



The Political Rhapsody and Ethical Expression in Bernard Shaw's *The Apple Cart*

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To cite this article:

Liu Maosheng, Long Yanxia. The Political Rhapsody and Ethical Expression in Bernard Shaw's *The Apple Cart*. *English Language, Literature & Culture*. Vol. 5, No. 3, 2020, pp. 91-97. doi: 10.11648/j.ellc.20200503.13

Received: August 1, 2020; **Accepted:** August 14, 2020; **Published:** August 25, 2020

Abstract: As a Nobel Prize winner, Bernard Shaw is undoubtedly one of the most prominent and prolific playwrights of the Victorian age. His works have exerted a great influence on world literature. The studies of Shaw and his works have achieved fruitful results. However, most scholars have long focused on Shaw's early problem plays and paid little attention to his later political plays. In fact, Shaw discussed more serious themes such as social reality, political criticism and ethical ideals in his later years through unrestrained artistic creation. He wrote dramas in a rhapsodic way which represented the political crisis and fantasy of British society at that time. As a member of the Fabian Society, Shaw never gives up his ethical thoughts and his political rhapsody of social reform and development, which are clearly expressed in his later plays. As Shaw's most important political satire, *The Apple Cart* is a case in point. In this play, Shaw combined current events, fantasy, and philosophic thought concerned by the public, criticized the British parliamentary system and bourgeois democracy at that time, and clearly expressed his political ideal and ethical appeal. That is to build a better world order, and reshape the virtuous social ethics and moral codes.

Keywords: Political Rhapsody, Ethical Expression, Bernard Shaw, *The Apple Cart*

1. Introduction

The Apple Cart is Bernard Shaw's 40th play and the most important political satire in his later years. The title of the play comes from an English idiom "upset the apple cart", which is equivalent to what people say "upset wishful thinking". *The Apple Cart*, which Shaw explicitly subtitles it "A Political Extravaganza", combines social and political reality with imagination and fantasy, exposing and criticizing the British parliamentary system and the bourgeois democracy. Shaw shows the audience with the mysterious, frightening, and curious struggle of the British royal family, both at the palace and in politics, arousing the audience's curiosity about the deep of the royal palace, thus giving them a taste of what appears to be urbane but is actually a life-and-death struggle. The economic crisis that broke out in 1929 plunged British society into extreme turmoil and unrest and the attitude of writers, including Shaw, to special problems also underwent a fundamental change: the tendency of sympathizing with the

lower class and the desire of reforming social structure are growing stronger. Shaw, in particular, showed a keen interest in practical politics and created a new form of drama called "political extravaganza". *The Apple Cart* shows the crises of British cabinet, the bourgeois democracy, the reconcilable contradictions between Britain and America, and the unfavorable situations of Britain after the World War I in a panoramic way. Shaw accurately grasps the hypocritical nature of the so called democratic politics of the British bourgeoisie both in reality and illusion, which not only realizes his drama creations concerning social reality, but also castigates such issues as inequality and injustice and finally realizes the ultimate goal of building a democratic and harmonious social system.

2. Literature Review

As a Nobel Prize winner, the studies of Bernard Shaw have achieved fruitful results and still maintain a strong

momentum of development. The research status is as follows.

The studies of Shaw abroad began in the late 19th century. It can be generally divided into four types. Firstly, some critics study Shaw from the perspective of social and history. The most representative is Frank Harris's *Bernard Shaw*, in which Harris provides a wealth of information about Shaw's life and social activities. It is a work of great importance to Shaw's later studies. Secondly, some papers analyze the identity issue in Shaw's plays. The latest study on this issue is "Socializing prostitution, sexuality, economic slavery, and depreciation of female Identity in Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*", in which the author argues that "By making use of masculine dominance over traditional female values, like other intellectuals from the Victorian period, Shaw viewed inflicting pain as necessary masculine prerogatives" [1]. Thirdly, some scholars study Shaw's plays from the perspective of postmodernism. Peter Gahan's *Shaw Shadows: Rereading the Text of Bernard Shaw* is a case in point. Based on the post-structure theory, "the author expends research on Shaw to a broader field of discourses in philosophy/literary dimension and demonstrates the characteristics of deconstruction of traditional definition, decentralization and multiple interpretations" [2]. Fourthly, there are some interdisciplinary researches on Shaw's plays. Among them, the most representative is McEwan's paper "The 'plumber-philosopher': Shaw's discourse on domestic sanitation", in which the author explores "Shaw's ideas on sanitation and health in the context of personal experience of domestic plumbing and drainage problems" and believes that "Shaw's representations of plumbing and drainage in his prefaces, plays and other writings include the use of mechanistic metaphors and satire to highlight these defects, offering commentary on the failings of health management in modern capitalist society" [3].

The studies of Shaw in China began in the early 20th century. It can also be generally classified into four types. Firstly, some scholars pay attention to Shaw's dramatic views. The latest example is "A glimpse into Shaw's early dramatic views from analyzing the writing history of *Widowers' Houses*". The author believes that Shaw and William Archer ended the collaboration because of great dispute over the plot and techniques, which "illustrate Shaw's early dramatic views that the English drama should discard the vulgar conventions, shift the focus to social problems in the reality and restore the didactic function" [4]. Secondly, some articles focus on the study of Shaw's portrayal of female images. For example, in "Imbalance between sense and sensibility: on Bernard Shaw's women characters", the author points out that Shaw's women images have given rise to various controversies. On the one hand, they are "the carrier of 'life force' and the embodiment of reason, which has a profound influence on the creation of female images in the 20th century English literature". On the other hand, Shaw overemphasizes "the service of his works to his thoughts in his dramatic creation, which weakens the artistic appeal of his characters and results in the imbalance of the sense and sensibility of his

female images" [5]. Thirdly, some scholars focus on the comparative studies of Shaw's plays. For example, in "Discussing George Bernard Shaw's influence on Eileen Chang by comparing *The First Incense* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*", the author points out that Eileen is deeply influenced by Shaw. Through adopting the comparative methods, she "explores Eileen's coincidence with Shaw in women characterization. But instead of just cutting and pasting Shaw directly, Eileen transforms them creatively by instilling her own experience and acute artistry" [6]. Fourthly, there is a trend to study Shaw's plays from the perspective of ethics in recent years. For example, in "The ethical tradition in Bernard Shaw's theatrical narrative", the author holds that "social problems and ethical concerns constitute the kernels of Shaw's dramas". Then, he examines "the interaction between morality and artistic pursuits in Shaw's plays", and finally comes to a conclusion that "Shaw plays a significant role in enhancing the ethical tradition of the Victorian period" [7].

Shaw's major works, including *Pygmalion*, *Major Barbara*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *The Heartbreak House*, have always been the focus of scholar's attention [8], which can also be seen from the above analysis. While in terms of Shaw's dramas of "political extravaganza", the studies on them are clearly inadequate. Therefore, it is a useful attempt to give an analysis of *The Apple Cart*.

3. Realistic Observation of Political Rhapsody

The drama creations in Shaw's later years mainly deal with the political issues, and he even write "A Political Extravaganza" right after the title of his play *The Apple Cart*. Shaw's plays on political issues during this period are closely related to the Fabian Society he joined in his early years and his political views. As a political group advocating social reform, Fabian Society has its unique political aspirations. Most members of the Fabian Society are familiar with the current situations such as society, economy and politics of Britain, and it is on the basis of their understanding of the British society that many of their proposals have been approved by the British authorities, which provides a strong impetus and support for the progress of British politics in that period. Shaw and other core members of the Fabian Society insist on the progressive ideas of improving society, thus "reform", "gradualism" and "democracy" become the important slogan of the Fabian Society's social reform propaganda, which objectively contributes wisdom to the political development of the British society and provides them with another option to observe and reform society. The word "rhapsody" originates from the epic singers of the ancient Greece who usually sang or recited to the accompaniment of musical instruments. Later, in professional musical composition, rhapsody refers to an instrumental fantasia developed on the theme of folk tune. Shaw specifically subtitled his play "A Political Extravaganza" in his drama

creation. On the one hand, he was deeply influenced by music in his early years. At the same time, the rhapsodic and passionate description of the British reality in literary creation is consistent with Shaw's expression form of irony and ridicule on the major issues of that time. On the other hand, Shaw needs to emphasize his political intention. "Political rhapsody" can properly and accurately express his worldly attitude of focusing on reality and facing the illusory ideal. Shaw uses the unique creative method "rhapsody" properly, and skillfully reproduces the political crisis and fantasy of the British society.

As a writer, Shaw never gives up his ethical ideal and his fantasy of social reform and development. *The Apple Cart* was written in Shaw's 70s, but he still used the unique artistic thinking mode of rhapsody to gallop through his imagination. If the problem plays, a kind of play that faces the realistic problems such as society and life, created by Shaw in his early years are the basic starting point of his drama creations and social thoughts, then, it is an inevitable choice for Shaw in his old age to adopt the style of "rhapsody" during the process of his artistic development. Unlike the creation and thinking mode of problem plays, rhapsodic drama creations can greatly expand Shaw's imagination space, thus many characters and scenes, which can only be represented in a realistic way, can be conveniently and freely showed in an illusory way now. Shaw shows the political, economic, and moral issues of British society one by one by using the artistic technique of rhapsody, and appropriately opens the gap between reality and imagination letting people see the real world more clearly in an illusory and mysterious world. At the same time, Shaw does not ignore the reality of spiritual emptiness of the British people and the status quo of bourgeois exploitation nor does he ignore the environment of the illusory mood that prevailed in Europe after World War I and the anxiety and restlessness that preceded the economic crisis. With his rhapsodic drama creations, Shaw builds a bridge between reality and imagination, allowing people's thoughts freely flow between them, which greatly improves the level of his drama creations, offering a beautiful blueprint for people who hope to achieve virtuous moral ideals.

As a Nobel Prize winner, Shaw is a playwright of great achievements. He could have proceeded with his familiar and skillful dramatic techniques, but Shaw, in his later years, developed a unique approach and continued his artistic creations, which is different from that of the previous. And it is surprising that Shaw does not give up his original intention of focusing on social problems. Instead, he not only cares about the reality of British society, but also extends his focus to the world. At the same time, he also cares about the surface of social phenomena and pays more attention to the essence of the objective world. Shaw takes it as his duty to reflect and reveal social and moral problems in his drama creations, and consciously carries out his duties as an ethicist. At this stage, Shaw discusses more serious topics such as politics, humanity through unrestrained artistic creation, which is based on the belief that the earlier drama creation methods of realism are no longer effective in conveying his inner expectations, and only

"the ideas and principles formed by philosophic thinking are alive... in order to better reflect reality, Shaw always breaks the framework of reality, despises the objective and realistic details, operates in the most farcical and fanciful situations, and deals with the plot as he pleases" [9]. The plays of political rhapsody can precisely avoid the defects of the excessive attention to details and allow Shaw's gift for speech and discussion to take its place in the world of imagination, which is effective to the comprehensive and in-depth discussion of the practical problems in Britain and around the world.

Shaw wrote more than ten plays during this period, including *The Apple Cart*, *Too True to be Good*, and *A Village Wooing*, combining people's concern of current affairs with the form of fantasy and philosophy, which is a major feature of Shaw's political plays. The year 1929 witnessed both the first successful performance of Shaw's *The Apple Cart* and the unprecedented turmoil in British society due to the outbreak of the global economic crisis. On the one hand, people led an extremely hard life, and there were mass unemployment, and most families even had difficulty in maintaining a normal daily life; On the other hand, the chaotic international political order exacerbated the social tensions, in particular, the fascist rule implemented by the Nazi leader Hitler more fundamentally destroyed the already fragile world political and economic systems. The wars of aggression launched by Germany, Italy, Japan and other countries and the exploitation and oppression of the people of the invaded countries have made the oppressed people live in dire straits and the social contradictions were also on the rise. Shortly thereafter, the outbreak of the World War II caused irreparable and devastating damage to the patterns of the world, both economically and politically. Shaw responded to the political and economic crises in Britain and around the world with his persistent fighting passion by using drama as weapons. He was concerned about the sufferings of people, the harmony of world politics and even the future destiny of mankind. The huge disaster brought to the world by the World War II, the chaos and disorder of the world politics, the spiritual emptiness and the moral degeneration of the people are not only the common social reality of this period, but also the main themes of Shaw's political rhapsody. Shaw longed for social change, and the ultimate goal of his political rhapsody was to build a better world order and to reshape the virtuous social and moral codes.

4. Political Criticism of Political Rhapsody

In the 1920s and 1930s, the dominant position of Britain in the international market was gradually replaced by the United States. People's independence movements in the British colonies continued one after another. There was an unprecedented crisis in British society, economy and politics, among which the political crisis was prominently showed in front of people. In *The Apple Cart*, Shaw has been actively

seeking solutions to the political crisis. However, due to his political stance and class limitation, it is impossible and unable for him to find a solution to these crises. He was confronted with Britain's democratic and political dilemma and realized the brutal fact that both the King and his cabinet were in the service of the consortium. His only fantasy of the British politics was that "the only way to lead the government out of its predicament is to turn to a king trained in political management, that is the superman of political leader shaped by Shaw" [9]. *The Apple Cart* is Shaw's important attempt to use the power of fantasy to save Britain from political crisis. It is also the only goal of Shaw's political rhapsody.

It seems that Shaw created what he calls political extravaganza in a fictional setting, but actually he never deviated from British social reality. In terms of economy, Britain experienced both a burst of prosperity and a disastrous recession during this period. Faced with such problems as global economic crises and depressions, high unemployment, and uneven development, economists found it almost impossible to find a solution to these crises. And it is even more frightening to politicians that the continuing economic downturn and the uneven development of various regions and industries have seriously affected the government's ruling prestige. In terms of culture, Britain showed the characteristics of both "progress" and "disillusionment" in this period. Although there was the trend of material and cultural development and progress in Britain between the two world wars, the mentality of the British people was in a negative state. It is natural that the state of people's spiritual emptiness and the mentality of disillusionment are also reflected in literary creations of this period: "This is a world full of lonely, isolated and soulless people whose religions have been shattered and whose constant pursuits have been fruitless" [10]. This is the most authentic reflection of British society at that time. In terms of politics, *The Apple Cart* was based directly on the struggle between the then British political party (Labor Party) and the royal family. The ruling of the British Labor Party failed to deal with the social and economic crises, and they could not reconcile the contradictions with the royal family. Some members of the Fabian Society with the fundamental goal of reforming society became the core members of the Labor Party, which highlights the characteristic of the Labor party as a Socialist Party to a certain extent. The socialism claimed by the British Labor Party is in fact an unformed socialism with unclear goals and platforms. Similar to the Fabians Society at that time, the Labor Party ascribed all social evils to the capitalist system and they believed that if capitalism were to be abolished one day, social problems and all evils would be eliminated and eventually disappeared. It was under the guidance of this fantasy thought that the Labor Party finally failed to manage the country effectively. The Prime Minister Proteus in *The Apple Cart* is an allusion to Ramsay MacDonald, the Labor leader, who served as Prime Minister in 1924 and 1929. The reason Shaw chose MacDonald as the prototype of the Prime Minister in the play was partly due to his unique personality.

MacDonald was an idealist, but a compassionate one. Although he was known as the leader of the Socialist Party, as Prime Minister, he did not have a practical plan or concrete action for socialist construction and development. At the same time, the insistence on Victorian moral and economic values did not get him out of trouble, eventually he had to give way to the rule of the Conservative Party.

In the play, Shaw clearly shows his support for the King, eventually the Prime Minister has to tear up the ultimatum and the King gets the final victory. *The Apple Cart* clearly does not deviate from the interests and moral demands of Shaw's class. Shaw's biographer Harris once said that "Aristotle taught Alexander in vain to produce a king of philosophy to replace the brave and strong men who have ever ruled the world; Some others have looked for such leaders since that time, and when they found that such leaders does not exist, they created them in their dreams" [11]. *The Apple Cart* directly points out the defects of the British democratic system, which can be most directly reflected in the struggle between the King and the Prime Minister. The King portrayed by Shaw in the play is the ideal king in people's mind. Although he is still far away from the reality of British society, it does not affect people's virtuous expectations of the ideal politics.

The Apple Cart, a political rhapsody based on fantasy and imagination, discusses the state of the country in the future. It is actually about the real politics of the British society, which includes the social, political, economic and cultural discussions of that period as well as the struggle between the King and the Prime Minister over democracy.

The future democracy, which Shaw does not explicitly describe in *The Apple Cart*, is set under the background of British constitutional monarchy. As an ideal future country, people here live a carefree and happy life without worry, oppression and exploitation. The social contradictions in Britain at that time mainly focused on people's desire for democracy and the contradictions between the sovereignty and the constitutional monarchy. Shaw's early experiences in the Fabian Society gave him an early and comprehensive understanding of the basic situations of British society. He accepted and believed in socialism, actively promoted and defended the political movements and struggles and always protected the political and economic interests of the working class. He had a deep understanding of the British democracy, and above all, he could not tolerate MacDonald's encroachments on the rights of the working class. In fact, the so-called bourgeois democracy in the British parliament is not a real democracy representing the public interests. At that time, the political foundation of the parliament and the cabinet was monopoly capitalism. Therefore, it is impossible for the working class and the masses who live at the bottom of society to enjoy real democracy. On the contrary, the democratic politics they claimed is just a means and strategy for politicians to play politics.

The democracy called by ministers is just a fig leaf for politicians to deceive the people. Actually, they do not care about the so-called democracy and politics at all. In the play, the struggle is mainly between the King and the cabinet with

the Prime Minister as its core. The focus of their struggle is not on the democratic politics of the people, but the struggle of interests on behalf of their respective groups, because the parliament and the cabinet, which represent the real politics of Britain, are dominated only by a few people. Under the seemingly most democratic political system, ordinary people have no democratic rights at all, let alone the political benefits derived from it. As the ruling class, the King and the cabinet do not care about the sufferings of the people, but only their own interests and political power. The ruling class cannot feel the hardship of the lower class, nor can British society truly eradicate poverty and backwardness. The gap between the upper class and the lower class not only escalates the inherent contradictions of the British society, but also implies the coming of the next economic and political crises, and also inevitably hinders the development and progress of society. At the same time, the economic and political expansion of the British capitalism also undoubtedly accelerates the further deterioration of domestic and foreign conflicts.

There is a crisis behind the apparent prosperity of the British society. Britain gradually became the factory of the world after the industrial revolution. Just as ministers saw, they could produce almost anything, and their capital has permeated all over the world. However, the excessive expansion and its consequent exploitation and oppression of capital make the seemingly prosperous and stable British economic and political structure in danger of collapse at any time. Among them, the biggest potential crisis is the existence and spread of monopoly capital, which will completely destroy the entire basis of the British economy. Shaw describes the current situation and crisis of the monopolistic economy through the mouth of the Powermistress General Lysistrata: "Here I am, the Powermistress Royal. I have to organize and administer all the motor power in the country for the good of the country. I have to harness the winds and the tides, the oils and the coal seams. I have to see that every little sewing machine in the Hebrides...as punctually as the great thundering dynamos of our big industrial plants" [12]. As the Powermistress General of the country, the departments managed by Lysistrata are far beyond her control. Such a centralized monopoly management mode is bound to destroy the healthy development of the economy, and also exposes some shortcomings of the country's politics and economy. The result is that the monopoly industries control all the markets, and people have to purchase the necessities of production and life at high prices. Monopoly capitalists maximize their profits, while the ordinary people who live at the bottom of the society do not have the ability to resist but to be exploited. The political crisis in Britain is fully exposed through the mode of economic operation, and the declining political organism is gradually being devoured. The ruling class allows the cancer of monopoly and corruption freely spread in order to protect its established economic and political interests.

In addition to coping with the political and economic crises at home, Britain also needs to deal with the differences and contradictions with the United States. In *The Apple Cart*,

Shaw addresses the question of how to deal with the relationship between nations. There are not only the close ties of cultural and political origins but also the irreconcilable conflicts of interests between Britain and the United States. As a long-term dominated monopoly capitalist power, Britain will not easily give up her desire and ambition to dominate the world. She must try her best to maintain her leading position in politics, economy and culture. As an emerging capitalist power, the United States not only wants to consolidate her social, economic and political foundation continuously, but also hopes to seek broader development space and overseas expansion is the only road for her economic development. Under the democratic system, the United States has more political advantages than Britain. Meanwhile, the flexible and efficient economic operation mode of the United States has shown its strong vitality. Due to the advantage of political system, the desire of the United States to control the world is stronger than that of Britain. In this sense, Britain naturally becomes the prime target of the United States for conquest. Therefore, another layer of meaning of the political crisis revealed by Shaw in *The Apple Cart* is also apparent.

5. Ethical Ideal of Political Rhapsody

Since Shaw has explicitly subtitled *The Apple Cart* a political extravaganza, the issue of politics is naturally the center of his concerns. It involves many aspects and levels, including those relate to economy such as the contradictions between democracy and monopoly, poverty and exploitation, unemployment and production, as well as the problems of the political system itself, among which the power relationship between the King and the Prime Minister is particularly important in the political structure of Britain at that time. As a playwright who cares about social issues, Shaw is keenly aware of the potential dangers in the fields of society, economy, and politics in Britain, and uses *The Apple Cart* to clearly show his position. His political rhapsody contains rich ethical connotations and conveys the ethical ideal of political responsibility and accountability.

Shaw portrays two important figures in *The Apple Cart* who are closely related to British politics: The King and the Prime Minister. Compared with the Prime Minister Proteus, the image of King Magnus is full and interesting. Although the interlude in the two-act play shows the King's private life, one can still see the typical characteristics of the King as a political ruler. He is "a thinker committed to the passions of the soul and not just the passions of the body" [13]. It is well known that the King was not necessarily at the heart of politics as far as the British political system was concerned at that time. However, after the Labor Party came to power as a minority of the government, there was no revolutionary change in Britain, nor any positive actions to reform society. The actual situation of the government is that "faced with financial crisis, the Labor Prime Minister MacDonald, a pacifist during the war, was willing to lead a 'government-for-all', which is mainly made up of Conservatives. It is clear that the social structure of

the country, tested by severe economic depression of the time, did not change as much as many commentators had expected in 1919 and 1920" [14]. Although the ruling Labor cabinet at that time also hoped to carry out a more democratic and scientific governing policy, the limitations of its own made it impossible to make great achievements. Additionally, due to the struggle of the internal power and the fatal flaw of caring only for its own interests, it cannot fulfill its political responsibility to reform society. In the balance of power between the King and the Prime Minister, people's expectations of the future are clearly inclined to the constitutional monarchy represented by the King.

The result of this political struggle is mainly attributed to the following reasons: firstly, British society, economy, politics, culture and so on were in a state of stagnation at that time. The economic crisis at home resulted in mass unemployment, the shrinking of Britain's overseas markets, and the reduced dependence of the new competitors on Britain, all of which objectively weakened Britain's position in the international market and also affected the development of the British economy to a large extent. The British government was unable to solve the fundamental problems caused by the economic system, and the domestic monopoly economy further widened the gap between rich and poor, which makes it more difficult for those who live at the bottom of the society to guarantee their basic livelihood. Therefore, people longed for a more democratic government, and the political power represented by the King responded to the needs of people, which greatly boosted people's confidence in British democratic political system and cleared the way for the practice of the King's political ideal. Secondly, the democratic and liberal system claimed by British politics has not brought the substantial social progress to Britain. On the contrary, the political corruption and its consequent economic corruption have seriously hindered the development and progress of the country. The ruling Labor government was unable to cope with the political and economic crisis both at home and abroad, and its coalition of the Conservative and Liberal Party also failed to bring real democracy to the country. The core of the political struggle between the King and the Prime Minister was the King's desire to establish a democratic and liberal political system so that he could realize the social system and politics under socialism that Shaw had proclaimed and hoped to establish in his early years in the Fabian Society. "As a political theory, socialism struggles to eliminate the inequality and oppression of the majority of people and is aimed at realizing socialism and a better life" [15]. Shaw's socialism is based on the pursuit of the elimination of exploitation and oppression, while the Prime Minister and his cabinet represented by the leader of the Labor Party, are based on the pursuit of personal interests. Therefore, they cannot shoulder the historical responsibility for the benefits of the people. Finally, in terms of ethical responsibility, the King, the head of the country, has more conscious ethical responsibility to manage the affairs of the nation under the constitutional monarchy. In many of his debates with the Prime Minister, the King has always showed an absolute confidence and even

arrogance based on the rule of the absolute monarchy. Interestingly, his confidence and arrogance even show greater strength in his struggle with the Prime Minister.

The Apple Cart was a hit in Britain, not because its successful script, but the themes of British democracy and politics reflected in the play that attracted the attention of the audience, including the upper class. "There is a widespread and influential viewpoint that the democratic form of government is a hopeless scam. The advantage of King Magnus is that he knows it is a truth. As a King, he can admit it, and his cabinet understands this. But they have to pretend that they don't know it" [9]. The direct conflict in the play is the conflict between the royal represented by the King and the cabinet represented by the Prime Minister. Although some have criticized the King's tendency to monopolize power, Shaw still clearly showed his support for the King. At that time, Britain was under the shadow of the eve of the outbreak of world economic crisis. Shaw keenly captured the topics of democracy and politics that people are keen to think about and discuss, and he also stimulated people's criticism and reflection on British political reality in his imaginative and satirical artistic creations.

The King Magnus described by Shaw is ostensibly competes with the Prime Minister Proteus for the control of the country, that is the monarchical power must be placed above democratic power. The monarchical power becomes the synonym of absolute democracy. It wins the final victory in what appears to be the antithesis of democracy, and the reasons behind the struggle are worth pondering. In fact, the politics that the King insisted on does not really deviate from his most basic ethical pursuit, and the king's moral responsibility and accountability to save the country from crisis is admirable. On the contrary, what Shaw expressed in his foreword to the publication of the play is precisely that the government represented by the Prime Minister cannot really carry out the democracy he claimed. "The contradiction between the King and the Prime Minister is not the conflict between the monarchical power and democracy, but the conflict between the monarchical power and democracy and the consortium class. In the name of democracy, the consortium class undermined the monarchy, and finally bribed and trampled it" [16].

In order to maintain the effective implementation of democratic politics, the King must face the unfavorable situations of British democratic politics. "Today, there is no aristocrat, freelancer, big business or financial leader still in charge of politics. They are richer, more powerful, capable and educated than ever, yet none of them is willing to touch the drudgery of political work" [12]. Nevertheless, the King must try to find an effective way to solve a series of difficulties in the process.

The king, of course, does not want the consortium class to take control of the country on the grounds of democracy. He must shoulder the important mission of resolving the crisis with wisdom and responsibility. Faced with the complex political situation, the king accurately grasped the root cause of the crisis. On the one hand, through the exploitation of

overseas colonies, the consortium class makes the British economy jump to the rich and developed level, and the bourgeoisie also lives a prosperous and stable life. On the other hand, as the vested interests, and in order to further protect the interests of the consortium class, the government will naturally hand over the high-profit industries to the consortium class, and even connives at the consortium class's monopoly capital with the sole purpose of seeking high profits. The monopoly mode not only makes high profits, but also hinders the innovation and progress of technology to a great extent. The King is not only aware of the interest links between the cabinet government represented by the Prime Minister and the consortium class, but also the nature of British politics and democracy: "politics, once a central attraction for talented, service-minded and ambitious people, has become a haven for a few public speakers and rowdy partisans" [12]. The cabinet government represented by the Prime Minister does not bring real prosperity to the country, nor does it bring real democracy to the politics, so it cannot take on the task of building a strong democratic country. Shaw himself clearly favors the King of the monarchy because he believes in the King's political wisdom. He has the confidence that only the King can bring real democracy and freedom to Britain. Most of all, Shaw shows the King's final victory in *The Apple Cart* while the Prime Minister's plans are completely in vain. The root cause of this is not only the moral power of the king's words and deeds to the people, but also people's beautiful vision for an ideal society. The King's victory is "at least above the tyranny made up of mass ignorance and poverty" [12]. The King is Shaw's spokesman for his time, and also the perfect embodiment of Shaw's ethical expression in his plays. Shaw speaks of the great principles in his heart through the mouth of the King, which are the moral codes he persisted in his drama creations: all words and deeds that represent conscience and virtue are the basic principles in Shaw's creations.

6. Conclusion

In Short, Shaw clearly shows his political ideal and ethical appeal in *The Apple Cart*. The final victory of the King, after several fights with the Prime Minister, is no longer a matter of personal success or failure. Its significance lies in the fact that Shaw set a goal for people, a political goal that can achieve democracy, freedom and rich ethical connotations, and the moral principles and conscientious character proposed by the King also conform to people's inner expectations. *The Apple Cart* is not only a concentrated representation of Shaw's political ideal in his later period of writing, but also an ethical expression after a long reflection on British political system.

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