, that "Es scheint mir überhaupt, daß jetzt wieder ein besseres Geschlecht heranwächst, – mehr Haltung und weniger Geist" (835-6).* Schnitzler opposes the terms "Haltung" and "Geist" to prescribe a psychological and ethical development that will have its basis in the practical world of experience rather than only in introspection, which can then lead to succeeding generations who do not suffer the frozen indecisions of the von Salas. Nietzsche also commented on the need for the superior people, the *Übermenschen,* to be bred: "The problem I thus pose is not what shall succeed mankind in the sequence of living beings ... but what type of man shall be *bred,* shall be *willed,* for being higher in value" (Kaufmann, *Nietzsche* 312). Nietzsche's definition of "will," which he here equates with breeding, is, like Schnitzler's view of breeding, not based on biological factors, but on the "will to power," the ability of certain individuals to integrate, to control the passions of their personality in their search for a greater truth, a higher morality than that of their society or culture. As Nietzsche remarks, "*die Geschichte wird nur von starken Persönlichkeiten ertragen, die schwachen löscht sie vollends aus*" (139).†

Sala's reference to *Haltung*, then, applies to Felix's parentage from the perspective of experience rather than of race. Aside from a juvenile hero-worship of Julian *before* discovering that Julian is his father, Felix seems to have inherited very little from this source, another indication that learned rather than inherited characteristics are by far the more powerful in Schnitzler's view. Felix is thus in fact the product of a passionately intense nature (Gabriele) which has experienced great disappointment and become resigned to it, and a bureaucratized intelligence (Wegrat) that, though not chaotically imaginative, contains a rather objective, shrewd self-analysis in relation to its surrounding environment, and that is, moreover, able to and prepared to commit itself to intense relationships. Wegrat also recognizes the power of the Nietzschean "will," as he refuses to let others sacrifice themselves or their ambitions for him, remarking, near the end of the play, when Felix offers to abandon his plans for the expedition in order to remain with him: "Sei doch glücklich, daß sich nun endlich für dich ein Weg eröffnet.... Das Schicksal, das über uns hereinbricht, soll nicht zu all seiner eingeborenen Macht auch die schlimmere haben, daß es uns in unserer Verwirrung Dinge tun läßt, die unserm Wesen zuwider sind" (831).‡

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* "It seems to me that a better generation is now emerging – with more breeding and less intelligence" (44).

† " *only strong personalities can endure history, the weak are extinguished by it*" (44).

‡ "Just be happy that at last a road has opened up for you.... We must not strengthen the innate power of the destiny which has broken over us by letting it make us act against our wills" (41).

In the very first scene of the play Felix already indicates in a brief but key speech his perception that he is a significant individual for his historical period, that he exists in opposition to the values of his society, and that the social order is too ordered and rigid:

> im Ganzen fühle ich mich jetzt bedeutend wohler als jemals zuvor. Es scheint mir nur manchmal, als wenn ich nicht zur rechten Zeit geboren wäre. Vielleicht hätt' ich auf die Welt kommen sollen, als es noch nicht so viel Ordnung gab, als man allerlei wagen konnte, was man heute nicht mehr wagen darf. (760-61)*

Felix is the end product of the two extremes of passion and order, the synthesis in the dialectic triad, containing the polarities within himself. His thoughts become more channelled even as the play progresses, rather than being simply chaotic or undisciplined, and so do his feelings, which are by no means uncontrollable. He is not the *Übermensch,* but he belongs to a new generation that can lead to renewed life. Through Wegrat's personality, his bureaucratic equanimity, his stability and endurance, combined with his liberal arts function as an art director – a "Kunstbeamter," as he self-deprecatingly refers to himself – Schnitzler seems to suggest that Austria's way to the future might lie in a "sensible" integration of the artistic with the bureaucratic intelligence, that this combination might give the empire the option of forward movement without the consequence "that every step, even the smallest, [would be] a step towards the abyss" (Manger 50).

If, as Nietzsche has suggested, "the emergence of the latent destructive forces will pave the way for the rise of higher specimens of humanity in the form of outstanding individuals" (Copleston 7 II 173), then it would seem that in Schnitzler's play Felix might be an individual who survives the destruction to lead the way toward a renewed vital life. Nietzsche ends his work on "Von Nutzen und Nachteil" with a qualified advocation of the "new generation," and his remarks seem as apt a definition as any of Felix's personality and historical role in Schnitzler's play:

> Und hier erkenne ich die Mission jener *Jugend*, jenes ersten Geschlechtes von Kämpfern und Schlangentötern, das einer glücklicheren und schöneren Bildung und Menschlichkeit voranzieht, ohne von diesem zukünftigen Glücke und der einstmaligen Schönheit mehr zu haben als eine verheißende Ahnung. (172)†

Nietzsche envisions this new generation as incorporating both the disease and the cure, but its "mission" will be similar to that which both Schnitzler

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* "I feel I'm more important than I've ever been before. Now it's only at the odd moment that I think I was born at the wrong time. Maybe I should've been born when there wasn't so much order, when you could do all sorts of things you wouldn't dare do today" (1).

† "And here I see the mission of the youth that forms the first generation of fighters and dragon-slayers; it will bring a more beautiful and blessed humanity and culture, but will have itself no more than a glimpse of the promised land of happiness and wondrous beauty" (96-7).

and Freud later worked toward, "die Begriffe, die jene Gegenwart von »Gesundheit« und »Bildung« hat, zu erschüttern und Hohn und Haß gegen so hybride Begriffs-Ungeheuer zu erzeugen" (Nietzsche 172).*

While Nietzsche's comments pertain to European, rather than strictly German or Austrian, culture, he nevertheless pinpoints the Austrian malaise in virtually identical terms to Schnitzler's later diagnosis. Although Schnitzler's own references to Nietzsche are sparse, and though over a thirty-three year history of correspondence with the greatest popularizer of Nietzsche's works in Europe, Georg Brandes, he never mentions Nietzsche once (Reichert 99), it is more than remarkable that Schnitzler's perception of his "diseased" society should so closely echo Nietzsche's, and also that Schnitzler's prescription for the future, for the only possible antidote to the burden of historical knowledge, should again be identical to that proposed by Nietzsche. Nietzsche succinctly states what this hero of the new generation, Schnitzler's Felix, must do to save society from the burden of history:

> er muß das Chaos in sich organisieren, dadurch, daß er sich auf seine echten Bedürfnisse zurückbesinnt. Seine Ehrlichkeit, sein tüchtiger und wahrhaftiger Charakter muß sich irgendwann einmal dagegen sträuben, daß immer nur nachgesprochen, nachgelernt, nachgeahmt werde; er beginnt dann zu begreifen, daß Kultur noch etwas andres sein kann als *Dekoration des Lebens*. (174)†

Felix must unburden himself of the subjective introspection of the Salas and the sentimentalism and "melancholy" of the Fichtners, before he can find his true place and function within history:

> In jenem Zeitpunkt werden sie [die neue Generation] unwissender sein als die »Gebildeten« der Gegenwart; denn sie werden viel verlernt und sogar alle Lust verloren haben, nach dem, was jene Gebildeten vor allem wissen wollen, überhaupt noch hinzublicken.... Aber sie sind, an jenem Endpunkte ihrer Heilung, wieder *Menschen* geworden und haben aufgehört, menschenähnliche Aggregate zu sein. (173)‡

Schnitzler, then, strongly endorses Nietzsche's perspective of history, and is uncannily identical to Nietzsche with regard to the view that an overemphasis on knowledge and historical consciousness can lead to an ineffectual, effete existence. Like Nietzsche, too, Schnitzler feels that culture

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* "to shake to their foundations the present conceptions of "health" and "culture," and erect hatred and scorn in the place of this rococo mass of ideas" (97).

† "he must organize the chaos in himself by "thinking himself back" to his true needs. He will want all his honesty, all the sturdiness and sincerity in his character, to help him to revolt against secondhand thought, secondhand learning, secondhand action. And he will begin then to understand that culture can be something more than a "decoration of life" (99).

‡ "At first they [the new generation] will be more ignorant than the "educated men" of the present; for they will have unlearnt much and have lost any desire even to discover what those educated men especially wish to know.... But at the end of the cure they are men again and have ceased to be mere shadows of humanity" (98).

is largely responsible for the burden of history, and if the new generation does not soon re-establish its vital connection with the self, is not capable of the reintegration of the self that is necessary for a vibrant life, then time soon will, in Felix's words to Julian, have run out.

Schnitzler is the product of an extremely conservative society, in which the *status quo* forms the ideal. Change is viewed as potential for disaster rather than for revolution. Schnitzler clearly recognized the faults and weaknesses of this kind of a perspective. Although he appears to be an "apolitical," or non-political, artist, we might assert that this is not a tenable position, since any action – any written or expressed opinion – has political consequences. If the conservative attitude is one that considers social change to mean only a turn for the worse, that change ultimately leads to catastrophe, then Schnitzler cannot be considered conservative, for he recognized that the static condition, the inertia and self-deception of his society was what would trigger the catastrophe. The recognition of impending catastrophe, on the other hand, can lead to either authoritarian or socialistic commitment, for as George Watson notes, "Fascism and communism ... are formal political expressions of a similar certainty concerning a just and impending doom" (101). Bernard Shaw tried to resolve this fear of catastrophe through an awkward marriage of authoritarian practice with an idealistic conception of what man could finally become. Compared to Schnitzler, however, Shaw's rhetoric is narrow and moralistic; he condemns humanity in its present form in favor of the potential for a future, greater humanity. Schnitzler, however, does not condemn, but merely exposes the frailties of his characters, and suggests that the stripping away of illusions is the first prerequisite of an improved society. The lack of polemics, lack of a judgmental position, and the recognition of facets of the artist in many of his characters, would, in the broad sense, lead to categorizing Schnitzler as a "liberal" rather than conservative, right-wing or left-wing. His work is characterized by a true concern for his society, and by the recognition that the conservative nature of that society cannot be corrected through radical, revolutionary means, but through the gradual change that results from heightened self-awareness and a revitalized historical perspective.

If Schnitzler was very much part of the society that he describes in his plays, Eliot tended to be more aloof from society, more impersonal, but just as objective. His early poems recreate, as Peter Ackroyd notes, "the observations of a solitary wanderer through dilapidated streets" (38), and he distances these impressions by objectifying them, creating different personas or "voices" to record the impressions. Where Schnitzler participated actively – almost pathologically – in sexual activity, Eliot appears to have remained a virgin until his marriage to Vivien Haigh-Wood in 1915, at the age of twenty-seven, and his early poetry portrays "a brooding dislike, or

fear, of women" (Ackroyd 44).* Ackroyd describes Eliot in the same terms as Schnitzler characterizes Julian Fichtner, "Self-aware but also filled with self-doubt, evincing a kind of narcissistic vulnerability" (Ackroyd 47). This was the vulnerability of an individual who continually fears the loss of self-control, perceiving a lack of order within himself that is consequently projected to the world around him, resulting in "visions of madness and a disintegrating world" (Ackroyd 46). Malcolm Muggeridge characterized Eliot as "a death-rattle in the throat of a dying civilisation" (170). Eliot's poetry, as well as his plays, exhibits the need for control as well as the need for moral and social standards. What Eliot fears in himself, and perceives in others, is uncontrolled subjectivity, "the failure of communication in a world which is interpreted and shaped by the individual consciousness.... The only way out of this subjective trap is in the idea of system and order" (Ackroyd 48-9). Where Eliot and Schnitzler therefore share many of the same concerns regarding culture and the individual, one feels that Schnitzler feels comfortable within his own milieu, at the same time that he recognizes its deficiencies, while Eliot is alienated within his, and continually searching for more personal as well as social stability.

If Schnitzler's sexual appetite as a young man is robust and superficial, Eliot's is "anxious" and somewhat voyeuristic; simultaneously intrigued and fearful, he experiments with sex in the mind, solipsistically exaggerating and twisting it in some of his early poetry. Consequently he describes the masochistic urge for self-flagellation and for death in the unpublished "Love Song of St Sebastian," and in another unpublished epic, "King Bolo and His Great Black Queen," he presents pornographic "allusions to buggery, penises, sphincters and other less delicate matters" (Ackroyd 52). Ackroyd notes that these images of perverted sex derive from feelings of the emptiness of life, that "severe religious discipline or gross sexual indulgence are, for the self-obsessed, ways of alleviating that meaninglessness" (53). The mature work of both Eliot and Schnitzler, however, represents a healthier sexuality, as in a later poem, "The Hollow Men," Eliot represents human isolation with lines like "Lips that would kiss / Form prayers to broken stones."

Eliot defined himself as conservative at an early age. He was raised as a Unitarian, which is "essentially Puritanism drained of its theology" (Ackroyd 17), a religion that does not recognize the incarnation of Christ, but is based upon conservative values, ethics, and work standards:

> it is a faith primarily of social intent, and concerned with the nature of moral obligations within a society. It placed its trust in good works, in reverence for authority and the institutions of authority, in public service, in thrift, and in success. This was the air that Eliot breathed as a child. (Ackroyd 18)

* Eliot again vowed a life of sexual abstinence in March, 1928, after his conversion to the Anglican Church.

Although Eliot was later to reject Unitarianism, it was not because this religion was too conservative, but because it was not enough so to satisfy his needs for even stronger and more traditional authority symbols and institutions, and it was this conservative, almost reactionary, need for tradition and authority that led to his conversion into the Church of England in 1927. As Ackroyd states, "if it were necessary to locate those elements of the Christian faith which impressed Eliot most deeply, they would surely be those of prayer and confession, balm and absolution for a soul deeply conscious of sin" (161).

Eliot reiterates over and over the dependence of time present and time past on the "continuation of ... a tradition ... [a] historical and ritualistic continuity which were for Eliot the essential elements of faith" (Ackroyd 160). Intellectually, too, Eliot was influenced by writers who reinforced the sense of tradition and authority. In Laforgue's symbolist poetry he was "attracted primarily to the denial of conventional feeling ... in its ironic scepticism about romantic passion" (Ackroyd 34). In Irving Babbitt, one of his teachers at Harvard University, he found an emphasis on classicism and the traditional values it embodied that Eliot identified with immediately; for Babbitt, who contrasted classicism to Rousseauism, "order and authority were necessary to check man's equally innate tendency to evil or the brutishness of appetite" (Ackroyd 36). Babbitt's "distaste for sentiment, emotionalism and narrow self-expression was to become a permanent aspect of [Eliot's] own criticism" (Ackroyd 36). Eliot was also briefly attracted to Bergson's concept of time, during the period that he attended Bergson's lectures at the Collège de France in 1911, and claimed that he had been a Bergsonian while writing "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," but as Ackroyd states, while the

> notion of "ideal duration," of immersion in time, of the flow of consciousness, is clearly an analogy for Eliot's own sense of experience and its claims ... he always withdrew from such experience, in the same manner that he withdrew from Bergson: he reverted to his need for order, for discipline, for tradition. (41)

A longer lasting and much stronger influence on Eliot was that of Charles Maurras, whose reliance on the traditions of classicism, Catholicism and monarchism Eliot would echo, with the exception that Eliot's Catholicism would be the English version embodied in the Church of England. Maurras was also a strong supporter of authoritarian hierarchy within the family, church and state, and was strongly anti-democratic and anti-semitic; these authoritarian traits were assimilated by Eliot as well. Ackroyd analyzes Eliot's almost voyeuristic excitement at watching a student riot by Maurras' *Action Française* against a professor who had criticized Joan of Arc:

> Here we have the excitement of the timid or hesitant man watching the violence of others (Eliot liked boxing matches also), just as his thirst for absolutism found nourishment in Maurrasien doctrines. Throughout his life, Eliot would continue to support Maurras, and his philosophy was to enter the fabric of Eliot's own concerns. (42)*

By the time of his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism in 1927, then, Eliot described himself as "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion" (*Lancelot* ix).

Eliot's need for order, for authority, for a tradition and for an absolute set of values was a search for some kind of unity to combat what he saw as a morally, ethically and politically disintegrating world. A strong sense of historical significance and of tradition could bring at least an apparent order and organization to the flux and chaos of the inter-war years, and the present, when viewed through the perspective of the past, was, through the longevity of the past, given an aura of stability. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" Eliot gives art and literature a solid grounding in history, maintaining:

> the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous order.... No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists.... what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order ... will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. (*Sacred Wood* 49-50)

Carol Smith remarks that Eliot "demanded that tradition be recognized as something which has an existence which is incontrovertible and cannot be ignored, an existence which is somehow 'given' " (7). By 1934, in *After Strange Gods*, Eliot's sense of tradition had broadened to include not only literature but "all of those habitual actions, habits and customs, from the most significant religious rite to our conventional way of greeting a stranger, which represent the blood kinship of 'the same people living in the same place' " (Smith 20).

Eliot's dramatic style, and his attempt to reassert the validity of verse forms and myth in modern drama represent a stylistic enforcement of tradition

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* Eliot's later opposition to Fascism was based primarily upon his recognition that the fascist ideology had no more respect for the past and for tradition than did Communism.

as clearly as his ideological position enforces the need to pay tribute to the past. Eliot's dependence on tradition as the final authority also leads him to recognize the past as an ultimate standard, even a universal objective "truth" that is external to the individual, a search for the absolute that rests on the past, rather than, like Hegel's Absolute Idea, looking toward a future perfection. Eliot further extended his notion of the Absolute, or absolute truth, from philosophy into religion, noting in his essay on Machiavelli, with whom he was essentially in agreement (Smith 16), that Machiavelli depicts "humanity without the addition of superhuman Grace. It is therefore tolerable only to persons who have also a definite religious belief; to the effort of the last three centuries to supply religious belief by belief in Humanity the creed of Machiavelli is insupportable" (*Lancelot* 63). It was consistent with his belief in authority and tradition, and his conviction that religion must consist of an ultimate standard unalterable by grace, that Eliot dispatched curtly Shaw's belief in a Life Force existing as a part of nature, stating that Shaw and Wells are "concerned with the spirit, not the letter. And the spirit killeth, but the letter giveth life" (*Lancelot*, Essay on Baudelaire). Carol Smith takes this comment to mean that Eliot is opposed to any liberalism and even any form of humanism that is not specifically tied to the formal church structure and hierarchy: "Only a formal religion can provide the necessary moral and ethical framework to sustain itself" (17).

Eliot's critical perspective and his political stand are, at the very least, ultra-conservative. The individual artist — and the individual work of art — can affect the tradition only to an extremely limited extent, as the literary tradition is in its own turn affected by every new work of art. The artist continually "surrenders" himself to the artistic tradition: "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (Smith 7). Eliot gave scant heed or credibility to the promptings of the artist's "inner voice" or to the working of intuition; all art, and all criticism, must be subjected to the demands of the artistic tradition. This interdependence of individual and tradition ensures that no radical change can take place, and that what was will continue to be, and will provide the standard for what is, and for what will be.

Russell A. Berman, in a critical study of "Fascist Modernism" in Germany, includes Eliot, together with "Pound, Lewis, Céline, Hamsun, Marinetti, Benn, Jünger, Grimm [and] Johst" (205) as writers who embody the characteristics of fascist modernism. His rationale for including Eliot in this category is based on Eliot's preoccupation with the subjective feelings and the isolation of the individual, which reveals Eliot's disillusionment with the liberal, democratic culture of America and England between the wars:

> The cultivation of subjective interiority in liberal culture led only to failed eroticism.... Here is where the strategies of fascist literary address emerge,

> calling individualism to account, pointing to its sexual misery, and generating images of a new collective of perpetual union. T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* stands as a paradigm. The power of attraction is clear, but so are its limits, for participation in this union demands the renunciation of individuality, the dissolution of the profile of subjectivity, in order to join the congregation. The social crisis is to be solved by insisting on the absolute priority of the whole over the individual who, robbed of all particularity, becomes the perpetual repetition of the next unit. (207)

Certainly Eliot's conversion strengthened even more than before his conviction that the individual was not, could not be, complete in himself, that if the world were to be saved it could only be through the individual continually "sacrificing" his individuality to a tradition and to a spiritual absolute.

The need for order, for authority and for an established past informs Eliot's view of history both in his poetry and his plays. Eliot's early historical perspective is singularly evident in "Gerontion" (1920), while the later perspective of *The Family Reunion* demonstrates the view of the mature artist, with an additional emphasis on morality and original sin that is derived from the inner, spiritual conflicts that let to Eliot's conversion in 1927. Eliot, like Nietzsche, views the excessive awareness of history as a psychological burden, but where Nietzsche believed that a higher breed of people could be developed who would be above the demands of history, and Schnitzler believed that history could still be revitalized, Eliot perceives a classical, static, and above all, a moral universe with an established order; history exists as a disruption of the established order, and where this exists, through the fallibility of mankind, there must be an expiation in the manner of the classical Greek tragedy – on which most of Eliot's plays are based – in order to re-establish the moral unity of history. Though the notion of flux, of historical motion remains dominant in Eliot's work, the only role left to man is to understand his relationship to history, and to atone for his guilt, which is inherited and closely analogous to "original sin." Walter Kaufmann views Eliot as the epitome of writers whose works display "a deep dissatisfaction with the time in which it is their lot to live," and that he "persuaded millions that the modern world is a waste land" (*From Shakespeare* 2). Eliot seems to confirm Kaufmann's assertion that the waste land imagery does not reveal the dilemma of modern man as much as it does Eliot's own private psychological torture chamber, as he remarks, in *After Strange Gods*, that "the damage of a lifetime, and of having been born in an unsettled society, cannot be repaired at the moment of composition." Kaufmann views this expressed dissatisfaction with one's own historical period as a kind of "self-pity and self-deception" which results in "a comprehensive distortion of history" (1). The answer to this "Godless existentialism," the complete disillusionment with modern existence, is to find the courage within oneself

to be able to face a life and death that seems to be meaningless. Moral courage may not necessarily add meaning to life, as Captain Shotover states at the end of *Heartbreak House*: "Courage will not save you. But it will show you that your souls are still alive.".

"Gerontion," written in 1920, embodies many of the themes that are developed in greater detail in *The Family Reunion*. Harvey Gross, who has analyzed "Gerontion" – as well as *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* – from a historical perspective, states that

> The concern in *Gerontion* is history as it is actually felt, a devastating force driving Europe toward cultural dissolution and moral despair; and history as it might be philosophically understood, a shattering Idea of History. This Idea leaves the protagonist incapable of action. (33)

This conception of history immediately identifies the individual with the universal, for Eliot's concern was with European culture, not with isolated individual experiences. Gross's definition also tends to confirm Eliot's similarity to Schnitzler and to Nietzsche; the view of history as destructive, and historical knowledge as debilitating, is a major focus of both Nietzsche and Schnitzler. This historical view shows the individual incapable of independent action or creativity because of his acute, rational consciousness of the past. But in his critical writings Eliot has demonstrated a strong reverence for the past and for tradition, without which he could not envisage the emergence of a worthwhile literature.

The historical perspective that emerges through Eliot's poetry and plays is more ambivalent than is Schnitzler's, and incorporates a strong *moral* element. Eliot views his contemporary society – and Europe as a whole – as fractured, chaotic and meaningless, precisely *because* it has lost the necessary reverence for history and for tradition, and so has been cut off from its vital historical past. Having lost track of his vital roots, his origins, man becomes a piece of human flotsam, drifting aimlessly, but inevitably, toward disaster. Eliot's conception of history is therefore both moral and eschatological; because we have transgressed in not tying ourselves closely enough to our historical development, we are doomed to a final, catastrophic end, which, at its worst, is an end without passion or violence; if there has been no vitality in life, how can there be any in death: "*This is the way the world ends / Not with a bang but a whimper*" ("The Hollow Men" *CPP* 86).* The early poetry does not clearly outline man's social and moral responsibility, focussing more on the resulting human alienation, the isolation of the individual within his society, nervous insecurity, and at the same time his boredom with the triviality of everyday life. The moral element becomes more dominant in the

* All references to Eliot's works are taken from *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot*, pp. 37-39.

later poetry, and especially in the plays.

Gerontion, like Clifford Chatterley or like Stephan von Sala, is a representative of his culture, a man who has lost all vitality, who has, as Eliot's quotation from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, which Eliot has chosen as the epigraph for his poem, makes clear, "*nor youth nor age / But as it were an after dinner sleep / Dreaming of both*" Gerontion has lost both the physical vitality of youth and the intellectual rigor of the mature individual. Eliot hints at a moral perspective by suggesting that the reason for Gerontion's empty, vicarious existence – "Being read to by a boy" – may lie in his past, ancestral, abnegation of historical responsibility:

> I was neither at the hot gates
> Nor fought in the warm rain
> Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
> Bitten by flies, fought. (37)

Gerontion has lost the vital sense of tradition that would allow him to identify with the past and organically extend it into the present and the future. The reference to the "hot gates" of Thermopylae and to other historical battles suggests that history cannot be protected through memory alone, but must be revitalized in every individual through intellectual honesty, duty and commitment, qualities that had been passed on to Eliot himself through his Puritan background; these were the qualities – merely hinted at in "Gerontion" – which would become increasingly significant in his later work. Gerontion, then, has failed to uphold his moral responsibilities, and as a result the historical process has been shattered; corruption, illusion, the dissolution of values and contamination of culture by inferior races are the result. Gerontion now lives in

> a decayed house,
> And the Jew squats on the window sill, the owner,
> Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
> Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London. (37)

Eliot's anti-semitism is flagrantly evident here, as he pictures the Jew as a contaminating influence that has insidiously spread throughout Europe. But the Jew is not the only contaminant in Eliot's view, as he envisages the ritual of a "depraved" Eucharist that sees the blood and body of Christ, in the form of "dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas," being shared by a community of participants whose polyglot composition (Mr. Silvero, Hakagawa, Madame de Tornquist, and Fräulein von Kulp) again demonstrates the corruption of any sense of tradition (Gross 35).

Eliot introduces the Eucharist scene as resulting from Gerontion's expressed desire for a divine sign, a hope for salvation which is, however, "Swaddled with darkness," or illusory. The Christ whom Gerontion envisages is "Christ the tiger," an identification with violence and bestiality rather

than hope, and after the communion, "The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours." The hope is unfounded, and Eliot's cataclysmic view of history is reinforced as those who participate in the mock communion are destroyed.

Having lost the vitality of an experiential past, the ability to believe in himself, to integrate reason and passion, Gerontion's consciousness and memory are merely rational: "What's not believed in, or if still believed, / In memory only, reconsidered passion" (38). Lack of passion, however, has not inhibited knowledge, and in this respect Gerontion becomes an overly intellectualized *epigone*, a representative of Nietzsche's "old age of mankind," as fully as does Schnitzler's von Sala, to the extent where "The pressure of this historical awareness paralyzes his capacity to act" (Gross 34). Eliot points again to the human transgression, the original sin, that has led to this maimed condition, through his reference to the "tears ... shaken from the wrath-bearing tree," the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Gerontion, too, recognizes and accepts his guilt, at the same time that he points to historical awareness as an active, destructive force, the serpent of knowledge which, through the beguiling of ambitions, vanities, and sexual desires, has forever destroyed innocence:

> After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
> History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
> And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
> Guides us by vanities. (38)

Transgression, guilt, the loss of innocence and loss of vitality are consistently strong elements of Eliot's poetry, and these elements come to represent the "modern human condition." The transgression and guilt are typically described through images of decay, nausea, dirt, sweat, noxious odors and repelling sights, while the images that portray man's isolation from society, and alienation from a vital tradition are of broken glass, dryness, age, aridity, rock and iron, dry wind, dry brain, dry season, and so on.

The Family Reunion is a logical thematic extension of "Gerontion." The play, however, also contains a strong autobiographical component, and reconstructs the agonizing personal experience and emotions that revolved around Eliot's separation from his wife Vivien, and the extreme guilt he must have felt at committing her to an asylum.* Harry, Lord Monchensey,

* Peter Ackroyd and Lyndall Gordon both note that the signatures of two relatives or close friends of the patient were required in order to certify an individual. While one signature contributing to Vivien's certification was probably that of her brother Maurice, the other may or may not have been Eliot. Ackroyd states that "Eliot himself could not legally have signed such a document since he was separated from her. But since he was the one most involved with Vivien's welfare, he must have either approved of, or acquiesced in, her committal" (233). Gordon, however, notes that "when Maurice Haigh-Wood was close to death, he confessed that he, with Eliot, had signed this order, much to his later regret, for when, after some years abroad, he saw his sister again in 1946, he was convinced that she

is a mask for Eliot – though Eliot himself later described Harry as "an insufferable prig" (Stein 442) – for Harry embodies the alienation, the guilt, the search for truth and for a tradition, that are so strongly Eliot's own concerns. Harry's wife, described by Amy as "A restless shivering painted shadow" who "never wanted to fit herself to Harry, / But only to bring Harry down to her own level" (290), is certainly based on Eliot's own wife, Vivien, who is similarly described by Virginia Woolf as "so scented, so powdered, so egotistic, so morbid, so weakly" (304). The interaction between Harry and Mary also parallels Eliot's relationship with Emily Hale, the American girl with whom he had an "understanding" before his marriage to Vivien, and with whom he resumed a close – though apparently chaste – relationship after his separation from Vivien (Emily either visited Eliot in England, or he her in America, every summer from 1934 to 1938) (Gordon 79-80). Vivien was placed into the asylum in August of 1938, and the composition of the various versions of *The Family Reunion* dated from at least as far back as 1934-5, to its completion at the beginning of 1939 (Gordon 80). *The Family Reunion* was also completed twelve years after Eliot's conversion, and this, together with the details of Eliot's own life and family relationships, lends a particular note of spiritual as well as emotional intensity to the play.

The sense of transgression and of guilt is much stronger in *The Family Reunion* than in "Gerontion." Harry is a tortured protagonist, wracked by a guilt – symbolized through the Eumenides – that he can neither understand nor particularize. Where Gerontion has an over-abundance of historical knowledge – "After such knowledge, what forgiveness" – Harry must *gain* the knowledge of his past, which is also a universal past, in order to understand his own position in the historical process. As Agatha says to him:

> It is possible that you have not known what sin
> You shall expiate, or whose, or why. It is certain
> That the knowledge of it must precede the expiation (333)

The paralyzing power of knowledge has to a large extent been replaced by a similar paralysis of guilt: "What we have written is not a story of detection, / Of crime and punishment, but of sin and expiation" (333). The uncovering of actual events, and the judicial punishment for crimes committed palls in comparison to the moral associations of guilt and its required expiation. Harry cannot act, cannot control his existence because he is overwhelmed by guilt without being able to recognize its source, to analyze and understand it; Harry recognizes that "the particular has no language" (294), either for expression or for comprehension. The partial knowledge that he does have, that of murdering his wife – his overt recognition that "Perhaps / I only dreamt I pushed her" (333) would be immaterial to Eliot with his Calvinist

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was as sane as he was" (77-8).

sense of morality, since the thought or intention is equal to the act, in the eyes of God* – is an incomplete apprehension of feelings with no understanding of where these feelings originated, and of how absolute they are. The sense of guilt established in Harry is equivalent to the biblical conception of original sin; man is guilty because he is imperfect, has lost his innocence through partaking of the tree of knowledge. Harry is the representative, the expressionistic incorporation of the evil that has invaded life. There is a haunting echo in Eliot's depiction of Harry Monchensey's tortured sensibility, and his references to having murdered his wife, of Eliot's own guilt over his wife's committal to the asylum, an act he too might have equated with murder, and like Harry, he might have felt that that particular act "was only reversing the senseless direction / For a momentary rest on the burning wheel" (294).

Eliot's success in intensifying the sense of guilt is achieved largely through an assault on the senses using images of odious smells, sights and feelings. The entire play is filled with images of contamination. The eyes of the Eumenides "corrupted" the nightingales' song for Harry; his guilt is like the "noxious smell untraceable in the drains" (294); Harry views himself, moreover, as the embodiment of the contamination:

> I am the old house
> With the noxious smell and the sorrow before morning,
> In which all past is present, all degradation
> Is unredeemable. (294)

As the sense of physical contamination is heightened, its identification with spiritual disease is also strengthened; the physical symptoms become more and more the concrete "objective correlative" for the spiritual condition, as the smells, images of rottenness and corruption are described as "unredeemable" in spiritual terms. The fatal nature of the disease is evident when the corruption spreads to the bone, and the marrow of the bone, an extension of the patient imagery in "Prufrock": "like a patient etherized upon a table":

> The partial anæsthesia of suffering without feeling
> And partial observation of one's own automatism
> While the slow stain sinks deeper through the skin
> Tainting the flesh and discolouring the bone – (294)

The reiteration of the images of disease, corruption, noxious smells, stains and contamination reinforce with depressing emphasis the sordid human condition drawn by Eliot's imagination. The one-dimensional nature of Harry's personality – the play is a morality play enacting Eliot's vision of transgression and salvation – and the insistent references to a universal spiritual condition make it evident throughout that Harry is a representative

* I John 3:15. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

of a wider, a universal culture. The second half of the play also uncovers Eliot's overriding concern with order and tradition; the transgression, the sin that Harry – as representative of humanity – has committed, is that he has destroyed the "natural" order of the universe, of which Wishwood is the microcosm. Harry himself begins to perceive his own corruption as part of a wider, universal disorder near the end of Part II, Scene 1, after he for the first time in his life has looked after his mother, has almost inadvertently taken on the role of caretaker in putting her to sleep:

> What you call the normal
> Is merely the unreal and the unimportant.
> I was like that in a way, so long as I could think
> Even of my own life as an isolated ruin,
> A casual bit of waste in an orderly universe.
> But it begins to seem just part of some huge disaster,
> Some monstrous mistake and aberration
> Of all men, of the world, which I cannot put in order. (326)

Having just accepted a sense of responsibility in taking care of his mother, Harry now recognizes that his responsibility is much greater than he had realized, that the whole world, not only Wishwood, is in a state of disorder, and that it is his moral responsibility to re-establish this order. The play gains a great deal of its power from the gradual perception, by both Harry and the audience, that Harry's particularized hell is really a universal condition, and that as the bearer of this agony, this heightened consciousness of sin and guilt, Harry's role changes gradually from one of agonized individuality to that of the universal "man of Destiny," the one whose destiny it is to redeem the world.* Agatha confirms this as Harry's role, as she reminds him that:

> Whatever you have learned, Harry, you must remember
> That there is always more: we cannot rest in being
> The impatient spectators of malice or stupidity.
> We must try to penetrate the other private worlds
> Of make-believe and fear. To rest in our own suffering
> Is evasion of suffering. We must learn to suffer more. (327)

As a man of destiny, Harry's road will not be lighter than it has been henceforth, for redemption must be preceded by the full understanding, the participation in the fruit of the tree of knowledge, "to penetrate the other private worlds / Of make-believe and fear" (327).

If "Gerontion" demonstrates inherited guilt, resulting in the consequent impotence of modern man, this conception is strengthened in *The Family Reunion*; there is an additional component to the play, however, that derives

* Lyndall Gordon emphasizes that "It is essential to persuade the audience that Harry is a man of destiny, and visible Furies achieve this with maximum economy and drama" (87).

from Eliot's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism, and this is the potential for spiritual expiation, an almost Old Testament possibility of re-establishing the vital link with God, or the universe. The order of the universe, as represented by Wishwood, has been disrupted, even before Harry's birth, and the apparent orderliness of the estate during Harry and Mary's childhood has been nothing but illusion, a pseudo order and a static, artificial tradition established by Amy in an attempt to stop the process of time. Despite all the symbolic associations of changelessness and cyclical time surrounding the estate, there is as great a sense of impending doom as there is in Schnitzler's drama. Wishwood House is a man-made barrier erected against time and change, and as such it cannot last; its spirit and creator, Amy, has tried to resist time and pretend it does not exist, but consequently lives in the constant fear that the clock will stop in the dark, a reference not only to her own death, but to that of the tradition she has built up:

> I do not want the clock to stop in the dark.
> If you want to know why I never leave Wishwood
> That is the reason. I keep Wishwood alive
> To keep the family alive, to keep them together,
> To keep me alive, and I live to keep them. (287)

Even the games, the pastimes for the children at Wishwood were, as Mary states, organized as if by design, "imposed upon us; / ... always so carefully prepared; / There was never any time to invent our own enjoyments" (306). The one area of imaginative, almost idyllic, game playing shared by Mary and Harry during their childhood revolved around the "hollow tree ... near the river" (307), and Harry notes that this, too, was later felled in favor of "a neat summer-house ... 'to please the children' " (307).

The morality by which Wishwood exists is, like the rest of its existence, artificial, for it revolves solely around pleasing or displeasing Amy, as Harry later recognizes:

> The rule of conduct was simply pleasing mother;
> Misconduct was simply being unkind to mother;
> What was wrong was whatever made her suffer,
> And whatever made her happy was what was virtuous – (318)

The Old Testament sense of justice is reinforced by Harry's remembering that nothing ever made her "very happy," consequently "We all felt like failures, before we had begun" (318). The entire mode of existence at Wishwood is based on guilt. Amy's awareness of the artificial nature of the tradition she has created is at the root of her fear that the clock might "stop in the dark" (285).

The cause for the "original sin," the original disruption of the "natural" order and hierarchy, is the loveless marriage between Amy and Harry's father, a first wrong that is compounded by Amy's resolve to have sons and

to take charge of Wishwood despite a marriage of "humiliation, / Of the chilly pretences in the silent bedroom, / Forcing sons upon an unwilling father" (340). Eliot's own experiences with women seems to have been in the form of either nurturing mother types or the dominating, irrational, witch-woman type that he describes as his own first wife and Harry's wife in the play. His marked distrust of women, and his authoritarian attitude toward the family hierarchy, is evident in the play in the feeling that Amy, through taking control of Wishwood, has upset the natural hierarchy; traditionally the man, the father, should be the controlling force, but Harry's father was too weak, and with the "diffidence of a solitary man" (331), he yielded to the mother's power. Harry, then, is a child born of "un-love" (Chiari 129), with Amy sexually forcing herself on her husband in order to bear sons. Since sin begets sin, the corruption spreads with the revelation of Agatha's love for Harry's father – though emotionally vital, this is nevertheless a sin against the "natural" or universal order – the father's plans to murder Amy, and Agatha's intervention in these plans, for the sake of the unborn child, whom she views as her own because of her love for the father. Agatha's love for Harry's father is a carnal love, and hence sinful, but it also saves both Harry's and Amy's lives, since it motivates Agatha to interfere with the father's plans to murder Amy. Harry is thus born of a passionless, loveless marriage, but is nonetheless coveted and fought for; Amy wants him because he is the only one of her three sons she views as competent and intelligent enough to guide Wishwood into the future; Agatha loves Harry for the love she bore the father, and wants him to be free to rid himself of the guilt of his past; Mary loves him for herself, and feels she can help him recover his true self, the "real you" (309). Mary is the only real hope for Harry's future happiness, but in Eliot's morality, as he explained in his essay on Machiavelli, there exists no state of divine "Grace"; therefore, because Harry is flawed, a life of happiness is no longer possible for him. The most he can live for is to expiate his sin and that of his family, and through this sacrifice, to restore the true order. Agatha's life since her affair with Harry's father represents her own attempt to expiate her guilt, a process that is not yet complete; consequently, Harry's questioning of her to gain knowledge of his own past "disturbs," as she states, "a deeper / Organisation" (307) of her own existence that reflects the pseudo organization of Wishwood.

Harry is therefore bound to Wishwood, bound through the burden of his past, at least until he learns to understand the sin of which he and his family are guilty, and learns to live with this knowledge. Although bound to the burden of his past, Harry is not, like Gerontion or like Schnitzler's Sala, powerless to act, and the play, despite its apparent lack of dramatic conflict, documents a series of actions and consequences that Harry undertakes in his efforts to first of all escape, and then to confront, the burdens he carries.

The first decisive action was his decision to leave Wishwood, and just as Eliot's own decision to leave America and his family was solidified through his marriage to Vivien, so Harry's decision to leave Wishwood was also made possible through his marriage to a possessive wife who kept him travelling through Europe, and prevented him from returning to Wishwood as long as she was alive. The wife is described, by Amy, as frenetic, possessive, taking Harry from the "right" groups to an identification with "undesireable society"; "A restless shivering painted shadow / In life, she is less than a shadow in death" (290). Harry falls into the same trap as his father had before him, allowing himself to be dominated, perhaps not altogether unwillingly, by his wife. Because his decision to marry was not based on knowledge of his past, but was, rather, a desperate attempt to escape his past, it merely takes Harry from the pseudo order of Wishwood to its opposite, a chaotic, spiritually isolated existence which he describes as

> that sense of separation,
> Of isolation unredeemable, irrevocable –
> It's eternal, or gives a knowledge of eternity,
> Because it feels eternal while it lasts. That is one hell.
> Then the numbness came to cover it – that is another –
> That was the second hell of not being there,
> The degradation of being parted from my self (330)

Harry's isolation stems from his separation from his organic past, from his sense of history, and he sees no redemption, no way back. He views history as cyclical because there seems little difference between past, present and future, an apparent Nietzschean form of eternal recurrence, but Eliot would have repudiated Nietzsche's philosophy as "irrational," for Eliot's conception of history is moral and biblical, based on the conception of the "fall from Grace"; at his best man can atone for his fallibility and thus restore the moral order, but cannot in any sense move history forward. Agatha states that Harry's return to Wishwood will be painful, because

> everything is irrevocable,
> Because the past is irremediable,
> Because the future can only be built
> Upon the real past. (288)

Unlike Julian's attempts at historical revisionism, his "coloring" of the past in *Der einsame Weg*, or Amy's effort to implement her own order, for Harry there can be no changing of the past; the future is dependent on the "real" past, and the "loop in time" must lead back to the real past, through a life of atonement. The entire play is laden with a sense of futility, of crushing hopelessness; even when the break with history is shown to be reversible and expiation possible, the heaviness persists.

Since this is a play of "sin and expiation," decisions such as Harry's decision to marry and leave Wishwood merely add to the agony, since instead of resolving the dilemma they add to it. Harry's next action is to fulfil his own father's sinful plan – though he does not recognize this at the time – and murder his wife. There is a great deal of ambiguity surrounding this "murder," but the act itself would not be as significant as the desire to do so. Again this decision, made in ignorance of the past, only makes Harry suffer more, and leads to further images of isolation, terror ("the burning wheel"), and finally of possession by the Furies, a psychological consciousness of pain and guilt that leads to a state near insanity, "that awful / Privacy of the insane mind" (334). Each of the actions and decisions that Harry has taken has intensified his emotional and psychological pain, because they represented attempts to escape the past, rather than confronting it.

With the return to Wishwood, the pain and terror has reached its height, and the emotional conflict begins to move toward a resolution. Harry is infuriated at Wishwood by the very quality he thought would be his refuge, the indomitable resistance to time as change. Having himself experienced spiritual assaults on his innermost being, he can no longer endure history as the mere recording of events. "You are all people / To whom nothing has happened," he tells his family:

> at most a continual impact
> Of external events. You have gone through life in sleep,
> Never woken to the nightmare. (293)

Harry's knowledge of the significance of the past virtually deprives him of the ability to act constructively in the present. He sees himself, as Felix does in Schnitzler's play, as the very sin that is being perpetuated, that he is "the old house / With the noxious smell and the sorrow before morning" (294), an organic, growing horror that is impossible to cope with. Within this chaotic experience of horror there seems no distinction between past, present and future, and no direction that has any meaning. He views existence as a thick smoke with

> many creatures moving
> Without direction, for no direction
> Leads anywhere but round and round in that vapour –
> Without purpose, and without principle of conduct. (294)

The apparent purposelessness of existence, of the historical process does not, however, alleviate the pain, the excruciating sense of guilt he feels as a sensitive representative of mankind. The murder of his wife – whether actual or imagined – was nothing more or less than an arbitrary attempt to organize the flux around him – Nietzsche's definition of the "will to power" is that one wants to organize the surrounding flux or chaos, and thereby gain control over it – to assert his personality on his surroundings and try to establish

some meaning to existence. His return to Wishwood, a further attempt to find order in a chaotic world, is prompted, as he states, by "The instinct to return to the point of departure / And start again as if nothing had happened" (308). But as Mary informs him, "What you need to alter is something inside you / Which you can change anywhere – here, as well as elsewhere" (308). It is especially at Wishwood, however, that Harry must alter what is inside him, for Wishwood contains all the past that has become such an intolerable burden for him. It contains the greater and the lesser experiences, the planned murder of his mother by his father, and the planned treats and enjoyments that were meant to entice him, as a child, to become a willing element, a "part of the design" envisioned by Amy.

Harry realizes that he must act, must make some choices at Wishwood. The first of these is the possibility of a union with Mary, who offers to restore him to his "real you." With Mary he also recalls the few idyllic moments they experienced during their youth at Wishwood. She represents a figure of succor and protection rather than of sexuality for Harry, who hears her voice "as in the silence / Between two storms, one hears the moderate usual noises / In the grass and leaves, of life persisting" (309). Mary is obviously an ambivalent personality for Harry, as Emily Hale was for Eliot himself, and Eliot's own comments on Harry's relationship with Mary, in a letter to E. Martin Browne in March 1938, are revealing for their perspective on Eliot's own personality, his first marriage, and his relationship with Emily Hale:

> The point of Mary, in relation to Harry, was meant to be this. The effect of his married life upon him was one of such horror as to leave him for the time at least in a state that may be called one of being psychologically partially desexed: or rather, it has given him a horror of women as of unclean creatures. The scene with Mary is meant to bring out, as I am aware it fails to, the conflict inside him between this repulsion for Mary as a woman, and the attraction which the *normal* part of him that is still left, feels towards her personally *for the first time*. This is the first time since his marriage ('there was no ecstacy') that he has been attracted towards any woman. This attraction glimmers for a moment in his mind, half-consciously as a possible 'way of escape'; and the Furies (for the Furies are *divine* instruments, not simple hell-hounds) come in the nick of time to warn him away from this evasion – though at that moment he misunderstands their function. (Quoted in Browne 107)

Through Mary, Harry begins to wake to a new life, a new season, but the "horror of women" that Eliot has referred to is portrayed through Harry's recognition of the Spring, not as a season of hope as much as "an evil time, that excites us with lying voices" (309); in the ritualized poem on rebirth that Harry and Mary recite together the emergence of new life is identified, as it is in *The Waste Land*, with pain and sacrifice:

> Spring is an issue of blood
> A season of sacrifice
> And the wail of the new full tide

Returning the ghosts of the dead
Those whom the winter drowned. (310)

For the first time since Harry has left Wishwood, however, he can again feel hope through Mary's presence:

You bring me news
Of a door that opens at the end of a corridor,
Sunlight and singing; when I had felt sure
That every corridor only led to another,
Or to a blank wall. (319)

This is the lightest, the most hopeful, imagery in the play, and it comes to an abrupt end as the Furies present themselves to Harry, and he recognizes that his guilt is such that he cannot escape it through succor from another source. The past must be faced and atoned for; it cannot be simply evaded.

Upon Agatha's revelation of the truth of his parentage, the full revelation of the past, Harry is finally in possession of the knowledge he requires to begin his purgatorial journey toward the reconciliation of the past, the present, and the future, a reconciliation that is "the completion which at the beginning / Would have seemed the ruin" (333), the end of a cycle, of the "loop in time" which will again see him leaving Wishwood, but this time looking to the future rather than trying to escape the past. In a play that emphasizes the seasons – as do many morality plays – and which is set on the day of the vernal equinox, Agatha, like Mary, invokes the images of Spring, but this time in connection with the consciousness of sin: "It is possible that sin may strain and struggle / In its dark instinctive birth, to come to consciousness / And so find expurgation" (333). Harry becomes, finally, "the consciousness of [his] unhappy family, / Its bird sent flying through the purgatorial flame" (333), a moral responsibility which he accepts through his recognition that the disrupted order of the past must be restored, and that he alone, as the first-born son of his family, and as the son with the greatest awareness of good and evil, is in possession of both the knowledge and the consciousness that will allow this order to be restored.

Harry must leave Wishwood again, for while he now has the knowledge of the past, and recognizes that the knowledge "must precede the expiation" (333), the penance is not yet completed. There can be no state of Grace, no easy redemption for Harry, and he consequently resolves, with Agatha's concurrence, to live a life of penance, but now led by the "bright angels" rather than pursued by the Furies:

Where does one go from a world of insanity?
Somewhere on the other side of despair.
To the worship in the desert, the thirst and deprivation,
A stony sanctuary and a primitive altar,
The heat of the sun and the icy vigil,
A care over lives of humble people,

The lesson of ignorance, of incurable diseases. (339)

The references to caring for humble people and looking after the ill and the ignorant seem shallow, even tawdry, here; a tortured personality like Harry's is not easily turned to a life of performing good deeds, nor are good deeds the prescription for the kind of diseased society that Eliot has portrayed in this play or in his poetry. Amy's reference to Harry leaving to become a missionary should also be taken ironically, as a substitute for a kind of existence that is impossible for Amy to comprehend. Even Harry cannot clearly articulate what he means to do or where he means to go. Lyndall Gordon states that Harry "means to purify himself through solitude, envisaged in terms of the remote lives of desert saints: the heat of the sun, thirst, the icy vigil" (89). Eliot appears to suggest, through the images of the desert, heat, "icy vigil," and solitude, that Harry's redemption is not yet complete. Armed with his knowledge of the past, he must now, as the moral representative of his people, live out his life as a kind of purgatory to complete the expiation, to restore the moral order of history that was disrupted before his birth. Eloise Hay has called *The Family Reunion* a "democratic tragedy" (115), and there is almost the sense about the ending of the play that the tragic hero should have died to restore the universal order, as he would have in an Aristotelian tragedy, or in one of Hebbel's "bürgerliches Trauerspiel"; instead, having decided that his hero will live, Eliot did not seem quite sure how to dispose of him.

Harry's final decision to leave Wishwood re-establishes the order of the past, and, like Felix's condemnation of Julian Fichtner and von Sala in *Der einsame Weg*, is also a condemnation of – and a judgment on – his mother, Amy. Her complete purpose had been to retain the artificial structure and order that she had build for the family, and her inflexible plan was that Harry should inherit this order and perpetuate it. Amy's psychological strength and absolute inflexibility allow Harry only two choices: to yield to her completely, or to cause her death. To gain his own redemption, and to right the order of history, Harry must oppose her, and though his action carries the implications of a finally completed murder, it is also justice carried out for her stifling influence on the whole family. If Harry once completed his father's planned murder of Amy through the killing of his own wife, he repeats this act through the symbolic killing of his mother.

Through Amy's death the pseudo order she had established will be replaced by a new order. In designating John as the new master of Wishwood, Harry implies that the new order will have both a material and a spiritual component. John, the unimaginative, the non-introspective brother for whom a concussion is merely a "brief vacation from the kind of consciousness / That John enjoys" (324), is well suited to make the day-to-day decisions involved in running an estate and taking care of family business. Harry, on the other

hand, with his acute self-consciousness and introspection, recognizes that his awareness inhibits decisiveness and the ability to act: "What would destroy me will be life for John" (339). Eliot here further defines Nietzsche's comments on the ills of over-rationalization as creating a "burden" of historical awareness that precludes action, as he envisages the new order, the new tradition, as comprising both action with little awareness (John), and a universal, accentuated, spiritual perception (Harry), that does not necessarily result in direct action.

The play ends with Agatha pronouncing the new sense of fulfillment and freedom for all the members of the family, that has been made possible through Harry's sacrificial role. History has been set straight, the curse ended, and the family members are free to "depart / In several directions" to find "their own redemption" (350), no longer united through the artificial structure that Amy had erected:

> This way the pilgrimage
> Of expiation
> Round and round the circle
> Completing the charm
> So the knot be unknotted
> The crossed be uncrossed
> The crooked be made straight (350)

Unlike Harry's first departure from Wishwood, this departure of the family in various directions indicates a lifting of the curse, since the historical circle has come to a close with Amy's death.

In *Man and Superman*, Shaw's flamboyant Jack Tanner rather pompously enunciated the role of the artist or the Superman, as the anti-conventional hero whose mission it was to "shatter creeds and demolish idols" (74), a re-statement of Nietzsche's definition of the *Übermensch* as one who also stands "beyond good and evil," a potent rebel against the conformist and traditional values of a decadent society. The drama of Schnitzler and of Eliot displays a much more cautious approach to convention, tradition, and ultimately to the treatment of history and the historical perspectiv Schnitzler enjoys living within the conventions of Vienna's historical past the same time that he recognizes its decadence, shallowness and lack o. vitality; consequently, he carefully and cautiously feels his way toward a renewal and revaluation of cultural values in the form of Felix, the hope for a new world in *Der einsame Weg*. Felix is not a revolutionary with a vitalist conception of history like Shaw's hero is supposed to be; he does not, like Tanner or like Nietzsche, advocate a violent confrontation of old and new, of decadence and vitality, but rather incorporates the breath of new life into an old body, the gradual revitalization of society through a deliberate discarding of some of the introspective dross, and a consequent re-integration

of intellect and passion which, as Nietzsche clearly stated in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, was essential for a vital culture. Schnitzler's belief in this kind of gradual revitalization of the society that he so profoundly identified with was shattered in August 1914, when the "Great War" abruptly put an end to the Vienna that he had known.

If Schnitzler expresses a fundamentally ambivalent perspective on history, recalling the past fondly at the same time that he recognizes its impotence, Eliot's approach to history is more reactionary. Eliot, too, considers his own culture as sterile and passionless, but for Eliot this condition of sterility is not as indicative of an obsession with the past as it is of a lack of understanding of one's personal and cultural history, and of the inability to deal with a past which has become alien to us. For Eliot man is impotent because he has broken his ties with tradition, not because he has aligned himself too closely with it. Eliot's conception is not of a hero who opposes tradition, but of a protagonist, almost an anti-hero, like Harry Monchensey, who, through his own spiritual odyssey of intellectual and spiritual comprehension of the past can, through this, and through a life of penance, re-integrate his culture with traditional values and beliefs.

If Shaw's view of history is vitalist and progressive, Schnitzler's is cautiously optimistic, though his drama expresses the pessimistic melancholy more convincingly than it does the optimism. Eliot, however, does not view history as progressive in any sense. Eliot's perspective is largely an Old Testament view of history; humanity is in a "fallen" state. We have lost our innocence through knowledge, and while the taste of the forbidden tree of knowledge caused the original "Fall," once having gained knowledge it is now conversely our only means to obtain some understanding of our condition, and of our position within the historical tradition. While this understanding helps reconcile man to his state, re-establishes the universal order in an Aristotelian manner, it does not lead to a renewed state of "Grace," for innocence, once lost, cannot be regained. Eliot's perspective on knowledge is therefore ambivalent; knowledge represents the burden associated with Original Sin, the original loss of innocence, but it also represents the only means through which man can re-establish his organic link with tradition and with history.

Chapter 4

History, Anarchism and Anti-History: Brecht's *Baal*, Kaiser's *Der gerettete Alkibiades*, and Dürrenmatt's *Romulus der Große*

Shaw, Schnitzler and Eliot have been shown to represent three distinct perspectives on history, and three separate means of coming to terms with history as process, history as knowledge, and history as tradition – where the hero's mission is to challenge the existing morality. Their perspectives are overtly straightforward, clear and serious – serious even to the extent of the agonized sense of self awareness that emerges in the works of both Schnitzler and Eliot, but most predominantly in Eliot's "Gerontion" and *The Family Reunion*. The dramatists under consideration in the present chapter either negate the validity of an historical perspective altogether, as in Brecht's *Baal* (1918), or else present their views of history obliquely, through humour, irony and paradox, portraying individuals who either inadvertently or deliberately affect the course of history in an anarchic or unconventional manner. Both Georg Kaiser's *Der gerettete Alkibiades* (1920) and Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *Romulus der Große* (1957)* are history plays. Kaiser sets his play in historical Greece, while Dürrenmatt presents an ironic, even grotesque, perspective on the Roman Empire during the final days of its collapse in AD 476, a fictional adaptation which he himself subtitles "eine ungeschichtliche historische Komödie."†

The protagonists of all three of these plays are, like Jack Tanner, rebels against the conventional morality of their period, but unlike Tanner, they are nonconformists in their own unique way and style, anarchists rather than revolutionaries. Brecht's Baal is a completely asocial protagonist; he identifies with nature rather than with humanity, but not with nature as either the Naturalists or the Romantics viewed it. He might, if anything, be called a "black Romantic," for his identification with nature is an amoral, almost neutral, coalescing with the natural forces. Nor is nature in this play

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* *Romulus der Große* had its world première at the Basle Stadttheater on April 25, 1949. The play was substantially revised in 1957, and produced at the Zurich Schauspielhaus on October 24 of that year.

† "an historical comedy without historic basis."

represented as a coherent component of the historical process; the play and the protagonist are both anti-historical. This is not to say that Brecht was unconcerned about history or about the progress – or regress – of humanity; however, writing the play just at the end of World War I, Brecht here expresses his disillusionment with the nineteenth-century view of history as progress.

If Baal is an anti-historical anarchist, Kaiser's Sokrates is an accidental anarchist, one who influences and directs the course of history randomly and without design or intent, driven only by the pain of the thorn in his foot; only after the fact is he forced through circumstances to prepare a rationalization for his actions. Kaiser demonstrates his disillusionment with the coherence of the historical process by creating a hero who inadvertently opposes social values, and consequently directs history in a seemingly random, haphazard manner. Dürrenmatt's Romulus is also a social rebel and an anarchist, but unlike Kaiser's hero, Romulus has carefully planned his course of action, has used cynical and unjust means to try to accomplish a just end to the Roman Empire; he manipulates himself into the position of Emperor through a loveless marriage to Julia, the previous Emperor's illegitimate daughter, and has, for twenty years, allowed his people to suffer and die because he is convinced it is his moral obligation to pass judgment on the decadent and corrupt empire, and thus to cause its dissolution. Felix, in *Der einsame Weg*, judged his society through his condemnation of von Sala and Julian Fichtner, and Harry Monchensey in *The Family Reunion* passed judgment by leaving Wishwood and thereby causing Amy's death. In both of these cases the characters also speak for the authors, who are themselves judging their respective societies or cultures. In Dürrenmatt's play, however, Romulus does not speak for the author, nor is the judgment that he passes morally and ethically vindicated through the denouement of the play, since it was presumptuous for Romulus as an individual to judge history and to deliberately and anarchically attempt to re-direct its course. When Pyramus says of Spurius Titus Mamma, in Act I, that "He who misjudges our worth digs Rome's grave" (99), the individual who does the misjudging, and consequent gravedigging is, in fact. Romulus rather than Spurius.

Baal and *Der gerettete Alkibiades* are plays that are strongly infused with the disillusionment resulting from the outcome of World War I, while *Romulus der Große*, with its frequent and strong allusions to totalitarian states and to the Third Reich in particular, could only have been written after World War II. All three of these plays are greatly influenced by the political turmoil that was dominant in Germany during their conception.

Modris Eksteins, in his *Rites of Spring*, describes the enthusiasm with which the German populace greeted the imminent probability of war during the last week of July in 1914, an enthusiasm that virtually forced the Kaiser's hand in declaring war on August 1: "The momentous decision of the last

days have all been made against the backdrop of mass enthusiasm. No political leader could have resisted the popular pressures for decisive action" (61). The enthusiasm and support for the war was far more intense in Germany than in any other country involved in World War I. While some anti-war demonstrations had been organized by the Social Democrats during the last week of July, with the actual declaration of war these ceased, as all political parties, all religious denominations, and all ethnic groups, including the Association of German Jews in Berlin, expressed their collective support and enthusiasm for the war effort (Eksteins 61-3).

The English response to the outbreak of war was radically different from that in Germany. Samuel Hynes, in *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*, records the reaction of some of the English and American-English intellectuals to the certainty of war, of which he states: "The best-known and most often quoted response to the beginning of the First World War is surely Sir Edward Grey's: 'The lamps are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our time' " (3). Hynes also notes how Henry James uses the same opposition of darkness and light – or atavism and civilization – in his recognition, on the first day of the war, that this conflict meant an end to any belief in the progress of history or of civilization: "The plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness ... is a thing that so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be ... gradually bettering, that to have to take it all now for what the treacherous years were all the while really making for and meaning is too tragic for any words" (3).* For the English intellectuals, then, the war was viewed, for the most part, as a complete break with the past, with tradition, and with civilization:

> Like James, they had believed, or had *wanted* to believe, that English society was fundamentally stable, and that it was evolving in a progressive direction. War could not occur to interrupt that process, because war was uncivilized. And now suddenly war had come, and had brought that dream of order to an end. It came not simply as an interruption of peace, but as a contradiction of the values that they had thought made Europe one civilization. (Hynes 4)

Eksteins attributes the German drive towards war to Germany's historical lack of unity, a political fragmentation that had resulted in a "craving for national wholeness, an illusion of unity, greatness, and strength" (66). Germany, unlike England, desired the break with its historical past,

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* This typically English perspective on the war, viewing it as atavistic and primitive, compared to the Germans' perception of the war as an opportunity to demonstrate their heroism and forge their destiny, is mirrored in the statistics of soldiers executed for desertion or for treason in each country: "During the period from the first day of the war until the end of March 1920 the British shot 345 men. The French executed about the same number, or perhaps slightly fewer.... The Germans executed forty-eight" (Hynes 214).

because even the political unification of Germany in 1871, directed by Otto von Bismarck, could not satisfy the Germans' psychological craving for unity and wholeness, for while Bismarck achieved a political wholeness, this was nevertheless fraught with tensions and discords:

> It is one of the succulent ironies of history that Bismarck, the "iron chancellor," who helped to unify Germany and make it a great international power, also fragmented and weakened the country further.... In the German classical humanist outlook, freedom was ethical not social; *innere Freiheit*, inner freedom, was far more important than liberty and equality. For the German idealist, *Kultur* was a matter of spiritual cultivation, not external form. Germanness was, by necessity, a matter of spiritual association rather than geographical or even racial delineation. Bismarck, instead of weakening this internalization of life, this mythopoeic quality, accentuated it. Bismarck "Prussianized" Germany and at the same time turned Germany from the reality of a geographical expression into a legend (Eksteins 66-7)

Eksteins remarks that "The entire German setting at the *fin de siècle* was characterized by a *Flucht nach vorne*, a flight forward" (73), which makes the German experience symbolic of modernism in general. Germany "more intensively than any other 'developed' country has given evidence to the world of the pa[illegible]disorientation that rapid and wholesale environmental change may p[illegible]The German experience lies at the heart of the 'modern experience' " (. . . The German experience during the early years of the twentieth century, then, just prior to World War I, consisted of a discarding of the traditional for the new, a feeling for modernism, for a spiritual awakening, a mystical unification and nationalism, a sense of progress, and a feeling that Germany was "the foremost representative of a Hegelian World Spirit" (Eksteins 80). These were the sentiments expressed in much of the pre-war Expressionist drama and poetry – with the notable exception of a few brilliant young poets, such as Georg Heym (1887-1912) and Georg Trakl (1887-1914) (the horrors of the war drove Trakl to commit suicide on November 3, 1914) – and these were also the sentiments that resulted in the Germans' heady sense of exhilaration and unity with regard to the declaration of war that started the carnage of World War I.

While the German response to the declaration of war was uniformly enthusiastic, the reaction to Germany's defeat in 1918, and to the formation of the Weimar Republic, was one of disbelief and disillusionment. Although the democratic republic resulted in vastly increased freedoms for the individual and for political groups, over the pre-war Wilhelmine dynasty, it was viewed by the Germans with distrust and suspicion as a "foreign importation", and as a subordination of the dreams of progress and of nationality. As Walter Laqueur writes, in his authoritative book on *Weimar: A Cultural History 1918-33*, "Germans were romantic in their attitude towards the state, and since the Republic was so unromantic, it was *mal-aimeé*" (5).

Laqueur also points out that if the Social Democrats had been more authoritarian in their administration of the new Republic, it might have had a much greater chance for survival (11). The pre-war dreams of progress, of expansion and of nationalism were reflected in the strong post-war political swing to the right, of even the most educated classes in Germany, since the German universities themselves were strongly anti-democratic:

> The Nazis emerged as the strongest party in the universities well before they did so in the country at large. Their political activities included violent attacks on pacifist, socialist and Jewish professors; the attitude of the authorities was one of studious non-intervention. (Laqueur 17)

If the immediate post-war years provided evidence of general disillusionment with the ideals that had seemed so promising four years earlier, Brecht's voice, in his poetry and early plays, was certainly one of the most pessimistic, even nihilistic. His first play, *Baal*, and his early poetry are permeated with images of decay, dissolution and disease. While this was not unusual within expressionistic poetry and drama, where "poets and playwrights were preoccupied with the [illegible] of great cities, parenticide and rats emerging from rotting corpses" (Laqueur 13),* the scenes that comprise *Baal* are unrelentingly filled with images of disease and putrification, smells of sweat, sex and excrement, and violent behavior, the work, suggests Laqueur, "of a chaotic talent, a nihilist exuding a feeling of nausea" (148).

Martin Esslin has recorded how Brecht wrote *Baal* because he had made a bet with a friend, George Pfanzelt, to whom he subsequently dedicated the play, that he could write a play superior to Hanns Johst's biographical drama *Der Einsame* (1917),† and this within a time limit of four days. While Esslin suggests that Brecht won this bet (22), the first version of *Baal* (1918) actually took six weeks to write (Hill 43); it is a play which Esslin describes as "a wild and extravagant effusion in the tradition of Büchner's *Woyzeck*, episodic and disjointed but carried along by a torrent of powerful images that unmistakably bear the marks of genius" (22). Herbert Ihring's review of the 1922 production of *Trommeln in der Nacht* could pertain to *Baal* as easily as to the later play:

> Brecht is impregnated with the horror of this age in his nerves, in his blood. This horror creates a pallid atmosphere, a half-light round men and things.... Brecht physically feels the chaos and putrid decay of the times. Hence the

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* Note also the recurrent images of disease and decay as symbolic of a diseased society in the writing of major figures such as Thomas Mann and T.S. Eliot. *The Family Reunion* is permeated with images of disease, but for Eliot these symbolize a spiritual waste land, whereas Brecht used the language of decay to remove completely any transcendental values from his vision of human existence.

† Johst was "later the leading Nazi playwright" (Hill 42).

> unparalleled force of his images. This language can be felt on the tongue, on the palate, in one's ears, in one's spine.... It is brutally sensuous and melancholically tender. (in Esslin 27)

Brecht revised *Baal* in 1919, and it was staged in Leipzig on December 8, 1923. Brecht revised the play again for its première – staged by himself – at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin in February of 1926, under the title *Lebenslauf des Mannes Baal,* The Life Story of the Man Baal, a version which retained only eleven of the published scenes, and set the character of Baal more precisely into the emerging technological society of the first decade of the century. This version was also performed in Vienna in the same year, with a prologue written by Hugo von Hofmannsthal. The version published in Volume I of the Willett-Manheim *Collected Works* is essentially that of the 1919 revision, with the exception of the first and last scenes.

Whatever the stories surrounding the origin of *Baal*, it is clear that Brecht's distaste for the essence of Hanns Johst's play was at least a major motivation for his own work. *Der Einsame* is a fictionalized portrayal of the life of Christian Dietrich Grabbe (1801-1836), a strong German nationalist, anti-Semitic, but a brilliantly ironic and caustic playwright, as my earlier analysis of his *Napoleon oder die hundert Tage* attests. Grabbe died, insane, at the age of thirty-five.

Johst's play, however, presents a sentimentalized, neo-Romantic portrait of Grabbe, and utilizes, as well, many of the techniques and clichéd exclamations of the "O Mensch," exaggerated form of Expressionism that had been made popular by Reinhard Sorge's early expressionist play, *Der Bettler* (1912). *Der Einsame* was characterized by intense, passionate – though often disconnected – rhetoric, which was punctuated by multiple exclamation marks. Grabbe is portrayed as a "Nietzschean" personality who, by virtue of being a poet, has the right to transgress – Johst would have said transcend – all social boundaries, to stand "beyond good and evil." Despite Johst's statement of this intended amoralism, the play emphasizes a stong social, moral, and spiritual order, and is permeated with the concept that death is merely the door to another life. A strong strain of romanticism is evident in the egocentricity, the solipsism, that the play espouses, as well as in its insistence that the poet, by virtue of his superior creative powers, can submerge his identity in the higher, more spiritual existence of the entire cosmos. "Oh! Dies Gefühl!" Grabbe rhapsodizes in the first scene, "Nicht um einen Thron möchte ich es eintauschen! Dieses Gottvatergefühl! Ich bin der Kosmos! Und ohne mein Wort und ohne die glühende Girlande meiner Dichtung zerfällt alles" (8).* This dialogue was accompanied by the rousing

* "Oh! This feeling! I wouldn't trade it for a kingdom! This feeling of being God the Father! I am the Cosmos! Without my words, and without the flaming garlands of my poetry, the world could not exist.

music of Beethoven resounding through the theatre.

Baal lacks completely the transcendental framework that characterizes Johst's drama. For Baal there is no greater meaning to life than the actual living of it, moment by moment. He has no sense of duration, of the future consequences of present actions; all that matters is the present *experience*, and for this reason he can feel no sense of responsibility or of loyalty. This lack of meaning to life beyond the immediate experience is what Walter Sokel has described as "Expressionism turn[ed] upon itself ... shorn of all sentimentality and idealism" (xxxii). Sokel views Expressionism as having two faces:

> With one of these it looked back to Romanticism; with the other it looked forward to what is most significant and new in the theater of our own time [i.e., the theater of the absurd]. It was the positive content given to "mission" in Expressionist plays that harked back to Romanticism. It was the parody of "mission" that pointed to the future. (xxii)

In parodying Johst's hero, Brecht parodies the creative/spiritual mission of the romantic poet to experience the universe and to have the power to transform this experience into literature, so that man may, at least in certain moments of ecstasy, become god-like. Through the parody of this sense of mission, Brecht emphasizes the meaninglessness of existence and of history, the knowledge that the alternative to life is a nothingness that lasts for ever, that completely denies the notion of history as progress. This is, indeed, as Sokel labels his anthology of expressionist plays, "a prelude to the absurd."

Thematically, *Baal* has stronger affinities with absurdist drama than with Brecht's later, committed plays, because it constitutes, through its cynicism, an implicit and stark criticism of society. The episodic structure of the play easily lends itself to either expressionist drama or epic theatre, for Johst's play, too, utilizes this form, consisting of nine relatively loosely-connected scenes. *Der Einsame* does, however, build up to a climax that is definitely a culmination of the preceding events, and one which the audience is expected to identify with, as emotionally as possible. Baal's death, on the other hand, is anti-climactic, for the audience has been prepared for the idea that death is merely the cessation of existence. Moreover, emotional identification is downplayed because Baal, throughout the play, is hardly a hero with whom the audience will wish to identify, and his own lack of the fear of death, his lack of trauma, prevents any strong emotional response from the audience. Even dying, Baal taunts those around him, asking one of the men to wipe the spit off his face, then laughing and telling him he likes the taste. His last speech, too, is more musing than agonized, as he pulls himself to the door and reflects: "Sterne ... hm" (66). The whole scene anticipates the cool, distanced theatre which Brecht was to emphasize throughout his life. The short, episodic scenes of this play do not yet have

the richness of contrast and paradox that were to characterize his later drama, but they are emblematic of the direction which Brecht's dramaturgy would take.

One of the most significant elements characterizing expressionist drama is the stripping away of individual characteristics to leave representative types or forces. In his prologue to the 1926 edition of *Baal* Hofmannsthal has Oskar Homolka, who played Baal, say: "We are anonymous forces. Psychological possibilities. Individuality is one of the fantastic embellishments which we have stripped from us. You'll see how I'm going to play Baal" (Bentley, "Intro" 4). Baal is a man stripped of character, a force that permeates the play, as Wedekind's characters, for example Lulu, become forces. Baal's rejection of society, his asocial nature, is also a rejection of individuality, for individuality is only possible in comparison with other social beings. Baal is defined through his sensuality, the immediacy of the physical experience, completely unrelated to whether or not this experience remains within or without socially approved outlets. Keith Dickson suggests that "Baal's obsessive consumption of the sexual object is plainly not the result of glandular activity. What Baal is seeking is oblivion rather than sensation" (35).

While Baal immerses himself in nature, even to the extent that he asks, angrily, "Warum kann man nicht mit den Pflanzen schlafen?" (29), which Mannheim and Willett translate as "Why can't a man make love to a plant?" (16), this represents, as Dickson points out, "not only complete communion with nature . . . but also the depersonalization of the sexual experience" (35). The portrayal of Baal as a depersonalized, psychological force clearly indicates an experience that is beyond the level of the personal; consequently, his sexual activity cannot be classified as ego gratification.

Baal is not, however, a "noble savage," for his perspective of the world around him is not an innocent one, though there are elements of innocence about it, especially in his immediate apprehension of and identification with nature. But Baal lies, connives, is brutal and ruthless, and finally murders his closest friend out of jealousy, although he has, in effect, murdered a number of times before his killing of Ekart, through his callous use of women, whom he subsequently discards to face the consequences of their sexual union. While Baal is amoral and asocial, the women he impregnates are not, and some of these, like Johanna, anticipate their social rejection by committing suicide, usually by drowning. As Ekart says to Baal in Scene 3, "in die schwarzen Flüsse fallen Weiber, die du gefüllt hast" (16).* The drowned female body, rotting and floating down streams and rivers, becomes a

* All quotations taken from *Bertolt Brecht: Gesammelte Werke*, Band 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1967). English equivalents are from *Bertolt Brecht: Collected Plays*, Vol. 1, ed. by Ralph Mannheim and John Willett (London: Methuen & Company, 1970). "let the women you've stuffed fall into the black rivers" (15).

dominant motif of the play, again suggesting that there is no metaphysical significance to existence, no meaning that is greater than life. Martin Esslin suggests the floating of human bodies is an expression of the "human condition" which is "essentially one of passive acceptance. . . . The process of nature is seen as one of incessant birth and decay, with human consciousness powerless to break the eternal cycle" (243).

The German Romanticists of the previous century, especially Schiller and Schelling, had idealized the merging of the human consciousness with the natural cosmos in a pantheistic union; the expressionists and pre-World War I visionaries likewise idealized nature and elemental existence in their mythic search for a unified and expansionary "Fatherland." Nature, and the opposition of nature and society, also figure prominently in *Baal*, but in this play nature is stripped of any transcendental implications. There is no conception here of history as progress. If the pre-war mood had been that Germany more strongly than any other country represented the Hegelian vision of progress, of the evolving human consciousness toward an absolute ideal, a unity of consciousness, state and nature, Brecht's play more than any other work of literature represents the post-war shattering of this ideal. Dickson maintains that Baal, "to whome the whole universe is but the exrement of a dead God tries to overcome what Hegel called 'the significance of finitude,' by experiencing his immoratality with greater intensity, but he can only do so at the expense of his individuality and his regard for it in others" (36). Certainly *Baal* incorporates the organic unity of man and nature, for Baal is made up of sky and of earth – "Soviel Himmel hat Baal unterm Lid / Daß er tot noch grad gnug Himmel hat" (4)* – but this unification of the social and the natural contains no hint of sentimentality or idealism; there is no sense of progress here, simply a sense of being and of feeling. Only the present moment has any meaning; all past and all future exist only as an eternal nothingness, an extinction of consciousness. As Gougou says in the thirteenth scene of the play, "Das Schönste ist das Nichts.... Nichts. Gar nichts. Man hört einfach auf. Wind geht, man friert nimmer. Regen geht, man wird nimmer naß. Witze passieren, man lacht nicht mit. Man verfault, man braucht nicht zu warten. Generalstreik" (49).† History is abrogated. There is no meaningful future and no meaningful past, for the knowledge of the past depends on memory, and for Baal memory has no meaning except for the memory of sensation, and even the concept of an historical past is foreign to him:

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* "Sky enough still lurks behind Baal's eyes / To make just enough sky when he's dead" (4).

† "The best of all is nothingness.... Nothing. Nothing at all. You just stop. The wind blows, and you don't feel cold. It rains, and you don't get wet. Funny things happen, and you don't laugh with the others. You rot, and don't need to wait. General strike" (44).

BAAL *trinkt*: Das war früher, Ekart. Ja. Das war auch schön.
EKART: Was?
BOLLEBOL: Das hat er vergessen.
BAAL: Frü-her, was für ein merkwürdiges Wort! (49)*

This is the antithesis to Nietzsche's concept of the "burden of history," for Baal can only wonder vaguely about the past; his memory is limited to only the very immediate past.

In this anti-historical play humanity is viewed as "das Geschwür" (56), a "cancer" (Willett-Manheim 51)† and freedom is only found in death, which is a release from, or cessation of life: "Es wird einem alles abgewöhnt. Auch die Wünsche. So wird man frei" (50)‡ Death, however, comes in the form of a sexual union with the earth:

Und das große Weib Welt, das sich lachend gibt
Dem, der sich zermalmen läßt von ihren Knien
Gab ihm einige Ekstase, die er liebt
Aber Baal starb nicht: er sah nur hin. (3)+

Baal's existence is one continuous sexual experience, from the "polymorphous perversity" of lying "im weißen Mutterschoße" (3), in "the whiteness of the womb" (3), through his various sexual encounters, his bathing in ponds and mud holes, his sitting – through the persona of "Orge" – on the toilet where he simultaneously engorges and disgorges – "Dies sei ein Ort, wo man zufrieden ist / Daß drüber Sterne sind und drunter Mist" (15)** – to his final union with the sky and the earth at his death, when he crawls out of the cabin in the woods:

der Himmel ist auch so verflucht nah da, zum Greifen, es ist alles wider tropfnaß.... Es muß draußen hell sein. Lieber Baal. Zur Tür kommt man noch. Knie hat man noch, in der Tür ist es besser. Verflucht! Lieber Baal! *Er kriecht auf allen vieren zur Schwelle.* Sterne . . . hm. *Er kriecht hinaus.* (66)††

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* "BAAL *drinks*: That's how it used to be, Ekart. And it was all right too.
EKART: What?
BOLLEBOL: He's forgotten what.
BAAL: Used to be! That's a strange phrase!" (44).

† Eric Bentley, in his 1962 translation of *Baal*, translates this as a "suppurating wound" (82)

‡ "No wish unfulfilled. You have none left. You learn to abandon all your habits. Even wishing. That's how you become free" (45).

+ "And that lusty girl, the world, who laughs when yielding / To the man who'll stand the pressure of her thighs / Gives him instants of a sweet ecstatic feeling. / Baal survives it; he just looks and sees" (3).

** "That was a place to set the cheeks aglow / With stars above and excrement below" (14)

†† "the sky's so damned near too, you can touch it, everything's soaking wet again.... It must be light outside. Dear Baal. You can get to the door. You've still got knees, it's better in the door. Damn it! Dear Baal! *He crawls on all fours to the threshold.* Stars . . . mmm. *He crawls out*" (60).

The dominant image in the play is of the tree, rooted in the soil, with its leaves touching the sky. The unity of earth and sky is reinforced throughout the play, and the connecting link from earth to sky is the tree. Man's identification with the tree, his similar function of a link, a bridge from earth to sky, is explicitly defined in Baal's poem on "Der Tod im Wald," where the dying man clings to the tree as his final support:

Und ein Mann starb im ewigen Wald
Wo ihn Sturm und Strom umbrauste.
Starb wie ein Tier in Wurzeln eingekrallt
Schaute hoch in die Wipfel, wo über dem Wald
Sturm seit Tagen ohne Aufhörn sauste....

Und der Wald war laut um ihn und sie.
Und sie sahn ihn sich am Baume halten
Und sie hörten wie er ihnen schrie
Und es graute ihnen so wie nie
Daß sie zitternd ihre Fäuste ballten:
Denn er war ein Mann wie sie

Unnütz bist du räudig, toll, du Tier!
Eiter bist du, Dreck, du Lumpenhaufen!
Luft schnappst du uns weg mit deiner Gier
Sagten sie. Und er, er, das Geschwür:
Leben will ich! Eure Sonne schnaufen!
Und im Lichte reiten so wie ihr!...

Ihm hielt Erde seine nackte Hand
Und von Meer zu Meer im Wind liegt Land:
Und ich muß hier unten stille liegen....

Und sie ritten stumm aus dem Dickicht.
Und sie sahn noch nach dem Baume hin
Unter den sie eingegraben ihn
Dem das Sterben allzu bitter schien:
Der Baum war oben voll Licht.
Und sie bekreuzten ihr junges Gesicht
Und sie ritten schnell in die Prärien. (56-7)*

* "And a man died deep in the primaeval woods / While the storm blew in torrents around him – / Died like an animal scrabbling for roots / Stared up through the trees, as the wind skimmed the woods / And the roar of the thunderclap drowned him. / ... Then the forest roared above their head / And they watched him clasp a tree and stagger / And they heard his screams and what he said. / Each man felt an overwhelming dread / Clenched his fist or, trembling, drew his dagger: / So like them, and yet so nearly dead! / You're foul, useless, mad, you mangy bear! / You're a sore [illegible]acre [sic], filthy creature! / Selfish beast, you're breathing up our air! / So they said. And he, the cancer there: / Let me live! Your sun was never sweeter! / – Ride off in the light without a care! / ... There's the earth holding his naked hand. / In the breeze from sea to sea lies land: / Here I lie in solitude for ever. / ... Then they rode in silence from that place / Turning round to see the tree again / Under which his body once had lain / Who felt dying was too sharp a pain: / The tree stood in the

This merging of man and nature is predominant throughout the play. Johannes envisions Johanna having sex with a tree, and Baal himself is described, in the Chorale, in a sexual embrace with the lusty girl, the earth. Eric Bentley has noted that in Baal's recitation of the poem of the death in the forest, as well as in his eulogy for the dead lumberjack, Teddy, Baal is prefiguring his own death, his own merging with nature, that in this sense, he actually dies three times within the play ("Introduction" to *Baal* 12). The frequent references to Baal bathing in mud but carrying the sky in his eyes, reinforce the unity of life from sky to earth, a seamless unity that recognizes the human being as a vital, sensuous element but without a spiritual or philosophical component. Like all natural things, man rots and becomes part of the earth, enriching its texture and productivity, but apart from this natural cycle of existence, life has no further meaning. Baal uses others for his own pleasure and then discards them, for ethics, morality, or the knowledge of good and evil have no meaning for him, and the fact that others suffer because of Baal is to a large extent a measure of their own social hypocrisy, their reliance on a world of conventional morality. Baal does recognize the difference between innocence and experience, as he leans over the baby in the thirteenth scene and says to it: "Warum weinst du? Hast du's noch nie gesehen? Oder weinst du jedesmal wieder?" (51).* This question, addressed toward the child, clearly portrays the relationship of innocence and experience within the play.

Eric Bentley makes a case for Baal's innocence, but not the innocence that comes before knowledge of the world, but that which may be regained after the world has been thoroughly known and experienced, "an innocence on the other side of guilt" ("Intro" 7), and the scene with the baby is significant in its contrasting of the innocence *before* experience with a form of innocence that comes *after* experience. Baal experiences "the innocence, the amorality, of Nature all around us, but from a distance and with longing and envy. The *sky* would be an ideal mistress indeed, but how far off it is, how unreachable! Between us and primal innocence stands the world, which includes that very society of men which one would reject" (Bentley, "Intro" 6). Baal – or Brecht – might be defined as a "Black Romantic," a term that has come to define an individual who copes with an evil and guilt-stricken world not by transcending it, but by immersing himself as fully as possible in its filth and degradation to the point where guilt loses any meaning or significance it might have had, and a kind of innocence beyond guilt can be regained. Lee Baxandall has stated that in *Baal* Brecht "hymned the natural forces, urging

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sun ablaze. / Each made the mark of the cross on his face / And rode off swiftly over the plain" (50-1).

* "Why are you crying? Have you never seen them at it before? or do you cry every time?" (46).

complicity with their obscene fecundity and with one's own inevitable attrition and death." Claude Hill, too, describes the play as "a hymnic evocation of nature at its wildest, rawest and most violent" (43). While it is true that the rhythms of this play are largely those of natural dissolution, it is also true that Baal almost purposefully seeks out and inhabits the most debased and sordid *human* establishments possible. This is why so much of the play takes place in foul, shoddy taverns, beginning with that in which Baal is first introduced to Johanna Reiher by his friend Johannes – and blame for the seduction of Johanna can be laid as much at Johannes' feet as at Baal's, for in bringing her to a spot tainted with human vice, he already symbolically violates her innocence – and ending with the same tavern, this time with Baal killing Ekart. Scene 13 is particularly symptomatic of how repulsive humanity can become, with a cancerous derelict and an insane beggar both vying drunkenly for Maja's pox-ridden body, with gusty references to putrid breath and smelly bodies. The strong smells of physical excretion attract Baal, whether these are the smells of excrement, of sweat, or of putrid breath. Baal often smells himself, feels his armpits, and soaks in black mud. Even nature is described by Ekart in terms of human decay: "Die Weiden sind wie verfaulte Zahnstumpen in dem schwarzen Maul, das der Himmel hat" (53).* Ekart also notes how cynical a creator must be who, in creating humans, combines the sexual organ with the excretory organ: "Des lieben Gottes, der sich durch die Verbindung von Harnrohr und Geschlechtsglied hinlänglich ein für allemal gekennzeichnet hat" (53).† Baal moves ceaselessly back and forth between the hangouts of the dregs of humanity to bathing in ponds, being washed by the rain, and generally immersing himself in the dissolution of nature. There is a point at which the disintegration of man and that of nature must unite fully, and this is in death. And it is therefore only in death, in the disintegration of the physical body within the dark womb of the earth, that the second innocence can be regained.

But in the meantime Baal does have his dream, his utopian vision, partial though it may be:

> Schlendernd durch Höllen und gepeitscht durch Paradiese
> Still und grinsend, vergehenden Gesichts
> Träumt er gelegentlich von einer kleinen Wiese
> Mit blauem Himmel drüber und sonst nichts. (61)‡

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* "The willows are like rotten teeth in the black mouth of the sky" (48).

† "The Almighty, who made himself known once and for all through the association of the urinary passage with the sexual organ" (48).

‡ "Loafing through hells and flogged through paradises / Calm and grinning, with expressionless stare / Sometimes he dreams of a small field he recognises / With blue sky overhead and nothing more" (55).

The dream seems to represent an instant, at least, in which Baal is living for something other than the moment. It may, indeed, be a premonition of his own death, with the small field being the earth within which he will lie. Nevertheless, it is the only innocence which he attains.

Not that Baal throughout the play has any sense of guilt for the actual crimes or actions accruing to him. He is, after all, an archetypal hero with no sense of individual or specific offenses. The individual has disappeared, and what remains is man in the abstract, a "psychological force." If Baal is a monster, Brecht is symbolically emphasizing the nature of a monstrous society, for Baal's crimes are those of humanity. Individual responsibility has disappeared with the substitution of a type for an individual, but responsibility and guilt are all the more oppressive for being generalized. Though Baal appears cut off from the meaning of his own actions, the audience is not, and Eric Bentley rightly perceives that "the rejection of the individual that comes with the twentieth century, and especially after World War I, is a rejection of the society around him" ("Intro" 5).

The mythic implications of Baal as a fertility god or the rain god further enrich the texture of the play, giving it a more paradoxical slant. Baal's personal fertility certainly becomes increasingly evident as he impregnates one girl after another, even loving two at the same time. But though the rich potential for rebirth exists here, it is never fulfilled, for pregnancy here leads to death and disintegration, a theme symbolized by Johanna's suicide, which Bentley identifies as a "leitmotif" of the play ("Intro" 12). The implication is that, though physical passsion exists, it is a destructive rather than constructive passion. And it is very evident that pregnancy disgusts Baal, as he tells Johannes:

> Wenn der bleiche milde Sommer fortschwimmt und sie sind vollgesogen wie Schwämme mit Liebe, dann werden sie wieder Tiere, bös und kindisch, unförmig mit dicken Bäuchen und fließenden Brüsten und mit feuchtklammernden Armen wie schleimige Polypen, und ihre Leiber zerfallen und werden matt auf den Tod. Und gebären unter ungeheurem Schrei, als sei es ein neuer Kosmos, eine kleine Frucht. Sie speien sie aus unter Qual und saugten sie ein einst mit Wollust. (11)*

It seems strange that the mythic god of fertility – for the Baal of the Middle Eastern mythologies also has affinities with Dionysus, Persephone or Osiris in symbolizing the cycle of death and rebirth – should be so repelled at the idea of pregnancy and childbirth. And Baal himself conforms to the cycle

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* "When the pale mild summer ebbs and they're swollen with love like sponges, they turn back into beasts, evil and childish, shapeless with their fat stomachs and hanging breasts, their damp arms clinging like slimy tentacles, and their bodies collapse and grow heavy unto death. And with hideous shrieks as if they were bringing a new world into being, they yield a small fruit. They spew out with pain what they once sucked in with pleasure" (11).

with regard to his physical desires – he sleeps and fasts during the winter, his symbolic death, then hunts for a woman – in this case Sophie Barger – when Spring is in the air. By the same token he again discards her with the approach of winter, when she is four months pregnant. Rebirth is precluded, however, and seen as disgusting, because in the world that Brecht creates in *Baal*, that is, the anti-historical world as experienced by Germany at the end of World War I, there seems to be no possibility of the meaningful kind of human relationship that can result in rebirth and in progress. Baal's excesses are merely animal urges, and meaningless with respect to a renewed existence for the world. For this reason Brecht paradoxically utilizes a fertility figure to illustrate how impossible genuine fertility has become, that the impulse toward rebirth has become perverse. The very essence of the fertility god is parodied in Baal's disgust for pregnancy, and in his desertion of the women whom he has impregnated. Both men and women are irresistibly attracted to Baal, because his fascination is the fascination of primal nature, of complete instinctual gratification. But once attracted they are destroyed, for Baal's utter capitulation to the life of the moment and the life of the instincts is completely incompatible with civilization, which is based on planning and responsibility. And neither can civilized individuals revert to Baal's form of existence; they must destroy themselves, since they have become inextricably caught between two modes of existence, and are no longer able to embrace either whole-heartedly. The turning of the god of fertility to a homosexual relationship where fertility becomes impossible – in Baal's union with Ekart – indicates, as does Wedekind through homosexual relationships, that the only valid form of human communication that remains is one where progeny or rebirth is denied, another instance of expressionism turned upon itself.

Eric Bentley has noted, in the introduction to his translation of *Baal*, that the play is representative of the "screw the world" philosophy which "sum[s] up a whole school of modern art and thought" (6), and he quotes, in this regard, from the work of Lautréamont, who, like Baal, sees himself in a sexual encounter with the universe:

> Oh that the universe were an immense celestial anus! I would plunge my penis past its bloody sphincter, rending apart, with my impetuous motion, the very bones of the pelvis. (in Bentley, "Intro." 6)

The references, in *Baal*, to excrement, to anal sex and to homosexuality all reinforce the non-reproducing, non-regenerative view of history in this play. For Baal this excremental vision is, however, not unpleasant. "Ich sehe die Welt," he remarks to Ekart, "in mildem Licht: sie ist das Exkrement des lieben Gottes" (53), but adds "Das alles ist so schön" (53).* Decay and

* "I see the world in a soft light: it is the excrement of the Almighty.... It's all so

decomposition reinforce the present moment, a present that at times includes a gentle nostalgia without memory, "Mit dem Champagner im Leib und mit Heimweh ohne Erinnerung" (61),* although this almost gentle expression immediately precedes Baal's murdering of Ekart because he is jealous of Ekart fondling the waitress. Watzmann, too, speaks of his "Ahnungen von einer höheren Welt" (60),† but the passing references to nostalgia, memory, and a metaphysical sphere of existence merely emphasize how little place these conceptions possess within the play.

Instead of a movement toward rebirth, therefore, this cycle is parodied and the movement of the play is toward death and dissolution. Charles R. Lyons has noted that the opposites of life and death in *Baal* are often represented via the use of colors, white being identified with life and with sexual desire, and purple and black being the colors of death: "Als im weißen Mutterschoße aufwuchs Baal / War der Himmel schon so groß und still und fahl" (3).‡ Nights, however, mean a sky that is violet, and "trunken Baal / Baal früh fromm, er aprikosenfahl" (3).+ The Chorale thus prefigures the movement of the play, for it shows us Baal's death, "wenn Baal der dunkle Schoß hinunter zieht" (4),** and his decaying in the darkness of the womb, which in the first stanza was a pale womb out of which Baal was born. But even in death Baal retains some light, some "sky" behind his eyes, another reference to his later vision of a small field with an open sky, the final union with nature that contains light as well as darkness.

Baal's sexual desire is signified in his emphasis on the pale whiteness of women's bodies before making love. Johannes, too, in his imagination, sees the pure "white body" of his Johanna in a sexual embrace with a tree, a metaphor that is later repeated in Baal's song of the sick man who tried to embrace a tree before he died in the forest. As previously noted, the tree is the best equivalent for Baal himself, for like him it is rooted in the filthy as well as fertile earth, while reaching up toward the white sky. Baal tells Sophie that she must have "pale thighs," and Ekart tells Baal about his woman with the white body; Baal consequently takes Ekart's place with her in the bushes.

The whiteness, however, moves into an ecstacy of darkness for the moments of passion, and from this moves to a darkness that is associated with rotting, decaying flesh. The sky is black and the foliage is wet and black

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beautiful" (48).

* "With champagne in the blood and homesickness without memory" (55).

† "intimations of a higher world" (54).

‡ "Baal grew up within the whiteness of the womb / With the sky already large and pale and calm" (3).

+ "violet sky and drunken Baal / Dawns, Baal good, sky apricottish-pale" (3).

** "when Baal's dragged down to be the dark womb's prize" (4).

under which Baal embraces Sophie, and black is likewise associated with the homosexual union of Baal and Ekart as they stop in the rain and Baal says, "Das ist der Winterschlaf im schwarzen Schlamm für unsere weißen Leiber" (42).* The strongest images of white moving towards the blackness of decay are those of Johanna's body, which Johannes later sees as continually decaying for seven years, and that of Baal himself, who decays within the darkness of the womb of the earth. Baal himself composes a poem about Johanna's disintegration, in which he minutely analyzes the process of decay:

> Als sie ertrunken war und hinunterschwamm
> Von den Bächen in die größeren Flüsse
> Schien der Opal des Himmels sehr wundersam
> Als ob er die Leiche begütigen müsse....
>
> Als ihr bleicher Leib im Wasser verfaulet war
> Geschah es, sehr langsam, daß Gott sie allmählich vergaß:
> Erst ihr Gesicht, dann die Hände und ganz zuletzt erst ihr Haar.
> Dann ward sie Aas in Flüssen mit vielem Aas. (52-3)†

The disintegration is gradual, and if there is any sense of regeneration, it exists solely in the fact that her rotting flesh, as it disintegrates, becomes part of the putrefaction of nature, and as such part of the natural cycle of life in that it provides for new natural growth, but nowhere is this sense of renewed growth openly emphasized. Her body in the water becomes heavier as wrack and seaweed cling to it, a parallel to Baal's own body, which becomes progressively heavier throughout the play as the downward movement toward the dark womb of the earth is emphasized more and more. The Johanna metaphor of white and black takes on the added significance of consumption and excretion that is the other major and parallel process in the play, as the now dissolute Johannes laments, in scene 18, that

> Ich habe die Empfindung nur manchmal, wißt ihr, als schwimme sie mir in dem vielen Schnaps die Gurgel hinunter, eine ganz kleine Leiche, halb verfault. Und sie war doch schon siebzehn. Jetzt hat sie Ratten und Tang im grünen Haar, steht ihr nicht übel ... ein bißchen verquollen und weißlich gefüllt mit stinkendem Flußschlamm, ganz schwarz. Sie war immer so rein. Darum ging sie auch in den Fluß und wurde stinkend. (60)‡

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* "This is the winter sleep of white bodies in the black mud" (37).

† "When she had drowned, and started her slow descent / Down the streams to where the rivers broaden / The opal sky shone most magnificent / As if it had to be his body's guardian.... As her pale body decayed in the water there / It happened (very slowly) that God gradually forgot it / First her face, then the hands, and right at the last her hair / Then she rotted in rivers where much else rotted. (47-8)

‡ "sometimes I get a feeling she's being washed down my throat with all the drink, a very small corpse, half rotted. And she was already seventeen. Now there are rats and weed in her green hair, rather becoming ... a little swollen and whitish, and filled with the stinking ooze from the river, completely black. She was always so clean. That's why she went into the river and began to stink (54).

Through this image of the swallowing of Johanna with a drink, we are again ironically reminded of Orge's sitting on his favorite seat, the toilet, eating and excreting. This is Baal's world, and after exclaiming that the world is the excrement of the Almighty, he also notes that "Das alles ist so schön" (53), or "it's all so beautiful" (48).

Brecht's first play, then, represents a dramatic break with the past, both in form and in philosophy. History can no longer be viewed as a coherent, progressive or positive force, but is utterly negated in favor of the present moment. While the play has been labelled as both nihilistic and as an early example of the theatre of the absurd, it might also be viewed from a more positive perspective. Brecht shows the human "animal" as part of nature, part of a "survival of the fittest" concept, but without any transcendental trappings or any notion of a "grand design" or of ultimate improvement. Once this more limited, more transient view of humanity has been accepted, however, the world may still be seen as being beautiful. Brecht may be suggesting here, as he does later in *Leben des Galilei*, that it is man's conception of himself, of his own importance or position within the natural order, that must change, that once this change has taken place, humanity may once again be viewed positively. The play does contain a message, for the protagonist – if that term can be used within the context of this play – is a poet who, like all poets and visionaries, proclaims through speech and song his particularized vision of the world. When Baal looks at the night sky, however, he sees actual stars, not a heavenly vision of another world.

Georg Kaiser's *Der gerettete Alkibiades,* published in 1920, examines the implications of a part of Nietzsche's work that has been discussed above, but not specifically taken up in any of the other plays. This is "the problem of Socrates" and his position in the historical process, which had been discussed by Nietzsche in *Die Geburt der Tragödie. Der gerettete Alkibiades* was conceived as early as 1904, when Kaiser first considered Nietzsche's reference to "the problem of Socrates," and wanted to write a play that would compare the death of the *Übermensch* with that of the *Vernunftmensch,* or man of reason. *Der gerettete Alkibiades* was therefore more than ten years in the making. The complexity of the play is achieved largely through the use of irony and through its dialectical structure, although Walter Sokel maintains that Kaiser is not a "dialectical" playwright, stating that "in *Der gerettete Alkibiades* ... all action comes from Sokrates; the others merely react against him. They are blindly caught in a problem of which Sokrates alone is aware, that which is his own creation" (*Anthology* xxii). However, while it is true that only Sokrates can see the "tragic irony" of his saving of Alkibiades, the dialectic nevertheless exists in the philosophical and historical antithesis set up in the play, in the tension between body and spirit (or mind), and in the tension of irony established through the contrast of external

appearance to the inner reality of given situations. Part I establishes the thesis, that the body, or the flesh, is transcendent; this thesis is equally applicable to Sokrates and Alkibiades. Alkibiades is loved for his physical beauty and strength, while for Sokrates the flesh is proved supreme by means of the thorn, which consistently focuses attention on the hideous *demands* of the flesh, its grossness being re-emphasized through Sokrates' grotesque body and humped back. Together the bodies of Alkibiades and of Sokrates embody the extremes of sensuousness, that enhanced by beauty, and that distorted by ugliness. For Sokrates the thorn asserts, as Hofmannsthal said, the "sullen might of cloddish earth" over the mind, even though the pressure of the physical being, of the thorn, in this case forces Sokrates to *elevate* the mind rather than repress it. For it is only because of physical pain that he cannot use his body, and since he cannot admit to the pain because to do so would be to make Alkibiades and all of Greece a laughingstock, he is consequently forced to invent a philosophy of Idealism. This is the central paradox of the play, which Sokel sees as the

> irony and paradox underlying the [whole] Expressionist position. Sokrates' mission is to endure suffering and court the death penalty in order to save Greece from absurdity. Only Sokrates ... knows the trivial accident ... to which the hero, Alkibiades, owes his life, and the country its victory. If Sokrates discloses the absurd secret, the hero would become a laughingstock, and faith in history and human greatness would be shattered. Civilization could not withstand such a shock. Better to interpose new values, and a new "message," between the traditional hero worship and the absurdity of truth than to allow truth to make all messages ridiculous. Subversive as these new values of intellect may be, they serve as a screen between man and the devastating insight into the absurdity of his existence.
>
> This is the crux of the Expressionist sense of "mission": it is a last barrier, frantically held, against absurdity. Its ecstatic humanism is the surface froth. But beneath it lies a cynical, bitter, and sardonic spirit. (*Anthology* xxiii-iv)

Herbert Reichert compares Kaiser's use of irony and illusion to Schnitzler's, in his attempt to analyze Schnitzler's affinity with Nietzsche; Reichert remarks that "the only other modern German dramatist [apart from Schnitzler] to utilize illusion and ironic reversal of values in his plays to the extent that Schnitzler did, Georg Kaiser, stood deeply in Nietzshe's debt" (97).

In choosing Sokrates as his central figure, Kaiser achieved much the same effect that Brecht did with *Baal,* that is, taking the initial concept of the poet-hero, and then following it to its logical extreme, into absurdity, by stripping his bacchanalian poet of the cloying idealism and sentimentality that characterizes the poet heroes of playwrights like Reinhard Sorge or Hanns Johst. For Kaiser, as for Brecht, writing a play meant following an argument to its logical conclusion, though Kaiser's approach is that of the philosopher's dialectic, the sharp irony of speech and situation permeating

the entire play. The expressionist stance that Brecht parodied was that of the poet's mission; the stance Kaiser exposes is that history is an arbitrary process characterized by coincidence, accidents, and above all by absurdity, the absurdity of idealists frantically scrambling to make this historical process meaningful, or to see purpose in it. It is this mission to establish a purposeful universe that Kaiser parodies through the symbol of the thorn in Sokrates' foot. The paradox is heightened by the very significant position that Nietzsche ascribed to Socrates in the historical process:

> Wer sich einmal anschaulich macht, wie nach Sokrates . . . eine Philsophenschule nach der anderen wie Welle auf Welle sich ablöst, wie eine nie geahnte Universalität der Wissensgier in dem weitesten Bereich der gebildeten Welt, . . wie durch diese Universalität erst ein gemeinsames Netz des Gedankens über den gesamten Erdball, ja mit Ausblicken über die Gesetzlichkeit eines ganzen Sonnensystems, gespannt wurde; wer dies alles, samt der erstaunlich hohen Wissenspyramide der Gegenwart, sich vergegenwärtigt, der kann sich nicht entbrechen, in Sokrates den einen Wendepunkt und Wirbel der sogennanten Weltgeschichte zu sehen. (*Werke* I 71).*

If Part I of Kaiser's play establishes the thesis that the body rules the mind, Part II has Sokrates asserting the antithesis, or the supremacy of the mind over the body, and Alkibiades, under the sway of Sokrates' superior intellect, concurs, at least for a time, with this new hierarchy. The synthesis is then led up to through Alkibiades' emotional frustration that brings on his hermae-breaking rampage, a significant occurrence, for it indicates the power that Sokrates has over the Athenian way of life, and the total incompatibility of these two opposing modes of existence. The synthesis is then fully established in Sokrates' final reconciliation that can only be achieved, however, through his death, and even then is shot through with irony.

Underlying the body-mind dichotomy throughout, is also that of appearance (or illusion) versus reality. It *appears* to Alkibiades and the Athenians that Sokrates has saved Alkibiades through pure motives, when he was in actuality saving himself from the pain of walking with a thorn in his foot. It *appears* that he refuses the golden wreath and the honor of placing the poet's ribbon on the head of the herma because he places no value on these conventional honors that celebrate the body, that "Spiels mit Armen

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* "Once we see clearly how after Socrates ... one philosophical school succeeds another ... how the hunger for knowledge reached a never-suspected universality in the widest domain of the educated world, ... how this universality first spread a common net of thought over the whole globe, actually holding out the prospect of the lawfulness of an entire solar system; once we see all this clearly, along with the amazingly high pyramid of knowledge in our own time – we cannot fail to see in Socrates the one turning point and vortex of so-called world history" (*Birth of Tragedy*, Kaufmann tr. 96)

und Beinen" (157),* the "play of arms and legs" (223), either in war or in art, for in neither case does the bust represent credit given where it is due, to Alkibiades' arms and legs, or to the poet's imagination. In actuality, though, Sokrates refuses both honors not because he is unimpressed with them, but because he ironically remains chained to the limitations of the flesh through the thorn in his foot, which he cannot have removed because to do so would be again to expose his original motive for saving Alkibiades. So in keeping the thorn, he continues to "save" Alkibiades, and symbolically to save the entire Greek culture, not from death now, but from ridicule and absurdity. And while he "saves" Greece from absurdity, he simultaneously destroys its very basis of existence, physical vitalism, the Dionysian principle which Nietzsche considered the essence of Greek civilization; Sokrates substitutes for it his elevation of the intellect. And so the ironies multiply. In the final part of the play Sokrates dies because he apparently does not value physical existence, but parts from it "as from a long sickness." While this is partly true, it is a deceptive truth, for rather than affirming his philosophy of idealism, as the young Plato assumes, Sokrates dies to deny it, and to finally and conclusively try to "save" Alkibiades by making it impossible that he, Sokrates, should ever reveal his original motives for saving Alkibiades. In thus trying to save Alkibiades, Sokrates is trying to save, or preserve Athenian life from the influence of his philosophical speculations, which were instrumental in bringing Athens from a city state emphasizing athletic prowess, to one stressing mental capabilities. Sokrates, in Kaiser's play, recognizes the limitations of exchanging reason for vitalism, and his death is ultimately an attempt to remove the necessity of a clear-cut choice between the opposing stances. But here we have the final irony, that of the young Plato and his friends idolizing Sokrates' death as the final proof of the superiority of the mind. They will defend with complete dedication Sokrates' espoused idealism, and will change the course of history through their defence of the position that Sokrates had to adopt because of a coincidental and absurd circumstance. While Kaiser takes full dramatic advantage of the coincidental manner in which Sokrates was forced to change the historical process, he ultimately focuses on the same issue that fascinated Nietzsche, that is, the immense conflict within Sokrates between intelligence and sensuality. Both Nietzsche and Kaiser viewed Socrates as a highly sensuous individual – if Baal's sensuality is emphasized through the increasing heaviness of his body, Sokrates' physical nature is heightened through his deformity – the thorn is the controlling symbol, within the play, of Sokrates'

* All quotations taken from Georg Kaiser, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 3 (Berlin: Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1931), pp. 113-244. English equivalents are from *An Anthology of German Expressionist Drama: A Prelude to the Absurd*, ed by Walter Sokel (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1963), pp. 202-64.

physicality. Nietzsche considered Socrates to be an *Übermensch* because the logical "instinct" within him was developed to the same degree that elemental passions are evident in a strongly Dionysian individual.

The first scene of the play establishes Alkibiades' ultimate superiority of physical beauty and strength, and this provides the framework for Kaiser's play. The concern of the boys that Alkibiades may be either punished or made to look ridiculous in court for the betrayal of his wife leads to their desire to save him. Their concern, and the misery of the first boy at being the wife's brother is legitimate, for Alkibiades is the very symbol of Greece's grandeur; he *is* Athens at the height of her power, embodying the essence of her Dionysian attributes, and to denounce him is to denounce Greek civilization. For ordinary mortals to be either so familiar or so presumptuous as to want to save that person, the symbol, would only be to contaminate it, to demonstrate its vulnerability in a public way. To save Alkibiades is therefore to belittle his stature and leadership, and thus to belittle Athens; it is for this reason that "Nur der Alkibiades kann den Alkibiades retten – sonst bräche der Himmel über Griechenland zusammen!" (125).*

It is only after this introduction to Alkibiades' resplendent beauty and his significance as a symbol that the audience is introduced to Sokrates, a hunch-backed hoplite in the Athenian army, who runs a thorn into his foot during the retreat. Sokrates is even at this time less afraid of death than he is of physical pain, and declares: "ich ... stoße nicht die ganze Erde gegen diesen Keil in meinem Fleisch!! –" (131).† This sentence immediately establishes the cosmic significance of Sokrates' opposition to the "ganze Erde," or all of physical existence, at the same time that he is enslaved *by* the physical world, for it is physical pressure that makes his foot hurt. The thorn thus immediately gains a strong symbolic dimension while it also fulfils its own specific and actual function in the play. It is the symbolic representation of the idealist confronted by the limitations of the flesh, or by the vitality of his physical existence. The thorn in the flesh is a microcosmic image of the major concern of the play, for the opposition of a mental and a physical existence is as evident in Sokrates' personality as is the opposing of his philosophy to Alkibiades' physical vitalism. Every time Sokrates is to receive an honor, we see his body convulse itself before he declines the honor and espouses the new philosophy in its place, an often repeated acting out in miniature of the major point of the play, that the real conflict takes place within Sokrates himself. Here Kaiser is following Nietzsche's conception of Sokrates to the letter, emphasizing the dialectical conflict between the

* "Only Alkibiades can save Alkibiades – otherwise the sky would collapse over Greece" (207).

† "I'm ... not ramming the whole earth against this wedge in my flesh!!–" (210).

Apollonian and the Dionysian forces. In a sense Alkibiades becomes a symbol for Sokrates' attraction to the vital, Dionysian element in life, and the physical pain caused by the thorn is symptomatic of the struggle within Sokrates of intellect versus passion. Whenever Alkibiades appears, the contrast between his splendor and Sokrates' ugliness is only too evident, for here again a symbol is concretized; Sokrates' external deformity represents physically the effect that his philosophy will have on the vitalistic life of Athens.

Sokrates refuses to run with Alkibiades in the cactus field because the thorn would make running seem like a thousand deaths instead of the one which he would welcome in its stead. That his pain is very real cannot be doubted, for after having inadvertently saved Alkibiades through blindly laying about him with his sword, Sokrates loses consciousness. Ironically, in refusing to run he has only multiplied the pain a thousandfold, for he dooms himself to keep the thorn in his foot; as he later tells his wife, "ich sterbe tausendmal – – in jeder Stunde – – und kann nicht sterben!!!!" (152).*

Though humiliated at having been saved by a hoplite, Alkibiades accepts his salvation with a surprising grace, only to be further condescended to by Sokrates' refusal to accept the golden wreath, which he asks Alkibiades to accept in his stead. This second humiliation leads Alkibiades to seek Sokrates out in his garret, with the intent to kill him, for as he says:

> Man empfängt nicht gern Geschenke aus Händen, die knotig sind. Man verdankt nicht gern Leben und Lob einem Buckel – der es wie Bettel hinwirft, den man aufheben muß – und trägt als Zierde und Krone! – – Ich bin Alkibiades, an dem Griechenland prunkt und sich brüstet – und in Scheu weicht aus seiner Nähe, um nicht mit Atemhauch zu betasten – – !! – – : wer bist du, der aus groben Fäusten fallen läßt, wonach ich mich bücke – und buckle vor dem Buckel, der über mir grinst?!! (155-6)†

The image of the grinning hunchback is a threat to the entire Athenian way of life at this point, for in patronizing Alkibiades, Sokrates has patronized all of Athens. Finding that Sokrates would welcome death, however, Alkibiades is too impressed, too curious and finally too humiliated to kill him, and questions him instead, thus forcing Sokrates to justify his refusal to run, and his saving of Alkibiades. Sokrates does so with the rationalization that he was tired of "des Spiels mit Armen und Beinen", the "play of arms and legs," that he was a man who preferred to use his head rather than his limbs, or, when using arms and legs, preferred that they be directed by the

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* "I die a thousand times – – in every hour – – and cannot die!!!!" (220).

† "One does not like to receive gifts from hands which are knotty. One does not like to owe life and eulogy to a hunchback – who throws it down like trash that one must pick up – to wear as adornment and crown! – – I am Alkibiades, on whom Greece prides and plumes herself – and shrinks timidly from his presence, so as not to touch him with her breath – – !! – – who are you, to let fall from coarse fists what I stoop to get – hunching my back before the hunchback who grins above me?!!!" (222).

head. His trade as hermae-maker indicates that the rationalization may be grounded in fact, but the significance of his defense to Alkibiades is that he is now forced to acknowledge publicly and to expound the gospel of the mind, rather than maintaining it as a private code of belief, a private conflict. And by making the philosophy of Idealism public, he changes the very course of history. It is only through this resorting to a philosophy that supposedly transcends the highest values of Greek culture that Sokrates consciously manages to salvage a measure of Alkibiades' pride in himself. He defends his refusal to accept the golden wreath with the same argument: "Hätte man ihn mir um die Arme und Beine gegürtet, wäre ich einverstanden gewesen. Aber was hatte mein Kopf mit dem Goldkranz zu tun, auf den man ihn drückt?" (158-9).* In one stroke all of Greece has been reduced to "a play of arms and legs," and if Alkibiades' personal pride has been salvaged, his pride in his country has received a mortal wound. Sokrates' own inner feelings are more openly revealed in this scene than anywhere throughout the play until the end. He is intensely aware of his duplicity and what it may mean both for Alkibiades and for Greece, and for history itself, for he knows he can never reveal the truth, therefore must maintain the lie: "ich mußte erfinden – – was nicht erfunden werden darf!! – – – – ich mußte den Himmel zudecken – – und die Erde verwelken – – !! – – es war kein Frevel von mir – – – – : Mitleid!! – – – – Mitleid!! – – – – Mitleid!!" (162)†

With Sokrates' request, at the poet's house, that Alkibiades place the ribbon around the head of the herma, the reversal of the positions of Alkibiades and Sokrates is complete, for Alkibiades can only exist now as a willing disciple of Sokrates, if he is not, as has been the case before, to look foolish. And this reversal of dominant and dependent roles is indicative of the effect of Sokrates' philosophy on Greek culture. Alkibiades is both fascinated and repelled by Sokrates' espousal of the new philosophy. He is fascinated because of the power that is so inherently evident in Sokrates' arguments. As the Alcibiades of Plato's *Symposium* states:

> Whenever I listen to him my heart beats faster than if I were in a religious frenzy, and tears run down my face, and I observe that numbers of other people have the same experience.... He compels me to realize that I am still a mass of imperfections.... So against my real inclination I stop up my ears and take refuge in flight, as Odysseus did from the Sirens, otherwise I should sit here beside him till I was an old man. (*Symposium* 101-2)

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* "Had they fastened it around my arms and legs, I should have consented. But what did the golden wreath have to do with my head, on which they would have put it?" (223).

† "I had to invent – – what should not be invented!! – – – – I had to cover the sky – – and wither the earth – – !! – – It was no crime of mine – – – – : Compassion!! – – – – Compassion!! – – – – Compassion!! (225).

Nietzsche, in his *Birth of Tragedy*, also states that "Wer die Lust einer sokratischen Erkenntnis an sich erfahren hat und spürt, wie diese, in immer weiteren Ringen, die ganze Welt der Erscheinungen zu umfassen sucht, der wird von da an keinen Stachel, der zum Dasein drängen könnte, heftiger empfinden als die Begierde, jene Eroberung zu vollenden und das Netz undurchdringbar fest zu spinnen" (*Werke* I 72).*

Sokrates' arguments justify Alkibiades' own actions and are significant to him for this reason, and because he can never fully understand them, but they also repel him because his own life is so firmly rooted in the supremacy of the flesh. Alkibiades consequently tries to trick Sokrates into affirming the flesh by leaving him with his own mistress, hoping to find him vulnerable to sexual desire. In this way Sokrates would contradict his own philosophy, giving Alkibiades the necessary pretext to negate the philosophy. Sokrates would then be denied and life could return to what it had been. But Sokrates is again prevented from acting because of the pain in his foot, and Alkibiades in a frenzy of rage and frustration finally destroys the hermae, for even these holy symbols of his own culture are easier to attack than is Sokrates. In doing so, however, Alkibiades also destroys his own credibility, and foreshadows the end of physical vitalism.

More interesting is the conflict as it finally culminates in Sokrates' own mind. B.J. Kenworthy has made the point that Sokrates is in this play in actuality a nihilist at the same time that he intrinsically believes in the vitalistic values of Greece. Sokrates recognizes the impossible contradiction between Idealist philosophy and physical vitalism, and his inability to reconcile these opposites leads to a desire for death, which is evident as early as his first appearance in the cactus field, where he wants only to be allowed to die without experiencing much pain. This he is not allowed to do, but again in Alkibiades' confrontation with Sokrates in the garret, the desire for death on the part of the latter is evident. At his trial, he shrewdly manipulates the jury to condemn him for his actual crime, that of saving Alkibiades, and with this verdict the wheel has turned full circle: "Ich habe die Hand gegen etwas erhoben, was über alle Maßen herrlich war – aber der Zwang war unabweisbar" (229).†

Although Sokrates embraces death, even luxuriates in it because in dying he can finally have the thorn removed – can rid himself of the intolerable ambivalence of his position and experience peace of mind – he is still an

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* "Anyone who has ever experienced the pleasure of Socratic insight and felt how, spreading in ever-widening circles, it seeks to embrace the whole world of appearances, will never again find any stimulus toward existence more violent than the craving to complete this conquest and to weave the net impenetrably tight" (97).

† "I raised my hand against something which was glorious beyond all measure – but the compulsion was too strong" (258).

exponent of life and vitalism. He urges his wife to take up her own profession again after his death, that of midwifery, the bringing of new life into the world. Sokrates believes both in life and in love, for when Xantippe vows she will make birth a misery for every child she attends, he counsels her to love instead: "Durch deine Hände gleiten Menschen ins Leben, dem ich einen Vorhang schwärzte. Einer arbeitet blindlings gegen den andern – und doch ist alles in Liebe verflochten.... ein Kind wird – war Vorbedacht am Werke? –: nur Liebe – nur die ist das ungewiß Gewisseste von allen Wundern! – – Versäume keine Pflicht, Weib" (230-31).* Sokrates welcomes death himself because there is no resolution to the intense conflict he experiences except in death, but he wishes life for others. After the experience of the play, however, this desire for life becomes a questionable value, for if life was impossible for Sokrates, how can it be possible for others? Perhaps only at the expense of knowledge, as Greece had enjoyed a vitalistic existence at the expense of knowledge. If this is the case, however, the ending remains decidedly inconclusive, even negative, for rather than finding a positive ideal after the manner of the Expressionists, Kaiser recognizes, like Nietzsche, that life may be pessimistic. Nietzsche hoped for an "artistic Socrates" to re-establish the tension between speculation and vitalism, or the Apollonian and Dionysian, on a higher level. Nietzsche's own conception of the "dying" Socrates may well serve as a summarizing comment on Kaiser's play:

> deshalb ist das Bild des *sterbenden Sokrates* als des durch Wissen und Gründe der Todesfurcht enthobenen Menschen das Wappenschild, das über dem Eingangstor der Wissenschaft einen jeden an deren Bestimmung erinnert, nämlich das Dasein als begreiflich und damit als gerechtfertigt erscheinen zu machen: wozu freilich, wenn die Gründe nicht reichen, schließlich auch der *Mythus* dienen muß, den ich sogar als notwendige Konsequenz, ja als Absicht der Wissenschaft soeben bezeichnete" (*Werke* I 70-71).†

Certainly the Sokrates of Kaiser's play functions to make human existence "appear comprehensible and thus justified" to those who are not aware of the underlying arbitrariness, the shifting and insubstantial basis for this belief in a justified existence. In presenting his play on the nature of history, Kaiser in effect demonstrates *how* the myth of enlightened history may have originated and been perpetuated, and the monstrous untruth it appears to

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* "Through your hands human beings will slip into that life for which I blackened a curtain. One works blindly against the other – and yet all is intertwined in love ... a child is born – was it forethought? – : only love – only that is the most uncertainly certain of all miracles! – – Neglect no duty, wife" (258-9).

† "The image of the *dying Socrates*, as the human being whom knowledge and reasons have liberated from the fear of death, is the emblem that, above the entrance gate of science, reminds all of its mission – namely, to make existence appear comprehensible and thus justified; and if reasons do not suffice, *myth* has to come to their aid in the end" (*Birth of Tragedy* 96).

cover up.

Like Brecht's *Baal*, Kaiser's *Der gerettete Alkibiades* represents a break with tradition as well as a negation of history as optimistic and progressive. If *Baal* denies history altogether, affirming only a life of present sensation, Kaiser's play recognizes a past and a future, but denies it any positive meaning, since the future is determined by random events that are completely out of the control of rational individuals. Neither of these plays is a war play – except insofar as *Der gerettete Alkibiades* utilizes a battle to initiate the significant action – but the philosophy of both plays is strongly related to the catastrophic psychological impact of World War I.

Friedrich Dürrenmatt, the only post World War II dramatist to be considered in this study, is a complex and often contradictory playwright, who was born in the Swiss village of Konolfingen, where he spent his childhood. His father was a Protestant minister, and Dürrenmatt's childhood, while externally peaceful, appears to have been dominated by an extremely vivid and even grotesque imagination, which resulted in the imagining and telling of childhood stories which contained "macabre, terrifying elements" (Tiusanen 4). Tiusanen calls Dürrenmatt a "Renaissance figure" who "plays several contradictory roles with equal gusto. He is a comedian, a religious meditator, a moralist; a child of nature and a theoretician of literature; a dramatist and a prosaist" (5-6). He studied philosophy, literature and science at the universities of Zürich and Berne, living the bohemian life style common to many university students. Tiusanen notes that the "image of a cruel, torturing God is clearly recognizable in Dürrenmatt's early writings" (10), and attributes this preoccupation to the "typical guilt complex" (10) of a young intellectual of one of the few neutral countries during World War II. Dürrenmatt's contemporary Swiss dramatist, Max Frisch, expressed the ambiguous nature of Swiss intellectuals as follows: "we lived at the brink of a torture chamber, we heard the shrieks, yet we were not among those who screamed; we remained without the depth of suffering endured, yet were too close to suffering to be able to laugh" (Tiusanen 11). Tiusanen characterizes Switzerland as a "country of solid and self-satisfied prosperity, of petty bourgeois, of bank and office clerks," who demonstrate a strong "preference for stability and security over intellectual daring" (11), national characteristics that inhibited the development of the arts and of self-introspection or self-analysis. Nevertheless, Tiusanen downplays the function of guilt based on national neutrality in Dürrenmatt's work, stating that for him "Switzerland is a convenient place to live, not a trauma or a problem" (12):

> The state exists to serve the people, cabinet ministers are civil servants in the original meaning of the word. He is afraid of modern giant states, with powers "too vast, too complex, too horrible, too mechanical" [*Four Plays* 31] to be controlled by an individual. By contrast, Switzerland is a "community of tiny

> cantonal and communal democracies"; it is probably the country in the modern world where direct, non-representational democracy has its greatest sway, not always to the good of efficiency. (12)

Tiusanen notes wryly that "Dürrenmatt also belongs to the generation of European writers who suspect that the stem word for 'nationalism' is 'Nazi' " (13).

Tiusanen suggests that *Romulus der Große* is "the first play by Dürrenmatt constituting an organic whole with strong interaction between its various scenic images" (77). Dürrenmatt, like Brecht, was constantly editing and revising his plays, and *Romulus* went through at least four distinct revisions. The original version was never published and was extensively revised in 1957, when Dürrenmatt was at the height of his power as a dramatist. It is the text of this version that will be used in the present analysis, but the play underwent further, though relatively minor, revisions in 1961 and in 1964 (Tiusanen 74).

Dürrenmatt develops the moral structure of his play through a comic dislocation – and consequent revaluation – of traditional values and attitudes, that is far more complex and innovative than that utilized by Shaw in *Man and Superman.** Dürrenmatt's dramatic technique has often been characterized as "grotesque," a viewpoint which, as Murray Peppard has noted,

> sees the insecurity of man in a world only superficially ordered and understood, a world in which the irrational and demonic may, at any moment, break through the veneer of convention and complacency to reveal fundamental and frightening truths. The grotesque has a mixed effect, turning laughter into horror, provoking a smile and then suddenly causing it to freeze on the face of the spectator.... it serves to unmask our everyday world and what passes as normal reality in order to confront us with the higher truths that have lain hidden. It is an attempt to exorcise the demonic by means of the apparently comic or ridiculous, producing a shock effect as the deeper, irrational truth emerges from behind a comic mask. (21)

Tiusanen notes that "Grotesque disharmonies include the mixing of separate conceptual spheres, abolition of the laws of statics, loss of identity, deformation of natural proportions or historical chronology" (14), and further distinguishes between Epic Theatre, the Theatre of the Absurd, and the Theatre of the Grotesque, by signifying how the social and historical perspective of each of these forms of drama differ from each other, although Tiusanen finally prefers to include the grotesque into the wider category of tragicomedy:

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* Although Shaw, by the time he wrote *Heartbreak House*, had also developed significantly the ability to incorporate a similar sense of dislocation of values and a cohesive symbolic construct into the structure of a comedy of manners, and in this respect *Heartbreak House* is a much more polished comedy than is *Man and Superman.*

> Playwrights of the epic theater believe in the changeability of the world and aim at making social relationships conceivable to the public. Absurdists proclaim the world not only unchangeable but basically senseless, and let the form of their plays reflect this interpretation of the state of affairs. The world of a grotesque play may be out of joint; it is not totally unreal, as is frequently the case in absurdism. The possibility that a grotesque play deals with specific social circumstances, rather than with life in toto, brings it close to the satiric end of the epic theater. (17)

Tiusanen calls dramatists of the grotesque "social and metaphysical agnostics" (18), because they cannot believe that human existence is meaningless, yet find it equally difficult to establish a rational basis for human life. Dürrenmatt's art does not represent an attempt to "save" the world, but rather to find meaning in it; thus, he states that "we should not try to save the world, but to bear it. That is the one real adventure which remains possible for us in this late time" (Tiusanen 18).

Romulus der Große is a fascinating analysis of morality and justice, of the need for action and of the possibilities of freedom to act within a curiously disjointed, virtually unstructured society. Dürrenmatt turns the Hegelian conception of the state upside down, for in this play it is the conventional or traditional heroes who are unable to act constructively, unable even to make themselves heard much of the time. Dürrenmatt's affinity to Brecht, as well as to Wedekind and Büchner, is amply evident within the first two acts of *Romulus der Große*, which are in many respects similar to Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper*,* but without Brecht's overtly political and economic perspective.

The tone of the first half of Dürrenmatt's play is set by the speech and actions of Romulus' two Chamberlains, who, in barring Spurius Titus Mamma from delivering his urgent message concerning the imminent invasion of Rome by the Teutons, effectively neutralize his two-day heroic ride from Pavia to Rome with the words that "Am Hof eines römischen Kaisers eilt nichts" (12).† Dürrenmatt's attack on conventional values and attitudes is repeatedly contained in this toppling of the sublime by the ridiculous, and

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* Urs Jenny notes that despite Dürrenmatt's affinity to Brecht in a technical sense, Dürrenmatt is an "Aristotelian – a fact which most clearly reveals his distance from Brecht – the contrast between tragedy and comedy, which hardly ever interested Brecht, stands at the centre of his dramatic philosophy. This deduces that comedy is necessary because tragedy is impossible" (20).

† All quotations taken from Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Komödien* I (Zürich: Peter Schifferli Verlags AG, 1957), pp. 88. The English translation is by Gerhard Nellhaus, and was published, together with *An Angel Comes to Babylon*, by Jonathan Cape, 1964.
"Nothing is urgent at the Court of a Roman Emperor" (98).

the Captain of the Cavalry is finally advised, by Pyramus, that his efforts to gain an audience with the emperor will be successful only if he submits to the protocol dictated by the court's bureaucracy:

> Begeben Sie sich zum Oberhofmeister. Er empfängt in zwei Stunden. Punkt zehn. Schreiben Sie sich in die Liste der angekommenen Personen ein, suchen Sie beim Innenminister um die Bewilligung nach, dem Hofe eine wichtige Nachricht zu überbringen und Sie werden Ihre Botschaft dem Kaiser vielleicht sogar persönlich im Laufe der nächsten Tage melden dürfen.
> *Der Präfekt weiß nicht mehr, was er denken soll.* (12-13)*

The central theme of the play analyzes and exposes the historical conception of the role of the "world historical individual," in Hegel's terminology, as well as of the "Superman/*Übermensch*" conception that has been passed down from Nietzsche and Shaw. Hegel judged world historical individuals after the fact, conceding their world historical role in promoting the progress of history, despite the fact that their motivations and their political morality might be questionable, or even totalitarian in nature. Nietzsche suggested that an *Übermensch* is someone who stands apart from and beyond the common "slave" morality, one who through his superior morality implicitly condemns the common morality of the masses. There is a strongly judgmental element to Nietzsche's conception of the *Übermensch*, as there is to Shaw's view of the Superman. Shaw, however, desires to breed a whole nation of Supermen, in effect to condition and improve humanity to a new plane of knowledge and consciousness, where the people become superbly capable of self-government, no longer vulnerable to the soap-box oratory of politicians who gain their popularity through false promises and mass appeal.

Dürrenmatt's portrayal of Romulus puts into question all of the above notions of super-human individuals. Romulus is the world historical individual whose entire life is dedicated to judging and destroying his own nation state rather than enhancing it. Romulus is the Devil's Advocate opposing Hegel's conception of history, while at the same time also denying Nietzsche's insistence on a superior consciousness in the form of the *Übermensch*, for while Romulus at the end of the play appears vastly superior to those around him – with the exception of Odoaker and perhaps Ämilian – he is also shown as irresponsible, a dangerous demagogue willing to sacrifice all others as well as himself to his own vision of morality. Dürrenmatt himself

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* "First go to the Lord High Steward. At ten o'clock sharp, two hours from now, he will hold audience. Add your name to the list of new arrivals. Request permission from the Minister of State to deliver an important message to the Imperial Court and perhaps then, in the course of the next few days, you may be able to deliver your news personally to the Emperor."
[*The* CAVALRY OFFICER *no longer knows what to think.*] (98-9).

states in his appended note to the play:

> Hält im dritten Akt Romulus Gericht über die Welt, hält im vierten die Welt Gericht über Romulus. Man sehe genau hin, was für einen Menschen ich gezeichnet habe, witzig, gelöst, human, gewiß, doch im Letzten ein Mensch, der mit äußerster Härte und Rücksichtslosigkeit vorgeht und nicht davor zurückschreckt, auch von andern Absolutheit zu verlangen, ein gefährlicher Bursche, der sich auf den Tod hin angelegt hat; das is das Schreckliche dieses kaiserlichen Hühnerzüchters, dieses als Narren verkleideten Weltenrichters. (88)*

Romulus' strategy throughout the twenty years of his reign† has been to paralyze, through an artificial bureaucracy, hypocritical conventions, and especially buffoonery, any effective action that could contribute to a prolonging of the life of the Roman Empire. While the comedy surrounding the identification of past emperors of Rome with hens who may or may not "lay an egg" – or two or three – reinforces Romulus' character as buffoon, it also defines Dürrenmatt's scepticism concerning the traditional values of the heroic and the regal from the perspective of a post-World War II society.

It is imperative for Romulus that in judging his empire and working for its destruction,‡ he too should die,+ for to pass judgment on the people of whom he is the leader, without anticipating the same judgment on himself, would be grossly immoral, and Romulus' driving purpose in this play derives from his acute sense of morality and justice. Where Hegel's world historical individuals, such as Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and Napoleon – and possibly Stalin, if Hegel's rationale for world historical significance were to be projected past his own lifetime – may have been inadvertent heroes of history with questionable motivations and actions, Romulus, on the other hand, is motivated by a strong sense of justice and morality, but purposely opposes history as progress.

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* "If Romulus sits in judgement over the world in Act Three, the world sits in judgement over him in Act Four. Look closely at what kind of a human I have sketched here: surely, a witty man, a man at ease and humane, but in the last analysis, a human being who proceeds with the utmost firmness and lack of consideration for others, a man who does not shrink from demanding the same absoluteness of purpose from others. He is indeed a dangerous fellow, a man determined to die. That is the terror lying within this imperial chicken fancier, this judge of the world disguised as a fool" (174).

† While Dürrenmatt has Romulus reigning for twenty years, his actual reign in history was only two years.

‡ Tiusanen calls Romulus a "Pacifist" (85), but how can someone who acts as decisively as Romulus does to bring about the destruction of his people be considered a pacifist? In not allowing his daughter to marry Rupf, and in his absolute refusal to allow any decisive actions to forestall the invasion of Rome, Romulus is, in fact, actively promoting the destruction of his empire, of its people, and of his own family. In his active enforcement of idleness and inaction for the purpose of bringing about destruction, Romulus simply cannot be considered a pacifist.

\+ In actuality he was banished to province by Odoaker.

The historical setting of the play, and the heroic title and name of its protagonist, immediately evoke the conception of imperial grandeur, with all the concomitant associations of heroism, military might, patriotism, idealism and glory, all the qualities associated with a mighty state whose mission it might be to fill an heroic role in history. These associations are abruptly shattered by the opening scene of the play, in which the Captain of the Cavalry, injured and exhausted, but patriotically determined to fulfil his commission to the best of his ability, stumbles onto the stage, *"den kaiserlichen Sommersitz in Campanien ... den seine Majestät auch Winters bewohnt"* (11),* only to stir up a flock of chickens, and to attract the attention of the two *"uralte Kammerdiener, grau, unbeweglich wie Statuen"* (11)†. The contrast between the historical sense of imperial grandeur that drive the Captain, and the cluttered courtyard and unconcern with affairs of state that characterize his reception at the palace, could not be greater. When he gasps that "Das römische Weltreich kracht zusammen!" (12),‡ he is met by the calm rebuff from Achilles that "Ein so großes Unternehmen wie das römische Imperium kann gar nicht vollständig zusammenkrachen" (12),+ and further, that "Wir halten einen Patriotismus nicht für wünschenswert, der zu einem kultivierten Betragen im Gegensatz steht" (12).** Where Nietzsche, Schnitzler and Eliot consider historical authority and culture to prevent decisive action and decision-making, Romulus here parodies the same concern as he justifies his own inaction on the basis of Rome's historical past.†† All the conventional symbols of historical greatness are parodied and belittled: Romulus sells the busts of his predecessors and of the "bedeutenden Dichter, Denker und Staatsmänner von Roms großer Vergangenheit" (22)‡‡ to Apollyon the Greek art dealer in an "Ausverkauf," a "closing-down sale" of the once-mighty empire; Apollyon's bargaining for lower prices reinforces the backruptcy of idealism as he rationalizes that "Für Büsten ist die Nachfrage gering, eigentlich gehen heute nur die von großen Boxern und üppigen Hetären" (17-18);++++ Romulus picks the golden leaves from his

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* *"imperial summer residence in which the Emperor of Rome lives the whole year round"* (97)

† *"ancient, grey and immovable chamberlains"* (97)

‡ "the Roman Empire is collapsing" (98)

\+ "An organization as immense as the Roman Empire simply cannot totally collapse" (98)

** "Patriotism which conflicts with cultivated behaviour is undesireable" (98)

†† Murray Peppard notes that when Romulus orders the Roman archives burned, "The smoke from the burning archives not only confirms Romulus' skeptical attitude toward Rome's traditions, but also means that future historians will be robbed of much source material – a drastic way of lightening the burden of culture in a Nietzschean manner" (40).

‡‡ "famous poets, thinkers and statesmen of Rome's great past" (108)

++++ "There is little call for busts these days; ... the only ones that sell are those of famous pugilists and buxom courtesans" (103)

imperial crown to pay his chamberlains, and has long since sold all the jewels that traditionally bedecked the imperial sword. Dürrenmatt's own disillusionment with history as progress and with military might and grandeur is revealed through the debunking of these traditional symbols of majesty. Murray Peppard states that Dürrenmatt's depiction of the Roman Empire in this play also constitutes a significant and satiric perspective on the Third Reich (37); from this point of view Romulus' judging of the Roman Empire may be paralleled by Dürrenmatt's judging of Hitler's Germany.

Despite Romulus' refusal to see Spurius Titus Mamma and listen to the news he has ridden so hard and so long to bring to his emperor, Romulus demonstrates his intellectual prescience and his acute awareness of the condition of his empire early within the first act, as he facetiously compares the significance of the Captain's news to the impact of his hen Odoaker laying three eggs in one day, but shows very clearly that he is already aware of the news that Spurius Titus Mamma has brought:

> Ich brauche Spurius Titus Mamma nicht mehr. Der Germanenfürst Odoaker hat Pavia erobert, denn das Huhn seines Namens hat drei Eier gelegt. So viel Übereinstimmung ist noch in der Natur oder es gibt keine Weltordnung. (20-21)*

If the comparison of a hen laying eggs to a cataclysmic military defeat is not debunking enough in itself, Romulus further devalues traditional heroism by relegating it to the level of a cliché: "Ich kenne die letzten Worte meiner Feldherren, bevor sie in germanische Gefangenschaft fallen: Solange noch eine Ader in uns lebt, gibt keiner nach. Das hat noch jeder gesagt" (21).† His later remark to Zeno, the Emperor of the East Roman Empire, who has come to Romulus to seek asylum, that "ich habe schon lange keine Übersicht mehr in der Weltpolitik" (25)‡ is ironic and untrue, designed to reinforce his role within the first two acts as a buffoon and to keep the audience from identifying with him too early in the play. His following statement that "Du hattest dich mit ihnen [den Germanen] verbündet, um deinen eigenen Sohn als Kaiser abzusetzen" (25)+ reveals Romulus' astute comprehension of world affairs. Both Romulus and Kaiser's Sokrates are intelligent, enlightened, and ultimately powerful individuals, but where Sokrates denied the concept of

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* "I no longer need Spurius Titus Mamma. The ruler of the Teutons, Odoaker, has conquered Pavia. I know this is so because the hen bearing his name has just laid three eggs, and all things come in threes. You see how it all fits; without this natural harmony, there would be no order in the world" (107)

† "I know the last words of my generals even before they fall into Teutonic hands: As long as there is a drop of blood in our veins, no one will give up. Every one of them said that" (107).

‡ "it has been quite some time since I've had a comprehensive view of world politics" (111)

\+ "You had entered into an alliance with [the Teutons] in order to depose your own son as emperor" (111)

military grandeur to cover up his own inability to withstand physical pain and still save Greek vitalism, Romulus does so through a deliberate, planned program to liquidate the empire.

If Romulus works actively to destroy the remnants of his empire, its *de facto* decadence and hollow existence are amply evident from the beginning of the play. The personalities of the characters in the play may be divided into four major groups. The first group consists of the decadent, corrupt buffoons such as Mares, Zeno, and Tullius Rotundus; the second includes the cynical profiteers and capitalists, Apollyon the art dealer, Cäsar Rupf, and Julia, Romulus' wife; the third group, characterized by their unquestioning loyalty, which makes them primarily comic figures, consists of the chamberlains, Achilles and Pyramus; the fourth group is comprised of idealists, and can be further subdivided into those who endorse traditional ideals without thinking about them, like Romulus' daughter Rea, and Spurius Titus Mamma, and Ämilian, who alone endorses traditional values, while supporting them with his past suffering and his active commitment to the future of his country. Ämilian is the strongest opponent Romulus has in this play, because Ämilian is the true idealist who completely incorporates the traditional values of the state, and is therefore by extension the representative for those who are suffering the most through Romulus' anarchistic suppression of these values.

Mares, Romulus' Minister of War, whose name "probably derives from a combination of Mars and Ares, and is pointedly modeled on Hermann Göring" (Peppard 40), acts totally out of self-interest; inept and cowardly, he is primarily anxious to escape from danger. Zeno, the Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, is a slave to his chamberlains and their meaningless formalities, formalities they subject their emperor to, "mag dies noch so unverständlich sein" (24).* For Zeno's chamberlains, "Das byzantinische Hofzeremoniell ist nicht nur ein Gleichnis der Weltordnung, sondern ist diese Weltordnung auch selber" (24),† an ironic comment inasmuch as all meaningful order has already been abrogated. Incomprehensible ritual has replaced meaningful action, and the chamberlains' names, Phosphoridos and Sulphurides, evocative of the sulphurous, smoky fires of hell, are a parody on both the fires of hell or the fires of conviction, for their insistence on ritual is meaningless within the decadence of their society and its imminent destruction. Tullius Rotundus, whose name again suggests his main interest – although Romulus himself is the character who repeatedly, if parodistically, focuses on the historical Roman preoccupation with food and wine – is, like

* "no matter how incomprehensible they may be" (110)

† "The Byzantine Court ceremonial is not only a symbol of world order, indeed it is the world order itself" (110)

Mares, primarily concerned with his own safety. Mares and Tullius Rotudus are both inept and corrupt, symbolic of the corrupt, decadent bureaucracy of the empire, a corruption that Romulus both encourages and exploits for furthering his own design for the end of the empire.

The play's cynical profiteers and entrepreneurs are all too willing to cash in on the collapse of the empire. Apollyon is forever popping up through the first two acts of the play as a comic reminder of the defunct financial condition of the empire, and of the deflation of the idealism of the hero. Cäsar Rupf's name, like most in the play, is also suggestive; the particular combination of "Caesar," indicating heroic power, and "Rupf," suggestive of aggressive and corrupt commercialism – "the verb 'rupfen' ... means to pluck, gull, cheat or fleece" (Peppard 40) – indicates that this man has the commercial or financial power to change the course of history. A further ironic play on the heroic name of Caesar emerges when Ämilian greets Romulus with the words "Willkommen Imperator des guten Essens. Sei gegrüßt, du Cäsar der Hühner! Heil dir, den die Soldaten Romulus den Kleinen nennen" (50-51).* Rupf, like Apollyon, is motivated only by self-interest, and complicates Romulus' plans through his offer to save the empire if Romulus' daughter, Rea, will marry him. Dürrenmatt uses Rupf to set up a Shavian-like dilemma between commercialism and morality, where the King of Commerce uses his wealth to force other characters into moral crises; Ämilian is forced to choose between his love for Rea and his loyalty to the empire, and Rea is forced into the same dilemma. At the same time, Rupf's offer for the first time in the play forces Romulus to make a direct and decisive decision, and when he does so, it is with the full dignity and impersonal authority of the "real" Emperor of Rome: "Der Kaiser erteilt die Bewilligung zu dieser Ehe nicht.... Der Kaiser weiß, was er tut, wenn er sein Reich ins Feuer wirft, wenn er fallen läßt, was zerbrechen muß, und zertritt, was dem Tode gehört" (52).† The implications of this action are complex. Romulus here indicates quite clearly to the other characters of the play and to the audience, that he will not allow himself to be deterred from his plan to destroy the empire. Rupf's offer, on the other hand, again reinforces the Hegelian question of individual versus state, and the freedom of the individual within the state. Ämilian and Rea represent Hegel's perspective on the state, that the individual has the freedom to choose, but that his choice will predicate a higher value on the good of the state than it will on the happiness and fulfilment of the individual, a perspective that is basically constrained by a sense of "duty"

* "Welcome, O Caesar of the good dinner table. Greetings unto you, Emperor of fine fowl. Hail unto you whom your soldiers call Romulus the Little" (136).

† "The Emperor will not permit this marriage.... The Emperor knows what he is doing when he throws his empire to the flames, when he lets fall what must break, when he grinds under foot what is doomed" (138).

rather than of "freedom." It is Romulus who emphasizes that the individual cannot be sacrificed in favor of the state, as he makes very clear, first of all, to Spurius Titus Mamma, when he tells him, at the end of Act 1, "Du opferst dich einem Toten, du kämpfst für einen Schatten, du lebst für ein zerfallenes Grab. Geh schlafen, Präfekt, die heutige Zeit hat dein Heldentum in eine Pose verwandelt!" (35).* When his daughter Rea in Act 3 begs to be allowed to marry Rupf and thus save the empire, he replies: "Das Vaterland kann nur noch mit Geld gerettet werden, oder es ist verloren. Wir müssen zwischen einem katastrophalen Kapitalismus und einer kapitalen Katastrophe wählen" (60).† Romulus reinforces the priority of the individual over the state very clearly in this all-important conversation with Rea, where he elaborates in detail his concern regarding the individual and the potentially satanic elements of the state that could only have been elaborated on after World War II:

> REA: Soll man denn nicht das Vaterland mehr lieben als alles in der Welt?
> ROMULUS: Nein, man soll es weniger lieben als einen Menschen. Man soll vor allem gegen sein Vaterland mißtrauisch sein. Es wird niemand leichter ein Mörder als ein Vaterland....
> REA: Ich kann nicht ohne Vaterland leben!
> ROMULUS: Kannst du ohne den Geliebten leben? Es ist viel größer und viel schwerer, einem Menschen die Treue zu halten als einem Staat.
> REA: Es geht um das Vaterland, nicht um einen Staat.
> ROMULUS: Vaterland nennt sich der Staat immer dann, wenn er sich anschickt, auf Menschenmord auszugehen.
> REA: Unsere unbedingte Liebe zum Vaterland hat Rom groß gemacht.
> ROMULUS: Aber unsere Liebe hat Rom nicht gut gemacht. Wir haben mit unseren Tugenden eine Bestie gemästet. Wir haben uns an der Größe unseres Vaterlandes wie mit Wein berauscht, aber nun ist Wermut geworden, was wir liebten.
> REA: Du bist undankbar gegen das Vaterland.
> ROMULUS: Nein, ich bin nur nicht wie einer jener Heldenväter in den Trauerspielen, die dem Staat noch einen guten Appetit wünschen, wenn er ihre Kinder fressen will. Geh, heirate Ämilian! (60-61)‡

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* "You are sacrificing yourself for a corpse.... The country you live for is no more than a grave. Go to sleep, Captain, our times have turned your heroism into a pose" (121).

† "The country can only be saved with money, or it will surely be lost. But we must choose between a catastrophic capitalism and a capital catastrophe" (146).

‡ "REA: But shouldn't one love one's country more than anything else in the world?
ROMULUS: No, one should never love it as much as one loves other human beings. Above all, always keep an open mind about any country. A country turns killer more easily than any man....
REA: I cannot live without a country.
ROMULUS: Can you live without your beloved? To remain loyal to a human being is greater and much more difficult than to remain loyal to a state.
REA: It is my country, not just a state.
ROMULUS: Every state calls itself 'country', or 'nation', when it is about to commit murder.
REA: Our unconditional love for our country was what made Rome great.
ROMULUS: But our love did not make Rome good. With our virtues we nurtured a beast. We

Hegel had recognized that the historical spirit was carried "by different peoples, but by only one people at any one time" (Kaufmann, *From Shakespeare* 116). Romulus does not appear to deny historical progress itself as much as to assert that the particular state of which he is the leader, and which has in the past been the prime representative of the world spirit, can no longer pretend to this position, and that his own historical role is to be instrumental in terminating the Roman Empire as the purveyor of the world spirit. As he tells his wife, Julia, "Ich bezweifle nicht die Notwendigkeit des Staates, ich bezweifle nur die Notwendigkeit unseres Staates" (57). He elaborates further, explaining to her *why* the Roman Empire can no longer fulfil the Hegelian perspective of progress, and his indictment of the Roman Empire represents Dürrenmatt's indictment of Hitler's Third Reich and of any totalitarian state: "Er ist ein Weltreich geworden und damit eine Einrichtung, die öffentlich Mord, Plünderung, Unterdrückung und Brandschatzung auf Kosten der andern Völker betrieb, bis ich gekommen bin" (57-8).* When Julia accuses Romulus of being Rome's traitor, he replies: "Nein, ich bin Roms Richter" (58).†

Romulus' open admission to Julia that he perceives himself as Rome's judge, the historical figure whose duty it is to execute the empire, sets the scene for Dürrenmatt's parody of Shakespeare's "Ides of March" assassination scene, where Romulus and Ämilian finally have the opportunity to explain their separate positions as fully as possible. Romulus' entire position is based on the assumption that he will himself be killed by the Teutons; this alone is what has given him the courage to bring about the destruction of the empire, for as he says to Rea, "Die Germanen werden mich töten. Ich habe immer mit diesem Tode gerechnet. Das ist mein Geheimnis. Ich opfere Rom, indem ich mich selber opfere" (62).‡

The attempted assassination scene itself is masterfully orchestrated, moving from the subtle play on the opposite views of justice held by Ämilian and Romulus as they toast "die Gerechtichkeit" (63), or justice, to the farcical

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became drunk on the greatness of our country as on wine, but now what we love has turned into gall and wormwood.

REA: You are ungrateful to your country.

ROMULUS: No. Only I am not like that sire of heroes in one of your tragedies who says 'good appetite' to the state when the state wants to devour one of his children. Go, marry Ämilian" (147).

* "I don't doubt the necessity of the state. I merely doubt the necessity of our state. Our state had become a world empire, an institution officially engaged in murder, plunder, suppression, and oppressive taxation at the expense of other people – until I came along" (144).

† "No, Rome's judge" (145).

‡ "The Teutons will kill me. I have always counted on that death. That is my secret. I sacrifice Rome through sacrificing myself" (148).

appearance of all the conspirators from under the bed, out of closets and of wardrobes. The one poignant moment within this farce – and it should certainly be played with some emotion – is when Romulus discovers that his cook – Caesar's Brutus – is also one of the conspirators; the stage direction at this point reads that "*Zum ersten Mal ist nun der Kaiser sichtbar erschüttert*" (65), as he states: "Koch, auch du? Und mit dem Messer, womit du so unzählige Kaiser ermordet hast" (65).*

The scene that follows, where Romulus justifies himself to Ämilian, is crucial to the play. Romulus here acknowledges the suffering which he as Emperor has been responsible for, the suffering of innocent humanity, of which Ämilian is the one representative in the play. Romulus says to Ämilian:

> ich will zu dir reden als zu einem Menschen, der Schweres erlitten hat und gefoltert wurde.... Ich will in dir das große, letzte Argument gegen den sehen, der sich wie ich nicht wehrt, den Menschen, der immer wieder geschändet wird, das tausendfach besudelte Opfer der Macht. (67)†

In this very significant scene Romulus as Emperor accepts the responsibility for the suffering of those who, like Ämilian, fought and suffered as genuine idealists for the empire. Romulus, who values the individual over the state, here confronts the individual suffering which he as emperor has caused through his judgment *on* the state and his decision to cause its downfall.

Romulus' justification for his actions – or his deliberate *inaction* – is that Rome – and by implication the Third Reich – must be destroyed because it was guilty of choosing violence and tyranny over truth and humanity. Dürrenmatt directly attacks Hegel's conception of the state here, and indicts, as well, any state which uses totalitarian methods to enforce its ideology or its historical significance:

> Rom hat sich selbst verraten. Es kannte die Wahrheit, aber es wählte die Tyrannei.... Was erwartest du für eine Antwort von der Spitze des Riesenbaus der römischen Geschichte herab? Was soll der Kaiser zu deinen Wunden sagen, thronend über den Kadavern der eigenen und der fremden Söhne, über Hekatomben von Opfern, die Kriege zu Roms Ehre und wilde Tiere zu Roms Vergnügen vor seine Füße schwemmten? Rom ist schwach geworden, eine taumelnde Greisin, doch seine Schuld is nicht abgetragen und seine Verbrechen sind nicht getilgt. (67-8)‡

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* "*[visibly moved]*: You, too, Cook? And with the very kitchen knife with which you slaughtered so many emperors?" (152).

† "I will speak to you as to a human being who was tortured and who suffered greatly.... For me you represent the final great argument against those who, like myself, refuse to defend themselves; in you I'm willing to see the militant challenge of the people, violated again and again, the victims of power defiled a thousand times" (153).

‡ "Rome knew the truth but chose violence. Rome knew humaneness but chose tyranny.... What kind of an answer do you expect I can hand down to you, as I sit on top of the colossus that is Roman history? What can be said about your wounds by your Emporer who sits enthroned above the corpses of his own sons and the sons of strangers, above the

Romulus views himself, as did Harry in Eliot's *The Family Reunion*, as the agent of expiation, but in Dürrenmatt's play the expiation of guilt, and the enforcing of a code of justice, while self-imposed on Romulus by himself, is in effect enforced on the innocent idealists, the Ämilians, by Romulus through his own totalitarian methods, his own inflexibility. The guilt is that of those in power, but in Romulus' design for justice the innocent suffer just as they did in historical Rome's design for power.

Romulus' plea to Ämilian, then, that "Wir wollen ehrlich sein" (68)* – similar to Gerontion's position when, faced with determining his position within history, he also states, "I would meet you upon this honestly" – is somewhat deceptive. Romulus believes in himself and in his sense of justice, and can consequently take the offensive against the conspirators: "nun springe ich euch an mit den Tatzen der Wahrheit und packe euch mit den Zähnen der Gerechtigkeit" (68).† But Romulus is not speaking for Dürrenmatt here, nor has he managed to convince Ämilian of the validity of his sense of justice, for Ämilian, unable to break through to the moral freedom that Romulus is arguing for – and which is, at any rate, questionable – leads the dramatic attack on Romulus, which is then aborted by the cry that "die Germanen kommen" (69).‡ The act ends with Romulus' order to Pyramus, that "Wenn dann die Germanen da sind, sollen sie hereinkommen" (69).+

The flaw behind Romulus' perception of justice and expiation is that the extinction – or execution – of one culture does not necessarily, as Hegel would have had us believe, lead to a superior, or more humane culture. Romulus, who believes Roman civilization must be destroyed, initially has no perception of the Teutons as a superior or more just society than that of decadent Rome; if anything, the perception is that the Teutons are an aggressive, primitive, uncultured race, and again Achilles and Pyramus speak for the others in the play when Achilles states, at the beginning of Act 4, that "Jedenfalls muß die Zeit, die nun anbricht, schauderhaft sein" (72), and Pyramus replies: "So richtiges dunkles Mittelalter. Ohne Pessimist sein zu wollen: Von der heutigen Katastrophe wird sich die Menschheit nie mehr erholen" (72).** Why, then, would Romulus want to destroy even a decadent,

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mound of human sacrifices swept to his feet by the wars of Rome's glory and the gladiatorial games for Rome's amusement? Rome has grown weak, a tottering old hag, but her guilt has not been expiated and her crimes not erased" (154).

* "Let us be honest with one another" (155)

† "I now spring upon you with the claws of truth and grip you with the teeth of justice" (155).

‡ "The Teutons are coming" (155)

+ "When the Teutons arrive, let them come in" (156).

** "ACHILLES: From every point of view, the times about to begin will be frightful. PYRAMUS: Yes, the darkness of the Middle Ages. Without wishing to be a pessimist, I say mankind will never recover from the present catastrophe" (158).

corrupt society when there appears to be no tenable or apparent improvement in sight? The moral dilemma that Dürrenmatt posits through Romulus is a form of justice that borders on the absurd. Romulus is an anarchist because his plan is not based on any coherent ideology, nor is it likely – or even designed – to lead to an improvement in the human condition.

Romulus' plan for the empire, however, does not lead to the conclusion that he had anticipated. He is composed and ready for what he believes is his own imminent death; even the news that his wife, daughter, and his entire court have perished in their attempt to escape cannot upset him, for "Wer bald sterben muß, beweint nicht die Toten" (73).* But Romulus is not about to die, for Odoaker, too, has a code of justice and an abhorrence for violence. When Romulus and Odoaker finally meet, their conversation is of chickens, rather than of war, for as Odoaker remarks—bringing the aggressive violence of war to the level of the courteously mundane – "Es ist etwas genierlich für zwei Feinde, sich auf einmal Auge in Auge gegenüber zu finden" (78).† Odoaker reproaches Romulus for the latter's willingness to abide by world opinion, as he asserts: "Denkst du so oberflächlich von deinen Feinden, daß du dich nach dem Urteil aller Welt richtest, Kaiser Romulus?" (78),‡ an insinuation that Romulus' sense of justice may also be fallacious. The truth now becomes apparent that Odoaker did not wish to defeat and kill Romulus; rather, "Ich bin gekommen, mich mit meinem ganzen Volk dir zu unterwerfen" (79).+ The Teuton leader's humanity and pacifism may be stronger even than that of Romulus, for Odoaker realizes, in a Brechtian fashion, that "*every* war turns men into beasts":

> Ich hoffte, den Krieg human zu führen, der Widerstand der Römer war gering, doch je weiter ich gegen Süden stieß, desto größer wurden die Untaten meiner Armee, nicht, weil sie grausamer war als andere Armeen, sondern, weil *jeder* Krieg bestialisch ist. Ich war entsetzt. Ich versuchte, den Feldzug abzubrechen, ich war bereit, die Summe des Hosenfabrikanten anzunehmen, noch waren meine Feldhauptleute bestechlich, noch konnte ich die Dinge vielleicht nach meinem Willen lenken. Noch. Denn bald werde ich es nicht mehr können. Dann werden wir endgültig ein Volk der Helden geworden sein. (80)**

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* "He who is about to die weeps not for the dead" (158-9).

† "It is somewhat embarrassing for two enemies suddenly to find themselves face to face" (163).

‡ "Have your thoughts about your enemies been so shallow, Emperor Romulus, that you must go by the world's judgment" (164)

\+ "I came to subject myself and my entire people to you" (165).

** "I was hoping to conduct this war humanely. The opposition of the Romans was slight. Still, the farther south I advanced, the greater were the misdeeds of my army. Not because my army is any more cruel than any other army, but because *every* war turns men into beasts. I was shocked, I tried to call a halt to the campaign. I was ready to accept the sum offered by the manufacturer of trousers. Because up to now my captains could still be bribed, and because up to now I might still be able to have things my way. But only up to now. Soon I will not be able to do it any more. Then we shall have become, once and for all,

Odoaker's speech again implies a transvaluation of values, where heroism has become a negative, aggressive and tyrannical conception rather than an expresssion of human idealism.

Both Romulus and Odoaker have had a moral vision that was too limited, and have both been guilty, also, of a deficient judgment of their enemy. Romulus viewed Odoaker as an aggressive barbarian who would kill him instantly; Odoaker, for his part, idealized Romulus' supposed pacifism, and hoped that Romulus could bring peace to both the Romans and the Teutons. Their common enemy is Odoaker's nephew Theodoric, who symbolizes aggression, nationalism and the superiority of the state. Theodoric *is* the state as the Nazis envisioned it; he is the depersonalized image of the state as war machine: "Er rührt kein Mädchen an, trinkt nur Wasser und schläft auf dem Boden. Er übt sich täglich in Waffen" (79).* Theodoric represents the alternative civilization that Romulus should have been aware of while judging Rome, and which he now does come to recognize:

> Ich legte mein ganzes Leben auf den Tag hin an, da das römische Imperium zusammenbrechen würde. Ich gab mir das Recht, Roms Richter zu sein, weil ich bereit war, zu sterben. Ich verlangte von meinem Lande ein ungeheures Opfer, weil ich mich selbst als Opfer einsetzte. Ich ließ das Blut meines Volkes fließen, indem ich es wehrlos machte, weil ich selbst mein Blut vergießen wollte. Und nun soll ich leben. Und nun soll mein Opfer nicht angenommen werden. Und nun soll ich als der dastehen, der sich allein retten konnte. Und nicht nur das. Bevor du kamst, erhielt ich die Nachricht, daß die Tochter, die ich liebe, mit ihrem Bräutigam umgekommen ist. Samt meiner Frau und dem Hofe. Ich ertrug diese Nachricht mit Leichtigkeit, weil ich zu sterben glaubte, nun trifft sie mich unbarmherzig, nun widerlegt sie mich unbarmherzig. Es ist alles absurd geworden, was ich tat. (80-81)†

Romulus' tragic error is that he should have recognized the absurdity of his reasoning much earlier; he should also have recognized that his own death was immaterial to the morality of his conduct, that it would not prevent, but merely accelerate the coming of a different but equally or even more bloody empire, as Odoaker now realizes:

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a people of heroes" (165-6).

* "He never touches girls, drinks nothing but water, and sleeps on the bare ground. Every day he practices with his weapons" (165).

† My whole life was aimed at the day when the Roman Empire would collapse. I took it upon myself to be Rome's judge, because I was ready to die. I asked of my country this enormous sacrifice because I, myself, was willing to be sacrificed. By rendering my country defenceless, I allowed its blood to flow because my own blood was ready to be spilled. And now I am to live; my sacrifice is not being accepted. Now I am to be the one who alone was saved. Even worse, just before you came I received the news that my only daughter, whom I loved, died together with her bridegroom, with my wife and the entire Court. I bore this news easily because I thought I was going to die. But now it hits me pitilessly and pitilessly proves me wrong. All I have done has become absurd" (166-67).

> Wenn du nicht meine Unterwerfung annimmst, wenn wir zwei nicht gemeinsam vorgehen, wird die Welt an meinen Neffen fallen, und ein zweites Rom wird entstehen, ein germanisches Weltreich, ebenso vergänglich wie das römische, ebenso blutig. Die Zerstörung Roms, dein Werk, wird sinnlos geworden sein, wenn dies geschieht. (81)*

Dürrenmatt has written, in his note to the play, that Romulus' "*Tragik genau in der Komödie seines Endes, in der Pensionierung liegt, der dann aber – und nur dies macht ihn groß – die Einsicht und die Weisheit hat, auch sie zu akzeptieren*" (88).† Romulus does more than merely accept his fate, however. Together he and Odoaker make the decision at the end of the play to truly work for a finer and more humane world, even though the odds against them are unconquerable. Morality, Dürrenmatt suggests, is finally a matter of intent more than of accomplishment, a matter of attitude and commitment: "Tun wir so, als ginge die Rechnung hienieden auf, als siegte der Geist über die Materie Mensch" (83).‡ Dürrenmatt is echoing a Kantian more than a Hegelian theme here, since for Hegel the world historical individual was one who affected the course of history, regardless of motive. While the Theodorics will always remain, and with them the threat of atavism, they may, for a time, be kept at bay:

> Wir glaubten, die Welt aus unseren Händen fallen lassen zu können, du dein Germanien und ich mein Rom, nun müssen wir uns mit den Trümmern beschäftigen. Die können wir nicht fallen lassen. Ich richtete Rom hin, weil ich seine Vergangenheit fürchtete, du Germanien, weil es dich vor seiner Zukunft grauste. Wir ließen uns von zwei Gespenstern bestimmen, denn wir haben keine Macht über das, was war und über das, was sein wird. Macht haben wir nur über die Gegenwart, an die wir nicht gedacht haben und an der wir nun beide scheitern.... Versuche, Sinn in den Unsinn zu legen.... Es werden einige Jahre sein, die die Weltgeschichte vergessen wird, weil sie unheldische Jahre sein werden – aber sie werden zu den glücklichsten Jahren dieser wirren Erden zählen. (83)+

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* "If you do not accept my submission, if you and I do not make our way together, then the world will fall to my nephew; then a second Rome will rise, a Teutonic empire, as transitory as Rome and as bloody. If that comes to pass your work, the fall of Rome, will become absurd" (167).

† "[Romulus'] tragedy lies in the comedy of his end; instead of a sacrificial death he has earned for himself retirement. But then – and this alone is what makes him great – he has the wisdom and the insight to accept his fate" (174).

‡ "Let us act *as if* final accounts were settled here on earth, as if the spirit won over the material called man" (169).

\+ "We thought we could drop the world from our hands, you, your Germania and I, my Rome. Now we must busy ourselves with the pieces that are left. I wanted Rome's end because I feared its past; and you, you wanted the end of Germania because you shuddered at its future. Two spectres ruled us, for we have power neither over what was nor over what will be. Our only power is over the present. But we did not think of the present and now we founder on it.... Let's try to endow the nonsense with sense!... Maybe there will be a few years which world history will forget because they will be unheroic years – but they will be

It is evident, from the plays discussed above, that the philosophies of Hegel and Nietzsche still maintained a significant position in the works of the dramatists between the two world wars, and even after World War II; however, the historical themes were usually treated ironically or parodistically. Matei Calinescu, in *Faces of Modernity: Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch*, defines "modernism" as conveying "an increasingly sharp sense of historical relativism," which in itself comprises a "criticism of history":

> From the point of view of modernity, an artist – whether he likes it or not – is cut off from the normative past with its fixed criteria, and tradition has no legitimate claim to offer him examples to imitate or directions to follow. At best, he invents a private and essentially modifiable past. (3)

The three plays examined in this chapter are primary examples of modernism, as they each represent history as transitory, modifiable and highly relative. The modernism inherent in *Baal* and in *Der gerettete Alkibiades* resulted mainly from the impact of World War I, which shattered any illusions of history as permanent, immutable and progressive. *Romulus der Große*, if anything, builds on the modernism of the previous two plays, carrying the questions regarding the morality of world historical figures even further than does Kaiser's play. In this sense Dürrenmatt reflects a moral perspective that is specifically attuned to a post World War II cultural milieu.

Above all, the views of these three artists, as expressed within the particular plays under discussion, represent separate, anarchic reactions to the post war situations that the artists find themselves engaged in. In none of these cases is the experimentation or the groping of the artist a programmatic statement, although this was to be the case with regard to some of Brecht's later drama. The perspectives on history are experiments, artistic explorations toward a more stable, more permanent, or more moral view of history and the nature of moral responsibility. All three plays, however, are open-ended in the sense that they cannot advocate any specific stand or conclusion. This is finally the dominant characteristic of modernism, that in a world of flux any definitive statement represents little more than a contradiction.

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among the happiest this confused world has ever lived through" (168-69).

Chapter 5

History and the Politics of Social Change: O'Casey's *Within the Gates* and Brecht's *Leben des Galilei*

The major portion of this study has demonstrated the insufficiency of nineteenth-century theories of history for expressing the historical concerns with human existence within the twentieth century. The turn-of-the-century saw widely contradictory reactions to the philosophies of Hegel and Nietzsche. Where Shaw saw bounding opportunity for the emergence of a race of Supermen in the marriage of evolution and humanly guided or "arranged" genetics, Schnitzler, on the other hand, identified more with Nietzsche's fears regarding the inherited burden of an excessive consciousness of history, "der Einblick in die grauenhafte Wahrheit" (*Werke* I 41), the "insight into the horrible truth" (*Birth* 60), the conseqences of which make meaningful actions or motives impossible, and Schnitzler's *Der einsame Weg* consequently diagnoses the symptoms of a dying civilization. The response of dramatists to the prolonged horror of World War I resulted, on Bertolt Brecht's part, in the nihilistic, sensuous poetry of *Baal*, a poetry that portrayed acceptance of, even a revelling in, a world filled with excrement and putrid with disease and decay, a world that denied any concept of spirituality or transcendence of the metaphysical over the physical. Georg Kaiser, too, emerged from the war expressing a bleak historical perspective in *Der gerettete Alkibiades*, where he viewed history as a giant deception, cloaking its purposelessness with a simulated veil of enlightenment and rationalism. T.S. Eliot's *The Family Reunion* reveals much of the decay and nausea that pervades the writings of Nietzsche, Schnitzler and Brecht, but in Eliot the disease from which civilization suffers has its roots in spiritual stagnation, and in the refusal of contemporary man to abide within the historical tradition of which he is the inheritor.

If the events and the disillusionments of the early twentieth century made it virtually impossible to maintain an optimistic vision of human existence, there nevertheless did exist, in the political-materialist philosophy of the socialists, an opportunity for twentieth-century man to maintain, and even build on, the idealistic conclusions of Schelling, Schiller and Hegel. Socialism offered the opportunity to "focus on the possibilities of human life

instead of its limitations" (Berckman 41), to believe, once again, in alternatives to determinism, in history as open to progress, in the brotherhood of man, and even in the possibility of an eventual utopia, the classless society. It stands to reason that with the end of the war, in the chaos of the rebuilding process that the major countries of the world had to endure, that the two major political platforms to emerge – at least in Germany and other European nations – should be the extremes of socialism and fascism, the first promising equality of class and equal rights in the governance of a country, and the second promising identification – even submergence of the personality – with a strong central authority, and the accompanying security and *freedom from* individual responsibility which this identification brought with it. The historical fact that both ideologies, when enacted in practical terms, often became two sides of the same coin, that both ultimately became authoritarian systems, should not detract from their original ideological stands as being diametrically opposed.

Brecht became a socialist after reading Marx's *Das Kapital* in 1926-27, and O'Casey ultimately became an advocate of socialism through his involvement with Jim Larkin and the Irish labour movement, particularly during the period of the great lockout of 1913, which paralyzed Dublin's commercial activities for several months; the lockout ultimately led to the formation of the Irish Citizen Army in 1913, a "citizens' " army originally designed to protect the workers. O'Casey was one of the founders of the ICA and served as its secretary for about a year. While Brecht sought to consciously incorporate socialist dogma into much of his drama, however, O'Casey's socialism appears to have been more naive, comprising a sympathetic identification with exploited people, with the aims and purposes of the labour movement in Ireland, and with the "little man" in general rather than an intellectually sophisticated set of ideological principles. Robert Lowery strongly disagrees with this view of O'Casey's politics, implying that by the time of the lockout and the formation of the ICA O'Casey's socialistic views regarding nationalism, class consciousness and Ireland's readiness for a major revolutionary workers' movement were as politically astute as those of Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg:

> It is clear that O'Casey's arguments closely paralleled both Luxemburg and Lenin. Implicit in their position was the theory that the political freedom and economic development was sufficient to allow for socialist education and organization: prime requisites for developing a revolutionary socialist movement. Equally important: O'Casey and Luxemburg believed that their respective countries had a strong base of industrialization and an active, urban, revolutionary working class. (127-8)

C. Desmond Greaves, on the other hand, argues that at this stage of O'Casey's life he was experiencing the difficult transition from a strong but

naive Irish nationalism toward an equally strong and naive form of socialism, two major passions which were, for O'Casey's personality, mutually exclusive, and ultimately resulted in his extreme antipathy for the newly formed Irish Volunteers, an indiscriminate mixture of representatives from employers and workers, and from the lower classes to the Irish aristocracy, all bound together by only one common goal, the struggle for Irish Home Rule. Greaves views O'Casey's hostility toward the Volunteers, and O'Casey's consequent insistence that Countess Constance Markiewitz not be allowed to hold simultaneous memberships and council representation in both the Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, as an indication of O'Casey's "political immaturity," insisting that O'Casey "still could hold no more than one idea in his head at a time. He had identified himself with the trade union movement, but he had no conception of the complexity of the issues it was concerned with" (69).

If Lowery implies too much political acumen on O'Casey's part, Greaves certainly exaggerates his political naiveté, for O'Casey's strong stand supporting class consciousness over nationalistic sympathies is indicative of a rapidly growing political maturity. On the other hand, O'Casey shows little evidence in his writings of being a truly international revolutionary strategist after the manner of Lenin or Luxemburg, or in Ireland that of Jim Larkin or James Connolly, whose martyrdom O'Casey later criticized in his *History of the Irish Citizen Army* (1919), as a betrayal of socialism in favour of nationalism.* Even in his later re-creation of the lockout in his autobiographical *Drums Under the Window* (1945), O'Casey pictures himself as an observer more than as an activist, although his participating efforts within the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Irish Citizen Army had, in actuality been prodigious. O'Casey never sought active membership in the Communist Party, although his sympathies for the Party and for the Communist government of the USSR were amply evident. Perhaps he realized, after his tempestuous involvement with the Gaelic League, the IRB, and the ICA, that his ideas and commitment were too individualistic to be restricted or confined within a formal organizational structure, a "party line." By the early nineteen-twenties O'Casey was also writing drama seriously, and possibly recognizing that it would be unwise to expend himself in too many other directions, especially because of the passion with which he tended to throw himself into these ventures. Nonetheless, his drama, from beginning to end, demonstrates both sympathy for and criticism of the poor and the exploited. O'Casey was, like Shaw, unwilling to lay the blame for poverty and exploitation entirely at the feet of the exploiting classes, the capitalists, implying in his Dublin trilogy as well as in the later plays that many of the

* Connolly had been executed for his instrumental role in the Easter Rebellion of 1916.

"Down and Out" are at least partially victims of a self-imposed hopelessness and helplessness. This impatience with the spiralling downward cycle of self-oppression should not, however, be misrepresented; it should not lead to the conclusion that O'Casey felt the misfortune of the poor was their own doing, but rather that he recognized a fuller human dimension than that of "exploiter" and "exploited." All of his drama demonstrates a strong commitment to the exposure of social injustice and unequal living and working conditions; however, unlike many representative socialists, O'Casey also attributed a spiritual component to humanity, and for him it was the bankruptcy of the spiritual, more than of the material, that culminated in the human waste land.

O'Casey's view that humanity encompasses more than a materialistic basis, a defined and formulated ideological stance, is evident especially in his treatment of Christianity and the Church. Socialists and pre-socialists, from the Young or Left Hegelians such as Bruno Bauer through Feuerbach, Marx and Engels, all denied Christianity any part within a socialist society, for Christianity – and even more so Judaism* – predicated an external god, an independent, final authority which was inimicable to any possibility of a classless society. Christians, too, valued – or were to value – an afterlife more than mortal life itself. The German Idealists had hypothesized a form of pantheism, an identification and a merging with nature and the cosmos, where the "subject/object relationship" (Simpson 166) of the individual and his environment gives way to a consciousness that extends beyond the individual to the universal; this romantic heightening of the significance of human consciousness already represented a drifting away from the concept of an external god and the identification with an afterlife. Bruno Bauer believed that "Only in an atheistic State where there were no more Jews or Christians could emancipation become a human reality" (Wistrich 20), and Marx and Engels later exclaimed that Feuerbach's studies had "turned philosophy upside down by explaining the Hegelian self-consciousness as the self-consciousness of real man and the world of religion as the product of human alienation" (Wistrich 21).

Although O'Casey asserted himself as an atheist from an early age, his socialism is not as rigidly atheistic as is that of Marx, Engels, Lenin and other socialist theoreticians, and in *Within the Gates* he mocks the dogmatism of the atheists as much as he does that of the representatives of organized Christianity. While O'Casey decisively exposes and debunks the hypocrisies of religion in most of his plays, his criticism is generally not of the essence

* Bruno Bauer maintained that Judaism was merely a more rigid, more legalistic form of Christianity, that "Christianity is completed Judaism. Judaism is unachieved Christianity," a formula which, as Robert Wistrich states, "was to be repeated by both Feuerbach and Marx" (19).

of Christianity as much as it is of the subverting of this spiritual nature through the frailty and the selfishness of its human representatives. *Within the Gates* presents a particularly discriminating distinction between spirituality and spiritual representation, in the form of the Bishop, the Salvation Army Officer, and at its most crude extreme, the two Evangelists. All of these are supposedly representatives of the same God, and all are spiritually corrupt to varying degrees, and consequently unable to effect the young prostitute's "salvation." Only the Bishop finally develops or grows in consciousness and empathy, to the point where he is able to merge – at least to an extent – his spiritual belief with human understanding and compassion.

In giving at least some validity to a Christian perspective, O'Casey as a socialist writer stands in opposition to the body of socialist dogma,* and the reasons for his failure to reject Christianity outright are important, for they are tied, to a large extent, to his conception of the theatre, and his insistence on the need for an Elizabethan type of theatre that would incorporate the metaphysical and the spiritual as well as the material world. In a 1942 article titled "Behind the Curtained World," O'Casey decisively asserted his view of what the theatre must encompass:

> As high as we can reach to heaven, as low down as we may get to hell, and all between, is the theatre proper and the theatre grand.... It is more than a mirror, for if what be conceived there be conceived with fierceness, joy, grace and exultation it will split the mirror [of realism and of naturalism] from top to bottom as reality cracked the glass and scattered the threads by which the Lady of Shallot wove her pretty patterns from the coloured shadows that passed her mirror by. (*Blasts* 10)

The significance of this perspective on the theatre echoes O'Casey's attitude toward religion. O'Casey could not or would not allow himself or his art to be *restricted* by any particular dogma, whether aesthetic, political or religious. His continuous experimenting with dramatic forms represents an ongoing challenge and opposition to some of the prevailing narrow definitions of realism and naturalism, and his exploration of religious, political and social themes represents a similar opposition to the restrictions imposed by organized religion or organized political and social systems. What emerges most strongly through both his art and his writing on the theatre is a sense of *essence*, of wholeness of being, wholeness of feeling, an emphasis on completion and on the necessary integration of the human being within his

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* O'Casey's use of Christian terminology and symbolic formulations should not, on the other hand, be construed as in themselves differentiating him from other theoreticians of socialism, many of whom also relied on Christian concepts to project the philosophy of social materialism. A case in point is Walter Benjamin, who, in his last "Thesis on the Philosophy of History," states that "every second of time was the straight gate through which the Messiah might come" (Mitchell xviii). Brecht's Galileo, too, invokes the Scriptures as he exchanges biblical proverbs with Cardinal Bellarmine in Scene 7 of *Leben des Galilei*.

environment. Consequently O'Casey felt there was a spiritual component to human existence, and while socialism represented the most equitable solutions to human misery and exploitation, he would not be bound by its materialism.

O'Casey is the quintessential modernist, if we take modernism to represent, as Philip Cooke does, a "willingness to explore beyond the limits of representation, a new and quickened sense of temporality and a broadened but structured sense of spaciality" (16). This suggests the innate urge of the modernist writer to break with tradition, with the past, and to search for new forms of expression and experience within an "unknown, unbound and therefore potentially terrifying future" (Cooke 5). But Cooke also maintains that modernity represents only a partial, never a complete break with the past, that "the perils as well as the emancipatory powers of progress demand the placing of one foot in a frequently prefabricated past in order to proceed into the uncharted territory of the future" (22). The elements of the past that tend to be maintained – for O'Casey as they are also for Eliot, but to different degrees – are a recognition of and reliance on the classics, and especially on the artists of the Renaissance, for the Renaissance was itself an historical period that in its emphasis on reason and science, stimulated progress.

O'Casey consequently invokes the drama of the Renaissance, and particularly of the Elizabethans, as an essential basis for the drama of the future, for only through the appreciation of the complete man of the past can we hope to achieve an equal integration of the fractured personality that characterizes the twentieth-century individual. Therefore, O'Casey's theatre is to be

> a theatre preserving all the delicate grace, beauty, and majesty of line that have been born before us, adding the sturdiness and lusty life of the present-day descendents of coopers, fullers, armourers, bowmakers, and all of a bygone generation, so that the theatre may become a passionate, graceful, and colourful part of English life, giving us a vision of the whole earth, not as a mourning man in the fork of a dying tree gazing over a waste land, but like unto Pushkin's beautiful princess with the moon in her hair and a star on her forehead. (*Blasts* 19)

O'Casey's emphasis on passion, grace and colour ultimately leading to a "vision of the whole earth," a sense of integration and unity, is a virtual recognition of the completeness and the greatness of human existence as presented in Renaissance drama, and O'Casey refers often to Shakespearean plays and characters as the epitome of what he desires to portray from the modern perspective: "The great art of the theatre is to suggest, not to tell openly; to dilate the mind by *symbols*, not by actual things; to express in Lear a world's sorrow, and in Hamlet the grief of humanity" (*Green Crow* 83).

Despite O'Casey's innovative and ever changing theatrical techniques from the writing of *The Silver Tassie* onward, then, he continues to recognize and pay tribute to the critical importance of the literary tradition for the future of the drama, insisting that the drama of the future "must be an offspring of the great tradition" (*Blasts* 26). O'Casey's drama, then, is a drama both of continuity and innovation, as Ronald Ayling has aptly indicated through both the title and the contents of his excellent examination of *Continuity and Innovation in Sean O'Casey's Drama*.

The elements that O'Casey especially admires about Renaissance art are those which gave that period its own sense of modernity, that is, the integration of the various arts, especially music, dance, poetry and painting, which are more temporal than they are spatial. Pater, states Edward Engelberg, had recognized as early as 1867 that the contemporaneity of this integration was characteristic of the "modern" age: "Modernity for Pater was distinguished by a sharp and recognizable dividing line, and he was certain – as were others after him – that it was indeed to be the age of painting, music, and poetry, and a painting and poetry that would aspire to the condition of music. Art of the modern ages would be an art of Time and Space, an art of confluence, integration, interpenetration – *'Anders-streben'* " (Engelberg 8). These are the elements that also characterize O'Casey's emphases on the modern theatre. Engelberg points to the strong influence of "time-consciousness" on the mentality of the moderns, an emphasis on time that strongly affects all the dramatists under discussion in this study.

O'Casey and Eliot both stress the importance of tradition on the drama of the future, and the difference between them is to an extent a measure of degree rather than of kind. A.G. George, in *T.S. Eliot: His Mind and Art*, has noted how Eliot, among other stream of consciousness writers, wanted to express time and history "as a continuous process without distinction of past, present and future" (George 94), that he attempted to portray time as process, as movement, as flux, despite the fact that "Our ordinary words relating to time spatialize it," that they impose "upon time and reality the notions of permanence, fixity and stasis" (94). Engelberg notes that while it was indeed Eliot's intention to portray time as movement, as flux, the attempt was, at least in part, self-defeating:

> Eliot's sense of history ... is time-bound by virtue of its very insistence on timelessness. His allusive and philosophical treatment of historical events always betrays the process of a mind that seeks escape not only from time and history but from event, occasion, the moment of experience wedded to the moment when one feels the consequences of that experience. Therefore, use of every-day objects such as cigarettes, razors, or steaks is, consciously or otherwise, an attempt to cover up timelessness by locating language in contemporary contexts.... History is indeed for Eliot a trap. (14)

If Eliot himself could not escape the trap of an antiquarian historical perspective – akin to Schnitzler's von Sala and Nietzsche's description of the intellectual epigones of a dying civilization – he does recognize that it was the expression of history as movement, as opposed to stasis, which was what brought life to the art of the Renaissance. Eliot calls this sense of life a "unification of sensibility," by which he means, as A.G. George points out, a "bringing together of thought and feeling" (94). This could best be achieved through arts that expressed movement, such as dance, music, poetry and painting, as opposed to an art like sculpture which expressed a frozen moment in time. Eliot expressed his appreciation for this "unification of sensibility" that was characteristic of Renaissance art when he stated that "In Chapman especially there is a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling, which is exactly what we find in Donne.... A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility" (*Selected Essays* 286-7).

If Eliot attempts to represent the past, present and future as one continuum, O'Casey accomplishes this much more successfully than does Eliot. Eliot was too much of a traditionalist to boldly and innovatively move into the future with the kind of experimentation and innovation that O'Casey achieved in his drama. Eliot consequently attempted to infuse the life of modernity into old forms, the verse drama, whereas O'Casey extracted the best of what he felt had made Renaissance art vital, and building upon this base, attempted to achieve that same spirit of vitality and integration through experimental forms that would help project his own, contemporary vision of integration. To accomplish this he adapted dramatic effects from expressionism, from Brecht's epic theatre, from Piscator's political theatre, and from the drama of the absurd and of the grotesque. O'Casey's central concern, however, was always that these effects, which included extensive experimentation with dance and music, would help him achieve his own vision of what the theatre of modernity must portray, the whole vision of life.

O'Casey's historical perspective, then, consists of a dual nature. History, or tradition, becomes repressive and sterile when its essence, whether this be the wholeness of life represented by the spirit of Christianity, or that represented through the Elizabethan theatre and by the classics, disintegrates into imperfection because of its modern-day fragmented, incomplete, and even perverse representatives. In *Within the Gates* O'Casey's ambivalent perspective on tradition is carried through his representation of the Bishop, the Salvation Army Officer, and the two Evangelists. Of these various representatives of the Christian faith, it is the Bishop who demonstrates the move towards a fuller integration of faith and compassion. The Bishop is, at the beginning of the play, fully characteristic of a tradition, a belief, that has been turned against itself, is in a state of depletion, in "a terr ... ible

state o' ... chassis," in the words of Captain Boyle. The Bishop symbolizes a system that has become hard, ungenerous and inhumane. He and the Young Woman, Jannice,* are both products of this tradition, the Bishop representing its governing role, and the Young Woman its victim. Jannice's fears of demons and monsters, of the fires of hell, are indicative of how cruel and repressive this depleted doctrine has become.

If O'Casey's drama is a drama of modernism, then, based on a vital literary tradition at the same time that it explores the forms and the social concerns of the present and the future, it is not surprising to find a strong emphasis on time, history, and the passing of the seasons in *Within the Gates*. The setting itself reflects the passing of the seasons, with Scene I set in Spring, Scene II in Summer, Scene III in the Fall, and Scene IV in Winter; within each scene the activity also takes place during a correspondingly later part of the day, from morning, to noon, to evening, and finally to a winter's night in Scene IV. The progression of the play therefore suggests a strong movement from the vitality and freshness – and innocence – of a Spring morning toward cold and darkness, and finally toward death, represented by the winter night. The progression from life to death is reinforced, as well, by the additional prominence given to the war memorial at the opening of each scene, a *"steel-helmeted soldier, the head bent on the breast, skeleton-like hands leaning on the butt-end of a rifle"* (117), who *"grey against the blue sky ... seems to be shrinking back from the growing interests brought into being by new life"* (117) in the opening scene; it *"resembles a giant clad in gleaming steel"* (149) at the opening of Scene II, *"shows a deep black against the crimson hue of the sky"* (176) in Scene III, and finally appears to dominate much of the activity of Scene IV, where *"Light from an electric lamp behind the War Memorial shines on the head and shoulders of the figure, making them glow like burnished aluminum; and the bent head appears to be looking down at the life going on below it"* (203). Despite its function as a memorial, the figure embodies a threat similar to that carried by the huge gun in Act II of the *Silver Tassie*, and O'Casey's description of the Old Woman's placing of a wreath at the memorial – *"The Old Woman lifts the wreath she is carrying, high above her head, much in the same way a priest elevates the Host"* (214) – symbolically associates the official sanction of the church with war and death.

The movement from life to death – John O'Riordan suggests this is also a Blakian journey from innocence to experience (159) – is likewise

* The Young Woman is called the Young Whore in O'Casey's first published version of the play in 1933. The play was revised extensively for inclusion in the *Collected Plays*. All references here will be to the *Collected Plays* of 1949, unless otherwise noted. For a discussion of the differences between the 1933 version and the "stage" version of 1949, see Heinz Kosok, *Sean O'Casey, the Dramatist*, pp. 119-22.

strengthened by the greater impact of the Down-and-Out in each succeeding scene. Scene I provides an indication of the fear which these messengers of spiritual death evoke in some of the characters of the play:

> [*In the distance are heard faint sounds of the sombre music of the Down-and-Out chant, saddened with the slow beat of a muffled drum. The Attendants stand stiff, a look of fright on their faces.*]
> ATTENDANTS [*together*]: The drum-beat of the Down-and-Out!
> OLDER ONE [*to his companion*]: Wot'r you stiffenin' for?
> YOUNG ONE [*tensely*]: I warn't stiffenin'. [*A pause.*] Wot'r you styrin' at?
> OLDER ONE [*tensely*]: I warn't styrin'. Didja hear anything?
> YOUNGER ONE [*tensely*]: No, nothing; did you?
> OLDER ONE: Nothing.
> [*They go slowly by each other, one to the left, the other to the right, and go out – a deeper limp coming into each lame leg, keeping time to the distant chant and drum-beat.*]

O'Casey's Down-and-Out are the equivalent of Eliot's "hollow men," whose "dried voices ... / Are quiet and meaningless / As wind in dry grass," and like the end of the world pictured by Eliot, O'Casey's Down-and-Out also look to an end that comes "*Not with a bang but a whimper*," as they chant, at the end of Scene IV: "We challenge life no more, no more, with our dead faith and our dead hope" (230). But O'Casey's Down-and-Out also carry with them a malevolence and the personification of the fear of death, as their strength and power grows from scene to scene, until they engulf the Attendants, the Evangelists and the Old Woman at the end of the play. These are not the voices of the depression, of those unable to find employment or pay their bills, for as the Dreamer says, the unemployed

> remain men in their misfortune. I keen those who whine through to-day and dread to-morrow; who would for ever furl the flag of life; who fear any idea common thought hasn't had time to bless; those who have a sigh for a song and a sad sigh for a drumbeat. (133-34)

For O'Casey the Down-and-Out represented the spiritual sterility of the twentieth-century waste land, a sterility that is further entrenched through a depleted Christianity, and is opposite and directly opposed to the fullness of life he wished to portray through his drama, the richness that is conveyed through music, and primarily, in this play, through the symbolism of the dance. The Down-and-Out are the symbolic representation of a spiritual disease that O'Casey felt as keenly as did Eliot.

The emphasis on spirituality, both positive and negative, should not, however, blind us to the social content and the socialistic views of the playwright that are also an inherent element of the play. The symbolism surrounding the war memorial is certainly a reminder of man's inhumanity to man. The alternately cringing and vituperative attitude of the chair attendants, their begging for monetary help from the Bishop, are all based on economic need and inequality, social conditions that lead, as Shaw had

pointed out in the Preface to *Man and Superman*, to a "rapacious cringe," a development of social attitudes based on wheedling and begging, attitudes that are conditioned by a society that occasionally dispenses charity as opposed to the equal opportunity to earn one's living honestly and justly. Galileo, in Brecht's play, makes the same point when he remarks ironically that "es besser ist, an sie [die Seilern] Suppen zu verteilen im Namen der christlichen Nächstenliebe, als ihnen mehr für ihre Schiffs- und Glockenseile zu zahlen" (1332)* The Attendants' worrying, in *Within the Gates*, about "Wot'll we do when we file to be able to walk!" (120) is a concrete concern that leads to bitterness, acrimony and finally hopelessness, to the point where they actively oppose those who retain a semblance of vitality, complaining that "this singin' gets me dahn. 'Eartless for a crahwd to sing when a man's in misery" (120). The Young Woman, too, seeks help from the Bishop in the form of a job, a place of employment where she will not be sexually harassed. O'Casey blames the inequity of social and economic conditions for her need to prostitute herself – and his calling her the Young Whore in the original version of the play perhaps lends a special emphasis to the social conditions responsible for her predicament – and points out, through her dialogue with the Bishop, that women are often forced into prostitution *through* their place of employment: "There's many an old graven image has made a girl dance out of her job and chance the streets, sooner than strip herself for his benefit, with nine hours a day and three pounds a week added on to the pleasure" (162).

O'Casey skilfully pits the sterile spiritual tradition against the reality of physical and social need. The Bishop, referring to the Atheist, states that "there are those who never will give thanks to God for life" (129); the Dreamer counters this truism of the institutionalized church with an economically based reality: "Always, when there are those who have no life for which to thank Him" (129). While this dialogue is enacted, the two Chair Attendants, the Atheist, the Man with the Hat, the Policewoman, and the two Nursemaids – with the aristocrat's baby – are all present, and the two "*prowling Evangelists*" are just making their entry; O'Casey invites the audience, here, to examine the cross section of people on stage, and decide which of them should be giving thanks to God for their existence. So while O'Casey expresses some optimism in *Within the Gates*, in the form of the Dreamer's encouragement to live a fuller life through song and dance, he never forgets to emphasize the reality of the social and economic conditions which dehumanize and depersonalize the individual. O'Casey's ability to recognize

* All quotations taken from Brecht's *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 3. English equivalents are from the Manheim-Willett translation of *Bertolt Brecht: Collected Plays*, Vol. 5.
"it is better to dispense soup to [the rope makers] in the name of Christian charity than to pay them more for their ship's cables and bell ropes" (87).

that social conditions make the man, and further, to satirize as well as to sympathize with the product of these conditions, results in some moments of fine comedy, as all the people on stage at one point "*crane their necks in an upward look*" (131) out of servile submission to the Bishop's suggestion to observe the birds, again evoking Shaw's disgust for society's "rapacious cringe." Like Shaw, O'Casey, too, believes that while conditions make the man, the man in the meantime also needs to reach within himself for vigour and determination, and O'Casey expresses the same kind of contempt for human subservience and lack of will that Shaw did. O'Casey's disgust for the extreme, perverse offshoots of Christianity is fully evident in his description of the two Evangelists, one with "*staring, stupid-looking eyes, shrunken cheeks, surly lines round a wide mouth, and ears that stick out from the side of his head,*" and the other with "*a big head, coarse face, heavy, hanging lips, and a small, snubby nose.... Both are shabbily dressed, and look, for all the world, like sullen, long-forgotten clowns*" (129).

When the older Chair Attendant, while cavilling to the Bishop snarls at the Atheist, "Wot's you or me in the general scheme of things, eh?" (131), we recognize this an an assertion by O'Casey that within a social context where the many are dominated by the few, the individual has become meaningless, a truth that the audience, rather than the character himself, is meant to perceive.

O'Casey's sensitivity to the social causes underlying human misery is evident in the social hierarchy he sets up in the play. The Bishop is superficially idealistic in Scene I, in wanting to break through the social barriers – on his terms and during his alotted times – to mingle with the "common people"; his sister, on the other hand, is adamantly rigid in her support of the social order and in her abhorrence of the lower classes: "A bishop should be in the midst of the incense, in the sanctuary, safe away from the sour touch of common humanity" (133), and as Heinz Kosok has noted, her method of dealing with the victim of the church, Jannice, is to threaten her with expulsion from the park or with arrest (Kosok 127). The Dreamer, too, endorses a hierarchy through his speech and actions, but, in counterbalance to the social gap between Bishop and Commoner, the Dreamer's hierarchy is based on vitality, on the difference between embracing life and disparaging it, as he replies to the Attendant's assertion of death as the continuation of a "fuller en' a nobler life" with: "Take that dead hand off me!... Be off, and die, and keep a holy distance from the quick and the lively!" (132).

O'Casey skilfully counterbalances the emphasis on time and change that dominates *Within the Gates*, with the specious, repetitious, and circumlocutious – if often highly comic – arguments between the Disputants, who themselves focus on the relationship of time and space, as well as on

the theory of relativity, origin of life and any other topic they can think of. These "theoretical discussions" could almost be lifted out of the play to form a little playlet of their own, a minor drama which, if abstracted from the balance of the play, could only be called a play belonging to the theatre of the absurd; the constant, pointless arguing over any and every subject might have served as a prototype for a play portraying the pointlessness of existence. O'Casey detested absurdist drama because to him it seemed to consist of "plays which despise and hate life" (*Blasts*, 74), and here the arguments of the Disputants, despite the comedy inherent in them, emphasize the futility of life, and as a sub-theme of the play, they relieve the emphasis on the inexorable movement from life to death that is the dominant theme of the play, as Shakespeare's "fools" balanced the developing tragedy through their buffoonery. The discussions and the participants are static, and in their lack of development they heighten the perception of time running out that is felt by some of the characters, and experienced by Jannice in particular in an almost hysterical manner.

If the movement demonstrated through the play is from life to death, then Jannice is the symbol of this movement, the microcosm of the waste land that twentieth-century society has become. Jannice's eventual death is established early in the first scene; her diseased heart is the symbol of the universal disease, and it is not her death that is in question, but merely the manner of her dying. If her heart symbolizes the decay of civilization, its *Untergang*, then the dance, and particularly her determination to "die dancing" (228), is the primary symbol of vitality that can arrest the decay, and at a spiritual level, can conquer the sterility of the Down-and-Out.

The dynamic tension within the play is established through the relationships of the different "types" and their symbolic associations. In the characters of the Bishop and the Young Woman, O'Casey has developed character well beyond the typical functions suggested by their names. The Young Woman is certainly an "everywoman" as Kosok (122) and Krause (*Sean O'Casey* 144) have both indicated, but she is also drawn in sufficient detail for the audience to identify emotionally with her plight, and the Bishop, too, ultimately draws the sympathy of the spectators because of his interaction with her.

The Young Woman's determination to go out with a song and a dance is at times a gesture of defiance rather than an instinctual love of life, but throughout the play she attempts to find salvation through someone who can alleviate guilt without destroying the enjoyment of life. The Dreamer can bring her joy and life, but he cannot absolve her guilt; consequently, she continues to vacillate, first declaring her passion, then in guilty horror at her presumptuousness, stating her resignation:

> [*Defiantly*] I'll not give in, I'll not hold back. And when I go, should God's angels beckon me up or push me down, I'll go game. [*Horrified*] Jesu, Son of Mary, what'm I saying? I'll fold all the things done in this life round me like a mantle, and wait for judgement. (183)

For a time the Salvation Army Officer seems to offer a viable solution to her spiritual dilemma, because his way to salvation appears so much less cumbered with penances than that of the Bishop, and in a beautifully patterned scene composed in biblical cadences, she decides to try his way. The highly formal dialogue distances emotion at the same time that it stresses the significance of the moment through its allusions to the eroticism of the Song of Solomon ("Come into the sun, and kiss me with the kisses of thy mouth!") and the acceptance of Ruth into an unfamiliar land ("If I lodge where you do, can your people be my people, and your God my God?" [173-74]). Jannice, wanting both erotic vitality and social/spiritual acceptance, incorporates both of these concepts, and O'Casey contrasts, here, their compatibility in the Bible with the unwillingness of both the S.A. Officer and the Bishop to acknowledge or even accept Jannice's determination to "enjoy" whatever life she has left. Jannice soon discovers that the S.A. Officer's view of life is as gloomy as that of the Bishop, "Miserere, miserere, all the way to heaven" (189).

Within the symbolic construction of *Within the Gates*, the Bishop represents the depleted tradition of the institutionalized church, a church that has become the institution, and in doing so has turned against itself, has lost its vitality. The Bishop's sister represents an even harsher, more sadistic variation of this tradition as she tells Jannice and her mother that "The pair of you ought to be stretched out naked on the ground so that decent women could trample the life out of you!" and that "The soft and gentle hand of pity must be changed to the punishing hand of bronze!" (225); the reference to "bronze" identifies her with the destructive characteristics of the war memorial. The tradition has become negative, oppressive, and even totalitarian, and in this form leads to sterility and ultimately to death. Jannice's fear of demons and monsters, inculcated through her childhood where she was constantly threatened by the nuns with visions of hellfire and of demons, is indicative of how repressive tradition – or history – may become when it turns against life instead of working to infuse vitality.

However, O'Casey's view of life in *Within the Gates* is that history can be revitalized, that through music and dance tradition can be re-invigorated. In selecting the Bishop over the Salvation Army Officer as one of the major elements determining how Jannice will cope with death – the other is the Dreamer – O'Casey represents the choice of a long-established, traditional form of Christianity over a more recent, more fundamentalist variant of the same religion; this is also a choice of reason over emotion, for the SA Officer

appeals to Jannice emotionally, with "uniforms, flags, music and song, with the irrationality of a pompous procession" where "Impressive images, especially the idea of the lost sheep, are substituted for logical arguments and create a feeling where the individual is ready to succumb to the sheer ecstasy of being saved" (Kosok 129). In having the Bishop help Jannice make the sign of the cross at her death O'Casey opts for the same rationalism and enlightenment values that appeared to dictate T.S. Eliot's conversion to high Anglicanism in 1927.

But the Bishop can only be revitalized through his involvement with Jannice's moral dilemma – and by extension with that of contemporary humanity – by helping her conquer the fear of death, and ultimately by concurring with the Dreamer that while others may find joy through peace, for Jannice, and for the humanity which she represents, "only joy can give ... peace" (178); her attainment of joy is, at the end of the play, ironically symbolized through her dance of death. The Bishop is originally forced into his involvement with Jannice through her aggressive attack on his own morality, as well as through the revelation of the Old Woman that he is, in actuality, Jannice's father. The moral imperative in the relationship of Jannice and the Bishop is human connectivity; driven by Jannice's insistence, and by his knowledge that he is her father, the Bishop is forced to connect with her as a human instead of as a whore or a commoner, an "other."

Jannice's relationship to the Bishop is more ambiguous than to the other types in the play. The Bishop represents tradition, and in the Bishop's dual role of being both the cause of Jannice's fears, and a major factor, along with the Dreamer, of the ultimate resolution of these fears, O'Casey demonstrates how tradition has been corrupted, and needs to be purified, needs to have the original vitality that instigated it, brought back. In his emphasis on tradition as an active force in this play, O'Casey shows affinities with Eliot's view of the significance of both a literary and a spiritual tradition, and the ending to *Within the Gates* suggests, as Ronald Ayling has noted, that O'Casey wished to combine the tradition of the Church with the Dreamer's pagan call for a vital existence, incorporating "both a moral challenge to orthodox Christians and a spiritual encouragement to the unorthodox and those outside the faith" (*Continuity* 128).

Though the Bishop, in his role as representative of the institutionalized church, is typical of a segment of the impotent social environment within which Jannice also exists, her sense of guilt and fear prevent her from rejecting him as easily as she does the other types, for it is *his* religion, the institution within which he is an authority figure, which first inculcated the guilt and fear within her, bringing into her mind the visions of "Green-eyed, barrel-bellied men [that] glare and grin at me ... out of the glow from the fire that can never be quenched" (141), as she tells the Atheist. Her feelings

of guilt, inculcated during her convent days, have been reinforced through her illness and through her fear of death and damnation; her atheist step-father has compounded rather than alleviated her guilt through knowledge that has no human warmth. The Bishop's link with the church institution in which she was raised gives new significance to the knowledge that he is her father. The melodramatic plot of the aging Bishop who discovers that the fruit of his youthful indiscretion is now a dying whore, and the ultimate reconciliation between this father and daughter, is here given a symbolic richness through her role as everywoman, the all-encompassing representative of a dying society. The church provides a *possible* path toward revitalization, if it can rediscover its own humanistic roots, as the Bishop does at the end of this play. He develops into more than a type through his relationship with the girl, therefore their dialogue often veers from the general or the universal to the particular, and back again, as the audience becomes increasingly aware of the distinction between his official, holy, capacity, and his individuality. It is a consequential triumph of the play that at the end the girl and the Bishop can meet both as individuals and as the "typical" forces of whore and Bishop which they represent.

The Bishop, having condescended to mix with the "common" people in Scene I, finds himself severely censured from various directions in Scene II, for he has failed to realize that the people are not interested in him as an individual, but only as the representative of a religious office. Their notions of the church are as narrow – or narrower – as those of the church officials themselves, consequently any attempted departure, however elementary, from the simplistic, literal views of religion to which they are accustomed seems a betrayal, and infuriates them. In an excellent example of how the "little" man, the exploited individual in O'Casey's plays, can in turn victimize authority figures through comic anarchy, the Man wearing the Trilby indignantly responds to the Bishop's suggestion that the whale story is an allegory with:

> Is that all you know about it! The Bible says the whyle swallowed Jonah, son of Amittae. It's a plyne fact, en' you should be ashymed to derny it. [*He crosses to go out; halts; and turns to glare at the Bishop*] Tyke warnin', you, at wot 'appened to Jonah, son of Amittae, for you're worse'n 'e was! (153)

Suddenly it is the Bishop himself who is threatened with damnation, and two pages later the Guardsman expresses a similarly scornful opinion of him. The Attendants cunningly try to extort money through flattery, and when that fails they, too, become vituperative. The Bishop's sister had warned him that his pretended belittling of himself in trying to get close to the common people would only make them "grill [him] with mockery," and they do. The Attendants' attempted exploitation leads directly to Jannice's appeal for help, a genuine plea to which the Bishop can respond no more easily, for

appearance's sake, than he can to the opportunism of the Attendants. It is now the Young Woman's turn, at the Bishop's uncomfortable withdrawal into the cover of respectability, to remind him formally, in elevated, biblical language, that he is no ordinary individual but the representative of a holy office: "You're neither a man nor a stranger: you are a priest of the most high God" (160). The first half of this sentence is still informal, beginning with the contraction "You're." The second half begins with the uncharacteristic "You are," a formal, impersonal and elevated reminder of the intrinsic responsibility of an ordained church official, and as such transcends the particularized criticisms of the Attendants, the Guardsman and the Man wearing the Trilby, whose disillusionment was with the status, not the essence of the office. Upon the Bishop's continued refusal to help her, the Young Woman, too, condemns him, again for observing custom rather than need:

> When you go to where your God is throned, tell the gaping saints you never soiled a hand in Jesu's service. Tell them a pretty little lass, well on her way to hell, once tempted you to help her; but you saved yourself by the calm and cunning of a holy mind, an' went out into the sun to pick the yellow primroses, leaving her, sin-soddened, in the strain, the stain, the horrid cries, an' the noisy laugh of life. Tell them you were ever calm before the agony in other faces, an', an' the tip of your finger never touched a brow beaded with a bloody sweat!... A tired Christ would be afraid to lean on your arm. (163)

Jannice is aggressive in her condemnation; she is no "shrinking violet," neither reticent nor shy, though her repression is no less severe for this, and her inculcated guilt and fear of death make her life a nightmare.

The Bishop's sincere but naive desire to mix with and help humanity is discredited when, upon realizing that Jannice is his daughter, he turns *all* his attention to her and can no longer be bothered to save other souls, impatiently shrugging them off with "Oh, it would be waste of time to think of them" (190). The attempt to help the Young Woman, though, is the first indication that the Bishop is breaking out of his schematized mold, not through universal love, but through the attempt to become genuinely personal, motivated in the first instance through guilt, but gradually developing far beyond this. His responses to the demands of life generally, too, gradually become more genuine, to the point where he can tell the Man with the Stick to "go to hell," while he "*pushes him out roughly*" (187).

Jannice continues to challenge the Bishop's conventional social attitude as much as he challenges her morality, asking,

> Why have you to be careful? Can't you yourself pray, or push yourself out of the fear of what may be said about you? What does it matter how many say a man's a sinner if God thinks him a saint? (191)

Though the Bishop's immediate response to this indictment is annoyance, he later replies to his sister's accusation that he is "becoming ridiculous to respectable and important opinion," by declaring:

> That has been my besetting sin all along – fear of the respectable opinion of others. I renounce it now! She herself has said, What does it matter how many think a man to be a sinner if God believes him to be a saint. That's what she said – to my very face. (205)

At the same time that his concern for Jannice increases, the Bishop's fear of involvement and what it may cost him increases proportionately. His ambivalence toward Jannice, and through her toward humanity, is revealed in the way he deliberately follows her at times, and just as deliberately shields himself from her at others. One of his typical defensive strategies is similar to that used by Ann Whitefield for manipulating others in *Man and Superman*, that of bestowing pet names or belittling names on the individuals presenting the threat; thus, through referring to Jannice as "my child" or "a straying lamb" (189), or a "girl," the Bishop attempts to maintain his superiority and his distance from her concerns.* The same distancing effect between priests and people is achieved – very purposefully – by the Papal hierarchy in Brecht's *Leben des Galilei* through the use of Latin for all religious and philosophical discourse and all scholastic writing. This is one of the communication barriers between classes which Galileo tries to break down by publishing his own research in "dem Jargon der Teigwarenverkäufer" (1333), in the "jargon of spaghetti vendors" (88). Thus Galileo worries that his irony may be too heavy handed, when he writes to the archbishop: "Das Latein der Kanzel, das die ewige Wahrheit der Kirche gegen die Neugier der Unwissenden schützt, erweckt Vertrauen, wenn gesprochen von den priesterlichen Söhnen der unteren Klassen mit den Betonungen des ortsansässigen Dialekts" (1333).†

In the final pages of *Within the Gates* O'Casey portrays, through a dialectical exchange of the opposing positions of the Bishop and the Dreamer, an attempt at a reconciliation of opposites that is largely successful. With the final appearance of the Down-and-Out and the self-justifications of the Evangelists, a process begins in which the Bishop expresses the conventional values of institutionalized Christianity, and the Dreamer denounces them through the formulations of his own creed:

> BISHOP: Grant them pardon, O Lord, and bring them peace.
> DREAMER: Let them sink into the grave, O Lord, and never let their like appear on the face of the earth again. (227)

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* See also Ronald Ayling, *Continuity* 164-5.

† "The Latin tongue, which protects the eternal verities of the church from the prying of the ignorant, inspires confidence when recited by priests, sons of the lower classes, in the pronunciation of their local dialects" (88).

When the Young Woman appeals to the Bishop to bless her, and then again implores him to "Let me not mingle my last moments with this marching misery!" he seems to become only increasingly more aware of what he genuinely believes to be his religious responsibility, though it is evident that on a personal basis he does desire to help her; it is the church office that will not allow him to yield, as he says to her, "[*slowly, but with decision*] You must go where they go, and their sighing shall be your song!" (228). Jannice's fear of the Down-and-Out is the fear of spiritual sterility, consequently her determination to "go dancing," for, while she fears death, she is also in love with life. In the Bishop's mind, the Down-and-Out, in accordance with the dogma of the church, are still at this point mistakenly associated with Christian obedience, and he must overcome this association of spiritual stagnation with Christianity before he can become fully effective, either in his religious office or as an individual. Like the Dreamer, he must attack the representatives of sterility and alienation, rather than considering them "God's own aristocracy ... a testimony that God's in His heaven, all's well with the world" (196).

When the Bishop asks Jannice to join the march of the Down-and-Out, the Dreamer again counters this judgment, admonishing her – through somewhat stilted dialogue – to turn from the "poor, purple-button'ed dead-man, whose name is absent from the look of life," and encourages her to "come before [God's] presence with a song" (228). She dances to the Dreamer's encouragement, but cannot rid herself of fear, while the Bishop's change of attitude becomes apparent in his prayer that God might "let this dance be unto Thee as a merry prayer offered by an innocent and excited child!" (229). The Bishop then, finally, at her dying request, guides her hand in making the sign of the cross, in this prayer and action indicating that he is interceding for her in his official religious capacity *without* requiring her first to renounce the joy of the dance of life. The personal love for another human being has given him the breadth of vision necessary to humanize his official position, and through this to revitalize the church through the re-enactment of the love that stands at the heart of Christianity. Kosok believes that the Bishop at the end of the play becomes a "positively utopian image – for O'Casey – of a Church so converted that it no longer believes itself to know the only way to God, but in all humility, without rash judgements, offers its assistance to those who need it most" (131). While this appears too optimistic a view for a play that throughout its four scenes has alternately emphasized the insecurity, stupidity, helplessness, fear and alienation of its human representatives, there is little doubt that Jannice has won the reconciliation of guilt and joy that tormented her throughout her life. The optimistic, utopian element has been embodied in the figure of the Dreamer, who, unlike Jannice and the Bishop, remains a one-dimensional,

expressionistic type throughout the play; his *function* is to represent hope and a full-bodied life. He symbolizes, in Brechtian terminology, an alternative to despair and hopelessness, the possibility of a fuller, richer life for each of the two major characters of the play, Jannice and the Bishop. The Dreamer essentially represents what has been missing in the Bishop's personality, and through the final scene of the play, through his part in helping Jannice face her death, the Bishop symbolically attains the vitality of the Dreamer. The Bishop and the Dreamer virtually become a single force in their combined support for Jannice, the Bishop exclaiming "[*in low and grief-stricken tones*]. She died making the sign of the cross," while the Dreamer addresses the dead woman directly: "You fought the good fight, Jannice; and you kept the faith" (231). The "faith" she has kept refers to both the Dreamer's and the Bishop's creeds, as these merge into one humanistic tradition that spans the past, present and future in its experiential sympathy for the death of one of their own representatives.

This reading of the ending of the play is supported by the Bishop's symbolic role as Christ's disciple, Peter. The Old Woman, the Bishop's former mistress, asks him three times whether his name is Gilbert, and he denies the question each time, as Peter denied his relationship to Christ thrice, thus establishing the associative link between the apostle Peter and the Bishop. Once this link has been established, it becomes clear that the Bishop's final words and action point forward to the dynamic role played by Peter as the foundation stone of the Christian Church after Christ's death.

The Bishop, however, is not complete, cannot become whole, without the presence of the Dreamer, for the Dreamer represents the essential component required to revitalize history. He is O'Casey's symbolic conception of the new drama, that will incorporate the Elizabethan sense of a full and exuberant life. The Dreamer is characterized by his name, as well as through his profession – a poet – and through his emphasis on music, dance and freedom from artificial or conventional obligations. He is conceived, like John Tanner of *Man and Superman*, as an iconoclast, a Nietzschean representative of a morality that is "beyond good and evil." While he has no compunction in withholding some of the money the Bishop asked him to give Jannice, he tells the Atheist "we must never ease off the fight for a life that is free from fear" (123). O'Casey describes him as symbolizing

> ... a noble restlessness and discontent; of the stir in life that brings to birth new things and greater things than those that were before; of the power realizing that the urge of life is above the level of conventional morality; of ruthlessness to get near to the things that matter, and sanctify them with intelligence, energy, gracefulness and song; of rebellion against stupidity; and of the rising intelligence in man that will no longer stand, nor venerate, nor shelter those whom poverty of spirit has emptied of all that is worth while in life. (*Blasts* 115)

Stylistically, some of the Dreamer's dialogue, including his first lines of the play, "Here, you two derelict worshippers of fine raiment – when are you going to die?" (120), is weak and stilted, but thematically it sets up the opposition of life against death. The Attendants find the justification for their existence in the social conformity of the work ethic, one part of the *miserere* that defines the Down and Out. The Dreamer, on the other hand, like the poet of Sorge's *Der Bettler* and of Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, incorporates the apocalyptic element that is almost always present in Expressionistic drama, the destructive force as well as the rebuilding force:

> DREAMER [*rising from the bench – fervently*]: Kill off the withered mind, the violently-stupid, O Lord, who having nothing to give, have nothing to get! (132)

Walter Kaufmann remarks how Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, in his role of the individual who stands above conventional morality, redeems "even the ugly by giving it a meaning in a beautiful totality – this *Übermensch* would also realize how inextricably his own being was involved in the totality of the cosmos: and in affirming his own being, he would also affirm all that is, has been or will be" (*Nietzsche* 320). Through this affirmation of being, of human existence, on the other hand, which the Dreamer represents in O'Casey's play, the weak, the Down-and-Out, are defeated and destroyed: "the weak would be crushed by this terrifying doctrine, while the strong would find in it the last incentive to achieve perfection" (*Nietzsche* 325). A new world cannot be built until the old has been annihilated. The old world here, is condemned for its excessively rigid social and religious structures, which must be opposed. O'Casey through the Dreamer expresses, like John Tanner did, the need to "shatter creeds and demolish idols" (*M&S* 74), to destroy in order that the essential rebuilding of a better society can begin. The Young Woman echoes the Dreamer's call for destruction when, in Scene III, she disrupts the Disputants' attempt to live vicariously through the sensationalism carried in newspapers, by singing, as the last verse of "London Bridge is Falling Down," "Let it fall to pieces then, my fair lady!" (182). She opposes the sterility of a world in which the semblance of spiritual and physical vitality – the essence no longer being possible – is sought in perverse, vicarious forms of titillation; hence, there exists an intense preoccupation, publicized through the media, with sensational topics – and acts – like murder, rape, suicide, and divorce, a perverse, and often voyeuristic, exploration of sensuality and violence that was also prefigured in Schnitzler's pre-war Vienna, where, upon the popularizing of electricity, carnival-like "electrocutions" became fashionable; decadence reaches a peak when humans can only feel vital as they experience the closest possible approximation of death, the strongest jolt of electricity the body can take and still remain alive (Morton 38). The ritualized speech patterns and chants of this scene in *Within the Gates* underline the

lack of feeling which even these sensational topics evoke. Jannice's reaction to this spiritual waste land is exaggerated and hysterical as she overcompensates for the sterility she finds around her, and which she fears within herself. Hysteria, in fact, is perhaps Jannice's most symptomatic characteristic throughout much of the play, for only an emotional extreme will elicit *any* response from the other characters.

In the final tableau scene of the play, then, the Dreamer and the Bishop become brothers in celebrating the joy of life and the joy of a church revitalized. The Dreamer in his defiant stance at the top of the slope continues the fight for life, pagan or Christian, while the Bishop, kneeling beside the dead girl, symbolically re-creates Christ's concern for the Whore, the church's concern for humanity. The Bishop's final words to his sister, to "go home, for Christ's sake, woman, and ask God's mercy on us all!" (231), indicate that he has at last not only forgiven, but has accepted his own guilt as well, both his personal guilt, and the church's complicity in Jannice's tortured life and death, this not in the narrow sense of having committed a sexual sin that resulted in an illegitimate child – though the genetic tie symbolizes the spiritual bond – but for having been directly responsible, through his allegiance to a life of convention-bound, hypocritical morality, for all her misery and shame, and through her, for the ignorance and suffering of church-dominated humanity. As the gates close on this final scene, there is at least the suggestion of a utopian promise that has been absent from O'Casey's previous plays, a hint of another day that is reinforced, as well, in the final stage direction, which states that "*The sky's purple and black changes to a bright grey, pierced with golden segments, as if the sun was rising, and a new day about to begin*" (231).

Within the Gates carries the theme and structure of the traditional morality play insofar as judgment is passed on the schematic main character after a struggle for her soul, or for the essence of her being, by opposing authorities of a higher nature. "Like the old morality plays," says David Krause, "*Within the Gates* is about the struggle of opposing forces for the body and soul of a symbolic character – here it is young Jannice, the everywoman of O'Casey's parable in Hyde Park" (144). Where the central character in a morality is essentially passive, however, the Young Woman of *Gates* plays both a passive and an active role. She herself judges those who contend for her soul, as well as being judged by them. The play therefore carries the dual function of exercising judgment both on the main character – as the representative of the weak and exploited – and on the authorities that dominate her existence. *Within the Gates* is a transitional play which cannot comfortably be categorized as expressionistic, morality, or "station drama" – where the central figure judges the society around her (Templeton 50-51) – since it contains elements of all of these, but develops character

more fully, on the part of Jannice and the Bishop, than is usually associated with these more schematic forms of the drama.

If a morality expresses the attempt to reconcile man's ways to God's, an expressionist play like Kaiser's *Von Morgens bis Mitternacht* examines the social forces driving the individual and condemns them. Jannice judges those sections of society represented by the Gardener, the Salvation Army Officer the Disputants and the Bishop in her rejection of these typified characters. Her rejection is primarily on grounds of their inhumanity and joyless approach to life. "When I come to the temple of peace, the veil of the temple turns to steel" (185), she complains of the church, and to the Disputants, who show neither compassion nor joy, she exclaims:

> In your looking after a woman there is no kindliness; before ye no image of loveliness, neither can ye hear the sound of a song as ye follow her, for your desire's but a venomous heat and a shame and a bruising! (186)

If many of O'Casey's techniques are comparable to those of Epic Theatre and of Expressionism, his ultimate vision of what the modern drama must accomplish was unique, and his alone. In O'Casey's unification of the traditional and the innovative, combined with his strong concern for the exploited and the needy, he presents a drama that is both committed and guardedly optimistic; its historical perspective is open-ended, based on a vital tradition and leading to a future that takes for granted the major strengths of socialism, the values of "rationalism, democracy, egalitarianism, and internationalism," which "conjure[s] up the image of a just world with which to confront the injustice of the present" (Bronner xi).

In *Within the Gates,* then, O'Casey establishes a tension between dynamic and static elements which fulfils itself as a continuing historical process. O'Casey exhibited little conviction of any kind of a utopian promise in his semi-realistic Abbey plays, and in *The Silver Tassie* he presented an expressionistic-like vision of almost total disintegration. In *Within the Gates,* however, as Ronald Ayling has pointed out,

> O'Casey first attempts to put forward a more positive social and spiritual message [than in the Abbey plays]. Without underestimating the magnitude of the economic and political problems facing the world at the time of the Depression, O'Casey shows the importance of courage in facing adversity, and the need for a full-blooded enjoyment of life as well as for improvements in the standard of living. His attitude is that the two should go together: men should band together to fight for decent social conditions, better pay, and more leisure in which to make the most of life in song and dance as well as work. (*Continuity* 90)

This promise will be extended, though by no means realized, in *Red Roses for Me, Purple Dust, Cock-a-Doodle Dandy,* and *The Drums of Father Ned,* and here O'Casey, like Brecht, views the promise of a better and more equitable world in terms of a historical process which will see the exploited

lower classes gradually increasing in class consciousness, a sense of self-respect, and in improved working and living conditions.

Stylistically, *Within the Gates* has a strong affinity with the objectives of Brecht's Epic Theatre, and with many of Brecht's plays, including *Leben des Galilei*. While Robert Lowery makes a case for O'Casey's drama as belonging into the tradition of Communist "Socialist Realism" as defined by Georg Lukács, this is not the most beneficial perspective from which to approach O'Casey's works. Lowery's interpretation of Lukác's theory is much too one-sided, as he relies solely on Lukác's short essay titled "Appearance and Essence," which was translated from the German "Einführung in die äesthetischen Schriften von Marx und Engels," and included in the 1963 publication of *Schriften zur Literatursoziologie*. By the late 1950s Lukács had become an "anti-Stalinist," and being in the process of convincing himself and others that he had always been an anti-Stalinist, he was "systematically constructing the sophisticated myth of his own political infallibility and primordial anti-Stalinism" (Pike 188). Part of Lukács' shift from Stalinism to anti-Stalinism involved the revision of his criteria for Socialist Realism. Certainly the conception of Socialist Realism that emerges out of "Appearance and Essence," which is what Lowery uses to place O'Casey into this tradition, is very different from that which he had enunciated in the late 1930s, when he condemned Brecht's work as a "formal experiment," and an example of "bourgeois decadence" (Mittenzwei 199, 201). In "Appearance and Essence" Lukács states that "even the farthest reaching fantasy in the representation of phenomena is completely compatible with the Marxist concept of realism" (20), a definition that could encompass any experimental writing, including both O'Casey's and Brecht's. The Lukács who originally defined the tradition of Socialist Realism in the 1930s, however, would have condemned the work of O'Casey as strongly as he did that of Brecht, seeing "in the montage, the inner monologue, the distancing and journalistic elements, a decline of literature, an expression of decadence" (Mittenzwei 209). Ronald Ayling, in his Preface to O'Casey's *Blasts and Benedictions*, also points out that "O'Casey's consistent repudiation of the theory of Socialist Realism realises a ... fundamental disagreement with 'official' communist attitudes to art" (xvi), and that "O'Casey opposed rules and regimentation in art – whether capitalist, theological, or socialist – and he firmly rejected Socialist Realism as a meaningless and impracticable dogma" (xvii).

Perhaps more than any of his other plays, Brecht's *Leben des Galilei* reflects the political, social, scientific and psychological climate of the time span during which it was written. The revisions made to the play over a period of fifteen years reflect, as well, Brecht's personal concern and increasing disillusionment with the supposedly liberating potential of science. Brecht concludes, in the working out of this play, that science carries the potential

to be a liberating power only when the scientist consistently identifies himself with the concerns and the predicaments of the common people, and even then, Brecht seems to suggest, the results may be self-defeating. Brecht's successive revisions to *Leben des Galilei* illustrate both his excitement and his fear regarding the awesome power of science, and the scientist, as shaper of history, as well as the threatening possibility that this power, because it lies in the hands of individuals who may not themselves be capable of controlling it, can as easily be devastating as beneficial, despite any altruistic intentions on the part of the scientist. *Galilei* portrays the same paradox in Brecht's conception of the historical process as is evident in the writings of Marx, a paradox, as Edward Berckman states, "between Marx the social scientist, 'empirically' discerning the laws of history which work inevitably, and Marx the prophet, urging the necessity of revolutionary action" (42). History is seen to evolve, on the one hand, in accordance with specific economic laws; the division of labor leads to the differentiation of different kinds of labour, which in turn results in a hierarchical social system based on the exploitation of one individual by another. On the other hand, Marx also recognized that the exploited can, through their own efforts, effect a sudden, revolutionary break from this deterministic cycle, and consequently point human history in an entirely different direction. Brecht's Galileo becomes a symbol of the possibility of this kind of revolutionary, freeing action, but at the same time that he represents the possibility of freedom, Galileo also, through his insistence on seeking support from, and working within the existing social and political hegemony in Florence, represents the resigned acceptance of those unable to escape the economically-determined conditions. Galileo's ambiguous position within the historical context of the play is further complicated by his consuming appetite for both sensual and mental stimulation, of which the appetite for thought is both the stronger and perhaps the more dangerous. Galileo's position becomes more ambivalent through the successive revisions, and the optimistic rationalism of the first version gives way to a more complex examination of the conflicts and contradictions that exist within the development of an individual and his consequent role in the evolving historical process.

In the first version of the play Galileo represents the dawning of a new age, the age of reason, while in the latest, 1956 re-writing of the play he virtually becomes, in many respects, a criminal, consciously responsible, in the light of his own self-analysis, of scientific advances that elicit a "universalen Entsetzensschrei" (1341), a "universal outcry of horror" (94) from the very people whom he originally hoped to liberate.

The first version of the play, then titled *Die Erde bewegt sich,* or *The Earth Moves*, was written within a three-week period in November, 1938 (Hayman 213), while Brecht was an exile in Denmark. He revised it for

production early in 1939, now calling it *Leben des Galilei*, and this became the first produced version of the play, premièring in Zürich during the middle of World War II. The second, American, version was the collaboration with Charles Laughton, dating from 1944 to 1946. This version was produced in Hollywood and New York in 1947; Brecht was summoned before the House for Un-American Activities shortly before the New York run, and subsequently left the U.S. before the play's opening on December 7 (Manheim xvi). The third and last version of the play, which is essentially the text as it exists in the *Gesammelte Werke* (1967), and in the Manheim-Willett English translation, was completed between 1953 and 1955, and received its German première at Cologne in April 1955. In 1956 Brecht was conducting rehearsals for its production by his own theatre group, the Berliner Ensemble; the rehearsals were continued, after his death in August of that year, under the direction of Erich Engel.

The years 1938-39, during which the first version of the play was written in Denmark, were particularly bleak years for Brecht. Not only was he an exile from Germany with the recognition of the approaching catastrophe of World War II fully evident to him, but he had to recognize, as well, that not only Fascism, but Communism too could inspire political terror. Three of his Russian friends, with whom he had hoped to establish a "Diderot Society" the year before – Eisenstein, Okhlopkhov and Tretiakov – had either been victimized or shot on the order of Yezhov, Stalin's Commissar for Internal Affairs, as had also Meyerhold, Tairov, and many other Russian innovators in theatre and literature. One of Brecht's own leading actresses, Carola Neher, had also been arrested and sentenced to hard labor along with her husband, both of whom were later also killed. Manheim and Willett report that a "kind of paralyzed horror fills the poems which [Brecht] then wrote about Neher and Tretiakov and which remained unpublished until after his death" (ix). In a 1939 poem titled "Ist das Volk unfehlbar?" Brecht questions the infallibility of the people's republic in the sentencing and execution of his "teacher," who was also his friend Tretiakov (Hayman 218), but the poem still maintains that it is the "people," not an authoritarian leadership, that has handed down the judgment:

> Die Söhne des Volkes haben ihn schuldig gefunden.
> Die Kolchosen und Fabriken der Arbeiter
> Die heroischsten Institutionen der Welt
> Haben in ihm einen Feind gesehen.
> Keine Stimme hat sich für ihn erhoben.
> Gesetzt, er ist unschuldig? (*GW* 9, 742)*

* "The sons of the people have found him guilty
The factories and collective farms of the workers
The world's most heroic institutions

Manheim and Willett note that during this period Brecht seemed also deliberately to turn toward more remote peoples and periods for his writing, a distancing effect which was possibly necessary for him to retain his own sense of perspective in light of current events; the distancing effects achieved through his purposeful juxtaposition of historical periods is at the same time consistent with the objectives of his "Epic Theatre," allowing the audience its perceptions of the present from the perspective of a past, but not entirely dissimilar, historical period. Galileo in 1633 stands at a crucial period in history, even as Brecht was writing the play and himself standing at a critical moment of history, for the world after 1945 was to be very different from the world before 1939, and Brecht deliberately invites his audience to make the comparison between the Papal hierarchy and Hitler's Third Reich.

Given the despairing context within which the first version of *Leben des Galilei* was written, it seems incredible that Brecht could write a play extolling the dawn of a new age of reason, an age in which astronomy would be discussed by the common people in the market places, in which old, outdated ideologies and hierarchies would be discarded, and the urge to discover new facets of the world and of human existence would be unrestrained and uncontrollable. This is essentially the context of Galileo's big speech in Scene I in all three versions of the play. The most significant differences between the three versions occur in scene 9 (in which Galileo resumes his study of sunspots because Barberini is to be the new pope), and in the next but last, the penultimate scene between Galileo and Andrea, in which Andrea smuggles the *Discorsi* out of Galileo's room.

The first version unambiguously depicts Galileo as a cunning hero, who recants not out of fear but in order to remain alive so as to be able to continue his work, though this must be done secretly while a prisoner of the Inquisition, and under the watchful eye of his own daughter. Galileo's cunning in the last scene is prepared for in Scene 9, in which, in answer to an old scholar's asking whether it " 'is really right to keep one's mouth shut?' Galileo replies with the Keuner story about the man who was asked if he would serve his enemy, served him for seven years till he died, and then bundled up his corpse, scrubbed out the room, breathed deeply and replied 'No' " (*Collected Plays* 5, 281). This is the kind of cunning which emerges in the fourteenth scene as well, in which Galileo has contrived elaborate plans for smuggling his manuscripts out of his prison. None of the excruciating self-analysis of the same scene in the last version of the play is evident here, nor is the responsibility of the scientist to his society drawn out in any depth. The

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Have identified him as an enemy.
No voice has been raised for him.
Suppose he is innocent? (Willett, *Bertolt Brecht Poems* 331)

emphasis is on scientific advance *per se* as indicative of the new age of reason, not on the relationship of science to the common people. Galileo is a relatively one-dimensional Marxist hero opposing his resourcefulness and cunning to the outdated authoritarianism of the church and court, and single-handedly directing history toward a new age of hope through reason. Though the play is openly optimistic, however, Brecht's "Foreword" to it is both cautionary and self-examining:

> Amid the darkness gathering fast over a fevered world, a world surrounded by bloody deeds and no less bloody thoughts, by increasing barbarism which seems to be leading irresistibly to perhaps the greatest and most terrible war of all times, it is difficult to adopt an attitude appropriate to people on the threshold of a new and happier age. Does not everything point to night's arrival and nothing to the dawning of a new age? So wouldn't one, therefore, assume an attitude appropriate to people heading towards the night?...
>
> Am I already lying down for the night and thinking, when I think of the morning, of the one that has passed, so as to avoid thinking of the one to come? Is that why I occupy myself with that epoch of the flowering of the arts and sciences three hundred years ago? I hope not.
>
> These images of the morning and the night are misleading. Happy times do not come in the same way as a morning follows a night's sleep. (*Collected Plays* 5, 215)

In these last lines Brecht indicates his recognition that the new age cannot be ushered in like a morning after a good night's sleep; it must, perhaps, follow a period of chaos and barbarism. Nevertheless, Brecht views scientific advancement as optimistic, because developing technology is based on the rational accumulation of carefully proven data, an educational process that appears indicative of careful thought and an enlightened perspective, a reasonable world view that is completely at odds with the fervid emotionalism and mass appeal of the German Fascists; consequently, Brecht is able to see progress beyond the dehumanizing war.

The second and third versions of the play are thematically similar to the first, although the final version is more polished, and develops virtually all the important arguments to a greater depth and with more precision than do the earlier viersions. It also emphasizes the scientist's responsibility to the people more than does the Laughton collaboration, and consequently also illustrates more clearly where Galileo fails, and where he makes unwise and damaging decisions. The American version deletes the plague scene and half of the first scene, in an attempt to set a livelier pace, and frequently reduces significant dramatic effects to more commonplace theatricality. In the transformation scene, for example, where Barberini, generous and open-minded as an individual, gradually assumes the characteristics of Pope Urban VIII as he is dressed in the papal robes, the total effect of the transformation is damaged in the Laughton script by the final stage direction, that "*The eyes of Barberini look helplessly at the Cardinal Inquisitor from*

under the completely assembled panoply of Pope Urban VIII" (110). The point of the transformation is missed here, for Barberini does not become a helpless child under the papal robes; rather, he assumes the full regal status, the personality, the power and the autocratic character of his new papal office. He is no longer Barberini the individual, but Pope Urban VIII.* In Brecht's play, as in O'Casey's *Within the Gates*, there is a strong emphasis on "office" as opposed to individual, to the extent where the individual *becomes* the office. Brecht's use of masks was always indicative of depersonalization, and here the very depersonalizing process is perhaps more consummately realized through external means than anywhere else in his work. Barberini had earlier warned Galileo, in Scene 7, of the necessity of masking the truth by suggesting that "Auch Sie wären besser als braver Doktor der Schulmeinung kostümiert hier erschienen, lieber Freund. Es ist meine Maske, die mir heute ein wenig Freiheit gestattet" (1290).†

Both the Laughton and the "final" versions of *Galilei*, however, emphasize Galileo's villainy in first of all opening the eyes of his students and of the common people to the idea of progress, and then betraying them through the public recantation of his discoveries. Galileo's greatest failure, though, is not that he recants because he cannot face the thought of pain, but that he turns from the concerns of the people to the pure pursuit of science, during his years of imprisonment, as an end in itself.

A major Marxian theme highlighted in *Leben des Galilei* is Brecht's conception of "*historisierung*"; historicizing, as he states in his essay "On Experimental Theatre" (1939), means

> to consider people and incidents as historically conditioned and transitory.... The spectator will no longer see the characters as unalterable, uninfluenceable, helplessly delivered over to their fate. He will see that man is such and such, because circumstances are such. And circumstances are such, because man is such. But he in turn is conceivable not only as he is now, but also as he might be – that is, otherwise – and the same holds true for circumstances. (Quoted in Ewen)

As Galileo states in the opening scene of the play, "da es so ist, bleibt es nicht so. Denn alles bewegt sich" (1233).‡ If man is conceivable not only as he is at present, but "as he might be," this suggests that humanity might be viewed, not only from the perspective of one's own historical period or of a

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* Claude Hill, too, notes that this scene, "during which the new Pope, the former cardinal and mathematician Barberini, with each new garment put on him gradually yields to the Inquisition's request for having Galileo shown the instruments of torture, is dazzling in its originality and stage symbolism" (120).

† "You too, my friend, should have come here in disguise – as a respectable doctor of scholastic philosophy. It's my mask that allows me a little freedom tonight" (52).

‡ "Since things are thus and so, they will not remain thus and so. Because ... everything is in motion" (4).

past period, but also from the perspective of a future, presumably more perfect moment of history, "an imagined Golden Future of justice and friendliness" (Suvin 57). History is not pre-determined; there is no irreversible fate. Rather, history is open; countless possibilities for its development exist; depending on man's collective initiative and class consciousness, he can guide the historical process toward a new – utopian – future. The majority of Brecht's characters do not ostensibly progress toward this goal of an ideal society, but the various choices they make during the course of the play are shown to have alternatives which, had they been exercised, *could* have led in this direction. Janelle Reinelt, in discussing Brecht's work with reference to deconstructionism and to feminism, remarks how both "Brecht and feminism emphasize the possibility of change, that things might be other, that history is not an inevitable narrative. Feminism is and Brecht was historically embattled in the struggle to make art which dismantles the political and artistic status quo" (99). The most significant aspect about the historicizing process, then, is that man shapes his own future; in doing so, however, he may lead society into the light, but can also plunge it further into darkness. The decisions that Galileo makes further the causes of science, but do not result in greater freedom for the people; in showing us the alternatives that Galileo *could* have chosen, however, Brecht also keeps the vision of a better society before our eyes.

The atomic explosions over Hiroshima and Nagasaki occurred, as Brecht notes, in the middle of his work with Laughton on the second version of the play, and this cataclysm was consequently written into the play, emerging in the second last scene as "the universal outcry of horror" that could greet a great scientific advance. Science becomes destructive when it is separated from the concerns of the people, when it becomes an end in itself instead of a means to alleviate suffering and hardship. Or rather, as Brecht points out here, science does *not* become an end in itself, though it may seem to. In actuality, it becomes a tool for those in power, and scientists therefore become, not the giants of the new age of reason, but "ein Geschlecht erfinderischer Zwerge, die für alles gemietet werden können" (1341).* Although Galileo levels this accusation at himself, Brecht demonstrates through the historicizing process that this is not a "fixed," or fatalistic self-judgment; alternative possibilities existed for Galileo, and he is aware of the instances where he made the wrong choices. His failure was due largely to avoidable errors of judgment, and because the character of Galileo is defamiliarized through *Verfremdungseffekte*, we can objectively recognize these errors. In the meantime, however, Galileo's vision of the new society as presented in Scenes I, III and IX, remains valid as well, a promise of what might have

* "a generation of inventive dwarfs who can be hired for any purpose" (94)

been achieved, and what still can be achieved in the post 1945 era should Galileo's mistakes – and the mistakes in judgment that culminated in World War II – receive thoughtful consideration. Brecht also warns us through Galileo's own words that unlike the Aristotelian, or fatalistic, world view, and unlike Hegel's perspective of the world historical individual, history is seldom dependent for its direction on one major personality, but rather on groups or classes of people. When Andrea laments, immediately after Galileo's recantation, that "Unglücklich das Land, das keine Helden hat," Galileo's reply overtly shifts the blame to where it really belongs, not on the shoulders of an individual, but on to society as a whole, when he replies: "Nein. Unglücklich das Land, das Helden nötig hat" (1329).* But if individual heroism cannot be held responsible for historical progress and continued enlightenment, neither can science be dependent upon individual effort, and after giving Andrea the *Discorsi*, Galileo states, "es gibt kein wissenschaftliches Werk, das nur ein Mann schreiben kann" (1338),† thereby asserting that progress, as well as regress, can never be dependent on an individual. Walter Benjamin maintains that the "hero" of *Leben des Galilei* is not the scientist, but the "people," an assertion that is more ideological than it is dramatic, for the "people" as such never become a viable dramatic force in the play. The shift of emphasis from individual to group does, however, lessen the tragic implications surrounding Galileo's personal failure. *Leben des Galilei* has often been criticized for its apparent focus on the individual personality, and its consequent lack of "epic" characters. This criticism is, however, unwarranted, for the play is based on a dialectic of particular fixations and their social and historical consequences, a focus that consistently maintains the opposition of the individual to his social environment. By the end of the play, in fact, we clearly recognize, as does Galileo himself, that his placing of his own appetites and fears before social consequences has alienated him from the social objectives he originally hoped to achieve, based on his own, earlier admission to the Little Monk that "Sie haben recht, es handelt sich nicht um die Planeten, sondern um die Campagnabauern" (1295).‡ Galileo's self-recognition of this truth and of his own failure would, in an Aristotelian drama, comprise the element of purgation, the saving self-realization leading to catharsis; that this effect is partially achieved in Brecht's play as well should not blind us to its greater truth, that Galileo has failed to respond positively to the needs of his fellow man, and that his failure has worsened rather than bettered their condition. Brecht considers

* "Unhappy the land that has no heroes ... "No. Unhappy the land that needs a hero" (85).

† "there is no scientific work that one man alone can write" (92)

‡ "You're right; the question is not the planets, but the peasants of the Campagna" (57).

social consequences as more significant than personal crises.

Another, and closely connected, Marxian theme pervading the play is that of alienated and de-alienated labor. Work should never be forced labor, or labor in exchange for capital or other commodities, since this divorces it from the worker's own self-fulfilment, making his work virtuous because it is self-denying rather than self-fulfilling. In order for work to be self-fulfilling, Marx and Engels state, it must be the "free activity of the self", noting that "Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* for the same reason that a silkworm produces silk. It was an activity of his nature". Galileo's paradoxical position seems to be that he, like Milton and the silkworm, wants only to do what is in his nature, but is frustrated because of the commercial nature of the world within which he exists. His first line of the play, "Stell die Milch auf den Tisch, aber klapp kein Buch zu" (1231), * is indicative of his nature, which is that of an inquisitive sensualist, to whom eating and thinking are both sensual processes and entirely self-fulfilling. The very fibre of his being is geared toward self-fulfilling labor, but this does not mean that his activity is all directed toward his own benefit. As fulfilling to him as eating and thinking is also teaching; consequently, what Galileo teaches and the people, or subjects, to whom he directs his instruction, become significant elements of the play. "The relationship between what [Galileo] knows," states Patricia Simpson, "and what he wants the world to know, focuses the attention in the play on scenes of instruction and persuasion" (165). Consequently, there exists an "undercurrent of philosophical discourse, of formalized proof" in "scenes between Galileo and Andrea, Galileo and the kleiner Mönch, Galileo and his pupils, Galileo and the authorities" (Simpson 166). Andrea, representative of the common people, those who will gain the most from Galileo's instruction, is Galileo's primary student, supported as well by Mrs. Sarti and Galileo's helpers; Federzoni the lens grinder cannot read Latin and consequently inspires Galileo to write his treatises in the vernacular. Galileo himself is well aware of the difference between alienated and de-alienated labor, as he explains to the Little Monk that there is no virtue in mere self-denial. Using a representative image for alienated labor, that of the oyster producing a precious pearl by nearly dying itself, the very opposite, in fact, to Marx's image of the silkworm producing silk, Galileo emphasizes that a healthy life is far more significant than the precious pearl:

> Zum Teufel mit der Perle, ich ziehe die gesunde Auster vor. Tugenden sind nicht an Elend geknüpft.... Wären Ihre Leute wohlhabend und glücklich, könnten sie die Tugenden der Wohlhabenheit und des Glücks entwickeln. Jetzt stammen diese Tugenden Erschöpfer von erschöpften Äckern, und ich lehne sie ab. (1296)†

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* "Put the milk on the table, but don't shut any books" (3).

† "To hell with the pearl, give me the healthy oyster. Virtue is not bound up with

This is very similar to the social concerns expressed through O'Casey's *Within the Gates*, where the Bishop also identifies virtue with misery, asking Jannice to become one with the Down-and-Out in order to achieve her salvation. Both O'Casey and Brecht vehemently reject the association of virtue with self-denial, or alienation. O'Casey's emphasis on dance and song as indicative of self-fulfilment is equivalent to Brecht's portrayal of Galileo workin teaching, eating and thinking with a sensual gusto that in every movement and "gesture" implies personal gratification.

But Galileo's self-fulfilment and his teaching of de-alienated labor as a means through which the new age of reason will be ushered in, encounters two obstacles. The first is that of material necessity in a commodity-oriented world, consequently Andrea's lessons must be curtailed in favor of Ludovico's. Ludovico is a landowner's son, who can pay, so the milk can also be paid for. Economic necessity also leads to ethical compromise, hence the deceitful presentation of the telescope as one of Galileo's own inventions. The second obstacle is the arbitrariness of Galileo's own nature, which induces him to spend time and effort teaching Andrea, but allows him, as well, to neglect, and rudely snub, his own daughter's curiosity in his work. His abrupt treatment of her throughout the first part of the play has its later consequence in her role as the Church's advocate, both in the recantation scene, where her prayers for her father's spiritual salvation are set into opposition to the hopes of Galileo's helpers that he will not give in to torture, and in the second-last scene of the play, where she virtually becomes her father's jailor, and the spying eye of the Inquisition. In scene III she asks Galileo, "Wie war die Nacht?" and with the vision of the dawn of the new age uppermost in his mind, Galileo answers "Hell" (1258).* In the next to last scene, the virtually blind Galileo now asks *her* about the night, and she gives the same answer, a grim parody of the earlier scene.

From the outset, Galileo is confronted by an impossible situation, which he nevertheless tries to resolve without giving up his freedom to work. In order to live the way he needs to live, and to do the work which is part of his life, he must have both leisure and money; both, however, are commodities that exact a price. He can either remain in Venice, which welcomes scholars but pays them badly, or he can move to the Grand Duke's court in Florence, where he can have leisure, but where his work will be censured. Both are relative liberties and answer only one demand. Galileo's predicament, how to live a fulfilling and productive life in a commodity-oriented society, is similar to that of Shen Te of *Der Gute Mensch von Setzuan*, and to the Young

misery.... If your people were prosperous and happy, they could develop the virtues of prosperity and happiness. But today the virtues of exhausted people derive from exhausted fields, and I reject those virtues" (57).

* "How was the night?" ... "Clear" (25).

Comrade's predicament in *Die Massnahme*. In Shen Te's case the question is one of how to be good in accordance with your inclinations, while living in an evil society; in *Die Massnahme*, the Young Comrade condemns himself for his inability to restrain his personal inclination towards compassion so that a better society can be created. In each case, the predicament is essentially an impossible one, for wholeness of being cannot be maintained under any of these conditions. So Galileo goes to Florence, but not simply because one choice seems as good as the other, but because he has a mistaken – and totally unrealistic – faith in the ultimate judgment of the church leaders, in authority figures, a faith that is as arbitrary and unfounded as is his neglect of Virginia. His sensuality, which is the measure of his form of de-alienated labor, paradoxically also becomes his enemy, for his love of eating, drinking and thinking becomes a self-indulgence which blinds him to the recognition that the Church could never allow him the freedom to spread the doctrine that would undermine its own authority. His faith in authority, and his servility to it, gradually begin to replace his marvellous conception of science for the common people, for though his teachings reach the marketplace and have a sensational impact there, he himself remains neutral rather than siding with the commoners. A further error in judgment, again motivated by his belief in the Duke Cosimo and his love for the luxury which only the Duke can provide, is to turn down the offer of support from the businessman, Vanni and his group, within which he might have had a greater opportunity to work *for* the people, rather than allowing his science to develop in isolation from them. He recognizes at the end of the play that he was, at this point, as strong as the church, and could have withstood its authority, but instead tried to align himself with it in an impossible situation that could only lead to defeat.

Galileo's recantation, too, is determined by his sensuality. The Inquisition recognizes that Galileo's greatest strength, his ability to fulfil himself, is also his greatest weakness, therefore its coercion is directed towards the essence of his being, his physical appetites and his scientific instinct, which cannot be separated. Just as the appeasing of unrestricted physical and mental appetites are his greatest pleasure, so is fear of pain his greatest torture, and pain by means of scientific instruments is therefore the most effective means of diverting him from his "natural scientific inclination." The instruments of pain estrange him, finally, from his self-fulfilling work, and though he continues to work, it is now in secret, outside of, rather than within, society. Frank Borckhart states that Galileo

> has achieved perfect "freedom," in the sense of becoming independent of human bonds and duties. He is ostracized from society and is now explicitly in the alienated social position he always held implicitly. He is now most fully a scientist. This supposed freedom is now independence from all outside moral

> forces. He has little choice but to turn entirely to his science, regardless of the possible cost to humanity.

As Borckhart has indicated, in becoming the amoral scientist, Galileo appears to have divorced himself from his earlier grand conception of science for the common man, and has himself become, as he tells Sarti, one of the "inventive dwarfs" catering to the whims of his superiors.

The progressive re-writing of *Leben des Galilei*, however, appears to be a measure of Brecht's feelings of ambivalence toward the values and dangers of science within the modern world. Each successive re-writing of the play increases the contradictions expressed within it, contradictions that further enrich the play, and reflect Brecht's own excitement and simultaneous fear of the power for good or for evil that new discoveries and inventions bestow. Brecht's personal experience of World War II left no doubt as to the destructive power of science in the hands of authoritarian leaders; at the same time, Galileo's consequential self-analysis in scene 14 remains a Brechtian attempt to justify the values of science for the advantages it can provide within a progressive environment. Science divorced from human compassion is both nihilistic and immoral, and a sensuality that indulges in learning for its own sake, without regard for the consequences of new discoveries and inventions, is equivalent to total depravity. Thus Galileo, whatever his failures, weaknesses and faulty decisions, recognizes by the end of the play that a wanton, amoral greed for knowledge, accompanied by the readiness to sell that knowledge to the highest bidder, is equivalent to treason against the progress of humanity:

> Wilkommen in des Gosse, Bruder in der Wissenschaft und Vetter im Verrat! Ißt du Fisch? Ich habe Fisch. Was stinkt, ist nicht mein Fisch. sondern ich. Ich verkaufe aus, du bist ein Käufer. O unwiderstehlicher Anblick des Buches, der geheiligten Ware! Das Wasser läuft im Mund zusammen und die Flüche ersaufen. Die Große Babylonische, das mörderische Vieh, die Scharlachene, öffnet die Schenkel, und alles ist anders! Geheiliget sei unsre schachernde, weißwaschende, todfürchtende Gemeinschaft. (1339)*

Galileo shares with his precursor, Baal, a sensual, physical presence which at its worst represents complete self-indulgence, while at its best demonstrates the Marxian concept of work as self-fulfilling. If Brecht emphasizes, through Galileo's self-analysis, the destructive element in the passion for knowledge, and equates the world of science with the gutter at one point, the further dialogue regarding the moral prerequisites of the

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* "Welcome to the gutter, brother in science and cousin in treason! You like fish? I have fish. What stinks is not my fish, it's me. I'm selling out, you are the buyer. Oh, irresistible sight of a book, that hallowed commodity. The mouth waters, the curses are drowned. The great Babylonian whore, the murderous beast, the scarlet woman, opens her thighs, and everything is different! Hallowed be our haggling, whitewashing, death-shunning community!" (93).

scientist, the need for a Hippocratic oath for scientists, and the association of science with the common people, provides this same passion for knowledge with more positive, life-affirming associations. Galileo's last words to Andrea are to "Gib acht auf dich, wenn du durch Deutschland kommst, die Wahrheit unter dem Rock" (1341).* The reference to the scientific treatise, the *Discorsi*, as the "truth," is combined in this sentence with concern for one's fellow man, the precondition for scientific truth to be life enhancing. Andrea's response, that "ich kann mir nicht denken, daß Ihre mörderische Analyse das letzte Wort sein wird" (1342),† further emphasizes the ambivalence of Brecht's feelings regarding scientific advances. The conclusion of this fourteenth scene of the play presents the pros and cons of scientific knowledge to the audience in a dialectical fashion – which is not, however, without a considerable emotional, or Aristotelian, appeal – and invites the spectators to make their own judgment of Galileo.

Brecht and O'Casey, then, share an emphasis on the importance of demonstrating alternatives to a deterministic conception of history. *Within the Gates* and *Leben des Galilei* present conflicts where consequences must be considered before decisions are made. The various choices are presented through typified situations; Jannice faces the alternatives of identifying with or seeking help from the Atheist, the Gardener, the Dreamer, the Salvation Army Officer, the Bishop, or the Down-and-Out. The fact that she finally embraces a combination of these alternatives, and that she influences the development of the Bishop's character as much as he does hers, is indicative of O'Casey's emphasis on the power of the individual to shape her own future, even if this freedom is restricted to the manner in which she faces death. Galileo's alternatives, and the decisions he makes, are driven largely by his lust for knowledge and his frustration with economic restrictions. He consequently makes incorrect decisions, but progresses through a process of self analysis which results in vastly increased self-knowledge, a heightening of self awareness that is essential for the further development of class consciousness.

Brecht and O'Casey also share with Shaw an emphasis on "moral courage" as the primary condition for facing a future which at times appears meaningless and nihilistic. Jannice courageously faces her death with a song and a dance, refusing the easy solution of an empty religious conviction with its illusion of death as the door to an everlasting life, or an equally empty atheistic solution which refuses to recognize a spiritual essence. Galileo lacks the courage to face up to torture, but gains the courage of self-analysis, and

* "Take good care of yourself when you pass through Germany with the truth under your coat" (95).

† "I refuse to believe that your devastating analysis can be the last word" (95).

of weighing decisions and consequences. O'Casey and Brecht are bold, experimental dramatists who through their style of presentation and the content of their dramatic works continue to affirm the possibility of action, of the freedom of the individual to determine a future for himself and his society, in the midst of a world that is dominated by pessimism and insecurity.

Conclusion

The major shift in focus, historically and philosophically, from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, was the increasing sense of alienation, the increasingly prominent view of man as victim rather than as hero. This change represents the difference between man as a "free" individual, a mover and motivator, an agent of historical change, and man as the victim of his society, of history, and even of himself, of his stupidity, his indecisiveness and his inability to assert himself in a positive manner. This perception of humanity allows for very little freedom to act, or even to think, as an individual.

Certainly this changing perspective of the human condition had its roots in the naturalistic literature of the late nineteenth century, in which the human being was also portrayed as the victim of forces over which he had no control, whether these were hereditary, social or psychological, but this perspective of man as victim was immediately challenged by the vitalists, who perceived in Darwin's scientific proof of evolution the opportunity for man to transcend himself, to become more, rather than less, god-like.

Bernard Shaw, an importants transitional figure from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, was caught between these opposing outlooks. The strength of his vitalism is evident in his emphasis on the will, and his apparent belief in the ability of human society to improve itself, to move forward toward Hegel's ideal of the realm of pure thought, if only the will is sufficiently strong and confident. Shaw's fear, however, is that man may become the victim of his own inertia, his lack of willpower and "moral passion," that he might lack the strength and the integrity to realize his own progress. Like Nietzsche, Shaw as early as the turn of the century had the prescience to recognize that if historical progress was not realized, the alternative was not stasis, but atavism, a relapse into the dark ages, and possibly human annihilation. Shaw's theory of the Life Force is only substantiated by his emphasis on the will, for without the exertion of the human will the Life Force would collapse. Shaw's perspective on human potential had darkened considerably by the time he wrote *Heartbreak House* in 1916, for in the latter play he portrays a society whose will has turned on itself, a society which,

having lost all hope of achieving its potential, is wholly engaged in the pursuit of sensation – even to the point of death – as the substitute for true emotion.

The first world war and its aftermath reinforced the perspective of man as victim and history as atavistic. If Eliot's J. Alfred Prufrock is a primary symbol of the twentieth-century man as a victim of his own moral and spiritual inertia, he is certainly joined by other figures such as Harry Monchensey in *The Family Reunion*, and Stephan von Sala in Schnitzler's *Der einsame Weg*. These are people who lack the will and the initiative to forge a history for themselves, who live every agonized moment of their self-conscious lives under the burden of the knowledge that the clock of human civilization may be winding down, that the "age of grace" may be over. Even more frightening than this perception, is the frozen inability of these individuals to free themselves from this paralysis of the will, indulging, rather, in empty sensation-seeking and meaningless, decadent activity.

The Family Reunion does finally suggest a "reconciliation" with a meaningful spiritual structure through a re-living and re-defining of the past, purging the disease of sterility through a recognition of man's moral culpability, and through the willingness of a contemporary human representative, Harry Monchensey, to wear the crown of thorns and live a life of penance for having disturbed the universal order, which, for Eliot as for Aristotle and Hebbel, constitutes the sole source of spiritual vitality. Man can expiate his sin and restore the order, but there is in Eliot's writing no sense that history can progress, can move forward in a Hegelian manner.

In *Der einsame Weg* Felix, who at the end of the play begins to display some physical directness and an almost conscious refusal to indulge in excessive self-contemplation, represents a measure of hope for the revitalization of society. Schnitzler portrays Felix in an almost tentative manner, suggesting a possible means of salvation for a leisured culture and way of life that he found fascinating despite his recognition of its decadence and ultimate sterility. *Der einsame Weg* appears to suggest that if the mannered existence of Viennese society could be infused with a new vitality in the form of a new, more vigorous generation, history might still be written as progressive, but the more dominant tone of the play is that of moral decadence and impending cataclysm, a sense of doom that was, in fact, realized with the outbreak of World War I.

While the pre-war dramatists like Shaw and Schnitzler portrayed the sense of impending doom, the works of the post-war dramatists such as Brecht, Kaiser, and Dürrenmatt (post World War II), represent a strong effort to come to terms with a world that has lost its idealism. Brecht's *Baal* is a strong evocation of the death of any kind of supernatural or spiritual order, with the concomitant recognition that if the world is made up of the excrement of a dead god, there nevertheless remains a full range of physical

sensations and experiences that can be extracted from this "natural" environment. If progress is an illusion, it becomes more important to experience the present as fully as possible. Kaiser, like Brecht, depicts the physical nature of the human condition through the thorn in the foot that determines all of Sokrates' actual actions and decisions. The improbability of a significant idealist perspective within a post-World War I culture is projected with consumate irony through the random nature in which Sokrates is forced to rationalize the domination of his physical being through idealistic "fictions." When the play-acting becomes intolerable, and the consequences of truth-telling would be a world with no pattern or significance, the actual world of the post-war German state, Sokrates embraces death to maintain the fiction; however, in preserving the semblance of idealism within the world of the play, Kaiser exposes it for his audiences and, like Brecht, portrays a world that has little more to offer than physical sensation. Baal and Sokrates are victims of their time, and victims of their physical condition.

The economic materialism of Marx and Engels also saw man as victim of historical and economic forces and conditions, but the historical perspective which they adopted from Hegel saw history as unresolved and open to change, and in the potential of the changing conditions lay the hope that the victim could ultimately become the victor through group or class effort. Despite the utopianism inherent in Marxism, however, the best Marxist literary works are often those which continue to portray the protagonist as a victim. Galileo, in Brecht's play, is the victim both of an authoritarian regime and of his own sensual appetites. The optimism inherent in *Leben des Galilei* lies in its emphasis on the possibility of making choices, which in turn results in a lack of closure, a world that is not pre-determined, one in which the individual possesses a measure of individual freedom. However, this freedom is more a matter of potential than of actualization, for Galileo is governed by his appetites almost as much as Kaiser's Sokrates is by the pain in his foot. Jannice in O'Casey's *Within the Gates* also enjoys a limited measure of freedom, the freedom to choose between a sterile religious tradition and a dynamic optimism that denies tradition and the past. Jannice is, however, also a victim, an exploited individual living within an exploitive society, but O'Casey, through his emphasis on living life and facing death with courage and vitality, portrays Jannice as the catalyst that has the power to re-invigorate the past, so that past and present may work together toward a promising future. This is what Schnitzler attempted to do in *Der einsame Weg* as well, but the synthesis of past and present is not as successful within the more naturalistic form of Schnitzler's drama as it is in *Within the Gates*. O'Casey's play, however, is very subdued in its optimism, merely suggesting in the final stage direction that the dawning sun will bring a new day. Even artists, then, who write from within an optimistic philosophical

framework, as do Brecht and O'Casey, often portray their protagonists as victims of their society, and ultimately of history, because the present century is so dominated by a sense of pessimism; the hope for a higher form of existence, for an open, progressive sense of history, is more a potential for the future than a present reality.

The dramatists covered within the parameters of this study are significant not only because of their historical perspective and their concerns with the future of the human race, but also because they are innovative artists with regard to form and dramatic technique, making the form a vital component of the message they have to present. Their plays project the dramatist's viewpoint as much as they do the views of the characters. Drama is, in its interaction of actor to actor, of actors to the audience and audience to both actors and the author, one of the richest forms of communication available within the world of art and aesthetics. This kind of communication ultimately proclaims a dramatist's point of view, which often translates into a significant political or social perspective. Brecht, always keenly attuned to the potential, for good as well as for evil, of the technological revolution, in 1932 addressed the possibilities of the radio as an instrument for true mass communications:

> ganz abgesehen von seiner zweifelhaften Funktion ... hat der Rundfunk eine Seite, wo er zwei haben müßte. Er ist ein reiner Distributionsapparat, er teilt lediglich zu.
>
> Und um nun positiv zu werden, das heißt, um das Positive am Rundfunk aufzustöbern, ein Vorschlag zur Umfunktionierung des Rundfunks: Der Rundfunk ist aus einem Distributionsapparat in einen Kommunikationsapparat zu verwandeln. Der Rundfunk wäre der denkbar großartigste Kommunikationsapparat des öffentlichen Lebens, ein ungeheures Kanalsystem, das heißt, er wäre es, wenn er es verstünde, nicht nur auszusenden, sondern auch zu empfangen, also den Zuhörer nicht nur hören, sondern auch sprechen zu machen und ihn nicht zu isolieren, sondern ihn in Beziehung zu setzen. (GW 18 129)*

Brecht's conception of the radio as a device for true communication, as opposed to the mass uni-directional disseminating of information, is fully borne out in his dramatic theory and practice, where the episodic structure of his plays, the constant interruptions of the action, songs and music, lighting, banners, the function of the gesture or "Gestus," and open commentary, are all designed to prevent illusion, to encourage the audience to think and participate in the communication process. This is a form of theatre, a form of communication,

* "radio is one-sided when it should be two-. It is purely an apparatus for distribution, for mere sharing out.... change this apparatus over from distribution to communication. The radio would be the finest possible communication apparatus in public life, a vast network of pipes. That is to say, it would be if it knew how to receive as well as to transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him.... it must follow the prime objective of turning the audience not only into pupils but into teachers" (Willett tr. 52).

that allows the viewer to formulate and express his own opinions of stage characters, and ultimately to view himself objectively, which Brecht stated was one of the functions he was trying to achieve in the *Threepenny Opera*: "Sie ist eine Art Referat über das, was der Zuschauer im Theater vom Leben zu sehen wünscht. Da er jedoch gleichzeitig auch einiges sieht, was er nicht zu sehen wünscht, da er also seine Wünsche nicht nur ausgeführt, sondern auch kritisiert sieht (er sieht sich nicht als Subjekt, sondern als Objekt), ist er prinzipiell imstande, dem Theater eine neue Funktion zu erteilen" (GW 17 991).* The perspective that is encouraged through this form of open, connective communication, is one of evaluation, consideration, and objectivity; ultimately, it forms a political perspective in which the people are encouraged to evaluate the relationship between the governing bodies and those being governed, and to participate in the process of governing on an on-going basis.

The difference between Brecht's "people"-oriented approach to theatre and politics, and that of a more authoritarian dramatic method, becomes clear when we compare Brecht's appreciation of the possibilities of modern technology for two-way communications, to that of Hitler, another connosieur of communications technology. Hitler made every effort to ensure that technology should serve as a hortatory one-way propaganda machine, to disseminate carefully prepared information, designed to make the public suspend individual thought and submerge itself in a "collectivity in which psychological interiority gives way to the surface lines of power and the seamless matrix of [the existing, seeming] order" (Berman 206). Hitler's carefully practiced rhetoric, his martial extravaganzas, his extensive travel via airplane, his effective use of radio, posters and ritual ceremonies all attest to his effective utilization of the communications technologies as a one-way form of mass communications; Brecht's epic theatre, on the other hand, illustrates an equally effective utilization of the same technology as a means of two-way communications, the opportunity of the playwright and the actor to communicate effectively with the audience.

Walter Stein has noted that Eliot, despite his obvious ideological differences, is similar to Brecht in his attempt to establish a communications link, to enter into direct intercourse with the audience. Speaking of Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral,* Stein remarks that this play is

> carved with a Greek statuesqueness, astonishingly at ease with its associated medieval morality tone and modern attack – with something of Shaw and Pirandello and Brecht about it. It is ... a literary reaffirmation of a ritual

* "It is a kind of report on life as any member of the audience would like to see it. Since at the same time, however, he sees a good deal that he has no wish to see; since therefore he sees his wishes not merely fulfilled but also criticized (sees himself not as the subject but as the object), he is theoretically in a position to appoint a new function for the theatre" (Willett tr. 43).

> tradition in decline; as Brecht's work so often turns into a sort of counter-ritual, prefiguring a future that calls for creation. In this sense, neither Eliot nor Brecht stands within a fully operative culture. And both, caring not only for personal integrity in such a world but for the renewed integrity of a whole way of life, are driven to technical innovations – or revivals – which will re-enfranchise the audience within the drama, and, conversely, allow the dramatist to enter into direct, dialectical commerce with it. (439)

If Eliot – and Schnitzler as well – attempts to reaffirm an incomplete culture through ritual and tradition, O'Casey is as adamant as Brecht in his effort to encompass the full, complete creation that is the promise of the future. The efforts of Shaw to some extent, and certainly of O'Casey and Brecht, to communicate with their audiences are truly efforts at two-way communications. While Eliot, as Stein has noted, also involves the audience, this is a more uni-directional form of communication, designed to reinforce the forms and rituals of a cultural tradition, to inform, to "educate," to sway, almost to manipulate the audience, to promote the concept of the universality of spiritual contamination and the need for expiation that makes up the central theme of *The Family Reunion.* In this play Eliot utilizes a chorus – made up of the less sensistive, less aware, characters in the play – to address the audience directly. In a number of instances combinations of characters (Harry and Mary, and later Harry and Agatha) speak "beyond" each other in a ritualized, heightened poetry that no longer functions as a two-way conversation, but engages the audience directly, demanding that it participate in the ritual performed on stage. Except for the dialogues between Harry and Mary, and Harry and Agatha, the whole play is an example of miscommunication, of individuals speaking more to the audience than they do to each other. The play itself is, as Stein notes, an important development of the English theatre, due to Eliot's attempt to reintegrate poetry as an essential element of English culture, and to speak to the audience in the form of poetry. It is a noteworthy example of English expressionism, with characters who are not "rounded" or fully developed; they exist, rather, as tortured representations of facets of the author's own personality.* Eliot is preoccupied with communicating to the audience his own concerns regarding tradition, culture, the nature of sin and the possibilities of expiation; the nature of this communication is essentially "authoritarian," since it seeks to "instruct" the audience rather than anticipating a varied audience response. I do not mean to suggest, through the earlier reference to Hitler's use of the

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* In the *Times Literary Supplement* of March 25, 1939, an unnamed reviewer attacked Eliot for his lack of characterization: " Characters are erected like statues (made at Madame Tussaud's) here and there about the dessicated stage. They are the statues of an intellectual commentary, not bold complete figures in Greek sunshine, but tenebrous with nineteenth-century Gothic guilt" (Review reprinted in *T.S. Eliot: The Critical Heritage,* Vol. 2, 370).

technology of mass communication, that Eliot supported fascism; he did not, but Eliot's preference for traditional forms of authority, for an established hierarchy, are quite clearly opposed to Brecht and O'Casey's emphasis on bi-directional communication, and as Bernard Bergonzi states, also opposed to the modern concept of democracy:

> For Eliot the Maurrasien combination of a strong king and a decentralized social order was something quite other than, and preferable to, the fascist ideal of totalitarian dynamism and a centralized state, equally removed though both might be from modern parliamentary democracy. (124)

Eloise Hay likewise refers to Eliot's preference for a strong monarchical structure as she describes *The Family Reunion* as "a vision of the waste land with its maimed king" (116).

Schnitzler's drama is also about miscommunication, but this is miscommunication of a different order from Eliot's. Schnitzler's drama is to a large extent a representation of Viennese society but the artistic representation isolates and organizes significant patterns, establishing the author's final summary and commentary on the mode of life and on the characters he has created. The function of "small talk," the utilitarian elevation of the trivial into an art form in a society of diverse nationalities, diverse occupations and multiple levels of bureaucracy, has been noted previously. While the endless round of trivial conversations, set conventions and procedures, the containment of virtually all communication to a superficial level, may serve as a means of maintaining the status quo, of retaining the cohesiveness of the Habsburg empire, it must finally also produce the opposite effect, that of creating a social structure that is devoid of anything but the superficial. This structure attains a rigidity, a uniformity within which individuality is no longer possible; hence, it is in danger of becoming an undissoluble, authoritarian – even fascist – structure, within which genuine interaction is no longer possible. *Der einsame Weg* is a clear embodiment of this social form, since the characters in this play for the most part do not interact, but merely speak past each other, of themselves. Johanna speaks of the need to feel horror in her life, but Sala, preoccupied with his own concerns and plans, hears the words but cannot comprehend her agony, until he becomes aware of her suicide. Julian speaks poignantly of his own insecurities and isolation, but is merely irritated by Irene Herms' agonized recognition that he, Julian, has a son by another woman, while she was persuaded by him to abort her own child by him. Neither is Julian at all cognizant of the pain he has caused Gabriele, for he is sensitive only to his own feelings. The community of *Der einsame Weg* is, like the Austrian community, one in which the emphasis on small talk, on forms and conventions, has gradually precluded the possibility of genuine dialogue and positive decision making, except in a few instances, and these are the moments

that give the play its final note of tentative hope.

The major difference between the drama of Eliot and Schnitzler, is that in Eliot's play the interaction is intended to be with the audience, and the audience is therefore the receptor for Eliot's message; this message, moreover, is not that the lack of genuine communication between individuals creates their isolation and the resulting social "wasteland," but that the discontinuity with their past, with tradition, with the forms and conventions of spiritual belief have brought about this corruption. Schnitzler, on the other hand, illustrates how the inability to communicate leads to the inability to feel, to extend oneself, to understand the feelings of others, and that this frozen articulation can only lead to cataclysm.

There are also parallels between the experimental theatres of Brecht and O'Casey, with their insistence on audience participation, and Shaw's "play of ideas," as Robert Whitman has called it. With the exception of the "Don Juan in Hell" scene in *Man and Superman,* Shaw was not a truly innovative dramatist with regard to production techniques, and his theatre differs from the naturalistic theatre of the nineteenth century primarily in his extensive use of stage directions and stage commentary, a feature which Raymond Williams, at least, finds disconcerting, remarking that it makes Shaw's plays half novel, half drama, and less than each. Certainly the bypassing of the stage directions during live performances make Shaw's plays much more pleasurable to view than to read. His "play of ideas" takes its form from the personality and style of the dramatist; Shaw was used to debates and discussions – had trained himself, in fact, to the dialectic mode – and his drama form developed organically and inevitably from his method of relating to and conversing with others. While Shaw's stage characters communicate and debate with each other, however, Stein notes that his drama suffers from a lack of emotional intensity; the communication is all intellectual, with little genuine emotional interaction:

> if Bernard Shaw's theatre of ideological debate now largely seems to by-pass our really experienced dilemmas and concerns, this could be because, in the relevant sense, his theatre is in fact not dramatic enough.... Brecht's epic theatre, with its insistent, direct buttonholing of the audience and its elaborate traps against spontaneous dramatic emotion, can yet be total in its demands on our dramatic involvement.... If Shaw now falls short in the power to probe us in depth, this is because of what actually happens (or fails to happen) within his dialogue – or plots – or intellectual dialectic – or emotional resolutions – and because of the ways in which these elements relate to each other. (418-19)

The form of Shaw's drama does not involve the audience as fully as does that of Brecht, O'Casey or Eliot. Nor does Shaw, despite the dialectical nature of his drama, really expect and desire that the audience take up a critical position on the play, despite his comment, in the "Epistle Dedicatory" to *Man and Superman,* that "it annoys me to see people comfortable when

they ought to be uncomfortable; and I insist on making them think in order to bring them to conviction of sin" (8). Shaw's concern was to communicate ideas, to present a theatre of substance rather than a theatre of illusion or of escapism, and in this respect he was certainly a precursor to Brecht and O'Casey, but brought little of Brecht's theatrical sophistication to the theatre. Shaw's intent was to instruct, and despite his stated intent that the "Don Juan in Hell" episode was to represent the debating of a "pit of philosophers," it at times bears greater resemblance to a classroom.

Brecht's emphasis on lack of closure, on the possibilities of alternative endings – to both his plays and to history – on the open ended aspects of the historical process, are consistently underscored through his theoretical writing on the theatre, and his insistence that actors integrate the demonstration of alternatives through their gestures:

> When [the actor] appears on the stage, besides what he actually is doing he will at all essential points discover, specify, imply what he is not doing; that is to say he will act in such a way that the alternative emerges as clearly as possible, that his acting allows the other possibilities to be inferred and only represents one out of the possible variants. (Brecht on Theatre 137.)

The emphasis on alternatives represents an insistence on viewing history as open-ended. Shaw's view of history, on the other hand is considerably more deterministic than is Brecht's. In *Man and Superman* Shaw has Ann Whitefield and Jack Tanner consent to the inevitable, to their pre-determined role in the historical process. The play presents a dialectic whereby the characters initially dissent, but inevitably recognize and accept their role within the historical process, rather than through intellect and self-will changing the progress of history through their individual insights and efforts. The determinism inherent in Shaw's drama places him, at least prior to World War I, very firmly in the nineteenth rather than the twentieth century tradition.

Brecht's demand that the actors suggest, and the audience critically entertain alternative historical scenarios is also reflected in the constant changes and revisions to his text, as well as in his emphasis on group and collaborative efforts, all of which produced, in many of his plays, what Edward Berckman calls a "pattern of alternating hope and disappointment" (44), in which "'a different course of events' is visualized or dramatized as the outcome desired by, or for, the protagonist" (44). At the end of *Der gute Mensch von Setzuan* Brecht asks the audience to provide a solution to Shen Te's problem of the impossibility of being good within a capitalistic society: "In your opinion, then, what's to be done? / Change human nature or – the world?" This ending probably illustrates one of the major differences between Brecht and Shaw. Shaw still wants to change human nature, to develop a race of supermen who will interact and live together within a truly democratic society because

they, within themselves, have developed to a point where they realize the waste and fruitlessness of social conflict. Shaw wants to modify and develop the individual, where Brecht feels that if social, political and economic circumstances are properly modified, the individual's behavior will change accordingly.

Brecht's theatre of commitment toward social change evolved out of deep feelings of pessimism and nihilism, feelings that characterized his early drama. Brecht ultimately saw optimism in the form of social change, where for Shaw, during the turn-of-the-century, and for O'Casey, social change was not in itself sufficient to improve the human condition; there had to be a more idealistic, philosophical or mystical/spiritual dimension to humanity, so history could progress toward a spiritual or philosophical ideal that was more akin to Hegel's conception of the Absolute. Turn-of-the-century artists and philosophers were still rooted in the ideal of and the need for the sublime, while artists during the period between the wars, responding in retrospect, as Eksteins points out, to a horrifying period of history most of them had initially accepted as unavoidable, were looking not for spiritual, but for social change.

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