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Source: *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Jan., 1990, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Jan., 1990), pp. 113-127

Published by: American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Inc.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3487528>

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Henry George and George Bernard Shaw: Comparison and Contrast:

The Two 19th Century Intellectual Leaders Stood for Ethical Democracy vs. Socialist Statism

By JACK SCHWARTZMAN*

ABSTRACT. *Henry George*, the American *economist* and social *philosopher*, and *George Bernard Shaw*, the British *playwright* and social *reformer*, were two famous personalities of the last quarter of the 19th century, each a prophet in his own way. The two men probably never met, though Shaw credited George's oratory as well as his classic, *Progress and Poverty*, with awakening his interest in economic issues, and to his last days acknowledged his debt to George. Both were deeply committed to ending poverty. But there the similarity ended—George was devoted to ethical democracy, Shaw to socialist dictatorship. George saw cooperative individualism as the goal of social reconstruction; Shaw dreamed of a Superman, and fancied himself a supporter of the Soviet dictator, Joseph Stalin, and of Soviet Russian 'communism.' Shaw saw the purpose of life as "being used for a (mighty) purpose;" George saw it as blazing a trail for 'progressive humanity,' cooperating with the Creator in creating a moral world.

I

Two Personalities, Two Social Programs

THIS IS THE STORY of two famous personalities, each of them a prophet in his own way and in his own time. This is the story of two social thinkers who presented differing solutions to the same perplexing and disturbing problem. This is the story of an American economist who wrote dramatic prose and an Irish dramatist who wrote economic plays. This is the story of Henry George and George Bernard Shaw.

Henry George became world-famous after having written a best-selling economic masterpiece, *Progress and Poverty* in 1879. In the book, he made "an inquiry into the cause of poverty and industrial depressions," and proposed a "Remedy" (simplistically called the Single Tax), designed to eliminate poverty

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and other related social ills. Contending that deprivation and want are caused by the denial to most people of access to privately-owned, superior land sites, he urged the imposition of a land value tax (rent collection), which would compel the relinquishing of gigantic, mostly speculative, land holdings, and thus lead to unlimited production and equitable distribution of wealth. Capital (and all other commodities) would be exempt from taxation, because capital, contrary to the teachings of Karl Marx, was itself labor-produced and a necessary factor of production. It aided, rather than hindered, the creation of additional wealth. It should *not*, therefore, be taxed.

In 1882, Henry George made a triumphant tour of Great Britain, presenting his theories to wildly-enthusiastic groups. One night, in London, a young man wandered into a crowded lecture hall where George was speaking, and was swept away by the fervent and passionate oratory of the American. The young man was Shaw, destined to be a famous playwright, and this is what he wrote, a quarter of a century later:

Henry George has one thing to answer for that has proved more serious than he thought when he was doing it—without knowing it. One evening in the early eighties I found myself . . . listening to an American finish a speech on the Land Question. I knew he was an American because . . . he spoke of Liberty, Justice, Truth, Natural Law, and other strange eighteenth century superstitions; and because he explained with great simplicity and sincerity the views of The Creator, who had gone completely out of fashion in London in the previous decade and had not been heard of there since. I noticed also that he was a born orator, and that he had small, plump, pretty hands.

Now at that time I was a young man not much past 25, of a very revolutionary and contradictory temperament, . . . and never having in my life studied social questions from the economic point of view . . . The result of my hearing that speech, and buying from one of the stewards of the meeting a copy of *Progress and Poverty* for sixpence (Heaven only knows where I got that sixpence!) was that I plunged into a course of economic study, and at a very early stage of it became a Socialist and spoke from that very platform on the same great subject, and from hundreds of others as well . . .¹

It is necessary to point out, at the start, that George was *not* a Socialist. Nothing irritated him more than to be so designated. "That any reader of George's works," wrote a modern commentator, "could have considered him a Socialist seems absurd today."² It is also important to note that George had never met Shaw; it is not even certain whether he was ever aware of Shaw's existence.

Shaw continued his reminiscence:

When I was thus swept into the great Socialist revival of 1883, I found that five sixths of those who were swept in with me had been converted by Henry George. This fact would have been far more widely acknowledged had it not been that it was not possible for us to stop where Henry George stopped. America, in spite of all its horrors of rampant Capitalism and industrial oppression, was nevertheless still a place where there was hope for the Individualist and the hustler . . . Henry George had no idea of this. He saw only the monstrous

absurdity of the private appropriation of rent; and he believed that if you took that burden off the poor man's back, he could help himself out as easily as a pioneer on a pre-empted clearing . . . Thus George actually felt bound to attack the Socialism he had himself created; and the moment the antagonism was declared, and to be a Henry Georgite meant to be an anti-Socialist, some of the Socialists whom he had converted became ashamed of their origin, and concealed it; whilst others, including myself, had to fight hard against the Single Tax propaganda.

But I am glad to say that I never denied nor belittled our debt to Henry George. If we outgrew *Progress and Poverty* in many respects, so did he himself too; and it is perhaps just as well that he did not know too much when he made his great campaign here; for the complexity of the problem would have overwhelmed him if he had realized it, or, if it had not, it would have rendered him unintelligible.³

A caveat is needed. George *never* "outgrew" *Progress and Poverty*. It was the cornerstone of his philosophy. As to "the complexity of the problem," George was far from being "overwhelmed" by it: his book addressed itself to the problem as it is in the real world.

Shaw concluded his recollections by stating that it was his "ambition to repay my debt to Henry George by coming over some day and trying to do for your young men what Henry George did nearly a quarter of a century ago for me."⁴ ("Your young men" meant American young men.)

In a foreword addressed to American women, in a book he wrote in 1928, Shaw reiterated:

. . . I wonder this book of mine was not written in America by an American fifty years ago. Henry George had a shot at it: indeed it was his oratory (to which I was exposed for fortyfive minutes fortyfive years ago by pure chance) that called my attention to it . . . America can claim that in this book I am doing no more than finishing Henry George's job.⁵

Henry George's granddaughter, the well-known choreographer Agnes George de Mille, vividly described a visit of Shaw to the United States. Her mother, the daughter of Henry George, eagerly awaited the arrival of the famed author. This is what happened:

. . . She had always wished to meet him, and, after hearing the astonishing tribute he had paid her father's memory in the speech of his last American trip, she faced him, shaken to the core with excitement. Tears stood in her eyes and she trembled.

"You mentioned Henry George in your speech last night. I am his daughter."

"You're better looking than he was."

"I have more hair."

"Have you also his beautiful hands?"

"Alas, no."

"Have you inherited his great gift for speaking?"

Her face transfigured with pride and devoted memory, she replied, "All I have inherited from my father is his love for ice cream."

Shaw saw the look in her eyes, heard the childish words, and was silent. He bowed, laughing over her hand.⁶

II

Two Understandings of Poverty

WHAT ARE THE POINTS of agreement and disagreement in the philosophies of Henry George and George Bernard Shaw? To understand the respective viewpoints, it is needful here to present a topical analysis. A major point of agreement immediately comes to mind. It is the attention, the absolutely urgent attention, that each man paid to the subject of poverty. It is the key word in the title of George's *Progress and Poverty*. It is the subject of constant discussion in Shaw's many writings.

Here are George's comments about poverty:

This association of poverty with progress is the great enigma of our times. It is the central fact from which spring industrial, social, and political difficulties that perplex the world, and with which statesmanship and philanthropy and education grapple in vain . . . It is the riddle which the Sphinx of Fate puts to our civilization and which not to answer is to be destroyed. So long as all the increased wealth which modern progress brings goes but to build up great fortunes, to increase luxury and make sharper the contrast between the House of Have and the House of Want, progress is not real and cannot be permanent. The reaction must come.⁷

Poverty is the openmouthed relentless hell which yawns beneath civilized society . . . For poverty is not merely deprivation; it means shame, degradation, the searing of the most sensitive parts of our moral and mental nature as with hot irons; the denial of the strongest impulses and the sweetest affections; the wrenching of the most vital nerves.⁸

A terrible calamity would befall mankind, George warned, if poverty were permitted to remain:

Upon streets lighted with gas and patrolled by uniformed policemen, beggars wait for the passer-by, and in the shadow of college, and library, and museum, are gathering the more hideous Huns and fiercer Vandals of whom Macaulay prophesied.⁹

Shaw, too, described poverty with the same vehement indignation. In the Preface to his play, *Major Barbara*, he cried out:

Now what does this Let Him Be Poor mean? It means let him be weak. Let him be ignorant. Let him become a nucleus of disease. Let him be a standing exhibition and example of ugliness and dirt. Let him have rickety children. Let him be cheap and let him drag his fellows down to his price by selling himself to do their work. Let his habitations turn our cities into poisonous congeries of slums. Let his daughters infect our young men with the diseases of the street and his sons revenge him by turning the nation's manhood into scrofula, cowardice, cruelty, hypocrisy, political imbecility, and all other fruits of oppression and malnutrition. Let the undeserving become still less deserving; and let the deserving lay up for himself not treasures in heaven, but horrors in hell upon earth. This being so, is it really wise to let him be poor? Would he not do ten times less harm as a prosperous burglar, incendiary, ravisher or murderer, to the utmost limits of humanity's comparatively negligible impulses in these directions?¹⁰

In Act III of the play, *Undershaft*, the main character, called poverty "the worst of crimes." He went on:

Poverty blights whole cities, spreads horrible pestilences; strikes dead the very souls of all who come within sight, sound or smell of it. What *you* call crime is nothing; a murder here and a theft there, a blow now and a curse then; what do they matter? They are only the accidents and illnesses of life: there are not fifty genuine professional criminals in London. But there are millions of poor people, abject people, dirty people, ill fed, ill clothed people. They poison us morally and physically; they kill the happiness of society: they force us to do away with our own liberties and to organize unnatural cruelties for fear they should rise against us and drag us down into their abyss.¹¹

Nothing infuriated both George and Shaw more than to hear the continuing existence of poverty attributed to the will of God. (For example, St. Matthew's "For ye have the poor always with you" is constantly quoted.) In his book, George lashed out:

Though it may take the language of prayer, it is blasphemy that attributes to the inscrutable decrees of Providence the suffering and brutishness that come of poverty; that turns with folded hands to the All-Father and lays on Him the responsibility for the want and crime of our great cities. We degrade the Everlasting. We slander the Just One. A merciful man would have better ordered the world; a just man would crush with his foot such an ulcerous ant hill! It is not the Almighty, but we who are responsible for the vice and misery that fester amid our civilization. The Creator showers upon us his gifts—more than enough for all. But like swine scrambling for food, we tread them in the mire—tread them in the mire, while we tear and rend each other!¹²

Shaw condemned the general public's complacent acceptance of poverty with similar anger. This is how he once addressed a congregation from a pulpit:

"Don't go about with long faces sympathizing with the poor and with ills. Take poverty and illnesses in extremely bad part; and when you meet a man whose wife is ill or who is poor, don't say to him that it is the will of God, which is horrible blasphemy. Tell him in solemn Scriptural language that it is a damnable thing, and that you have come to try to put a stop to it because *you* are the will of God. And then you will have put the man you are talking to on the high road to understanding that his will is the will of God too."¹³

How is poverty caused? How can it be abolished? Here, each of the writers had his own theory, sharply at variance with the other's. George claimed that poverty, misery, war, and most of the social and psychological evils were caused by the confiscation of land (Nature) for personal use. When a tiny percentage of people own God's earth, there is no place left for the rest. Such a violation of natural laws (the laws of harmony) inevitably produces human deprivation. "The enslavement of laborers," he wrote, is "the ultimate result of private property in land."¹⁴

George, therefore, set forth his "Remedy" (as he called it), and it followed logically from the *cause* of poverty and maldistribution. George's "Remedy" was: 1) the elimination of the existing land monopoly by means of land value taxation; and 2) the abolition of all other taxes. The land value tax would compel the surrender of huge possessions (otherwise held out of use), thus immediately

releasing land for needed production of wealth. The removal of all other taxes, currently a prohibitive levy on industry, would spur human endeavor—thereby, again, opening up the gates to unlimited production. Mankind would benefit from both procedures of the “Remedy.” George painted a colorful picture of the future—when his plan would be adopted:

Give labor a free field and its full earnings; take for the benefit of the whole community that fund which the growth of the community creates, and want and the fear of want would be gone. The springs of production would be set free, and the increase of wealth would give the poorest ample comfort. Men would no more worry about finding employment than they worry about finding air to breathe; they need have no more care about physical necessities than do the lilies of the field. The progress of science, the march of invention, the diffusion of knowledge, would bring their benefits to all.¹⁵

This would *not* be a Socialistic panacea, since private enterprise would not only be untrammelled, but actually encouraged.

Shaw, on the other hand, even though he started out as an ardent admirer of George’s doctrine, quickly converted to Socialism, through the medium of Karl Marx (whom he soon abandoned). In one of Shaw’s letters, he revealed:

Suffice it to say that George shunted me on to the economic tack. I read *Progress & Poverty*, and went to a meeting of the Democratic Federation at which I rose & protested against their drawing a red herring across the track opened by George. They told me I was a novice, and that I should read Karl Marx’s *Capital*. I promptly went and did so, and then found that my advisers were awestruck, as they had not read it themselves, it being then accessible only in the French version at the British Museum Library. I immediately became a Socialist, and from that hour I was a man with some business in the world.¹⁶

Shaw claimed that even though George “was revolted” by poverty, “George’s omission to consider what the State should do with the national rent after it had taken it into the public treasury stopped him on the threshold of Socialism; but most of the young men whom he had led up to it went through (like myself) into the Fabian Society and other Socialistic bodies.”¹⁷

Being a Fabian (evolutionary) Socialist (or Communist, as he later called himself), Shaw disagreed with George’s “Remedy,” blaming *both* Land and Capital for the existing social disparity. He advocated, instead of a Single Tax on land values, the appropriation by the State of both rent *and* interest. *All* income, irrespective of source, had to be confiscated, redistributed, and equalized. “We must,” Shaw urged, “therefore take it as an indispensable condition of a sound distribution of wealth that everyone must have a share sufficient to keep her or him from poverty.”¹⁸

Thus, the two thinkers disagreed about the cause and the solution of poverty and other social ills. The Fabian Socialists and the followers of Henry George were now unceasingly at war with one another.

III

The Source: Ricardo's Law of Rent

IT IS STRANGE, indeed, that two social dogmas as diametrically opposed to each other, as those of George and Shaw were, should both claim "descent" from the same source: Ricardo's Law of Rent. *Progress and Poverty*, declared Shaw, "is still Ricardian in theory," but he then dismissed George for failure to follow through: for stopping "on the threshold of Socialism."¹⁹

What is Ricardo's Law of Rent?

George explained it as follows:

Fortunately, as to the law of rent there is no necessity for discussion . . . This accepted law of rent, which John Stuart Mill denominates the *pons asinorum* of political economy, is . . .

*The rent of land is determined by the excess of its produce over that which the same application can secure from the least productive land in use.*²⁰

It became easy for George to steer Ricardo's theory into his own. As he paraphrased it:

Perhaps it may conduce to a fuller understanding of the law of rent to put it in this form: The ownership of a natural agent of production will give the power of appropriating so much of the wealth produced by the exertion of labor and capital upon it as exceeds the return which the same application of labor and capital could secure in the least productive occupation in which they freely engage.²¹

A still simpler paraphrase might be: Rent increases at the expense of both capital and labor, and the owners of land appropriate this "unearned increment" (as John Stuart Mill called it). Therefore, all that is needed to bring about the realization of George's proposal is to funnel this privately-kept rent into a community fund—and the problem of poverty would be solved. No other taxation would be needed or desired, because additional taxes would eventually fall on production and stifle it. Also, an increase of State functions would be dangerous to individual Liberty. ("Liberty" was another key word in George's thought.)

As to Shaw, an article which appeared five years before his death carefully analyzed his views on Ricardo, which Shaw set forth in his *Everybody's Political What's What*. This is what he said:

I must insist that the crux of the land question is the classical theory of Economic Rent, dubbed by Ferdinand Lassalle the Iron Law of Wages. Like the roundness of the earth it is unfortunately not obvious . . . Our politicians simply do not know of its existence. Karl Marx, by an absurd reference to it in *Das Kapital* proved that he did not understand it . . . I am tempted to add, nobody who had not read my paper on the Economic Basis of Socialism in *Fabian Essays* should be allowed to write, speak, vote or agitate politically in any fashion in this unhappy country.²²

It is amusing to add the following note of comparison to the above “modest” comment by Shaw. In a Preface to a book on George, and directly referring to George, John Dewey sweepingly pronounced: “No man, no graduate of a higher educational institution, has a right to regard himself as an educated man in social thought unless he has some first-hand acquaintance with the theoretical contribution of this great American thinker.”²³

In a book which Shaw addressed to women, he made the following statement concerning poverty and social misery:

And all this could have been avoided if we had only had the sense and foresight to insist that the land should remain national property in fact as well as in legal theory, and that all rents should be paid into a common stock and used for public purposes. If that had been done there need have been no slums, no ugly mean streets and buildings, nor indeed any rates or taxes: everybody would have to contribute to it by work; and no idler would be able to live on the labor of others.²⁴

However, lest it sound like a repetition of George’s Single Tax, Shaw was careful to point out that what he wanted was a Socialist State, which would collect *all* revenues, not just rent. This is hardly the Georgist approach to solving social problems. George wanted to decrease, not to augment, the power of the State. All governmental functions were to be “communal,” not “national.” George accented the individual; Shaw glorified the State.

A modern scholar analyzed the differences and the agreements existing in the rival camps of George and Shaw in the following words:

. . . In Shaw’s belief, once the single tax was adopted its operation would not cease until it had absorbed the entire economic rent of the country, and when this happened the State would be in control of the revenue from which industry drew its free capital. . . .

Assuming this, he argued, “really knowing Social Democrats would let George alone.” For “if the Socialist theory be correct, taxation of rent, the moment it went beyond replacing existing taxation, would produce Social Democratic organization of labor whether its proposers foresaw or favored the result or not. And by his popularization of the Ricardian law of rent which is the economic keystone of Socialism, and concerning which the published portion of Marx’s work leaves his followers wholly in the dark, Mr. George is doing incalculable service in promoting a scientific comprehension of the social problem in England. Besides, the public knowing that Mr. George advocates taxation of rent, will, if the Social Democrats attack him, simply conclude that Socialists oppose taxation of rent, which is the main plank in their platform.”²⁵

In other words, Shaw regarded George merely as an initiator of a procedure that, once started, would not cease until *total* Socialism would prevail.

An interpreter of George’s philosophy, quoting from Shaw’s essay on the “Transition to Social Democracy,” in *Fabian Essays on Socialism*, noted that Shaw favored the taxing of rents and land values because such taxation would *inevitably* lead to Socialism. “What the achievement of Socialism involves eco-

nomically is the transfer of rent from the class which now appropriates it to the whole people.” And: “The economic object of Socialism is . . . to carry out the principle over the whole community by collecting all rents and throwing them into the national treasury . . . The socialization of rent would mean the socialization of the sources of production. This transfer is the subject matter of the transition to Socialism . . .”²⁶

To repeat: To George, the Ricardo theory was a ready-made formula (and justification) for George’s own doctrine. The communal collection of rent would fully satisfy all social need. No other taxes would be required. Besides, additional taxation would only lead to an unwanted and much-dreaded increase of the power of the State. To Shaw, however, the collection of rent alone would not suffice. It would be only a beginning—a necessary beginning—of the welcome and much-desired transfer of all power to the State.

IV

George, Shaw and the Physiocrats

ANOTHER TOPIC of disagreement deals with the Physiocrats, who originated the terms “laissez faire” and “l’impôt unique,” and whom George considered to be the predecessors of his own theory. He credited the elder Mirabeau with having stated that the Single Tax was “a discovery equal in utility to the invention of writing.”²⁷ In his last book, George wrote:

France will some day honor among the noblest the centuries have given her the names of Quesnay, and Gournay, and Turgot, and Mirabeau, and Condorcet, and Dupont, and their fellows, as we shall have, in English, intelligent explanations, if not translations of their works. But, probably for the reason that France has as yet felt less than the English and Teutonic and Scandinavian nations the influence of the new Philosophy of the natural order, best known as the Single Tax, the teachings of these men seem at present, even in France, to be practically forgotten.²⁸

Shaw ridiculed the Physiocrats. In a letter to Joseph Fels (a successful soap manufacturer and follower of Henry George), Shaw attacked the Single Tax concept:

I am violently opposed to the notion that the social question is now a land question except in the sense that every question is a land question. I have always wanted to have Voltaire’s *Homme Aux Quarante Ecus*—the tract in which he smashed up old Mirabeau’s Single Tax panacea (*l’impôt unique*)—translated & reprinted as a Fabian tract. We had trouble enough in the old days to get rid of Henry George’s impossible distinction between land & capital, between industry & agriculture, without reviving it again. All attempts to distinguish between income derived from rent of land & interest on capital are futile. All notions that you can solve the social problem for men by giving every one of them access to land are as impossible as giving them all access to a city office or an electrical workshop. Until you organize men’s

industry for them in their own interests and attack unearned incomes as such, regardless of their source (thereby getting such a mass of capital into the hands of the State that it *must* be used immediately *as* capital for the support of those thrown out of parasitic private employment) you will not achieve the purposes of Socialism.²⁹

In his play, *Great Catherine*, Shaw (using the Empress to express his own ideas), lavishly praised Voltaire for allegedly slaying the dragon of the Single Tax:

CATHERINE (soliloquizing enthusiastically): What a wonderful author is Monsieur Voltaire! How lucidly he exposes the folly of this crazy plan for raising the entire revenue of the country from a single tax on land! how he withers it with his irony! how he makes you laugh whilst he is convincing you! how sure one feels that the proposal is killed by his wit and economic penetration: killed never to be mentioned again among educated people!³⁰

Just how *did* Voltaire “kill” that proposal “by his wit and economic penetration”? In his story (known in English as “The Man of Forty Crowns”), Voltaire transported the reader to an imaginary time when the only taxes collected by the government were those on land value. Sarcastically, he introduced the reader to two characters, one a millionaire, who owned no land and therefore paid no taxes, and one a near-pauper, who owned a “landed estate” which yielded him annually forty crowns (a pittance), from which he had to pay one-half to the State. The dialogue between the two characters follows below. (The narrator is the impoverished landowner.)

“I suppose, then,” said I, “that you pay out of this income two hundred thousand to the State . . . since I . . . am obliged to pay half . . .”

“I, said he, “I contribute to the wants of the State? You are surely jesting, my friend . . . I owe the State nothing. It is for you to give half of your substance,—you who are a proprietor of land. . . . Pay then, thou, my friend, who enjoyest quietly the neat and clear revenue of forty crowns, serve thy country well, and come now and then to dine with my servants in livery.”³¹

The story is sufficiently humorous and satiric—except for one thing: the arbitrariness of the presentation. Since most great fortunes come from monopoly (of some advantage that Nature freely confers, or a political boon that the State freely gives to some Robber Barons), the two characters invented by Voltaire are neither convincing nor plausible. It is not often that a person becomes a millionaire without access to some natural site or patent or monopoly, and Voltaire’s contrived depiction is both highly unlikely and totally frivolous.

V

Shaw, the Totalitarian

A MOST IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE between George and Shaw lay in the allegiance each of them paid, respectively, to free enterprise in a free society and to So-

cialism (or Communism: Shaw often blurred the distinction). Let us hear from George first.

In his *Progress and Poverty* (before he examined the subject further), he, as a supporter of private enterprise, nevertheless, gave qualified support to Socialism. "The ideal of socialism is grand and noble; and it is, I am convinced, possible of realization: but such a state of society cannot be manufactured—it must grow. Society is an organism, not a machine. It can live only by the individual life of its parts."³²

Almost two decades later, staunchly opposed now to all forms of regulation that stifled competition, production, and *life itself*, George cast his vote resolutely *against* Socialism. "This is the fatal defect of all forms of socialism . . . that any attempt to carry conscious regulation and direction beyond the narrow sphere of social life in which it is necessary, inevitably works injury, hindering even what it is intended to help."³³

Shaw, however, in complete opposition to George's thinking, proudly defended Socialism and boasted of being a Socialist and/or Communist. For instance, this is what he said ("like a good totalitarian," declared a friendly biographer): "The only country in the world where you can get real freedom is Russia . . . The greatest man alive is Stalin."³⁴ And here are some of his utterances, culled from his innumerable letters: "What more can I do for Communism than I am doing? . . . I have gone around the world . . . shouting that I am a Communist . . . I have given every scrap of my support for what it is worth to Russia . . . There is no public man in England more completely committed to Communism, and in particular to the support of the Russian system, than I."³⁵ "I have advised the nations to adopt Communism, and have carefully explained how they can do it without cutting one another's throats. But if they prefer to do it by cutting one another's throats, I am no less a Communist. Communism will be good even for Yahoos."³⁶

One of the commonest errors is to imagine that because Shaw was a leading member of the Fabian Society (which advocated the evolutionary rather than the revolutionary approach to Socialism), he, therefore, believed in moderation and the democratic process. Nothing could be further from the truth.

According to another biographer, also a friend, Shaw (like the Webbs and several other Fabians) was convinced that only an all-powerful State was capable of controlling the means of production (and, if need be, the producers as well). Therefore, Shaw espoused dictatorship. "Contemptuous of democracy, . . . his admiration for dictators was almost unbounded. Hitler, Mussolini, Kemal Ataturk, Stalin—all these absolute rulers received his admiration."³⁷ It "seems to have satisfied the Fabian in Shaw that they were great men."³⁸ He once wrote: "I have

been the first to applaud Hitler's two great steps as to compulsory labor and the trade unions when the whole British press are denouncing them savagely, exactly as I supported Mussolini when he too was being denounced as the most infamous of usurpers and tyrants."³⁹

Shaw was also in favor of exterminating, when "necessary," the "undesirable" elements of his projected society, declaring: "That killing is a necessity is beyond question by any thoughtful person."⁴⁰

This, then, was Shaw's belief.

How different—how very, very different—was the philosophy of Henry George! He warned against the danger of Big Government, and incessantly urged that the power of the State be drastically curbed. He dreamed of the final disappearance of the State. (Was it not, ironically, also Marx's alleged ultimate dream: this "withering away" of the State?) Expressing himself about his Utopia, George declaimed: "Society would thus approach the ideal of Jeffersonian democracy, the promised land of Herbert Spencer, the abolition of government."⁴¹

This, then, was George's belief.

VI

Superman—or Progressive Humanity

ONE THING MORE remains to be said.

Two dynamic, goal-driven visionaries—such as George and Shaw were—could not long maintain their missionary obsession without an unquestioning faith in the absolute Purpose of Life. Shaw, influenced by Nietzsche and Bergson, championed the Superman, and propounded the creed of the Vital Life Force. (There is also an echo of Ibsen's Peer Gynt in Shaw's anti-"scrap heap" pronouncement.) George, raised in the tradition of Jefferson and Lincoln, proclaimed the nobility of man, and extolled the divinity found in *each* human being. (There is a haunting Biblical cadence in George's poetic style.)

Here, then, are the respective views of Shaw and George:

Shaw: 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.⁴²

George: Granted that man is only a more highly developed animal, . . . no sooner are his animal wants satisfied than new wants arise . . . He works for those he never saw and never can see; for a fame, or maybe but for a scant justice, that can only come long after the clods have rattled upon his coffin lid. He toils in the advance, where it is cold, and there is little cheer from men, and the stones are sharp and the brambles thick. Amid the scoffs of the present and the sneers that stab like knives, he builds for the future; he cuts the trail that progressive humanity may hereafter broaden into a highroad. Into higher, grander spheres

desire mounts and beckons, and a star that rises in the east leads him on. Lo! the pulses of the man throb with the yearnings of the god—he would aid in the process of the suns!⁴⁵

And so, which of the two philosophers should one prefer: Henry George or George Bernard Shaw? The champion of Liberty or the proponent of Statism? The Individualist or the Collectivist?

Or (to use Shaw's words): Man or Superman?

Notes

1. Letter to Hamlin Garland, 1904, in the Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations; also in the *New York Public Library Bulletin*, November, 1927; also in George Raymond Geiger, *The Philosophy of Henry George* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), pp. 232–34; also in Bernard Shaw, *Collected Letters*, Vol. II, Dan H. Laurence, ed., (New York: Viking, 1985), pp. 476–78.
2. Elwood P. Lawrence, *Henry George in the British Isles* (East Lansing: The Michigan State University Press, 1957), p. 87.
3. Letter to Hamlin Garland.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Bernard Shaw, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism* (New York: Brentano's Publishers, 1928), p. xi. (The spelling is Shaw's.)
6. Agnes de Mille, Introduction to Anna de Mille's *Henry George: Citizen of the World*, (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1950), p. xii.
7. Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1979), p. 10.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 457. (The spelling is George's.)
9. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
10. Bernard Shaw, *Major Barbara*. In *Three Plays* (New York: New American Library, 1985), p. 11.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 124–25.
12. George, *Progress and Poverty*, pp. 549–50.
13. Hesketh Pearson, *G.B.S.: A Postscript* (London: Collins, 1951), pp. 36–37.
14. George, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 347.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 461.
16. Letter to Archibald Henderson, 1905, privately owned; also in Archibald Henderson, *George Bernard Shaw: His Life and Work* (1911); also in Archibald Henderson, *Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet* (1932); also in Archibald Henderson, *George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century* (1956); also in Shaw, *Collected Letters*, Vol. II, p. 486.
17. Shaw, *Intelligent Woman's Guide*, p. 468.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 468.
20. George, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 68. (Italics are George's.)
21. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
22. Anonymous, "Bernard Shaw's Political What's What." In *Land & Liberty* (April 1945), pp. 29–30.
23. John Dewey, "Dedication." In *Significant Paragraphs from Henry George's Progress and Poverty* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1929).

24. Shaw, *Intelligent Woman's Guide*, p. 126.
25. Laurence, pp. 86–87.
26. Geiger, pp. 248–49.
27. George, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 433.
28. Henry George, *The Science of Political Economy* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1981), p. 159.
29. Letter to Joseph Fels, 1909, privately owned; also in Shaw, *Collected Letters*, Vol. II, p. 839.
30. Bernard Shaw, *Great Catherine*. In Bernard Shaw, *Complete Plays, with Prefaces*, Vol. IV (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1963), p. 598.
31. Voltaire, "The Man of Forty Crowns." In *The Works of Voltaire* (New York: Walter J. Black, Inc., 1927), p. 315.
32. George, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 321.
33. George, *Science of Political Economy*, p. 391.
34. Hesketh Pearson, *George Bernard Shaw: His Life and Personality* (New York: Atheneum, 1963), p. 458.
35. Letter to Christina Walshe, 1934, General Collections, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin; also in Bernard Shaw, *Collected Letters*, Vol. IV, Dan H. Laurence, ed., (New York: Viking, 1988), p. 373.
36. Letter to Kingsley Martin, 1942, University of Sussex Library; also in Shaw, *Collected Letters*, Vol. IV, p. 629.
37. St. John Ervine, *Bernard Shaw: His Life, Work and Friends* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1956), p. 534. See also Hesketh Pearson, *George Bernard Shaw*, p. 460.
38. Ervine, p. 567.
39. Letter to Siegfried Trebitsch, 1933, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection, New York Public Library Collection; also in Samuel A. Weiss, ed., *Bernard Shaw's Letters to Siegfried Trebitsch* (1986); also in Shaw, *Collected Letters*, Vol. IV, p. 337.
40. Ervine, p. 535.
41. George, *Progress and Poverty*, pp. 455–56.
42. Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*. In *Seven Plays by Bernard Shaw* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1951), pp. 510–511.
43. George, *Progress and Poverty*, pp. 134–136.

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21st Century Scholarly Communication

STARTLING WORDS begin the back page of "Point of View" article in the October 18th *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. "Scholarly Journals are obsolete as the primary vehicle for scholarly communication," is what is asserted.

With the enormous developments in technology that have already taken place, there are indeed great possibilities of improved dissemination of scholarly work. But one wonders about the efficacy of the detailed plan set forth which more-or-less follows along the lines of electronic mail.

The author would put his work on a kind of bulletin board where it would be keyed as to topic. Then anyone who read it could leave comments. After a short period the author would have to revise the article or it would be erased. Once revised, it would be rated blind by three reviewers. At this stage it would be recatalogued and available only to users with access to the catalogued fields.

This arrangement, it is claimed, would avoid some postulated unfairness in present refereeing systems, save money for school and libraries, and provide funds for faculty.

One wonders if many readers of first draft papers would do the initial reading expected, and if there would not be so great a babble of voices that few would be heard. A flood based on reliable voice-recognition hardware and software lies just ahead.

It might be more feasible to build on present journal mechanics than to attempt so sweeping an end run.

F. C. G.