WILLIAM MORRIS
THE MARXIST DREAMER

BY PAUL MEIER
Professor Meier in this massive book demonstrates that Morris had a great deal of importance to say about politics and society. He argues that Morris was an unequivocal Marxist, and also that he was a creative Marxist — one who made important extensions to Marxist thought. Of all the preceding Morris literature no book has done what Meier attempts, and his work is already accepted as of the enduring quality and importance of E. P. Thompson's *William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary*.

What is special about Meier's book is that it defines one particular theme — not just Morris's acceptance of Marxism as a guide to his socialist thought and action, but his concern with theory, and his capacity to extend that theory.

Meier emphasizes that Morris's thought was not ideistic or merely dreaming; it had a hard edge. He is at pains to show Morris's view of history embracing not only the past but the present and future; how he grasped the essentially class nature of the conflicts within society, and the basis of this in the different modes of exploitation and the social and ideological structures arising from them; how he understood the notion of two stages of development from capitalism to his communism — a process with socialism as the necessary step between.
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Dedication

The English-language edition of this book is dedicated with warm affection and sincere thanks to RAY WATKINSON, friend to the author, translator and publisher, whose infectious enthusiasm, commitment, wit and learning have helped the work at every stage and have meant a very great deal to us all.
Preface

The description of British poets and artists of the mid- and late nineteenth century as examples of an advanced and progressive culture was a fancy picture. It was belied in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* by the short shrift given to the democratic poetry of Robert Burns and the total omission of the revolutionary democrat William Blake. Apart from a very few, the Victorians with great names reflected the outlook and the prejudices of the middle class; and in nothing so much as in their disdain of the working class. From the day when the laureate Wordsworth smashed his staff in a rage on being told that the Chartist leader, John Frost, was not to be hanged, right on to the laureate Tennyson, aghast if 'Russia bursts our Indian barrier' and if war or peace be settled by the votes of the newly enfranchised agricultural labourers, there is steady access of class bias.

But then came the manifold craftsman, artist and poet, William Morris, who plunged into political activity to stop 'an unjust war' by his appeal 'To the Working Men of England' (11 May 1877). In this he asked if they realised 'the bitterness of hatred against freedom and progress that lies at the hearts of the richer classes of this country'. 'These men', he says, 'would deliver you bound hand and foot forever to irresponsible capital'. A dozen years later Morris, leader of the Socialist League, is at the founding congress of the Socialist International; and in 1890 in *Commonweal* of which he had for five years been the editor, he writes serially *News from Nowhere, or an epoch of rest, being some chapters from a utopian romance*. Very soon *News from Nowhere* was translated into the main languages of Europe.

Paul Meier, the distinguished scholar, who in 1961 published the best French translation (*Nouvelles de nulle part*, Editions Sociales, Paris) has since turned his attention to more fundamental studies of the utopian thinking of Morris, on which there appeared in October 1972 a volume in three parts—*La Pensee Utopique de William Morris*. This had an immediate impact in North America and in the United Kingdom from whose presses there have issued in the last five years many publications to swell the torrent of books about Morris that have appeared at the rate of about one a year throughout this century. Now, skilfully translated by my Sydenham neighbour, Frank Gubb, Paul Meier's book appears in English under the title *William Morris the Marxist Dreamer*.

In a Foreword to Part II, Dr Meier has explained how his studies, which are penetrating and profound, inclined him to think that the main inspiration and starting point of the Morris utopia was to be sought in the teaching of Karl Marx. He was then to find that with two notable exceptions (one in 1955 and another back in 1934) critics 'were almost unanimous in declaring that William
Morris was the opposite of a Marxist. To track down, analyse and explode these mistaken notions now became a task additional to the great work Meier had set himself. These notions, rife enough in the forty years that followed the death of Morris, might well have ceased after 1936, in which year Bernard Shaw, who had worked with Morris and had known him as 'the greatest poet and the greatest prose writer of the reign of Queen Victoria', made the authoritative declaration that 'Morris stood for Karl Marx contra mundum'; but the 'mistaken notions' persisted. The fact has to be faced that in this century literary and political criticism had become an Augean stable of filth and fantasies about William Morris: and Paul Meier has put us all under a debt by his undertaking to cleanse the stable and destroy much of the rubbish. Not only has he done this conclusively, but in so doing has performed another signal service—of demonstrating Morris's almost totally undervalued power as a theorist.

Robin Page Arnot
Sydenham, July 1977
Introduction

One may well wonder whether it was necessary to devote yet another book, and one of this bulk, to William Morris. Hundreds of books and articles have, over nearly eighty years, recounted his life and described his many activities. Innumerable critical judgements have been made of him, and their diversity is truly astonishing. It must be admitted that this voluminous literature, taken together, has long been very uneven in quality and often suspiciously subjective. A more serious point is that the poet and artist has been, in a restricted view, exalted, while a modest veil has been cast over his ideology and political life, these being regarded as of minor importance, a little embarrassing, or even as a regrettable waste of energy. This has resulted in a blurring of the image of Morris and a lack of understanding of his art itself, the deepest intentions and true significance of which have been ignored or distorted. The few books devoted to his socialism have scarcely been satisfactory. Bruce Glasier's account was deliberately mealy-mouthed and reassuring, teeming with assertions of dubious veracity. In France, Edouard Guyot's study was, for a long time, the only honest analysis, but it was brief and superficial. For long years the only fundamental document available to critics was the biography published in 1898 by J. W. Mackail; it is still irreplaceable today, but is, all the same, wilfully fragmentary and tendentious.

Moreover, Morris's Complete Works were not published until very late, between 1910 and 1915, and we had to wait until 1936 for the publication by his daughter May of the two supplementary volumes containing some of his most significant writings. May's introduction and commentaries accompanying these volumes represented a considerable advance upon earlier literature and provided a mass of precious facts, but the basic problems were scarcely indicated. Since then, very slowly, unpublished works are finding their way to the presses. A certain number of Morris's letters were collected in 1950 by Philip Henderson and some more in 1951 by R. Page Arnot, but a mass of correspondence still lies sleeping in library boxes and private collections in every corner of Europe and the United States. Finally, ten further lectures, hitherto only available at the British Museum, were published by Professor Eugene D. Le Mire of Wayne State University, first in 1962 as a typewritten thesis, and in 1969 as a printed volume; the latter has a different and much shorter introduction.

These long delays explain in part the shortcomings of criticism over many years, but only in part. It was only in 1934 that R. Page Arnot, in a slim pamphlet of 30 pages, did pioneer work in drawing attention to the Marxist inspiration of Morris's socialism. These short, incisive pages were a revelation.
Since, and stemming from it, there has appeared a masterly work by E. P. Thompson: *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1958). This volume of more than 900 pages constitutes the most detailed biography that could be desired and describes with noteworthy intelligence Morris's literary, artistic, political and ideological evolution. It is a fundamental work to which we must continually refer and without which the present study would have been impossible. The labour carried out by E. P. Thompson is usefully supplemented by A. L. Morton's more general studies in English utopias and, in Czechoslovakia, the more literary ones of Jessie Kocmanova. Books which have appeared since, apart from Professor Le Mire's thesis, add little to our knowledge of Morris's thought.  

Nevertheless, all has not been said. While it may be readily admitted that *News from Nowhere* is the writer's most popular and representative work, it does not seem to have been the best understood. Critics have been unanimous in appreciating its poetry and charm, but few among them have turned to its content, unless to look upon Morris's utopia with amused indulgence. Few among them have seen it as serious thought and none has yet undertaken to set the ideas which stem from it side by side with all the similar ideas scattered throughout his whole work and which constitute a body of thought of extraordinary richness. Such is the ambition of the present work, and despite my efforts to embrace all aspects of Morris's anticipatory thinking, I am not convinced that this vast subject is exhausted.  

E. P. Thompson's monumental and inestimable study is a historian's work, and I sincerely believe that it is impossible to write a single line more in definition of Morris's socialism, its characteristics and its development. The mistake (which often happens) would be to confuse his socialism with his utopian thinking, that is, his conception of a society to come and of the future of mankind. These two aspects of his ideology clearly overlap and are inconceivable apart from each other, but utopianism is not merely political thinking, but also philosophical, economic, aesthetic, moral, social and historical thinking, which, in Morris's case, takes on dimensions distinctly more vast than in previous utopian systems. I felt that an investigation of this kind was worth undertaking.  

It has imposed its own strict discipline. Anything not having direct bearing upon utopia is excluded from the scope of our study. I only have recourse to biography (what more remains to be said after Thompson?) to the extent to which it provides explanations, nor is there any question of going over the same ground by relating Morris's life of militancy. Nor do we study his immense work as decorator, and I only refer to it to extract the aesthetic theories involved in his looking forward. I refer to his poems and romances only when they contain a germ or extension of a utopian idea. Our attention is above all directed towards his theoretical writings, lectures, articles, treatises and, of course, his stories, such as *A Dream of John Ball* and *News from Nowhere*, which are the tangible illustrations of this thought. But (and it is, I am well aware, an enormous pity) I have refused to allow myself to be drawn into the smallest literary digression: despite my eagerness not to lose any nuance of this rich and complex thought, I have resisted the constant temptation to enjoy its forms of expression.  

Alongside this thematic limitation stands a chronological limitation.
William Morris only came to socialism around the age of 50, and his utopian thought only took full wing with the development of his theoretical education. In fact, his utopianism offers the greater interest for being an expression of full maturity. It existed, surely, in embryonic forms (already fairly well-defined, moreover, on the aesthetic plane) in the work of his earlier years, and we take note of this. But, in fact, our study is logically concentrated upon the writings subsequent to 1880.

Even restricted in this way, the study which I initially projected proved to be too vast and too ambitious for a single volume, and for the moment I have had to set aside two-thirds of it. In fact, every utopia takes as its starting point criticism and even rejection of contemporary ways and institutions. Utopia is primarily negation. Throughout Morris’s writings we find a vibrant and many-pronged indictment of Victorian society, of its ugliness, its social injustice, its pretences and its hypocrisy. It is by setting off from this inhumanity that he defines the outlines of the finally human society of time to come. I have only kept a few rapid indispensable glimpses of this denunciation, and they are by no means sufficient to reveal its full extent. Nor, alas, is that all! Morris’s utopia is not arbitrary and gratuitous, situated outside space and time. It sets off from a real situation in a real country and envisages a historical development founded upon a scientific theory. It includes in its foresight all the events separating the present moment from the stage finally described, and the major event is the social revolution which will open the new era. Contrary to all earlier utopists, Morris does not, in the words of Babeuf, leave ‘his means blank’. Let us not forget that, at the time at which he was writing, the world had not yet seen any socialist revolution, and that, for him, there could be nothing but the foresight of his own brain. So we find him with a theory of revolution that is an integral part of his utopia. That, too, I lack space to study in the present work, which is confined entirely to an analysis of Morris’s conception of future society. This work, then, presents a double gap and must be regarded as a fragment of a study yet to be completed. From all these limitations I have enumerated arises a danger of which I am only too well aware – that of giving an unduly narrow view of the prodigiously rich personality of William Morris. I am almost shamefaced about it and ask the reader to understand and forgive. I think that he will easily do so by appreciating, within the bounds enclosing our analysis, the extraordinary abundance of thought which close attention reveals.

However, an attitude consisting only of description and analysis would put us at great risk of staying on the surface. I had to understand. For that, I needed to bring out the ideology inspiring Morris’s utopia, and the only way was to discover its sources and to define which, among the many influences bearing upon him, was the one which predominated, enveloping the rest. I wanted not to neglect any one of these factors and have tried to re-establish the complex tangle in which diversity tends towards unity. Along the road, I have had to sweep away an impressive range of legends and unjustified interpretations. The reader will realise that my task, throughout the present book, will have been to correct inexactitudes and denounce falsifications – deliberate or unconscious – which for decades entirely misrepresented Morris’s thought. I know very well that it is difficult to cast off ready-made and assiduously taught ideas, and that I will be accused of having an axe to grind. My reply will be
that at no moment have I permitted myself the slightest arbitrary assertion and that each one is based upon precise references and upon the discoveries I have succeeded in making. No true research can be pacific.

I cannot conclude this preamble without expressing my gratitude to all those, men and women, who have provided help and support. It goes first to Monsieur J. J. Mayoux, professor at the Sorbonne, under whose direction the present work has been brought to its conclusion. He has shown rare understanding and been unsparing of encouragement. Thanks also to my very close friend, Monsieur Emile Bottigelli, whose twin skills as Germanist and editor of the works of Marx and Engels have sometimes saved me long research; he has authorised the reproduction, as an appendix, of two unpublished letters of which he possesses the originals. I owe a similar debt to Mr. Chimen Abramsky, of London, who has allowed me to give the reader the first sight of a precious unknown Morris manuscript. Similarly, I have been able to reproduce three other unpublished letters through the good offices of the Amsterdam Institute of Social History, the Moscow Institute of Marxism-Leninism and the Hammersmith Central Reference Department. I have had the benefit of a useful exchange of information with Monsieur J.-M. Baïssus, of the Faculté des Lettres of Montpellier, who is preparing an important work on William Morris as a writer; with Professor Norman Kelvin of New York City College, who is soon, I hope, to publish Morris's complete correspondence; with Professor B. G. Knepper of Morningside College, Sioux City, Iowa, a specialist in the works of Bernard Shaw; with Mrs. Yvonne Kapp of London, an authority on Eleanor Marx-Aveling. Thanks are also due to the London Society of Antiquaries for allowing me to have microfilms made of unpublished manuscripts by William Morris and to the William Morris Society, whose eminent Secretary, Mr. R. C. H. Briggs, gave me a specially friendly welcome and arranged invaluable contacts. I owe to the Reverend N. Macdonald Ramn of Oxford and to the Reverend A. R. Staines of Bexleyheath information about useful biographical details contained in their parish registers. Finally, I wish to thank for their effective help the staffs of the Bibliothèque Nationale, the British Museum, the libraries of the Sorbonne, the William Morris Gallery at Walthamstow, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the London School of Economics; adding a special thought for Miss M. W. H. Schreuder, who has charge of the Anglo-American section of the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, thanks to whom I discovered the text (believed lost) of an important lecture by William Morris.

And may I end this introduction by expressing to my wife (to whom the original French edition of this book is dedicated) my deep gratitude for her practical and moral help, without which my task would have been impossible.

Let us try to take refuge behind Pisarev.

"There are rifts and rifts," wrote Pisarev of the rift between dream and reality. "My dream may run ahead of the natural march of events or may fly off at a tangent in a direction in which no natural march of events will ever proceed. In the first case my dream will not cause any harm; it may even support and augment the energy of the working man... There is nothing in such dreams that would distort or paralyse labour-power. On the contrary, if man were completely deprived of the ability to dream in this way, if he could not from time to time run ahead and mentally conceive, in an entire and completed pic-
ture, the product to which his hands are only just beginning to lend shape, then I cannot at all imagine what stimulus there would be to induce man to undertake and complete extensive and strenuous work in the sphere of art, science and practical endeavour ... The rift between dreams and reality causes no harm if only the person dreaming believes seriously in his dream, if he attentively observes life, compares his observations with his castles in the air, and if, generally speaking, he works conscientiously for the achievement of his fantasies. If there is some connection between dreams and life then all is well."

Of this kind of dreaming there is unfortunately too little in our movement.

LENIN: *What is to be Done?* Works, V, pp. 509-10.

... a man must have time for serious individual thought, for imagination – for dreaming even – or the race of men will inevitably worsen.

William MORRIS: *Art and Socialism.*
PART ONE
GODS AND DEMONS
CHAPTER ONE

Religion

The attitude of a utopian writer towards religious problems cannot be disregarded by anyone seeking to define the ideological bases of his utopia. Utopia itself, in fact, involves the adoption of a position; it is necessarily a confident affirmation of the importance of the terrestrial world, even of its primacy. It does not accept resignation to the misery and injustice of the human condition; it tacitly rejects the consolation of a hereafter and it can, finally, either refuse to comment upon the existence of one or even deny it explicitly. Many utopias, however, are not without religious fervour and therein lies a fact not readily explicable in schematic fashion; in each case, it is a matter of temperament, of intellectual keenness, of period, of view of the world. For some, there is no contradiction; their mind is filled with the concept of unity between heaven and earth. With others it may simply be a matter of complete failure to see any contradiction. Some are conscious of it, but choose to be non-committal. But in all cases, whether the utopia is of an idealist inspiration or not, the author's personal beliefs cannot but influence the content of his dream, the form of his aspirations, his tendency to stress some certain aspect of the desired society, and the ethic of the mankind described.

The innumerable critics who have turned their attention towards the work of William Morris have never taken more than incidental note of his attitude to religion. The family biographers are extremely discreet. His daughter, May, whose own reactions are often confused and contradictory, is content, when she touches upon the problem, to insist upon her father's extreme reserve and his refusal to commit himself. However, the very partial information she provides permits us, as we shall see, to determine certain traits. J. W. Mackail, for his part, is a far less certain source. Morris's socialism plainly embarrasses him, and the picture he draws sets out to be as respectable as possible. This is precisely why he dilates complacently upon the years of Morris's childhood and youth when he was responsive to the religious trends of the time, but he refrains, once this stage is past, to enlighten us upon the author's later reactions. Lacking adequate witness from his contemporaries, we will go to Morris himself. He, throughout his work, has expressed his thought in relatively clear terms. We must not expect forthright declarations. His attitude remains one of reserve, and is marked by his constant desire not to give offence; it is rare, nevertheless, for it to be ambiguous.

* * *

Is it necessary for us to dwell upon his childish religion? I hesitate to think so. William Morris's utopian thought did not really begin to take shape before
the approach of the 'eighties. He was then over forty-five and had given up any theological preoccupations. So it is not the real substance of what his religion had been which is truly interesting in our eyes. Rather it is the sum of activities and tastes which this temporary inclination of his intellect fostered, for it would be too much to say that they were created out of nothing. So, in this hasty examination, I shall follow J. W. Mackail's account, putting it together with the indications Morris himself provides, especially in his correspondence.

"The religion of the family," Mackail tells us, "was of the normal type of somewhat sterile Evangelicalism, which cursorily dismissed everything outside itself as Popery on the one hand or Dissent on the other. The children were not allowed to mix with dissenters with the single exception of the Quakers."

This narrow outlook and this colourless background seem to have been common enough then among the middle classes. The word "enthusiasm", writes May Morris, was a pejorative term in religious circles, and social reformers such as F. D. Maurice were not looked upon as true Christians. The openness of mind and the love of life in all its forms which Morris was not slow to show during his university years make it impossible to believe that this somewhat suffocating atmosphere could have exercised a lasting influence upon him. He is, moreover, categorical on this point and, in an autobiographical letter to Andreas Scheu many years later (5 September 1883), he declares that, even as a child, he was never easy with the conformist puritanism of the wealthy classes.

However, religious practice had some effects. Around Walthamstow and Woodford, where the family lived, there were many old churches which they often visited, and the young Morris, already passionately responsive to the beauty of things and endowed with the rare gift of observation, knew their smallest decorative and architectural details very early. At times these visits were real journeys and so, at the age of eight, he, together with his father, discovered Canterbury Cathedral; it left, Mackail tells us, an indelible impression and was a revelation of all the splendour of Gothic art. If we recall that he could read at four and was then devouring Walter Scott's Waverley Novels, we realise that a taste for the mediaeval past could not but develop precociously in him. Let us add that London had not yet invaded Essex, and that these visits and excursions introduced him to the charm of the English countryside with its beautiful old dwellings. But all this shows aesthetic pleasure and a taste for history much more than mysticism.

During the three years (1848–51) which Morris spent at Marlborough College, there appeared a new phenomenon, which, even if it did not yet assume great importance, laid the way for future developments. The school was a centre of Anglo-Catholicism and the observances practised there were firmly High Church in tendency. It happened that Morris's sister, Emma, also was caught up at that time in a wave of revivalism. Correspondence between the young people reflects these developments, but as far as Morris was concerned the only manifestation of the phenomenon lay in his taste for sacred music. We have a letter from him in which he speaks at length of a psalm which entranced him, but we notice that above all he details to his sister the
choral variations which the psalm admits. One hesitates to see in this effusion anything more than an expression of aesthetic sensuousness; true religious emotion is missing. Nor is there any trace of mysticism in the letter which he wrote to Emma the month before (19 March), telling her of the order of the confirmation ceremony at the school. He confines himself to describing the bishop in commonplace terms and also, a very typical detail, the communion plate. Morris's tone seems to brighten up suddenly in a completely worldly postscript, in which he is eager to know whether his brother, James, has, as he had asked him, sold the baby rabbits he had reared, because he wants to buy a fishing rod with the money.

Mackail asserts that, at the end of his education at Marlborough, William was definitely Anglo-Catholic. It is difficult, in the absence of more cogent personal witness, to assess the accuracy of this assertion, at any rate as far as the strength of his deeper feelings is concerned. It seems certain, in any case, that the High Church ritual must have attracted him infinitely more than the dull family puritanism, and been more in keeping both with his native love of beauty and with the fantasy of his imagination. Emma was probably more receptive to the new current. She was, moreover, to marry the next year a young clergyman strongly steeped in Anglo-Catholicism ("of pronounced High Church views"), the Reverend Joseph Oldham, who had been curate at Walthamstow from 1845 to 1848. The young couple settled in a parish in Derbyshire, and in this way William was henceforth separated from his sister. Mackail tells us that he suffered greatly from this, adding that their intimacy had been very close and that it was under her influence that he had decided to enter the Church. There are no grounds for completely rejecting this latter assertion, although we do not know upon what basis it rests; but we note that when, a few years later, Morris went back upon his decision, it was with his mother, not his sister, that he had to have the discussion, which leaves room to think that it was a matter of a premature family decision rather than of a vocation inspired by the sudden fervour of revivalism, as Mackail seems to imply.

The High Church influence did not immediately cease to operate upon him. When, in 1851, the deplorable administration of Marlborough College led his mother to withdraw him, he was, while waiting to go to university, entrusted to a tutor, "a High Churchman of the best type", with whom Morris was to maintain very cordial relations.

In reality, whatever Mackail may say, it was only during his short university years that this influence was effective, and it was not to last. Morris's own evidence bears this out. He wrote, in fact, to Andreas Scheu, in the same autobiographical letter of 1883 already cited:

"I went to Oxford in 1853 as a member of Exeter College; I took very ill to the studies of the place; but fell to very vigorously on history and especially mediaeval history, all the more perhaps because at this time I fell under the influence of the High Church or Puseyite school; this latter phase however did not last me long, as it was corrected by the books of John Ruskin which were at the time a sort of revelation to me; I was also a good deal influenced by the works of Charles Kingsley, and got into my head therefrom some socio-political ideas which would have developed probably but for the attractions of art and poetry."
It is pertinent to stress that the Tractarian Movement was then in its decline. Newman’s conversion to Rome in 1845 had dealt it a mortal blow. By the time Morris arrived at university it was only a survival. Mackail himself admits that the great railway speculations of 1846 stirred public opinion more deeply than did the religious controversies and finished the process started by the conversion of Newman. The atmosphere of Oxford had changed considerably, and Anglo-Catholicism was coming up against strong liberal and positivist positions. The arrival of the Great Western Railway opened the ancient city to modern life and began to change its mediaeval character. Oxford was no longer closed in upon itself, and the currents which Morris mentions in his letter to Andreas Scheu must have exercised an irresistible pressure on the spiritual ivory towers.

At a closer look, this crisis which I hesitate to describe as mystical (let us call it rather, youthful fervour) began to calm down by the end of 1854. One may even wonder whether it would have lasted that long without the daily contact of Edward Burne-Jones, who entered Exeter College at the same time as William Morris and whose close friend he remained to the end of his days. Burne-Jones, also destined for the priesthood, was of a much more heterodox temperament than Morris and always refrained from following his friend into the heterodox paths he was later to take: knighthood and official recognition were later to recompense this wisdom, which, it must be said, was in no way hypocritical. In 1853, in their college rooms, the two young men spent long nights devouring books of theology and ecclesiastical history. Mackail cites among them Neale’s History of the Eastern Church, Milman’s Latin Christianity, the Acta Sanctorum and numerous mediaeval chronicles. The reading of Kenelm Digby’s Mores Catholicæ and the treatises of Archdeacon Wilberforce came near, in fact, to converting Morris to Catholicism. As far as we know, no letter of Morris’s dating from that period has survived, and we must rest content with what Mackail says, and he gives us no indication of the source of his information. The ardour of the two friends was tempered by more profane pursuits. Burne-Jones spent whole days drawing in the woods, so finding solace from his “theological perplexities”. As well as Carlyle, Kingsley and Ruskin, Tennyson stirred Morris’s enthusiasm, and he, for his part, was pursuing his fervent exploration of the architecture and graphic arts of the Middle Ages. Quite a group (“the set”) grew up around them, and it was not theology that was the centre of their interests. Canon Dixon, from whom Mackail sought and obtained evidence, leaves no doubt on the point:

“Jones and Morris were both meant for Holy Orders: and the same may be said of the rest of us, except Faulkner; but this could not be called the bond of alliance. The bond was poetry and indefinite artistic and literary aspiration.”

Dixon also tells us that, during 1854–55, readings of Shakespeare’s plays took place in the rooms of “the set”, and reveals the interesting fact that Morris declaimed with impressive conviction Claudio’s speech in Measure for Measure: “Aye, but to die, and go we know not where.” The theme of this declamation, by no means in tune with orthodox Christianity, recurs several times in less and less romantic forms in the early works.

As early as 1853, Morris was writing poems. The greater part of them were
to be lost in a furious *auto-da-fe*. May's filial piety has preserved a few scattered fragments for us. Their inspiration is, certainly, religious but by no means mystical. It rather foreshadows, though overloaded with grandiloquence and saturated with mediaeval romanticism, the style of the great narrative poems of his maturity. May Morris quotes extensively from a poem entitled *The Dedication of the Temple*. Its subject is the Crusades, and its interest lies in its having been written in 1853, during the acute stage of Morris's Tractarian period. May appositely points out that one cannot find the slightest trace of fanaticism in the poem. On the contrary, she asserts, Morris condemns the violence of the Christians against the infidels and shows his compassion for the sufferings of the latter. "Pray, Christians," he exclaims, "for the sins of Christian men!" 17

This crusading theme was in the air, together with an ideal of monastic life. On this point we lack Morris's own evidence and have only that of Burne-Jones, whose fervour was very exalted. In his letters to a friend in Birmingham, he several times mentions the idea of founding a monastery, and Mackail assures us that William thought seriously ofdevoting his fortune to an enterprise of this kind. 18 Burne-Jones invites his correspondent to join "this Crusade and Holy Warfare against the age" 19 - a formulation which leads us to think that, if the young painter was drawing Morris down the path of religion, the latter was perhaps making him share in the preoccupation he was deriving from contact with Carlyle and Ruskin. In the group too were young people from the Birmingham area, notably Cormell Price, who brought to Morris their knowledge of the Black Country and its social problems. And that is why, in 1855, the ideal of this "fraternity" bore an appearance which was much less monastic than social. 20 At the same moment, another factor intervened to exert a considerable influence upon Morris. This was his discovery of Chaucer, which was finally to give his mediaevalism a wide window on to the earthly world and to purge it of all spiritual excess, so producing in him a "secularization of mind", in J. W. Mackail's excellent phrase. 21 Religious observance certainly went on for a long time after this progressive abandonment of theological preoccupations; Burne-Jones and he often took part in the plain-song services at St. Thomas's Church but it was more and more a question of musical enjoyment to which for Morris was added the growing attraction of the plastic arts and architecture. Although the two young men remained joined by a friendship which was to stand against all vicissitudes, there was no longer the agreement between them on points of doctrine which had brought them together, as Cormell Price perceptively noted in May 1855: Burne-Jones had become too catholic to be ordained into the Anglican church and William was professing altogether dubious opinions. 22

This problem of priestly vocation was soon to present itself with growing urgency to the two friends. As far as it concerned Burne-Jones, Cormell Price's perception was incomplete: he had not taken into account that another vocation, that of painting, had possessed him. It was in the summer of 1855, on the occasion of an unforgettable tour in France, wallowing in architecture and art, that one night, on the Le Havre quayside, the two young men resolutely faced the issue and decided to renounce the Church in order to devote their lives to art. 23 That Morris returned to Oxford in the autumn of 1855, was only out of regard for his mother, with whom he had, in September or October, a first,
somewhat stormy and indecisive discussion. But, though he returned, it was not with the intention of pursuing his studies as far as his B.A., and, even before his return, he explained his reason to Cornell Price: he refused to sign the compulsory acceptance of the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England. So the rupture was complete; it was not sentimental, it was doctrinal. Clearly it is a pity that we possess no letters from Morris between August and October to allow us to follow the stages of this rapid progress. We must rest content with stating its outcome, which is devoid of any ambiguity.

He now had to take up the matter with his mother and reach a final settlement. Feeling unsure of his ability to keep his temper, over which he had not been too successful at the time of the Walthamstow discussion, he chose to write to her, on 11 November. It is a letter of moving tenderness which allows us to appreciate Morris’s human qualities. But it does not tell us much about the motives of his decision. It is laboured, meticulously composed, aimed essentially at convincing his mother that, on the one hand, no material hardship would come of his new choice of profession and that, on the other, the calling of architect would allow him to be of use to his neighbour and to lead an exemplary life. One or two incidental reflections, however, merit our attention. First, one on the inadequacy of the instruction he received at Oxford: “... an University education,” he wrote, “fits a man about as much for being a ship-captain as a Pastor of souls,” — which is a roundabout way of conveying that only a sincere vocation, which he no longer possessed (if he ever had done), is needed to fulfil that office. A little further on, wishing to reassure his mother, who was disturbed about people’s opinions of her son’s lack of purpose, he promises to give the lie to such poor opinions, “God being my helper”, by the persistence of his efforts. This abrupt reference to God does not carry conviction. This whole letter is deliberately phrased in a moralising style (very different from the tone of his correspondence with his friends) which suggests with involuntary cruelty the heavy and dreary family atmosphere. Morris is seeking arguments and words to pacify poor Mama; he must keep to her level of understanding and leave her, perhaps, some illusions. One thing is certain – henceforth and for long years, until the moment when his transformed, mature thought once again confronts religious problems, all personal reference to God disappears from his vocabulary.

* * *

He never again took part in any religious observance. His only visits to churches were entirely in response to artistic impulses or through enthusiasm for the campaign he later undertook for the protection of ancient monuments. The only exception to this rule was the baptism of his daughters, Jane Alice (Jenny) in 1861 and Mary (May) in 1862; Perhaps he did not wish to shock his family. After Emma’s marriage to an Anglo-Catholic parson, the affection Morris showed her became tinged with irony. One would like to know what it was he gave her for Christmas in 1870 which was calculated, he wrote, to operate in the opposite direction from what she had known in her youth. In 1883, announcing to Jenny Aunt Emma’s arrival in London, he tells her that the object of her journey is “‘holy larks”, in which he will certainly not join. His attitude towards his friends and relations is the same. Being in
Marlborough for a few days in 1876, he refused to accompany his hosts to service on Sunday, and recounted the incident to his wife in the same ironical tone. 12 This detail is not without interest. If Jane Morris seems in fact to have shown little sympathy for her husband’s socialist ideas and friends, she does not appear to have made the smallest difficulty over the question of religious observance. Many disbelievers have found themselves in awkward situations because of their disbelief and felt obliged to make some concessions. The freedom which Morris enjoyed in this respect within his family leads us to believe in his complete sincerity. He was not, after all, a man to allow himself to be put upon, and his horror of any hypocrisy shows throughout his work. The faint-hearted acceptance of a practice in which he no longer believed was repugnant to him, and in a book which he was to publish in 1893 in collaboration with Ernest Belfort Bax under the title of Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, we find these biting lines:

"... most intelligent persons will allow that it (the religion of modern society) means nothing more than mere sets of names and formulas, to one or other of which every reputable man is supposed to be attached; in one or other of which he will be sure to find a conventional solution of the great problem of the universe, including our life and its aspirations. If he fails in his duty to society in this respect he suffers accordingly; and indeed few men of any position are bold enough to avow that they are outside all such systems of ecclesiasticism; the very unorthodox must belong to some acknowledged party - they must be orthodox in their unorthodoxy. But as a fact the greater part of cultivated men dare not go as far as that, and are contented with letting society in general feel happy in believing that they subscribe to the general grimace of religion that has taken the place of real belief..." 33

Morris’s attitude stems, then, not from a personal whim, but from a position of principle. He has lost his faith, and refuses to make any "grimace".

* * *

With his Christian faith lost, what belief remained to him? In other words, what was the limit of his disbelief? May Morris maintains firmly that her father became and remained an agnostic. Trying to describe his state of mind on the approach of 1870, she launches into rather lyrical and at times somewhat verbose flights, from which we may extract the following:

"... the future stretches before him with its grave question; ... how best to answer to the high sense of duty towards humanity and the beyond: in 1860 he would call it God, later in life the mystery beyond our visible world had no name." 34

This chronology seems to me to call for some reserve. Nothing in Morris’s work seems to me to justify so late a date as 1860. As for "later in life", I think that in this sphere as in many others, the first years of the ‘eighties mark an important turning point in his thought. After having read Capital and flung himself headlong into the struggle for a better society, it was inevitable that he should modify and clarify his thought.
May's assessment, nevertheless, retains its validity in so far as this long intermediate period is concerned, lasting over twenty-five years entirely devoted to artistic and poetic creativity, and during which his thought rarely reached the level of general concepts. No evidence of his contemporaries, none of his letters, afford us the slightest illumination: matters of religion seem to be banished from the field of his consciousness. It is only in his many long poems that we can occasionally glean a few meagre hints.

We meet this deliberate rejection of all metaphysical preoccupation from the first lines of The Earthly Paradise (1868–70):

"Of Heaven and Hell I have no power to sing,
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
Or make quick-coming death a little thing..." 35

And in the ‘Envoi’ which closes this long sequence of poems, he proclaims his ignorance of the meaning of life and death:

"Death have we hated, knowing not what it meant;
Life have we loved, through green leaf and through sere,
Though still the less we knew of its intent..." 36

Again we find this declaration of ignorance, in a somewhat confused passage of Love is Enaugh (1872) upon which May Morris dwells at rather greater length to buttress her theory. She writes significantly:

"For him the mysteries that lie beyond the life of man are wrapt in inpenetrable silence. The moments of inspiration that must come to all in some degree may bring broken visions of a new life, dim sounds of a new language, but no knowledge of whence they came may be vouchsafed:

How shall the bark that girds the winter tree
Babble about the sap that sleeps beneath?" 37

If May Morris had gone to the trouble, she could doubtless have found more significant passages; for example, the sonnet which serves as preface to The Story of Greitr the Strong (1869), from which I extract these two lines:

"As toward the end men fare without an aim
Unto the dull grey dark from whence they came." 38

The years during which these poems were written belong to the most painful period of Morris's life. His domestic happiness was threatened, and, up to the moment when the journey to Iceland came to restore vigour and confidence, it was in vain that he steeled himself within a stoical, uncomplaining reserve: life seemed pointless and meaningless. Is it too much to wonder whether his refusal to penetrate the mysteries of before-birth and after-death were not, after all, a kind of discouraged indifference? Certainly, if the tendency to pessimism was of short duration, traces of this agnosticism are found up to 1881. This was the year of Carlyle’s death, and he wrote to his wife on 10 February "...So Carlyle is off to learn the great secret at last..." 39

However, the "dull grey dark" referred to in the poem just quoted was, not long afterwards, given by Morris another, much more precise name. Reread these few lines of The Earthly Paradise.
"... While many a band of striving men
    Were driven betwixt woe and mirth
Swiftly across the weary earth,
    From nothing unto dark nothing." 40

Can we think, even in an isolated instance, that Morris could use this word if his conception of the world were not already steeped in materialist thought? The writings of his maturity, in any case, leave no doubt about his refusal to believe in any survival, and certain passages of The House of the Wolfings (1888) express this refusal with equal clarity. Wood-sun begs Thiodolf not to rush to death:

"A few bones white in their war-gear that have no help or thought
Shall be Thiodolf the Mighty, so nigh, so dear – and nought...
Nay thou shalt be dead, O warrior, thou shalt not see the Hall
Nor the children of thy people 'twixt the dais and the wall.
And I, I shall be living; still on thee shall waste my thought.
I shall long and lack thy longing; I shall pine for what is nought." 41

* * *

From the period of The Earthly Paradise, Morris's attitude is clearly critical and even rationalist. Could one describe otherwise the words he puts into the mouth of one of his story-tellers:

"It made me shudder in the times gone by,
    When I believed in many a mystery
I thought divine, that now I think forsooth,
Men's own fears made, to fill the place of truth
Within their foolish hearts..." 42

But let us come finally to the beginning of the 'eighties. One man was scandalising England: Charles Bradlaugh, avowed atheist, founder of the periodical The Freethinker, member of Parliament, which denied him the right to take his seat because he refused to take an oath on the Bible and claimed the right to make a solemn non-religious affirmation, triumphantly returned time after time by his constituency of Northampton. Morris does not appear to have had any direct contact with him, but, in the beginning at least (we shall see later how things went otherwise for political reasons), he felt a most lively sympathy for him and warmly commended the stand he made. In a letter of 1883, he tells Jenny of the enthusiasm with which he has read his speech in the House of Commons. 43 Free-thinking, anti-clericalism, secularism and even atheism held nothing to shock him.

What is striking about Morris's attitude of mind during his years of socialist propaganda is the effort he made to adapt his language to his new convictions and his irritated reactions when formulations of religious origin, although consecrated by usage, came, despite himself, from his pen. We find two characteristic examples in his correspondence, which is always so spontaneous. In June 1884, in a letter to Georgiana Burne-Jones, intended to convert her to revolutionary ideas, he wrote, by way of conclusion or excuse:

"I shall offend you desperately some day I fear, meantime to think me quarrelsome is a misjudgement, for I commonly hold my tongue when my conscience (I don't like that ecclesiastical word) bids speak: so when
at last I do speak it sounds quarrelsome you know." 44

The other example is yet more curious, in view of the sort of man to whom Morris was writing. It comes from the first of the four celebrated letters written to the Rev. George Bainton in 1888:

"Since man has certain material necessities as an animal, Society is founded on man’s attempts to satisfy those necessities, and Socialism, or social consciousness, points out to him the way of doing so which will interfere least with the development of his special human capacities, and the satisfaction of what, for lack of better words, I will call his spiritual and mental necessities." 45

These peculiarities of style reveal a rational inner compulsion, ever alert and a growing secularisation in Morris’s thought. His political rigidity, whose limitations, late in the day, he came to recognise, can be ascribed to the same preoccupation, and it is this rigidity which led him to write in 1890, in an article in Commonweal, lines of uncommon boldness which display a conviction that undoubtedly goes beyond simple agnostic prudence. In this article he opens a discussion with Christian socialists, but, while paying tribute to their sincerity, and welcoming their support, he demands that such an alliance must be unambiguous; scientific socialism cannot have a religious doctrine as its basis, and any confusion on that point must be swept away:

"... if Christianity is a revelation ‘addressed to all times’ it can not be neutral as to political and social institutions, which, if they are to be binding on men’s consciences, and not pieces of arbitrary coercion, must be founded on a system of morality; and that morality must not be founded on explanations of natural facts or a theory of life in which people have ceased to believe. At the risk of offending ‘real Christians’, however well-meaning or honest they may be, we must ask ‘Is this TRUE?’" 46

The capitals are Morris’s own. So posed, the question suggests the answer, and lets us understand clearly that Morris’s utopia can only be one of materialist inspiration.

Certainly William Morris always hated to lay himself open. On the key question of the existence of God, it is plain that he avoided the issue whenever possible. The very name of God is only found at widely spaced intervals in the twenty-six volumes of his works. So it is of evident interest to examine the rare occasions when he does tackle the problem. And it is as well to set aside the replies which he was ready to make to correspondents who questioned him on the point. Then his first concern was to avoid ruffling feelings and to bring his questioner back to the issue which, in his eyes, took precedence over all others: the struggle for the transformation of society. However, even in these careful or evasive replies we can find food for thought. In fact, only two letters of this kind are available to us, both dated 1884, which is not at all surprising: it was, in fact, the period when he was striving to rally his friends to the Social Democratic Federation and to overcome their doubts, and one can well believe that the latter might have arisen from religious scruples. The letters to which he was replying have not been preserved, but it is plain that they must have been similar in tenor:
On 20 June 1884, he wrote to Robert Thompson:

"I must decline to argue theological points: I don't understand them: if there be a God, he, or it, is a very different thing from what religionists imagine."

A curious reply from a man who previously, at Exeter College, had plunged with Burne-Jones into theological treatises. A reply expressing rejection of what now seems to him to be an unreal problem. But it is a reply which also suggests a broadening of outlook. Undoubtedly he categorically sets aside the Judeo-Christian conception of God. But we see him addressing himself to another conception, the heterodoxy of which appealed to him and which was linked in his mind with an important aspect of his interest in the Middle Ages. This "he, or it" seems to recall certain pantheistic tendencies among mediaeval heretics (such as Thomas Münzer and Jacob Boehme) which, through the long anabaptist tradition, mark a whole underground current of English religious thought and which well up unequivocally in *A Dream of John Ball*. We might refer to the sermon on the steps of the cross:

"Therefore, I bid you not dwell in hell but in heaven, or while ye must, upon earth, which is a part of heaven, and forsooth no foul part."

And this mediaeval heresy seems to Morris worthy of consideration. On condition, as he says, that God exists. But let us make no mistake; his interest is above all historical. It gives body to his vision of an organic, earthly Middle Ages, the values of which are transposed on to a higher plane in his utopian perspective. His attitude towards old beliefs remains totally detached and singularly secular:

"Mediaeval history in all its detail," he writes, "with all its enthusiasms, legends, and superstitions, is now cultivated by many who have no ecclesiastical bias, as a portion of the great progress of the life of man on the earth."

His constant tendency was to insist upon the absence, in the religion of earlier days, of any metaphysical preoccupation: that is a foreign body introduced by "the strange mysticism and dreamy beauty of the East"; it is a heritage which has been assimilated, transformed, fused into the natural unfolding of the glory of Gothic. Mysticism was an exceptional phenomenon: religion and daily life interpenetrated without clash or contradiction. Such is the vision he has restored in *A Dream of John Ball*, and, even more, in the late romances where all belief is resolved into an ever more pagan naturalism.

It is this very primacy of earthly humanism which finds its expression in the second letter to which I referred. It is inspired by the same propagandist purpose, and is addressed to William Allingham and dated 26 November. Less bold and less rich in underlying implication than the former one, it is nevertheless significant:

"Imprimis, I don't touch on matters theological, which I never could understand, except to say that a God who stood in the way of man making himself comfortable on the earth would be no God for me, nor doubtless for you."
This rejection of all asceticism and this concern for man’s happiness constantly inspire his utopian quest. Certainly there is no formulation here as clear as in the previous letter. Nevertheless, let us note that he wrote “would not be a God for me”, and not “is not”, which is very different.

In fact, his prudence and reserve were always dictated by political reasons which I shall shortly analyse, and a real burst of temper was needed to make him overstep them. He had a violent temperament, and the discipline which he constantly imposed upon himself, in order to serve the cause he was defending, was worthy of admiration. It was only on a single occasion that a somewhat revealing word escaped him. May Morris relates an incident told to her by Sydney Gimson, Morris’s host when he was in Leicester. On 23 January 1884, after he had delivered his lecture on Art and Socialism for the Secular Society of that town, he came up against the Rev. J. Page Hoppes, in a lively after-dinner discussion. The latter, reverting to the socialist perspectives expounded by Morris in his lecture, declared: “That’s an impossible dream of yours, Mr Morris, such a Society would need God Almighty himself to manage it.” The poet stood up, advanced upon the unfortunate cleric waving his fist and said: “Well, damn it man, you catch your God Almighty – we’ll have him!”

I feel that this possessive needs no comment.

But we do not have the least need of this outburst to know what Morris thought. When, six years later, he published his News from Nowhere in Commonweal, he had recourse to no supernatural intervention to describe the functioning of his socialist society. Not only do we meet no clergy and see no religion practised in his England of the twenty-second century, but the new humanity he describes at no moment shows any religious interest: it has even totally forgotten that such interests could exist. Not one of the people in his tale makes the slightest reference or once utters the name of God. Only old Hammond, the Sage of Bloomsbury, who has discreetly pierced the Visitor’s identity in the course of a long conversation he has with him in the British Museum, and who tries to put himself on his level in order to make him understand the realities of the new world, only he makes use of such a reference. In order to explain to him that, in the new society, work no longer needs payment and that its recompense lies in the very joy of creation, he adds: “The wages which God gets, as people might have said time ago.”

However, Morris later had occasion to express himself in less allusive manner and in terms which do not give room for the least ambiguity. In Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, he sketches with Bax a brief outline of the genesis of the religious idea, from which I take the following paragraph:

“...with the development of material civilisation from the domination of things by persons to that of persons by things, and the falling asunder of society into two classes, a possessing and dominating class, and a non-possessing and dominated one, there arose a condition of life which gave leisure for observation and reflection to the former, that is, the privileged class. Out of this reflection arose the distinction of man as a conscious being apart from the rest of nature. From this again was developed a dual conception of things: on the one hand was man, familiar and known; on the other nature, mysterious and relatively unknown. In
nature itself there grew up a further distinction between its visible objects, now regarded as unconscious things, and a supposed motive power or "providence" acting on them from behind. This was conceived of as man-like in character, but above mankind in knowledge and power, and no longer indwelling in natural objects, but without them, moving and controlling them.”

This is not at all the place to discuss the scientific value of this argument, which Morris and Bax hang rather clumsily on to Marx’s historical materialism. Let us observe that, even if the composition of this passage appears due to Bax rather than to Morris, the latter had no scruples over subscribing to this undisguised declaration of atheism.

He came to be even more explicit. Does he not speak, in an article in Commonweal of 18 May 1889, of an “imagined ruler” of the universe? In another article, appearing the next year, he stigmatises the

“worn-out superstition, which sees in the struggling world of men... little more than an appendage and plaything of an irresponsible master, who neither asks nor allows mankind to understand him or his arbitrary commands.”

In his lecture on Equality (of which May Morris only published fragments, characteristically omitting the passage we quote here) Morris goes much further and denounces the imposture of the divine right of bosses:

“an idea founded on the assumption that there exists an arbitrary irresponsible God of the universe, the proprietor of all things and persons, to be worshipped and not questioned; a being whose irresponsible authority is reflected in the world of men by certain other irresponsible governors whose authority is delegated to them by that supreme slave-holder and heavenly employer of labour”.

Let us add that the romances contain more than one detail that is hardly veiled in meaning, and Morris’s atheism was no mystery to his friends. W. Scawen Blunt wrote: “... he does not believe in any God the Creator of the World, or any Providence, or, I think, in any future life.” Despite all his efforts to clothe Morris’s message in spirituality, Bruce Glasier himself recounts this saying of his: “I am what is called bluntly an Atheist. I cannot see any real evidence of the existence of God or immortality in the facts of the world”. And that must have been hard for Glasier, who was then, like his wife, a prey to all the exaltation of Theosophy.

* * *

Morris’s position is, as one might expect, firmly negative over a belief in a soul and its survival. In this same chapter of Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, in which Bax and Morris briefly study the formation of the religious idea and thereby reject all revelation, we read, immediately following the paragraph already quoted, these lines:

“Another set of dual conceptions arose along with this: firstly, the distinction between the individual and society, and secondly, within the individual, the distinction between the soul and the body.”

And further on:
"An importance began to be attached to the idea of such future life for the individual soul, which had nothing in common with the old existence of a scarcely broken continuity of life, founded not on any positive doctrine, but on the impossibility of an existing being conceiving of its non-existence."

It is interesting to see that Morris associates the distinction between soul and body with the distinction between the individual and society, implicitly condemning both. All his utopia, in fact, tends to restore the unity of mankind, which has been disrupted by the antagonism of social classes and which can only be restored by the revolutionary abolition of capitalism, the cause of all antagonisms and divisions. Both distinctions will be found to disappear when universal unity is recovered.

If I expressed doubts about the paternity of the previous fragment, I am, on the other hand, certain that the last fragment quoted is by Morris himself. We find there, in fact, the ideas and formulations of an essential passage in A Dream of John Ball, which is much more explicit and significant. It is in Chapter IX, entitled Betwixt the Living and the Dead, describing the watch kept by the poet and the priest in St. Martin's Chapel over the bodies of those killed in the recent battle. The interest of this episode lies in the opposition between the two men over problems of the soul and survival. Of course, John Ball is a heretical priest. He goes so far as to call in question the wisdom of a God who could endow some men with the souls of swine and wolves, and even wonders whether such men have a soul; and his faith in the unity of heaven and earth goes far beyond the limits of orthodoxy. Nevertheless, he is sincerely and deeply a believer. The poet hesitates to shock him, and there we see Morris's constant scruple, but he ends up by saying that he cannot answer such a question because he has never seen a soul other than in the body.

Nevertheless, retorts the priest, what would be the purpose of life if men could not look forward to the reward of "the heavenly fellowship" after death? To which Morris makes the remarkable reply, remarkable less for its materialism than for its rejection of all finality: "They live to live because the world liveth."

They then approach the bodies of their dead and John Ball asks him whether he feels sorrow at the sight, either for the dead friend or for the prospect of his own death. No, replies Morris, the body is but an empty house, and, as for as his own death, how could he think about it. While he is alive, he cannot think that he will die or believe in death at all – he can only think of himself as living in some new way. The priest, intrigued by this way of putting it, takes him to be making a reference to survival in the hereafter. But the poet disillusions him, shaking his head, and John Ball realises that there is a wall between them, Morris explains the depths of his thought: "... though I die and end, yet mankind yet liveth, therefore I end not, since I am a man."

Morris rarely explained his position with such precision, and never defined better the materialist basis upon which, in his utopian vision, will rest his "religion of mankind."

A quick digression is necessary here. May Morris, in fact, quotes words said to have been uttered by her father on his death bed. Anecdotes of this kind are always a priori somewhat suspect, but this one seems to shed light as much
upon the naïvety of the one who recorded it, and of May herself, as upon the continuity of Morris’s thought. May goes to the diary of the Rev. Stopford Brooke, who records having received a long letter from Holman Hunt, who told him that Mary de Morgan, the devoted and redoubtable friend of the Morris family, heard the poet murmur during his last illness: “I can’t but think that somehow or other we shall live again.”

The last words of the dying rarely carry much conviction; even less so when they vary from one version to another. According to Cobden-Sanderson, he said: “I cannot believe that I shall be annihilated.” The difference is not all that important, anyway. Some will plead the poet’s lowered physical condition, which is not, perhaps, irrelevant. Others will read a spiritualist meaning into the words, or, following in the footsteps of the Rev. Stopford Brooke, who saw in Morris “a strange creature – not of this world of ours”, or in those of May herself, who saw in the words an abrupt and possibly unique glimpse of her father’s ideas about the “Unknown”. But it does not appear to me that there is any contradiction between this phrase and the very lucid thought expressed by Morris in A Dream of John Ball: life goes on without any need of recourse to a hereafter. Moreover he expresses this thought even more clearly and concisely in other writings. Did he not say that the condition for life to be worth living is that “we can live fearlessly and confident of our immortality not as individuals but as a part of the great corporation of humanity”? The only possibility of survival for the individual lies in the glory of outstanding acts and the memory they leave behind. He saw in this idea one of the bases of the Nordic religions during the barbarian ages and this idea recurs in a great number of his poems. But he refuses to go any further.

“Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing”, he had written already in The Earthly Paradise – itself a significant title. The idea of a heavenly paradise seemed ridiculous to him and he could not see himself “sitting on a damp cloud and singing hymns”. As for the idea of eternal damnation, it provoked his indignation, and his dearest wish was that man’s labour should cease to resemble “the hell imagined by the theologians”. It is, he said, “as much violence to threaten a man with evil in the future as to shake a whip at him now.” Belief in survival came to jar upon him to such an extent that, according to Bernard Shaw, he conceived a real hatred for Wordsworth and his Intimations of Immortality, a hatred which extended to any pious poetry which might, even from a distance, remind him of the evangelism of his childhood.

William Morris does not appear to have been free, before the ’eighties, of some degree of anti-clericalism. The Rev. Stopford Brooke himself related to May Morris that he made his acquaintance at a dinner in 1867. “He didn’t care for parsons, and he glared at me when I said something about good manners.” Even during the devout period of his youth, he does not seem to have shown special respect for the clergy; telling Cornell Price of a visit to an Essex church in 1855, he stresses the incredible filthiness of the parish priest. Later, in his diary of his Icelandic travels, he slyly refers to “the long-nosed cadaverous parson” who was his guide in the Faroe Islands.

In fact, this anti-clericalism only assumes a definite and purposeful form
during the years 1877–79. It was in 1877 that Morris founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, dubbed “Anti-Scrape”, whose objective was to combat all attempts at “restoration” in the Victorian manner of mediaeval architecture. It was his first secular crusade and his ardour for this cause remained firmly militant to the end of his life. It exerted a definite influence upon the development of his thought, because for the first time it brought him into collision with what he bitterly refers to many a time as “the rights of property”. But it brought him up against another obstacle, the hostility of the clergy who proposed to settle the fate of their churches themselves. Morris railed at the “ecclesiastical zeal” which set about restoration without any care for art, and against the stupidity and negligence which would spend thousands of pounds on decorating a church while allowing the rain to ruin its roof. He despaired of plumbing the depths of clerical ignorance, even more crass, he wrote, than that of architects, and he appealed through the medium of the press (notably The Athenaeum, 1877) to public opinion, in order to convince it that ancient buildings are not “mere ecclesiastical toys”. He wrote to The Times, three months later, that these monuments are the property of the nation and must not remain at the mercy of the many changing ideas of what constitutes “ecclesiastical propriety”. In 1878, when the City churches built by Wren were threatened with demolition, he wrote again to The Times, appealing to the English “by strong and earnest protest (to) show the ecclesiastical authorities that they will not tamely submit to this outrageous and monstrous barbarity”.

By this time Morris had already acquired a prodigious knowledge of the history of art, and he undertook another, no less lasting, crusade with the aim of restoring the decorative arts, “the lesser arts”, to their rightful place. He had not yet reached the point of thinking that only the advent of socialism would permit their flowering, but he analysed the past and present obstacles hindering the development of these “popular” arts, an analysis which strengthened his hostility towards the churches. Thinking of the soaring of these arts in the Middle Ages, he observed how harmful luxury and superstition had been to them, the extent to which religion had been able to elevate them in use and the extent to which it had degraded them through detestable usages.

With the passing of the years, his optimistic, earthly conception of art became more and more radically opposed to religious asceticism: the latter regards art as a “wordly entanglement which prevents men from keeping their minds fixed on the chances of their individual happiness or misery in the next world;” the devout “hate art because they think that it adds to man’s earthly happiness”. The enemy to be overthrown is religious manicheism which sees nothing but evil in the world, and this dominant ideology will endure until “history has become a book from which the pictures have been torn.” What Morris finds particularly shocking in ascetic Christianity’s belief in the hereafter is the calculation, the egoism, implied by such a religion. As his socialism grew stronger, he linked in his contempt two kinds of adversary who differ in appearance only; on the one hand, those who disregard the future of mankind and think only of enjoying ephemeral pleasures without regard for other people, and, on the other hand, those whose only purpose is to “secure a good position each for himself in a future life”. He regards these two outlooks
as “pretty much the same, since each means despair of our life upon the earth”. 91 He cannot accept a “religion which looks upon another world as the true sphere of action for mankind”. 91

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This declared hostility towards religion and the clergy, however, became less extreme; in his later years it developed discretion, or more accurately, lost what can be called its “vulgarity”.

There were two reasons for this change of attitude. The one lay in the needs of the political struggle. The other is to be sought in the increasing influence upon him of Marxism. The absorption of historical materialism led him to look upon the fact of religion, not as a fundamental and autonomous reality any longer, but as a superstructure, a reflection in men’s consciousness of the material conditions of their existence and of their production relationships. 92 Morris came little by little to see in religion a historical phenomenon intimately linked with the class struggle, with successive transformations corresponding to transformations in society.

He had early noted the interpenetration, the interdependence and the common development of superstructures. “It is not possible” he was saying in 1879, “to dissociate art from morality, politics and religion”, and it is pure formalism to study them separately. 93

But these arguments still came from a somewhat idealistic inspiration. It was only in 1885 that the spirit of scientific socialism really began to impregnate Morris’s thought. It is in the Notes, jointly signed by Morris and Bax, accompanying the October edition of the Manifesto of the Socialist League, that we find for the first time formulations on the religious question which indicate a new turn of thought. In Note E, there is reference to the new morality which will of necessity be engendered by “a new system of industrial production”. Now, morality rests only upon the responsibility of the individual towards a supernatural being, but “the attributes of this being are but the reflex of some passing phase of man’s existence and change more or less with that phase”. 94

Again and again we find this refusal to look at religion in the abstract and from the angle of eternity. On 6 May 1888 he writes in the last of his important letters to the Rev. George Bainton:

“When I use the word Christianity I do not mean some abstract idea, any more than a set of dogmatic assertions, but an historical phase through which the world of civilization has passed, or, if you will, is passing.”

He adds that every religion leaves traditional after-effects, even when it has ceased to play a rôle, and here he joins Marx, who observed in a celebrated remark that consciousness lags behind being. But, writes Morris, there cannot be anything whatsoever everlasting in the specific details of the Christian religion, any more than in those of older religions, although, as he recognises, the principles it professes are probably of a more elevated nature. Religion means the habit of feeling oneself responsible to something outside oneself, but
this "something" does not always impose that responsibility in the same terms.

He is even more precise when, on 8 March 1890, in an article in *Commonweal*, he embarks upon a discussion with a Christian socialist named Rickarby. The letter had drawn a distinction between "real" Christianity and "actual" Christianity as practised. Morris rejects any distinction of the kind.

"Mr Rickarby’s contrast between real and actual Christianity evades the point of difference; that real (I should call it ideal) Christianity has never existed at all. Christianity has developed in due historical sequence from the first, and has taken the various forms which social, political, economic circumstances have forced on it; its last form moulded by the sordid commercialism of modern capitalism being the bundle of hypocrisies which, as I have said, Mr Rickarby with other Christian Socialists condemns".

Morris repeatedly brought historical considerations to bear upon the transformation of Christianity at the time when feudalism was giving way to capitalism. In 1885, he remarked that the feudal class, for whom religion was nothing more than a "grimace", used it in its rearguard action against the merchant class. Consequently the latter, when it freed commerce from the fetters imposed by the former dominant class, at the same time "freed thought from her fetters of theology, at least partially".

A few years later, in 1889, in his lecture on Gothic architecture, he returned to the phenomena that characterised the Renaissance. His account has remarkable depth and accuracy, and one is constantly reminded of *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848. It is the change that has come about in production relationships which has determined the change in superstructure: a new political life marked by the birth of bureaucratic power and the coming of the idea of nationhood. To consecrate the commercial age a religion was needed, itself new, fitted to the new theory of life. This was Protestantism.

But, as he observes in 1893 in *Socialism, Its Growth and Outcome*, Protestantism only developed in the Germanic countries. The Latin countries remained Catholic. Does this mean that Catholicism remained what it had been in the Middle Ages? Not at all. It is a mistake, say Morris and Bax, to set the two religions in opposition: they represent two aspects of the same phenomenon. Catholicism repudiated the mediaeval condemnation of usury, adapting itself to the age of commerce, and, like Protestantism, became an instrument of the bureaucracy. It too is, in fact, a new religion, which the authors describe by the name of "Jesuitised Catholicism". Again and again Morris insisted upon the fundamental identity of the two religions, of their nature and material objectives. They are two parallel superstructures. Bourgeois tyranny

"in Catholic countries took the form of pure materialistic cynicism masquerading in priests’ garments; and in Protestant of a religion made for the rich which proclaimed competition for a good position in this world and the next as the real rule of conduct".

He stresses the radical difference between the mediaeval religion and what is still called Catholicism:
"Real Catholicism died with the Middle Ages: modern Catholicism is but a survival from it, kept alive on the one hand by its alliance with absolutist bureaucracy and on the other by its alliance with Puritanism, with which, though Catholicism is less revolting on the surface, it has much in common."

From this historical analysis there emerged one point which was soon to assume fundamental importance in Morris's eyes: religion is and has been in all epochs the guardian of the established order, identifying its interests with those of the dominant class, and is an instrument of oppression and exploitation. Far from idealising the Middle Ages, as has sometimes been claimed, Morris did not hesitate to say that mediaeval piety had no other aim than to maintain among "the wretched slaves of this world" the hope of becoming "the joyous masters of the next". But it is quite certain that the conduct of the Church appears in a much more revealing light with the coming of capitalism, and it was the study of modern society that revealed it completely to Morris. He first became aware of it when jolting the enfeebling conformism that made the Victorian atmosphere oppressive: a general cowardliness engendered by holy respect for "the rights of property, the necessities of morality, the interests of religion."

He was not slow to realise that religion contributes to the consolidation of the régime through a dialectical process. On the one hand it is a result and a reflection of the sufferings of workers obliged to struggle for a livelihood. On the other, its doctrines of renunciation and resignation, born of their despair, "have been for so many ages used as instruments for the continuance of that oppression and degradation". There is a close, constant, essential bond between religious ideology and economic servitude, unceasingly maintained by "the revival of grovelling superstitions".

Morris stigmatised the sanctification of poverty, hunger and ignorance. He regarded with contempt the promise made to the poor of a paradise where they will relax while the wealthy go to hell. Such an ideology effectively complements the work of the police and the deprivation of the right to education. Old Hammond, in *News from Nowhere*, describing to his visitor social conditions in England before the "great change", speaks of a "class system which proclaimed inequality and poverty as the law of God."

The middle classes no more escape than do the people from this obscurantism which is intended to keep them, too, in their place. The petty bourgeoisie of traders and artisans, while not hungry, is content to live in mediocrity and ugliness "crushed by grovelling superstitions". Nor do educated circles resist this dominance any better, and therein lay a major obstacle to socialist propaganda. If the group set up by Andreas Scheu in Edinburgh in 1884 did not succeed in winning the students, it was religious factors, Morris wrote to him, that above all held them back.

Religion and the clergy make up an integral part of the bourgeois state machine just as do the armed forces, the police and the law, and they all make common cause to defend "the rights of property". The modern capitalist has taken the place of the highway robber: instead of sword and pistol, he has
at his disposal these material and spiritual resources, and, moreover, morality and religion provide him with a mask. When popular discontent threatens the privileges of the bourgeoisie, it is in the names of morality and of religion that repression operates. In the comedy The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened, which Morris put on at a Socialist League festival in 1887, he staged a grotesque prosecution of a poor woman who had stolen a loaf from a bakery, and put into the mouth of the prosecutor weighty words which express the holy alliance of religion and bourgeois society for their common defence.

If the possessing class fears popular discontent, it is just as much afraid of social reformers, and its classic tactic is to discredit them in the name of religion. In this way it endeavoured to isolate Owen and Lammenais.

Curiously enough, however, it seems that Morris retained illusions about the Catholic Church for some time, and perhaps we should see in that fact the last survival of the tractarian enthusiasms of his Oxford years. But the critical capacity acquired in the course of his life as a militant socialist rid him of such illusions. In December 1887 a great discussion took place in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, with him present; its purpose was to find remedies for the widespread misery of London’s unemployed. Morris paid special attention to the contribution made by Cardinal Manning, and in giving an account of it in Commonweal, he began by stating his awareness of the lack of hatred towards the poor which he noticed in the prelate’s tone, contrasting, he observed, with that usually met in cultured circles, even when disguised by the cloak of philanthropy. But as he continued speaking, Morris realised that one should not seek in his words anything more than another totally demagogic kind of philanthropy. In short, he concluded, no help is to be expected from the Catholic Church, only a charitable attitude less wounding in form, and the expression of a few commonplace truths which might on occasion upset bourgeois digestions. Catholicism also is a pillar of the established order.

What provoked Morris’s indignation, when this collusion between churches and capital became plain to him, was the hypocrisy or cynicism with which the bourgeoisie, while using religion to assure its ascendency, blithely ignores its precepts and commandments when it finds them inconvenient. They then invent particular rulings allowing them to be avoided. In fact, they have not always been able to foresee the consequences of this religious morality whose spread they have encouraged, but they never hesitate for one moment to throw it overboard whenever it clashes with their own interests. The bourgeoisie’s practical conception of it is in persistent opposition to the theory it preaches. A particularly revolting instance of this came to Morris’s notice during a journey in Scotland in 1887: he discovered that Presbyterian and sabbatarian forge-owners were making their employees work a seven-day week “in this Devil’s Den”. These bosses would doubtless have given expression to their horror if they had seen their workers indulging in sports on the Lord’s day. Morris certainly had in mind the contemptuous denunciation made by Karl Marx of the employers who profaned the sabbath. But religion is in the service of the powers of money, and must bend to their will. As to the personal convictions of these capitalist magnates, history itself renders them suspect. Have they not built up their wealth through prodigious industrial development and a growing mastery over nature? And would this mastery have been possible without the development of the sciences, themselves born of the rejection of
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the old superstitions? So these men founded their exploitation upon technical and scientific power, anti-religious in its origins, and make use of religion to maintain and extend this exploitation. But they do not consider such problems, and their faith, when it exists, is a comfortable faith: "they very naturally therefore are always fairly contented with the world as it is, especially since most of them look forward to another Bourgeois world beyond". It happens that they salve their consciences by the exercise of charity or philanthropy. Recourse to evangelical morality then encourages them to consider the distinction between rich and poor as "a providential fact, at which neither the poor nor the rich have the right to repine".

On the whole, their outlook is much more cynical, and their hypocrisy knows no bounds when it is a question of opening up new colonial outlets. A good pretext is "the pushing of a religion no longer believed in by its promoters". The newspapers assert that "this task of civilising Africa is well worthy of Modern Christianity; ... twenty per cent and the Gospel ... are tempting, indeed. To save your soul and your business at one stroke is certainly making the best of two worlds". For the colonial peoples, "one day it is rum-and-bible, another sword-and-bible". They are sent soldiers like Gordon "that most dangerous tool of capitalistic oppression, the 'God-fearing soldier'". It is strange, writes Morris, "that the new Attila, the new Ghengis Khan, the modern scourge of God, should be destined to stalk through the world in the gentlemanly broadcloth of a Quaker manufacturer".

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In Morris's eyes, once he had become a theoretician and a socialist militant, religion is thus an obstacle to all progress, a danger of which he is fully conscious and of which he reminds his comrades when they are inclined to lose sight of it. At the annual supper of the Kelmscott Fellowship, in March 1932, Harry Lowerison recalled a conversation he had had with Morris, Bernard Shaw and Belfort Bax after a lecture in Hammersmith: "Shaw, Bellort Bax and I were chatting after a lecture in the old shed in the Mall. The churches just then were a little more intolerant and reactionary than usual, and I got angry and was damning them in good set terms, when I was surprised to hear Bax, of all men, say: 'You're flogging a very dead horse, Lowerison.' Morris had come up behind me, and he met Bax on the rebound with: 'Dead! the church! you mind its hoofs, Bax, and its teeth; neither end is safe'".

Nevertheless, with remarkable insight and political sense, Morris refused to let himself be drawn into declarations and attitudes inspired by "vulgar anticlericalism". Undoubtedly the clerical danger existed and he did not hesitate to denounce it whenever he thought necessary. But the main enemy was the capitalist system. When he attacked religion, it was only in so far as it put itself at the service of the ruling class. But militant atheism and anticlerical feeling must never take the lead over the political and social struggle. That was, in effect, exposing oneself to a double risk. On the one hand, honest and aware workers, still attached to a belief, would hesitate to join the ranks of the Socialist League and we know that Morris went to a great deal of trouble to avoid public meetings going off down this perilous path. On the other hand,
it would be committing a grave error of judgment to turn the activity of militants aside from what should remain the essential objective of their struggle. "At least it may be said that there is time enough for us to deal with this problem and that it need not engross the best energies of mankind, when there is so much to do otherwhere." We may note in passing that Morris's position is identical with that adopted by Marx at the General Council and in the Congress of the International Working Men's Association. There is everything to gain, thought Morris, by refusing to concentrate the attack upon religion, because the only result of such an attitude would be to give it a new lease of life. It is even striking to observe that this understanding of political necessity matured within him very early. In 1884, when he was still a member of the Council of the Social Democratic Federation, he opposed Aveling's proposal aimed at writing into the programme of the Federation a demand for the separation of Church and State, which, at that time, could only have shocked opinion and turned attention away from genuine social demands.

Another fact, from that same year on, which must have strengthened his conviction and put him on guard against the pitfalls of anticlericalism, was the violent campaign against socialism launched by Bradlaugh and carried on to the end of his life, in which he did not hesitate to spread the most personal and, at times, the silliest, slanders against Marx and his circle. At the beginning of 1884, in the Hall of Science in the Mile End Road, he gave a series of anti-socialist lectures, at which Shaw and Andreas Scheu represented the opposition. A public debate was arranged, and took place on 17 April in St. James's Hall, between Bradlaugh and Hyndman, with Professor Beesly, the eminent positivist, in the chair. Hyndman had some difficulty in defending the socialist viewpoint against the furious assault of Bradlaugh's magnificent oratory. Morris, who does not appear to have spoken during these verbal joustings, was solidly in support of Hyndman and for evermore felt a keen antipathy towards Bradlaugh. So he discovered that the most outrageous views of freethought were perfectly reconcilable with the most reactionary political ideology, the most hostile to social progress. This provided one more reason for deliberately excluding metaphysical controversy from the propaganda of the Socialist League. It could only introduce confusion and ridiculous divisions among the contenders. The only possible criterion rested upon the way to look at production relationships and the attitude towards property. Bradlaugh and his friends justified capitalist appropriation: therefore they were to be branded, together with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Duke of Westminster and the greedy grocer who adulterates his wares.

Morris's position, dictated by thought and not by feeling, was, then, prudent, restrained, free from any sectarianism. One may well be astonished at the large number of clerics with whom he established and maintained continuous links. I quote at random (probably overlooking some) such names of clergymen as Glasse, Bainton, Dixon, Stopford Brooke, Sharman, Marson. Certain of them were won over to the ideas of socialism, and the Rev. C. L. Marson even contributed to Commonweal articles whose religious orthodoxy was highly questionable. In his long letters to the Rev. George Bainton, Morris strives to show that nothing in socialist morality can affront a Christian: socialists brand the present rulers of society as thieves, but does not Christianity denounce dishonesty just as strongly as does socialism?
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When he comes to the delicate problem of lay education, a problem which, even if it was less sharp than in France, nevertheless engaged the British conscience during the years we are considering, 143 Morris avoids any extreme attitude. Certainly, there are standpoints of principle which were set out in the Manifesto of the Socialist League; in future socialist society, education was to be freed from the trammels of commercialism on the one hand and superstition on the other. 144 But he thinks that by that time the economic liberation of society will have transformed family life and that there will not be "any necessity for using compulsion towards rational education". 145

So there was a complete absence of sectarianism together with the broadest tolerance. When he writes to The Times, in 1878, to arouse opinion against the plan to demolish Wren churches in the City, is he not defending religious rights, just as much as historical and artistic rights, against financial interests? 146 And for the sake of the same considerations, in 1887 he launched an appeal for the preservation of the old church at Inglesham. 147

All these declarations on Morris's part are, then, contradictory in appearance only. He has reached personal conviction solid enough for metaphysical speculation to seem quite pointless: it irritates and bores him. He lives wholly and passionately inside earthly reality, and, with exemplary selflessness, he devotes all his efforts to preparing for the coming of a new society, which his utopian vision makes real and almost tangible to him. All his propaganda is directed towards getting men to share his vision and enthusiasm. But the fact of religion exists. He only wishes it were as unimportant to others as it is to him. 148 Unfortunately it is nothing of the kind, and Morris would, at any rate, like each individual's belief to remain something personal and intimate, as his own disbelief is to him. And that is not so either. Other people's convictions seem worthy of respect to him, but the churches are temporal powers in the service of temporal interests, and their influence sets up serious obstacles in humanity's road to happiness. He appreciates the hopelessness of frontal attack and refuses to confuse cause with effect. He is far from any temptation to try to "écramer l'infame"; that would be to make permanent division among those he wishes to unite. So in this sphere he carries on a purposely restricted fight, carefully subordinated to the pursuit of essential objectives, and only takes a stand against religion in so far as the latter is aggressive in the political or social field.

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This reserve finds a complementary (possibly a fundamental) justification in his confidence in mankind and the future of the human race. When, all the conditions having been fulfilled, the socialist revolution comes about, men will find so much satisfaction in their existence, they will have so little need for heavenly consolation or resignation to their lot that the foundations of religious ideology will crumble of their own accord. Economic liberation will deliver men from their fantasies, and that is the very reason why it would be absurd to bring the least pressure to bear. 149 But it is still imprudent to trumpet this certainty abroad, for fear of being imperfectly understood and wounding sensibilities: it is, even, only a probability, for Morris never tries to impose his utopian vision as dogma. 150 Perhaps the human race, even then,
will continue to speculate upon the problem of its own existence, but it will be under totally different conditions, in a calm and propitious spirit, because, instead of: "Why were we born to be so miserable?" the question will be: "Why were we born to be so happy?" Theological morality will then be nothing more than a survival, and we have already seen that, in Morris's utopian vision, expressed in *News from Nowhere*, it has totally disappeared. Old Hammon is categorical about this: "... assured belief in heaven and hell has gone". Socialism will have transformed men's lives and habits to the point where all these controversies, over which we become so heated today, will be "forgotten, useless, and lifeless like wrecks stranded on the seashore".

Henceforth, reason will triumph. No supra-terrestrial consideration, no submission to an imaginary master of the universe, will any longer play a part in relationships between men. Their ethic will be founded upon "the recognition of natural cause and effect", and it is this materialism, as much as the abolition of inequality, which will be the life-blood of existence in communist society.

Does this amount to saying that this new humanity will selfishly enjoy its liberty and its dearly bought material happiness, will know no satisfaction other than that of its daily needs, and will have no moral cares or aspirations? By no means. A new conscience will have arisen from the joys of the new life, and a new, materialist religion, possessing no cult, no priests and no metaphysics, will then flourish. It is this "religion of mankind" that I shall examine in the last part of my work, when I analyse the rich and varied aspects of the utopia of William Morris.
CHAPTER TWO

Bourgeois Consciousness

Georges Duveau, in his Sociologie de l’Utopie, incidentally remarks that there are, with very rare exceptions, no workers’ utopias. In fact, if we restrict ourselves to the study of English literature, we are obliged to admit that, from Sir Thomas More to the most recent writers, utopias have always been a bourgeois phenomenon. How are we to explain this fact?

One first consideration is immediately obvious: the industrial proletariat has existed as a really distinct class only since the last years of the eighteenth century, and one has to wait a great deal longer to see the emergence of an authentic working-class literature. Until the end of the nineteenth century, the level of education was too low to allow the sorely exploited workers to rise to any speculations beyond organisational and political ones. Utopia implies a high level of culture: one builds the future, not only by submitting contemporary society to judgment, but even more perhaps by reflecting upon history.

The present – a wretched, narrow present – bore down with all its crushing weight upon the working-class consciousness. Despite the unprecedented surge of industrialism, the level of the productive forces was still insufficient to allow the Newcastle miner or the Manchester spinner to conceive the abundance needed for blossoming into utopia: the poverty of periodic crises was a more compelling dread. Poverty was so great that it engendered a total inability to conceive of a better lot, and that was an obstacle encountered by William Morris throughout his career of militancy. Religion sustained this resignation and channelled all utopian aspirations towards the hope of supernatural compensation after death.

As the working class, to an ever greater degree, shook off this resignation and apathy and rose to a consciousness of class and then of the trade union and political struggle, the weight of the present in no way decreased, and dreams of the future were pushed aside by the need of fighting step by step for immediate, tangible improvements. No doubt, a certain utopianism was mingled with the fervour of these demands, but it was not of proletarian origin, and one can even say that it was not long in losing its intransigence and becoming diluted and degraded into everyday material objectives. While the wealthy industrialist Robert Owen drew the parallelograms of his perfect society founded upon co-operative production, the workers who had been beguiled by his message set up the first consumers’ co-operatives, incurring the wrath and disavowal of the prophet. Owenism, even in its bastardised form, was soon to appear a dead end, or suffer further transformation when the standard of Chartism was raised.
The working class did not have the time to build ideal cities; the horror and pestilence of the slums of Manchester and the East End had to be mitigated first. It was necessary to live today and especially to stop dying of hunger. It was necessary to win the right to bread, to clothing that was more than rags, to decent working-hours, to education, and also to the vote, which would make it possible to assure the legal acquisition of these advantages. In difficult and dangerous circumstances, the best militants, all self-educated, carried on a day-to-day struggle which absorbed all their energy and often exhausted all their strength. How could these men, even those least involved in the struggle, have had available that imagination, have known that sweetness of dreaming, which are the essential attributes of every utopist? Their life was one long sacrifice, closely bound up with that of their union or their organisation, and in them there was scarcely any of that individualism (an essentially bourgeois characteristic) necessary for the elaboration of a utopia if it is true, as Morris recognised, that every utopia is “the expression of the temperament of its author”. 2 I may note in passing that this perhaps explains why there has never been a utopia produced by collaboration.

In the twentieth century, the position has become appreciably different. The social and political gains of the working-class in the capitalist countries have raised it to a level of relative well-being and education which enable it to dream of the future, even if the needs of the day-to-day struggle are just as demanding as before. But it does not dream of it, it thinks about it. On the one hand, scientific socialism has habituated its most enlightened vanguard to a rigorous theory, a consciousness of the laws of history, which do not at all encourage wandering off into subjective fantasy. On the other hand, the arrival of socialist states or states building socialism has posed the problem of perspectives to the working class in quite different terms. It deals with real experiences, often following them passionately, despite the complexity of their economic implications. It interprets the socialist future, not in the language of utopia, but in that of planning.

In the history of utopia, the ’eighties constitute an intermediate period which was, if one considers it, unique and almost strange. It was the moment when Marxism, a fertilisation of the workers’ movement by the scientific thought of two intellectuals originating from the bourgeoisie, was spreading in England. The works of Marx and Engels available to the British public were not numerous; their study by the masses was still cursory and without consequence. Its first expounders were intellectuals: Belfort Bax, Hyndman, Aveling, William Morris; and the latter is the only one among them to have assimilated certain elements of dialectical thought. No doubt, the essence of historical materialism was understood by them and absorbed into their outlook. Nevertheless, though they discovered (with such enthusiasm!) the scientific theory of history, and clearly conceived the idea of a classless society, they were strangers to Marx’s careful rigour and his avoidance of subjective prophecy. Filled with ardour and passion, they were haunted by the problems of “the morrow of the Revolution” (a phrase which constantly recurs in their writings) more than by any realistic appreciation of the needs of the struggle. These men of the middle classes wanted to make their contribution to the theory of the workers’ movement, but their lack of contact with the proletarian masses condemned them to involuntary isolation in sects, and William Morris
the poet thought for a long time that the only way to attract the masses lay, not in the search for palliatives to lessen their poverty, but in the presentation of a radiant prospect. At this time, apart from the too-brief episode of the Paris Commune, no socialist experiences had yet happened to impose upon these hopes the pitiless discipline of real situations.

So we are considering a unique moment, which passed forever, when only a bourgeois intellectual, saturated in a Marxism whose strictness he did not always appreciate, and led by his enthusiasm as much as by his very origins into uncompromising formalism, could want to change the world by offering the oppressed classes a vivid picture of their liberation, drawn direct from the analyses of scientific socialism. It would be quite impossible to understand the special characteristics of William Morris's utopia without taking into account the social factors that contributed to the formation of his personality.

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In his autobiographical letter of 5 September 1883 to Andreas Scheu, William Morris wrote significantly:

"My Father was a business man in the city, and well-to-do, and we lived in the ordinary bourgeois style of comfort... My Father died in 1847 a few months before I went to Marlborough; but as he had engaged in a fortunate mining speculation before his death, we were left very well off, rich in fact."

Mackail gives us fuller details of this "speculation", and the term is certainly too strong, because the writer's father owed his fortune to pure chance. A company was formed in 1844 to exploit veins of copper discovered near Tavistock, in Devon. It was launched with a modest capital of 1,024 one-pound shares. Mr Morris senior held 272 of them and they appear to have come into his possession as repayment of a debt. As soon as work started, it became clear that the deposits were extremely rich. Copper was then worth £160 a ton, and the undertaking, which gained rapid notoriety under the name of Devon Great Consols, was able to produce large amounts of ore at low cost: 750,000 tons a year, Mackail tells us, and the value of Mr Morris's holding rose for a time to more than £200,000. E. P. Thompson comments acidly, but justly enough, that these handsome dividends flowed regularly into the Walthamstow household without bearing any trace of the sufferings endured by the miners at the bottom of the narrow and ill-ventilated shafts. When William reached his majority, he had an annual income of £900, a considerable sum in the middle of the nineteenth century, bearing in mind not only the level of prices but taxes less democratically based than in our days. These resources, however, decreased noticeably around 1864 with the rapid exhaustion of the deposits. It was a difficult moment for the young artist, who had to leave his lovely new home, Red House, to live in London where he worked hard at the young decorating business in Red Lion Square. This, thanks to ecclesiastical orders, had already become a paying concern Soon the "Morris Firm", of which William finally became sole owner, was a success and it became a very prosperous business. By the end of his life he had considerable resources and used to spend prodigious sums buying mediaeval manuscripts."
Was he a good businessman? Mackail’s biography,¹⁰ and the memoirs of George Wardle, who managed the Firm for some years,¹¹ leave us with mixed impressions on the point, of both efficiency and slackness. His aim, Mackail tells us, was not to make money but to make the objects he manufactured. This judgement seems fair and completely consistent with all we know of Morris, of his creative enthusiasm, his devotion to his aesthetic ideal,¹² and his complete honesty. But, to realise this ideal, the undertaking had to be solvent and so it was, despite a number of careless practices. One of the most serious was to have working together, notably in the Merton Abbey workshops, piece-rate workers and those paid by the hour, and also the continued employment, through generosity, of unduly old or incompetent employees. Another specially interesting detail is that Morris was never deterred by expense, and never bargained over the purchase of materials of the highest cost and quality. Such prodigality did him no disservice—quite the contrary, because this excellence was appreciated and ensured him a plentiful and wealthy clientele. It is difficult to say whether commercial shrewdness was part of his outlook, running alongside his aesthetic ideal. In fact, it rather seems that his success was the outcome of psychological qualities rather than commercial acumen. He was an admirable trainer of men. His infectious faith and his consuming activity enabled him to get an exceptional return from the hundred or so artisans and employees working under his orders and by his side. And, perhaps above all, he had an extraordinary flair for surrounding himself with really able executives: first, George Wardle, then the Smith brothers and later, at the Kelmscott Press, Sydney Cockerell. Mackail quite shrewdly observes that the choice of a good administrator argues sound administrative qualities. The fact remains that, despite certain blunders, Morris tackled his business with tireless enthusiasm and obtained indisputable material success.¹³

This will to succeed came, no doubt, in the first place from a high sense of his artistic mission, and he would never accept any compromise. On this level of ideas, he had a delightful way of showing rich but uncomprehending customers to the door.¹⁴ But that by no means indicates that he treated money with contempt. Because, first, by his own admission, he had no sense of economy,¹⁵ and also because riches were a necessity to him, the essential condition for freedom in his work. When, in 1873, he was beset by financial difficulties, he became obsessed with the fear of poverty and made up his mind to hammer away at making “the Firm” a success.¹⁶

The freedom to work as he liked, and as determined by his successive missions, was certainly the predominant reason for his desire to remain wealthy. I feel strongly obliged to add that it was not his only reason. Despite very simple personal habits, it would have been difficult for him to give up the bourgeois ease he had always known, and he derived enormous pleasure from the splendid décor of his Hammersmith house,¹⁷ as well as from the rural charm of Kelmscott Manor. His marriage only strengthened this tendency. Jane Burden, the daughter of an Oxford groom, seems to have accustomed herself very easily to a more ample life. The impressive fall of her dresses was a subject of admiration; the meals she provided for guests at Kelmscott House were, on Shaw’s authority, “works of art almost as much as the furniture”;¹⁸ her supposedly frail health, her frequent indefinable illnesses, (she died in 1914, surviving her husband by eighteen years), were the occasion of her long
journeys in Germany and Italy. We may add that the very real illness of Jenny, Morris's elder daughter, deeply affected him and caused him considerable expense.

The way of life in a large house seemed to Morris to be the most natural thing in the world. It is interesting to examine his 1878 letters to his wife (then in Italy) when he decided to take a lease on Kelmscott House, which was still called "The Retreat". Jane, told of its situation, complained because the district was so far from the centre of London. William replied that he found this objection not unreasonable, and even sympathised with it. But, he pleads,

"I don't think we shall manage to get what we want nearer; you see this is practically what we want in a house: servants' rooms, kitchen and the rest: then 1st 2 nice airy rooms (though they needn't be very big) for our dear maidens: 2nd a good and quiet room for you, my dear: 3rd either a biggish room for my study to hold a bed for me also, or some den for my head. & a fairish room for my study: nor 5th can we quite do without a spare room: 6th 2 sitting rooms and (especially if only 2) one of them to be decidedly a good room: this, I think, is the least we can do with . . . At the risk of being considered self-seeking, I must say that in the ordinary modern-Cromwell-Road-sort-of-house I should be so hipped that I should be no good to anybody; nor do I think that either you or the girls would get on in such a place . . .

. . . P.S. Mind a poney & chaise at The Retreat."

On 2 April, William informed Jane that the deal was concluded. He pointed out that, despite its distance, the house would attract visitors by its garden and its view of the Thames. "The maidens," he added, "could have the 2 queer little rooms above for larking rooms," and there would be room enough to house a third maid.²¹

A third maid? That was in 1878. That was not to be the end of the story. Isis, the Oxford University magazine, in its number 1500 in November 1965, published a special edition devoted to the Victorian era, and in its summary figured an interview given to its editor by a very old lady named Floss Gunner who, in 1891, at the age of fourteen, entered the Morris family's service as a kitchen maid. Her evidence gives us something to think about. We learn, in fact, that in addition to her the domestic staff comprised a cook, a young male servant, a chambermaid, a parlour maid and another maid whose functions combined something of both of these.²¹ No doubt not to have a servant in the last century would have been, for a bourgeois family, to have come down in the world,²² but to have half a dozen certainly gave class to a house. William Morris probably had no dealings with all these staff²³ and did not know how much work was required of them. If one is to believe Floss Gunner, it was a good deal, but, even if one supposes him to have been aware of this, his own capacity for work was such that it would scarcely have shocked him. Was he also ignorant of the fact that, to start with, the kitchen maid earned six pounds a year, and nine at the end only²?

Such a style of household, it should be stressed, was not unusual at the time. It was a long way from approaching the extravagant luxury of wealthy households. It was simply typical of the well-off bourgeoisie.

Having come from easy circumstances and never having ceased to belong to
this background, even if romanticism and art had dispersed the chilly fogs of his childhood and brought joy in living and flights of imagination, William Morris remained faithful in his way of life to bourgeois habits, and his natural simplicity was itself attuned to the traditional attitudes of the British middle classes. At no moment in his development, even when his uncompromising political attitude brought him into vehement opposition with his own class, did he dream of denying his social origin. "We of the middle classes" is an expression one finds constantly in his lectures and his articles. He felt himself to be bourgeois and did not hide the fact. One is impressed by the loyalty he showed to his class during the full fervour of Pre-Raphaelitism, at an age and in a bohemian atmosphere when everything might encourage rejection, even more than by expressions like that quoted, which were consciously employed during his socialist years. "I am bourgeois you know," he wrote to Madox Brown, "and therefore without the point of honour." 24 His biographer insists, perhaps with disingenuous exaggeration (we know how little enthusiasm Mackail had for Morris's socialism) on his being "a typical Londoner of the middle class", and upon his more and more marked resemblance to Samuel Johnson. 25 He took pleasure in describing his bourgeois virtues of hard work, honesty, reserve, in contrast with the uproarious prodigality of Rossetti; 36 and Morris himself does not give the lie to this picture in his correspondence. In 1884, telling Andreas Scheu of the difficulties he was having over getting in money owed to the weekly Justice, he exclaimed: "Perhaps 'tis my bourgeois blood, but this un-straightness on money matters discourages me very much." 27 One may wonder, too, whether this "bourgeois blood" was altogether free from a trace of snobbery. The question might come up when we attempt to examine the relationship between Morris and his wife's family. We do not know much about Elizabeth, Jane's sister, except that she helped the latter with embroidery for the Firm 28 and lived with the Morries at Queen Square. William could not stand her and felt he had nothing in common with her, 29 so he was glad when she stopped living with them. 30 There is nothing in this that is not perfectly natural: he wrote that he had nothing against her and considered her to be "harmless and even good" but liking does not come to order. One thing is more strange, and that is that Robert Burden, Jane's father, a groom in Holywell Street, Oxford, disappeared immediately and completely from the life of the couple, and it is quite impossible to find the slightest reference to him. May Morris, for her part, although she makes a very passing reference to her Aunt Bessy, 31 never has a word to say about her maternal grandfather. The lack of information reduces us to conjecture, but does not exclude disagreeable questions. For example, one is intrigued to read a letter of February 1885 in which Morris relates to Mrs. Burne-Jones that he has recently given a lecture in Oxford in Holywell Street, "just opposite where Janey used to live". 32 We do not know whether Robert Burden still lived there; in any case, Morris does not appear to have crossed the road. And, above all, what happened between Jane and her father? What we do now know without doubt is that she put pressure on Mackail not to mention Robert Burden's occupation in the biography, and refused him permission to reproduce a drawing by Burne-Jones of the house where she was born. 33
These facts, which throw some light on some aspects of his life, also give us a measure of the enormous length of the road travelled by the writer, the depth of his thought, the force of his generous sensibility, and the courage he showed in espousing the cause of revolutionary socialism.

This development, which took place between 1877 and 1883, has been followed through in masterly fashion by E. P. Thompson, and there would be no point here in repeating the account. It claims our attention in so far as it explains his pathway towards utopia.

During this pre-socialist period, William Morris’s bourgeois conscience was not yet aware of any real contradictions. It was as a bourgeois democrat that, in 1877, he issued his emphatic manifesto against an “unjust war”, and it is interesting to consider the spirit in which this was composed. The writer was still a member of the Liberal Party, and his intention was deliberately political. It was the Conservative majority, its leader Disraeli and the foreign policy of the Government that he was primarily attacking. If he railed against certain social strata, they were those who provided the basic support for the Tory Party, “greedy gamblers on the Stock Exchange, idle officers of the army and navy (poor fellows!), worn-out mockers of the Clubs…”, and it is evident when, a few lines on, he wrote: “us of the Middle Classes”, the distinction in his mind is clearly and definitely between these circles and the bourgeoisie of which he proclaims his membership.

But the originality of this document is that it is addressed to the working class, having as its sub-title: “To the Working Men of England”. Morris had still not the slightest acquaintance with this working class, but he had been deeply impressed by his first contacts with union leaders and with the radical clubs on the occasion that was to develop into his activity in the Eastern Question Association; they already inspired a confused feeling that they constituted a growing, decisive force that compelled respect. So he was filled with indignation at the contempt for the working masses expressed in the circles he was condemning; and it was as a bourgeois, ashamed of the attitude of the topmost layers of the ruling class, that he sought to put the working men of England on their guard:

“Working men of England, one word of warning yet: I doubt if you know the bitterness of hatred against freedom and progress that lies at the hearts of a certain part of the richer classes in this country: their newspapers veil it in a kind of decent language; but do but hear them talking among themselves, as I have often, and I know not whether scorn or anger would prevail in you at their folly and insolence: these men cannot speak of your order, of its aims, of its leaders without a sneer or an insult: these men, if they had the power (may England perish rather) would thwart your just aspirations, would silence you, would deliver you bound hand and foot for ever to irresponsible capital.”

I will not linger over the naivety and illusions still reflected in that last phrase; let us confines ourselves to noting the violence of the resentment Morris expresses towards that section of the bourgeoisie which he is repudiating. A lasting resentment, for twelve years later old Hammond in News from Nowhere,
relating to his guest the sequence of events which were to culminate in the
triumph of the revolution, described the rôle of the reactionaries, "men who in
ordinary times were forced to keep their opinions to themselves or their im-
mediate circle". But, in 1877, Morris refused to believe that such hypocrisy
and ill-will were characteristic of the bourgeoisie as a whole. He addressed
himself to the working class because he felt that it alone could play a decisive
part in the movement of opposition to the "unjust war", but he begged it to
"... urge us of the Middle Classes to do no less, so that we may all protest
solemnly and perseveringly against our being dragged and who knows for
why into an UNJUST WAR".

For a long time, these working masses were to remain an abstraction for
him. If, for some years, he had ceased to feel, as in his youth, "too happy to
think that there could be much amiss anywhere", yet he could still, in 1882,
declare to his listeners:

"I had rather say a few words to finish with to those of my own class, to
the rich and well-to-do, and the rather because, and it is a woeful confes-
sion to have to make, I know little of any class save my own."  

It is in terms of this ignorance and limited outlook, I feel, that we must un-
derstand, without being upset, the declarations he trumpeted forth in his early
lectures on art in favour of a return to craftsmanship which would restore art-
istic merit to everyday objects, particularly in pottery and glass-making,
accepting as normal and necessary the inevitable rise in prices that such a
return would involve.  

His first approaches in the direction of the working class were full of symp-
athy and goodwill, but they bore, to an almost embarrassing degree, the
marks of bourgeois paternalism. Each must have his due, he declared:

"For those of us that are employers of labour, how can we bear to give
any man less money that he can decently live on, less leisure than his
education and self-respect demand?"

The bourgeoisie, he considered, had yet other duties, in particular that of set-
ing an example by the simplicity of its way of life. In a preaching tone, which
seems to derive from his evangelical childhood, he claimed that such an exam-
ple would effectively lessen the horrible contrast between the wastefulness of
the wealthy and the needs of the poor, and so provide "an example and stan-
dard of dignified life to those classes which you desire to raise, who ... are
given both to envy and to imitate the idleness and waste that the possession of
much money produces."  

This puritan paternalism was not to last long. Morris realised very rapidly
that the "elevation" of the working class as a class would result from its own
determination, but he hoped that it would be assisted by the goodwill of the
bourgeoisie:

"... it seems to me that both to the working-class and especially to
ourselves it is important that it should have our abundant goodwill, and
also what help we may be able otherwise to give it, by our determination
to deal fairly with workmen, even when that justice may seem to involve
our own loss".  

This confidence in his own class was slow to diminish. Much more, during this pre-socialist period, when he was already haunted by utopian preoccupations and the vision of happy days to come, he believed in the revolutionary mission of the bourgeoisie. That class, in the name of its past, was duty bound to remedy the injustices and make good the artistic damage which its own society had brought about in order to build a higher society. I think it appropriate to quote in extenso a fragment of this same lecture, given in 1881. The lyricism and beauty of image bear witness to William Morris's conviction:

"I may say without fear of contradiction that we of the English middle classes are the most powerful body of men that the world has yet seen, and that anything we have set our heart upon we will have: and yet when we come to look the matter in the face, we cannot fail to see that even for us with all our strength it will be a hard matter to bring about the birth of that new art: for between us and that which is to be, if art is not to perish utterly, there is something alive and devouring; something as it were a river of fire that will put all that tries to swim across to a hard proof indeed, and scare from the plunge every soul that is not made fearless by desire of truth and insight of the happy days to come beyond.

That fire is the hurry of life bred by the gradual perfection of competitive commerce which we, the English middle classes, when we had won our political liberty, set ourselves to further with an energy, an eagerness, a single-heartedness that has no parallel in history; we would suffer none to bar the way to us, we called on none to help us, we thought of that one thing and forgot all else, and so attained our desire, and fashioned a terrible thing indeed from the very hearts of the strongest of mankind.

Indeed I don't suppose that the feeble discontent with our own creation that I have noted before can deal with such a force as this not yet not till it swells to very strong discontent: nevertheless as we were blind to its destructive power, and have not even yet learned all about that, so we may well be blind to what it has of constructive force in it, and that one day may give us a chance to deal with it again and turn it towards accomplishing our new and worthier desire: in that day at least, when we have at last learned what we want, let us work no less strenuously and fearlessly, I will not say to quench it, but to force it to burn itself out, as we once did to quicken and sustain it."  

A passage of crucial importance in more than one respect, despite the confusion of its expression, and it marks a critical point in the life of William Morris. The negation of commercial civilisation already finds expression in it, and there is already an aspiration towards a happier world as well. But the social and economic content of such a revolution is not yet perceived, because of his lack of a scientific understanding of society and its production relationships. The only point at issue is still aesthetic humanism. The ways and means are still to be discussed and the essence of the problem is still distorted by the writer's class illusions, by the fundamental illusion that a revolution which would bring into question and destroy the bourgeois way of life could be the work of the bourgeoisie itself. Nevertheless, this passage, despite its inconsequences, has an objective merit which is to be appreciated. If he does
mistakenly associate the bourgeoisie with the building of a future, which is not at all its function, he is fully right in doing justice to its past revolutionary and progressive rôle. Nowhere in Morris's work is this consciousness so clear; and, unfortunately, it no longer appears after his conversion to socialism. His leftist formalism and his mediaevalism lead him, even more than Ruskin, to reject en bloc the historical contribution of the bourgeois class to human progress, to strike out of history and exclude from utopia four centuries of civilisation. On this point, Morris's thought departs from Marx's. But this excess of anti-bourgeois reaction itself could only come from a bourgeois, disappointed in his trust and in his illusions.

* * *

In 1883 William Morris crossed the "river of fire" beside which he had been anxiously pondering and gathering his strength for two years. He achieved for himself the prediction contained in The Communist Manifesto of 1848:

"Finally, in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. Just as, therefore, at an earlier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular a portion of the bourgeois ideologists who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole." 47

One can take it for granted that this passage of the Manifesto (which he devoured, along with the first book of Capital, in 1883) made a deep impression upon Morris's outlook. He reproduced it almost word for word in a letter to T. C. Horsfall on 25 October. 38 Less than a month later, on 14 November, speaking at a meeting in Oxford, with Ruskin in the chair, he used similar language. 59 Moreover, it would always be as a bourgeois adhering to socialism that he would introduce himself to working-class audiences, and chairmen at his lectures would stress this fact and its significance. 50

This adherence was without reservation, and Morris accepted without jibbing for one moment the restrictions of the militant way of life. His devotion has remained a legend and is the more praiseworthy because nothing had prepared him for so great a sacrifice of time, money, peace of mind and comfort. Long afterwards, his daughter May still marvelled at such complete self-sacrifice on the part of a man for whom bourgeois ease had always provided a pleasant life. 61 But Morris felt himself drawn into the struggle by a kind of fate. He readily agreed that, if the times had been more peaceful, he might have been "contented amidst his discontent" and have settled down, as it were, in a hermitage. 62 He recognised, too, that he was not by nature inclined to be a fighter and that he preferred lazily dreaming; that he might have felt more at ease in a "moderate socialist" party and even found it a way to satisfy his vanity, because he could easily have become the leader of one. It would have been sufficient for him to follow his inclinations and deceive himself, but
such a lie horrified him.\textsuperscript{53} His socialism was not moderate, it was revolutionary, and he humbly accepted the most irksome militant tasks without ever displaying the slightest political ambition. There certainly seemed to be a blatant contradiction between his upper-bourgeois home life, and his unending and demanding travels as a propagandist. The reactionary press had a fine time finding material for the most unjust and unworthy jeers.\textsuperscript{54}

Morris's first steps towards socialism and his joining the Democratic Federation in 1883 were perhaps made easier by the fact that this group still had few links with the working class and that almost all its leaders belonged to middle and upper class circles, as he recalled himself in 1894.\textsuperscript{66} He thus was spared the disconcerting shock of immediate contact with the working masses, for which there had been nothing to prepare him.

In his thesis, Mr Eugene Le Mire has gathered some information about the founders of the Democratic Federation,\textsuperscript{58} and I quote from it, adding a little more. Henry S. Salt and J. L.Joynes had both been masters at Eton.\textsuperscript{57} Edward Carpenter had been Fellow of Trinity Hall at Cambridge.\textsuperscript{58} E. Belfort Bax was a member of the Bar.\textsuperscript{59} As for Hyndman, the president of the Federation, with whom Morris had most contacts, he was a stockbroker.\textsuperscript{60} We may add the names of H. Hyde Champion, an artillery officer\textsuperscript{61}, and his friend R. P. B. Frost, like him an ex-Marlborough pupil.\textsuperscript{62} They provided a curious spectacle, these members of good society, led by Hyndman in immaculate frockcoat and top hat, selling the socialist weekly \textit{Justice} in Fleet Street and the Strand.\textsuperscript{61}

Hyndman was certainly less well-off than Morris, but both in his dress and his bearing he was the very incarnation of bourgeois respectability. He was a complex person and the ambiguity of his motives has never been clearly resolved, either by his memoirs or by the studies made of him. Despite his unbudging hostility towards Engels ("the Grand Lama of the Regents Park Road", as he called him),\textsuperscript{64} he remained true to Marx's doctrine, or believed he was true. His militant activity was considerable and no doubt could be cast upon his devotion. But, contrary to what took place in Morris's case, his bourgeois consciousness remained alive to the end, and seems to have been one of the decisive factors in the political attitudes he adopted in later years, which earned him bitter denunciation from Lenin.\textsuperscript{65} This man was a strange socialist: when he was expelled from the New University Club following his agitation among London's unemployed, and not having been able to afford, because of his financial contribution to the S.D.F., to maintain his membership of the Garrick, he felt disconcerted at no longer belonging to any club.\textsuperscript{66} His appearance and his manners, as much as his dictatorial methods, did not arouse sympathy in socialist circles\textsuperscript{67} and it was only through tenacity and devotion that he maintained his authority over the S.D.F. and kept it alive for a surprisingly long time.

It is interesting to note the difference in tone between the "we of the middle classes" of Morris and Hyndman's "my class".\textsuperscript{68} At almost all public meetings, Hyndman used this expression with provocative cynicism and lashed the apathy of his working-class listeners by ironically thanking them for maintaining his class. This unamiable course often annoyed Tom Mann, who, nevertheless, remained one of his faithful supporters.\textsuperscript{69} There was nothing so contemptuous in Morris's attitude and, when he joined the Democratic
Federation, he was already losing his illusions about the leading rôle of the bourgeoisie and did not take himself to be a liberating Messiah; Marx had convinced him that the emancipation of the workers would be the work of the workers themselves.

Such was not the opinion of Hyndman, according to whom “a slave-class cannot be freed by the slaves themselves”.  

It is not very likely that differences showed between Hyndman and Morris on the subject at this stage, at least until the second half of 1884. They were both sincere and ardent socialists, and points of agreement were clearly more numerous than points of discord. It is not surprising, moreover, that the propaganda efforts of the young organisation were directed not only towards the working class, to whom the mechanism of its exploitation needed explaining, but also, in an explicit way, to the middle classes, who needed reassuring: the socialist aim, jointly wrote Hyndman, Morris and Taylor, in an article published in Justice in January 1884, was to show them that socialism was a serious scientific theory and that, far from fomenting anarchy, it had as its only objective to put a beneficent society in place of the disorder of present society. Reassuring words both for the public and for the authors themselves.

Problems, however, were not long in arising. First was the discovery of working-class poverty, the facts of which seem to have come to Morris as from a distant, almost unsuspected country and which, he said, impinged upon his bourgeois sensibility and filled him with naive astonishment and horror. Already, during his pre-socialist period, sights in the streets had made him feel that he owed it to chance alone that he had been “born respectable and rich” and enjoyed a pleasant life. Even earlier on he had felt shame and personal responsibility at such sights. This feeling could not but deepen after his coming to socialism, and Morris, in the presence of the contrast between the joy of his work and the enslavement of the majority of his fellows, was “ashamed of his own position”. He publicly admitted during a debate that he had an uneasy conscience over occupying himself with art and literature while the masses were “doomed to such a sordid and miserable life of servitude”. This feeling grew steadily stronger and was more and more expressed in his lectures and articles. By 1885 it must have been extremely strong, for Morris felt obliged to give it expression in the official text of the Manifesto of the Socialist League.

Ruskin had felt similar shame and expressed a desire to find “a byework to quiet my conscience”. But with him it was only a passing pang flattering to his Protestant introspection, a whim leading only to abortive undertakings with no future. For Morris, on the other hand, there was a permanent and painful contradiction, the essential motive for his militant activity and his utopian quest. This contradiction drove him to analyse, and the analysis sharpened the contradiction. The Marxist concept of surplus value made him feel, not only an accomplice to exploitation, but one who profited by it. This caused him real pain, and the revolution, the building of a classless society, became for him, belonging to the exploiting class, an absolute personal necessity. He reached the point of declaring that the situation of “slaveowner” was more wretched and shameful than that of the slave himself.

But strong roots attached him to his class and he did not stop imploring it to
understand and to join him in the struggle. When he reached political maturi-

ty, these appeals stemmed more from the needs of propaganda for unity, but in

the beginning he was pathetically direct in his appeals. His 1884 lecture, Art

and Socialism, is wholly aimed in this direction. After having, still in terms that

lack precision, sat in judgment on the system of laissez-faire and commercial

competition, he sketches the picture of a happy society, “the reverse of the pre-

sent state of things”, and asks: “How can we of the middle classes help to

bring such a state of things about?” He can write “clear our own consciences

doing the guilt of enslaving men by their labour … Can the middle-classes

regenerate themselves?” He refers to the energy displayed by his class in

overcoming the forces of nature, but he is no longer the optimist of 1881: “And

yet I doubt it: their own creation, the Commerce they are so proud of, has

become their master.” Nevertheless, repressing his own doubts, he appeals to

the hearts of his bourgeois listeners, he paints the lot of the “class of vic-

tims” and shows them the way to salvation:

“And how can we of the middle-classes, we the capitalists, and our

hangers-on, help them? By renouncing our class, and on all occasions

when antagonism rises up between the classes casting in our lot with the

victims … There is no other way: and this way I tell you plainly, will in

the long run give us plentiful occasion for self-sacrifice …”

He concludes by inviting them to join the Democratic Federation without

hiding all the material and moral risks to which such membership would ex-

pose them. Despite the sincere emotion of this appeal, it is presented in a very

clumsy way, doubtless on account of its very sincerity, and there was little

chance of its being heeded.

Morris probably dealt with the same theme in the lecture entitled “What’s

to become of the Middle Classes?”, given in Hammersmith on 23 August 1885,

the text of which has been lost. There is something deeply touching in this

painful fidelity to his origins, which was expressed in various ways. In the

course of the present study we shall see that Morris always avoided confusing

the bourgeois with the bourgeoisie. He believed in the natural goodness of man

and that it was historical fate that made them cruel exploiters, not as in-

dividuals but as a class. Just as he offered his middle-class listeners immediate

redemption by acceptance of socialism, this solicitude followed him into his

utopia, for one of the tasks of the new society was to ensure the reintegration

and ultimate regeneration of the defeated bourgeoisie.

These approaches and appeals met with little response. The risks to

deserters from the middle classes after their conversion to socialism, of which

he charitably warned his audience in his 1884 lecture, Art and Socialism, were

real risks, and others were prudent enough to leave him to verify their reality

on his own. It is true that his material position was too firmly based for there

to be any danger of his losing it, but he became a target for jeers and unworthy

attacks by the whole press, which did not greatly affect him, and he found peo-

ple he esteemed becoming cold and even turning away from him. These were

certainly pinpricks to which he was sensitive. He must have been still more

so to the attitude of Jane, who did not hide her lack of enthusiasm for her

husband’s socialist visitors.

He stood firm, and went further. But other disappointments awaited him at
the beginning of his militant career. Probably the most serious was the difficulty he found in adapting himself to working-class audiences. Despite his burning sympathy and the zeal of his new conversion, he could not rid himself of a superior attitude. In a letter sent on 7 May 1883 to his elder daughter, Jenny, we find an account of his first experience: “One thing I would not praise them for, to wit that they kept dropping [in] all the time or nearly so, till the room, which was only half full when I began, was crowded at the end. I must tell you however that I behaved badly; for 2 young women close to me would keep whispering and giggling, which made me so nervous, that at last I laid down my Ms and said ‘I will go on when you have left off whispering and giggling.’ But nothing put him off and the occasions on which he addressed audiences of the people became more and more frequent, without his feeling however any more at ease. Two years later, in a letter to Mrs Burne-Jones, we find these very revealing lines:

“You would perhaps have smiled at my congregation; some twenty people in a little room, as dirty as convenient and stinking a good deal. It took the fire out of my fine periods, I can tell you: it is a great drawback that I can’t talk to them roughly and unaffectedly. Also I would like to know what amount of real feeling underlies their bombastic revolutionary talk when they get to that. I don’t seem to have got at them yet – you see this great class gulf lies between us . . .”

This naked confession demands respect. So many bourgeois intellectuals, after a period of flirting with the working class, have returned to their ivory towers or have become hostile and aggressive. Morris was aware of what he was and of what the proletarian masses of the ’eighties still were. He had no illusions about himself or about them. But he was moved by his fundamental revolt against injustice and also by the conviction, drawn from his reading of Marx, that historically it is the function of the working class to destroy the capitalist production relationships and inaugurate the classless society into which his quest for utopia was already venturing. He carried on his militant task in order to bring to the unorganised masses the ideological weapons they needed, despite disappointment and friction and despite another feeling that sometimes haunted his bourgeois conscience during these early years of struggle. This revolution, for which he prayed, frightened him at the same time, not by its inevitable violence, which he readily accepted at that time, but by its outcome. His apprehension of the coming to power of what “no history has yet shown us – what is swiftly advancing upon us – a class which, though it shall have attained knowledge, shall lack utterly the refinement and self-respect which comes from the union of knowledge with leisure and ease of life. The growth of such a class may well make the cultured people of today tremble.” He is undoubtedly being ironical at the expense of the latter, but nothing in his lecture sets out to dissipate their apprehension. Certainly, this was only a passing feeling, every trace of which subsequently disappeared, an the expression of it bears witness to the sincerity, thoughtfulness, and pertinacity of Morris. But it also indicates a shrewd appreciation of his own position. His revolutionary enthusiasm and his indignation at working-class poverty were never to lead him into meretricious demagogy. He never sought to identify himself with the proletariat or pretend to express his revolt a
aspirations "from within". In The Pilgrims of Hope (1885-86), which is his most "committed" poem, the hero is not a proletarian but a young ruined bourgeois, reduced to earning a workshop living.98

This dignified reserve does credit to Morris as a writer. In the field of action, however, his inability to put himself in the shoes of the workers led him into equivocal positions up to the beginning of the 'nineties. He could not grasp the political necessities as readily as the human needs behind immediate demands. With his eyes fixed on the ultimate goal, sickened by the petty-bourgeois socialism of the Fabians and the compromises of the parliamentary game, he imprisoned himself in rigid doctrine, a leftist formalism which represented to him the royal road to utopia. Without doubt, at this time the first enemy for the young revolutionary movement to fight was reformism, and so it remained up to the Leninist period. But Morris's uncompromising anti-reformism led him to despise not only the "palliatives" achieved by parliamentary means, but also the partial victories of the trade union struggle. Whatever reservations might be justified by the behaviour of trade union leaders, he did not appreciate that in the unions were to be found the working masses, towards whom the essential effort of his propaganda should be directed, and that strikes and mass action, however modest the results achieved, were indispensable stages on the road to socialism. Cut off in this way from fundamental reality, disposed to see the working class in an abstract vision, he long held on to illusions about the imminence of revolution, and the knell sounded only after Bloody Sunday in 1887. It needed the thunderclap of the dockers' strike in 1889 to bring him gradually to a more realistic appreciation of the fight for immediate demands, tearing him at last from that formalism which, though he did not understand this, was the consequence of the limitations of a bourgeois viewpoint, and not of a superior understanding of revolutionary action. Nor did he realise, moreover, that this very formalism, which isolated him for several years from the true mass movement, held nothing to frighten the middle classes, quite the contrary. As E. P. Thompson cogently remarked: "It became even fashionable for the young avant-garde of the bourgeoisie to pay at least one visit to the converted out-house", transformed into a meeting-hall, which flanked the Hammersmith house.99

We have found, in Bernard Shaw's papers, a letter from May Morris, dated 25 November 1886, in which she says: "The 'damned bourgeois branch', as Leaguers have been pleased to call the Hammersmith Branch, is going to have a party on Jan. 1st." 100 And, looking at it from a different angle, there is another fact worthy of comment. Morris's formalism significantly impoverished his propaganda towards the working class, because he proved incapable of mustering his arguments with concrete examples, directly drawn from the workers' experience of the day-to-day fight. Being unable to really talk to them about themselves, and about reality as they knew it, he was left only with the prospects offered by utopia, convinced that, thanks to the culture with which his birth had endowed him, he could in this way give form and expression to the deep aspirations which were confused in their minds because of their stupefying poverty.101

However, in his own organisation, in the very bosom of the Socialist League of which he was founder and leader, a severe voice had been raised which must have given him a great deal to think about by its personal and direct way of
denouncing the very roots of the evil. Thomas Binning, an honoured militant of the printing union, with full-time responsibility for the publication of *Commonweal*, specialist on workers’ matters in the League’s weekly, was not himself entirely free from similar failings. But he was a worker, tied to the masses, and when, in 1888, Morris, in the columns of *Commonweal*, delivered a somewhat outspoken attack on “practical socialism”, he felt stung to the quick and retorted with a letter published on 25 February:

“It is all very well for people in comfortable circumstances to go in for the ‘whole hog’, to deprecate the vulgar comfort of the middle classes, and to make light of ameliorative changes in the condition of the workers. But those whose daily life is brightened and made happier and more hopeful by these little changes so slightly spoken of are not likely to be favourably influenced by the abstract notions of the doctrinaires.”

The judgment, terse as it was, was clear-sighted, but the lesson was too hard to bear fruit at once.

* * *

There were, then, all these internal contradictions to be resolved. There were also what we might call external contradictions, those imposed upon him, not by the stirrings of his conscience, but questions inevitably raised in the world in which he moved by his belonging to both the bourgeois class and the socialist movement. This state of affairs aroused venomous spite in the hostile press, but William Morris cared little for such attacks. On the other hand, he was responsive to the questions, sometimes aggressive and sometimes perplexed, addressed to him by popular audiences and he early felt the need to clarify his exact place in the social scale. He no longer had any direct links with finance capital since he had, in 1876, resigned from the board of Devon Great Consols, and he had been so delighted at having done so that, back home from the meeting, he had solemnly sat on his top-hat. He was, of course, an employer of paid labour, but, in view of the medium scale of his business and the nature of the work, he refused to wear the label of capitalist. The term would, in fact, have suggested a level of fortune he was far from possessing; and he insisted over and over that he was not so rich as was claimed. Was he not obliged to sell the luxurious products of the Morris Firm to people much richer than himself? It is true that even that fact was once reckoned a crime by a militant socialist in Glasgow. This very point indeed, was one of Morris’s personal sorrows, and his daughter May thought it one of the main reasons for his becoming a socialist. It was certainly this melancholy realisation that allowed him to place himself, not without bitterness, in a well-defined category. “I am not a capitalist, my friend,” he wrote to Mrs. Burne-Jones, “I am but a hanger-on on that class, like all professional men”, and he did not hesitate so to describe himself in his public lectures.

It would probably be dishonest to doubt his sincerity and suppose that he was trying in this way to avoid burning questions. They could not fail to come up, and had come up already. Did he not belong to the employing class and how was he to reconcile this fact with his socialism? In 1883 the question was asked by a reader in the columns of the *Standard*, and Morris replied at once to the editor of that paper:
"I freely admit that this position is a false one, but it seems to me that its falseness is first felt by an honest man, not when he begins to express his opinion openly, and to further openly the spread of Socialism, but when his conscience is first pricked by a sense of the injustice and stupidity of the present state of society. Your correspondent implies that, to be consistent, we should at once cast aside our position as capitalists, and take rank with the proletariat; but he must excuse my saying that he knows very well that we are not able to do so; that the most we can do is to palliate, as far as we can, the evils of the unjust system which we are forced to sustain; that we are but minute links in the immense chain of the terrible organisation of competitive commerce, and that only the complete unrivetted of that chain will really free us. It is this very sense of the helplessness of our individual efforts which arms us against our own class, which compels us to take an active part in the agitation which, if it be successful, will deprive us of our capitalist position." 113

This first skirmish remained on the plane of generalities, and Morris's reply was one of irreproachable logic. His reaction was expressed in a letter to Mrs. Burne-Jones in November 1888: "I have been living in a storm of newspaper brickbats, to some of which I had to reply: of course I don't mind a bit nor even think the attack unfair". 114 In the following year, matters took a more direct and more serious turn. On 4 February 1884, during a debate at the Cambridge Union Society: "The opposer Mr. Frost, a Cambridge Graduate, ... tried to excite the merriment of the house, and then condescended to personalities, by asking Mr. Morris to account for his position as an employer ... Mr. William Morris ... explained the impossibility of avoiding the responsibility which capital in the present state of society confers, and avowed his readiness to resign his position as soon as ever the State should be able to step in and take his place, pointing out the utter uselessness of merely handing over capital to another capitalist while the certainty of its being used for the exploitation of labour remains unassailed. This the audience seemed capable of understanding, and they cheered accordingly." 115

All that was not going very far, but it appears that, from the early months of 1884, these attacks seriously worried Morris. The long letter of 1st June 1884 to Mrs. Burne-Jones is clearly the conclusion of a discussion on this subject that had been going on for some time in earlier letters that have disappeared. 116 From this letter we can draw several important pointers. First of all, Morris, who knew his Capital very well, observes that the capitalist's profit only constitutes a part of the general exploitation and that "co-operation, to be real, must be the rule and not the exception". If he renounced his personal profit and shared the Firm's balance equally among all the workers, what would be the result? He calculates that it would represent an annual increase of £16 each, which would obviously be pleasant, "but leave them still members of the working class with all the disadvantages of that position". So what was to be done?

"... Here then is a choice for a manufacturer ashamed of living on surplus value: shall he do his best to further a revolution on the basis of society ... which would turn all people into workers, as it would give a chance for all workers to become refined and dignified in their life, or
shall he ease his conscience by dropping a certain portion of his profits to bestow on his handful of workers, [117] for indeed it is but charity after all . . . Well I say what shall he do? The second choice if he takes it, may save a few individuals a certain amount of suffering and anxiety, therefore if he can do both things let him do so, and make his conscience surer; but if, as must generally be the case, he must choose between the furthering of a great principle, and the staunching of 'the pangs of conscience', I should think it right to choose the first course: because although it is possible that here and there a capitalist may be found who could and would be content to carry on his business at (say) foreman's wages, it is impossible that the capitalist class could do so: the very point of its existence is manufacturing for a profit and not for a livelihood.” [118]

So Morris's decision was taken: he rejected a personal solution which would not advance the cause by one inch. That cannot have happened without long arguments with himself and with his friends. Why, one may wonder, could he not do "both things at the same time", as he stressed himself? For his part he would have been willing to live on four pounds a week, and he added, "if Janey and Jenny were quite well and capable I think they ought not to grumble at living on the said £4, nor do I think they would" [119] "That is certainly a bold supposition. One can hardly see Jane accepting a proposal of that kind and there is no doubt that Jenny's health caused Morris grave worry. These considerations certainly played a part in his final decision, just as much as did considerations of an ideological nature. We find proof of it in the private diary of Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson. He and his wife Annie were a somewhat odd couple who had, with much affectation, renounced the world to practise the "simple life", devoting themselves to vegetarianism and book-binding. They had fairly close links with Morris, and tried to influence him. The diary entry of 16 January 1884 reads: "We told him we thought he ought to put his principles into practice in his own case: that his appeal would be much more powerful if he did so. He said he was in a corner and could not, that no one person could; that to say the truth, he was a coward and feared to do so, that there was his wife, and the girls; and how could he put it upon them? . . . Dear old Morris, he would be happier if he could put his ideas into practice." [120] Perhaps it is as well not to put too much trust in Cobden-Sanderson, bearing in mind his condescending priggishness; but we have definite indications that in January 1884 the problem was facing Morris in personal terms.

He touched on the same problem in a letter to an American, Emma Lazarus, in April 1884. Written to a woman infinitely less close to him than Georgiana Burne-Jones, it is of less direct interest and scarcely adds anything to what he wrote to that friend two months later. Nevertheless, he stresses one idea that we find recurring in all his work, that production co-operatives in the present situation cannot be anything other than a larval form of capitalism. [121]

Morris had, however, introduced a partial profit-sharing system into his business, of which his questioners and critics were generally ignorant. This system directly involved the general manager, George Wardle, as well as four workshop directors and, indirectly, two foremen who received production bonuses. [122]

The attacks on Morris never stopped. In 1885, an anonymous journalist in
the Saturday Review reproached him in these terms: "... he left off poetry, which he understood, and took to politics of which he knows nothing... the fact of a capitalist and 'profit-monger' denouncing capitalists and profit-mongers without, as far as is known, making the least attempt to pour his capital into the lap of the treasurer of the Socialist Church, or to divide his profits weekly with the sons of toil who make them". The article was pompously entitled: Nephelococcygia-Lez-Hammersmith. A few weeks later, the Oxford Times, in scarcely less abusive terms, returned to the same questions: "Nobody wishes him to escape from the vicious circle of modern society, nor to hand over his accumulated profits to some capitalist who might not make so good use of them as he; but surely it is not much to ask him to divide the surplus profits of the labour of the concern over which he presides equally among those who help to realize them. This, however, is a view of the case which, socialist as he is, the apostle of socialism declines to adopt; and with his tenderness for his own pocket, many of his abstract arguments go by the board". In 1890 again, Morris was interviewed by one of the editorial staff of Cassell's Sunday Journal: "Q.: Meanwhile, they say, you ought to share publicly whatever you have got, and run the concern for the good of the community. – A.: What good would I do by that? I am not fighting individuals, I am attacking a system. How could I attack it more effectually by reducing myself to the proletariat level?" In the discussions following his lectures the same question constantly cropped up: "Why don't you carry out your Socialist principles in connection with your own business?": "Was it consistent for Socialists to be capitalists?" Sometimes the question was put in a more general way. When, one day, Morris was asked: "If you believe so much in what you say, why don't you give your money to the poor?" he replied: "I am not a very rich man, but even if I were to give all my money away, what good would that do? The poor would be just as poor, the rich, perhaps, a little more rich, for my wealth would finally get into their hands. The world would be pleased to talk about me for three days until something new caught its fancy. Even if Rothschild gave away his millions tomorrow, the same problems would confront us the day after". In replying to these questions he knew how to raise the level of the argument. In an article in Commonwealth, he showed that workers' sharing in profits was a trap, and was tantamount to "feeding the dog with its own tail". It would be a way of inducing the workers to increase their productivity and it would sidetrack them" by deluding them into thinking that their interests are at one with those of their masters.

It is remarkable that Morris, so readily aroused in argument and discussion, to the point at times of losing all control of himself, could always maintain exemplary calm and patience whenever this topic was raised. The decision he had taken was the climax of a long and painful struggle with his conscience, calling into play his innermost feelings as well as his theoretical thinking. The contradiction in his life was plain to him in the broadest sense. He had chosen his stand and the solution which seemed proper to him. The debate was over and he lived with his contradiction, slowly making himself work it out in action and in utopia.
The intense political agitation into which Morris threw himself during the 'eighties was the product of deep conviction and also, probably, of a need to resolve this contradiction, to put an end to these "pangs of conscience" which tormented him. He must have succeeded to an appreciable extent, because his contacts with the working class became easier and more cordial. When one thinks of the ignorance, the prejudices, the physical revulsion which reared an insurmountable barrier between the Victorian bourgeoisie and the urban proletariat, 17 when one thinks of the reticence and attitudes of other socialist intellectuals like Hyndman or Shaw, or writers like Gissing, it is impressive to recognise how far Morris had gone beyond the "river of fire" in this new world with its spreading human warmth. He no longer had to spend weeks over drafting his speeches. Now he improvised on street corners. As E. P. Thompson so appositely notes, the finest homage in this connection paid to 'comrade Morris' came from his companion in the struggle Frank Kitz, an East End worker little disposed to tolerate the airs of a great gentleman:

"So convinced was he of the utility of open-air propaganda that he stood by my side on many a windy, inclement night at the corner of some wretched East-End slum whilst I endeavoured to gain him an audience... He had no feeling of contempt for those who do the rough work of the movement... Although his audience were at first somewhat mystified by his method of delivering his message, for he was no great orator, they gradually grasped his meaning; and as he preached to those toil-worn crowds in the gloomy East-End byways... he would warm to his subject, and his audience would enter into the spirit of his address". 18

Morris established warm human relationships not only during public meetings but also in the long conversations he had during his long canvasses with local militants. Throughout Glasier's book we find the echo of these talks, their friendly, simple ease and the pleasure the poet experienced in being among the workers. 19 He no longer felt apprehensive; his mind, more critical now towards his own class, was no longer shocked by the lack of 'refinement' or 'dignity' and found other human qualities. He was conscious of this change and found great peace and deep satisfaction in it, as is indicated by a tiny incident recorded in Yeats's autobiography. 20

His natural simplicity, the little care he took over his appearance, his lack of affectation, setting him so clearly apart from Hyndman, helped to lessen the distances. But the fact that Morris was a man as much as an intellectual worker helped even more. He knew and practised himself the techniques of many of the artistic and craft activities of the Firm. He could handle tools and trades, he ground his colours and plunged his hands into the vats of dye. When he spoke to the workers, it was not only about politics: "He chatted in a chummy way with those around him, asking about their employment, and surprising us all by his acquaintance with the practical skill and usages of their crafts." 21

For the same reasons he never had any difficulty in his dealings with his own workers, to whom, incidentally, he paid wages above the average. 22 On the evidence of George Wardle: "He substituted piece work founded on the advanced rates of wages of the time work whenever the occupation permitted it, thus giving the workman a greater liberty as to the disposal of his time..."
Piece workers... could then occasionally knock off for an hour’s work in the
garden – the garden having been allotted in sections to the piece workers.
Any objection or claim made by the workman was listened to as if it came from
an equal and decided according to the equity of the case... No one having
worked for Mr. Morris would willingly have joined any other workshop. In
an attempt to bring into the present his utopian view of the workplace, Morris
had made Merton Abbey into a pleasant spot, and his enthusiasm aroused
the love of beauty in them. With justified pride he could speak of the works of
art that came from their hands, when replying to opponents in public meetings
who questioned him on his equivocal situation. It is noteworthy, too, that no
question or reproach on this subject ever came from his own workers, and
he even had the joy of seeing seven of them spontaneously set up a local group
of the Democratic Federation. Nonetheless, he remained obliged to put off into
the future the chance of being a worker among workers, putting his talents at
the service of a socialist community for a worker’s wages. In the evening he
returned to Kelmscott House and, when he was exhausted by work, he went
and relaxed in the calm of Kelmscott Manor. The utopian, seeking relief in the
future from a guilt-feeling, plunged back into the bourgeois sources of his
utopia.

* * *

In fact, consciousness of his origins pursued him into his own utopia. Even
when he is unfolding to his audience visions of abundance and happiness, he
will abruptly interrupt himself:

"I daresay that you will find some of my visions strange enough. One
reason which will make some of you think them strange is a sad and
shameful one. I have always belonged to the well-to-do classes, and was
born into luxury, so that necessarily I ask much more of the future than
many of you." 141

Against this, as he declared towards the end of his life, precisely because he
was a bourgeois who had not known the daily difficulties of existence, he could
never have become a militant socialist other than by the utopian road. only an
ideal could bring him to practical action. Such an assertion is surely going
too far, and seems to derive from a humble and blameworthy effort to indicate
a superiority of awareness on the part of the proletarian class. Before 1883, in
fact, one hardly finds in Morris’s writings anything more than utopian
aspirations. Utopia only really assumed shape and substance in his mind during
his years of militant action. If, as we have seen, the approach to utopia gave
direction and strength to his militant action, it was from this and from the
theoretical thought accompanying it that utopia drew its essential sustenance;
we shall find many opportunities of observing this. Utopia was at once cause
effect and this unceasing interplay was at all times the product of class
motivation.

News from Nowhere describes a communist society two hundred years after
the revolution, a society from which social classes have disappeared. But the
vision of that future world is not absolutely free from every bourgeois tinge.
William Guest, "the man from another planet", whom Morris, with a touch of
false naivety, casts in the rôle of foil, is a socialist from the nineteenth century, in fact, the bourgeois socialist Morris himself. We may wonder what would have been the reactions of a working-class socialist, a Frank Kitz, a Tom Mann, a Maguire, Mahon, Binning, had one arrived in Morris’s utopian world. Doubtless, in two hundred years the characteristic outlooks of each social layer have had time to disappear, and society has become homogeneous. There is really nothing proletarian left in this world. It is true that descriptions of work are lacking, apart from the idyllic vision of haymaking and the building work of the “Obstinate Refusers”. The dustman in the gold-embroidered overcoat is seen only in his gorgeous apparel and we have some difficulty over picturing him about his professional tasks. If, then, the persons in the story have absolutely nothing about them suggesting either close or remote working-class ancestry, can we certainly declare that nothing bourgeois remains about them either? We will not speak of Ellen’s father (or grandfather), who has to a dreadful degree the manner of a little Victorian rentier. But the “positive” heroes, like Dick and Clara? Haven’t they a way of life and a manner of talking that we can easily find among many English couples from cultured and comfortable surroundings? Don’t we get the feeling that in sketching a picture of a classless society Morris has stolen all the bedclothes, and proposed as model whatever was best in his own milieu? The bourgeoisie against which he rails is that of enriched cockneys, not his own. The indignation expressed by Morris against Bellamy’s “cockney paradise” is quite justified, and the contrast between the two utopias is certainly striking. There is not a trace in News from Nowhere of the philistine climate of Looking Backward. In condemning the American writer’s prophetic vision, Morris expressed a very interesting judgment:

“The only ideal of life,” he thinks, “which such a man can see is that of the industrious professional middle-class men of today purified from their crime of complicity with the monopolist class and become independent instead of being, as they now are, parasitical.”

Doubtless it is so, but is he sure that this reproach does not reflect back, at least to some small degree, on its author? And is not this desire for purification a more tender spot with Morris than with Bellamy?

It seems to me that, had we put such questions to Morris, he would not have protested, but would, on the contrary, have humbly agreed and even gone unnecessarily further, so great was his anxiety to resolve his contradictions and escape the original curse. In a practical sense, is there no other purpose in his utopia? Is it not advance preparation for escape? He replies unambiguously in the text of the narrative:

“Here I could enjoy everything without an afterthought of the injustice and miserable toil which made my leisure; the ignorance and dullness of life which went to make my keen appreciation of history; the tyranny and the struggle full of fear and mishap which went to make my romance.”

There is an almost despairing note to this admission. It has the same bitterness as the period when he wrote:

“But he who is rebel and rich may live safe for many a year,
While he warms his heart with pictures of all the glory to come.”
In *News from Nowhere*, after expulsion from paradise on earth the return to the dominance of bourgeois society is presented symbolically as a "black cloud rolling along to meet me, like a nightmare of my childish days". But another symbol is even more striking, that of the wretched old villager he passes on the road and who greets him obsequiously. Morris is out of the egalitarian world of his dreams, he is again one who attracts servile greetings from the "lower classes". It is easier to exorcise gods than demons.
PART TWO

SOURCES AND INFLUENCES
Foreword

In most studies devoted to a writer or to an aspect of his work, research into "sources and influences" constitutes a part of the work notorious for erudite sterility, which the reader is often tempted to skim or even skip. So my disquiet and hesitation are understandable. I finally decided to embark upon this thankless task because it seemed indispensable. A preliminary explanation is needed, it is very simple and I hope it will be convincing.

The whole of my analyses and discoveries inclines me to think that, in fact, the main inspiration and starting point of Morris's utopia are to be sought in Marxism. However, I am obliged to record that, despite the brief but lucid summary from R. Page Arnott, who played a pioneer rôle, and despite the extraordinary wealth of the political biography written by E. P. Thompson, critics are almost unanimous in declaring that William Morris was the opposite of a Marxist. The essence of my task will consist of an attempt to resolve this argument. It may be objected that the effort could have been restricted to that. The temptation was great, but the result would scarcely have been satisfactory. Other influences are intermingled with the one I find predominant. Certainly it is equally my conviction that these other influences have been profoundly transformed, digested, assimilated by the determining ideology. But their existence is indisputable and to pass them over in silence would distort the viewpoint, upset the balance, pervert the truth. I take a stand solely upon the complexity of the facts.

This search for sources is imposed by Morris himself. He was a man of excessive modesty. Although he felt at ease in the sphere of art, he tended to consider himself inept at handling ideas, to respect the judgment of those he considered more competent than himself and to deny himself all originality. "...though my mouth alone speaks," he said to his listeners at one of his first lectures, "it speaks, however feebly and disjointedly, the thoughts of many men better than myself." Undoubtedly he increased in assurance later on, but he never looked upon himself as an individual thinker bearing a new message. He was prevented, not only by his modesty, but also by his fundamental feeling for the continuity of history. "Inspiration," he declared several years later, "means the hope and the fruition of pleasure which fills a man as he receives from the minds of those who came before him to give to his fellow now living and to those that shall live." From 1885, when his mature judgment became saturated with dialectical materialism, this sense of the continuity of history took on deeper intensity as the prospect of utopia opened out before him. More than ever he claimed the heritage of all that was best in the past, but by then it was no longer a simple matter of transfer. History was no longer a circle, but a
spiral, and earlier messages would assume growing value as they were transformed by the rising curves of human development. So there was in him the consciousness of a many-sided, lasting debt that he explicitly recognised throughout his work.

At first glance, this facilitates my task. It is enough for me to collect the names of all the leaders of thought whom he quotes himself, or for whom, according to the evidence of his contemporaries, he showed special enthusiasm. I am encouraged to go about it in this way all the more because Morris was at once a ravenous and strangely selective reader. Burne-Jones noted that he “had a great instinct at all times for knowing what would not amuse him and what not to read”, 1 and Mackail confirms this characteristic: “He always knew whether he wanted to read a book or not, and when he did not, nothing could induce him to read it.” 2 One other indication will be valuable to us. In 1886, the Pall Mall Gazette sent a questionnaire to a number of writers asking for a list of their hundred favourite books. Morris’s reply contained fifty-four titles, excluding all works of philosophy, economics or history, which he wrote, are “rather tools than books”. So his choice was very limited, but far from negligible because the list only contained, he said, works which had “profoundly impressed” him.

It may perhaps be surprising that I have not purely and simply used the list to headline the following pages. I was careful not to; first, let us remember that the present study is concerned strictly with the utopian thought of William Morris, to the exclusion of all his other innumerable activities. So my purpose is to seek only the inspirations of his utopia. If some of the authors have made a “profound impression” upon him, it does not necessarily follow that they have exercised any influence in this direction. Conversely, a number of writers not mentioned may have “impressed” him less, but incontestably influenced him. There are even certain individuals whom he attacked in various circumstances, sometimes harshly, sometimes with sympathy, like Henry George, Edward Bellamy or Kropotkin, contact with whom nevertheless greatly enriched him (sometimes in unexpected ways). Finally, there are authors he perhaps never read, but who were discussed around him (for example, certain French socialist utopists): they were influences which were “in the air”, as the saying goes. We are even less able to neglect them since their names figure in the theoretical handbook, Socialism, Its Growth and Outcome, which Morris wrote with Bax in 1893: caution will obviously be needed as we get into regions of what cannot be checked. The same caution will be necessary when we come across reminiscences which are perhaps no more than coincidental.

In a general way, and at the assured risk of producing an incomplete work, I shall limit my enquiry strictly to ideology. More strictly still, because my concern not to let this study grow to monstrous dimensions forces me to make arbitrary selections, I shall endeavour to separate what comes under the head of utopianism from what can be classed as criticism of bourgeois society. In other words, I shall extract from the books which directly or indirectly influenced Morris that which deals with the organisation and ways of an ideal society. There again, we shall meet another difficulty. In fact there are, on one hand, innumerable definite suggestions for a future way of life and, on the other, there is a philosophy of history and life upon which the conception of a utopian world is founded. The frontier here is uncertainly traced, but, looking at it
more closely, it is the second element which is decisive. This will be apparent when we consider Ruskin and Marx. That is why, above all as far as these two thinkers are concerned, I thought it best, in the present part of our study, only to tackle the great ideas which bore upon Morris’s utopian development, allowing myself to note in passing, as we study the development, similarities of detail.
CHAPTER ONE

Utopian Literature

1. Plato and Campanella

News from Nowhere is the end-product (some would not hesitate to say the crowning achievement) of a long speculative literary tradition that has, since Plato, nourished man’s dreams. It would appear then, at first sight, that so enquiring and erudite a mind as that of William Morris would be soaked in this mass of material, particularly plentiful in his own country. However, this appear not to have been the case, and a critic, ready to discover in some earlier work the source or inspiration of some detail, some development, some idea, must exercise the greatest caution. Two considerations should encourage us to such caution.

First, it should be agreed that utopia is, to a certain extent, a literary genre with a set form, both in its construction and its essential themes, the narrative element regularly having as its point of departure a journey or a dream, and the ideal society often presenting the same reformist or revolutionary aspects: community of goods, social harmony, obligation to work, elimination of idlers and parasites, absorption of the family into the collective, eugenics, equality, a varying element of enjoyment or asceticism, raising of moral and cultural standards, and so on. Of course, these elements do not have the same value or significance from one work to another; even more than diversity of temperament, historical, political and social pressures give each case a different range and direction. But there is a common traditional basis, which is why the search for sources is seen to be uncertain and forever open to discussion.

In Morris’s own case, and this will be our second consideration, in order to avoid really gratuitous hypotheses, I shall be concerned to consider his own evidence or that of contemporaries who knew him. So our field of investigation is, surprisingly, reduced to six names: Plato, Campanella, Thomas More, Samuel Butler, Richard Jefferies and Edward Bellamy. We are sure that he read all these six authors, which by is no means to say that they all exerted an equal influence upon him. Did he read others? We have absolutely no information. I have not found in the whole of his work any definite indication which we can regard as a certain echo of such-and-such a utopian writer, and for my part I am inclined to think that, even if his reading was less restricted, the rest was of little consequence to him. His aggressive contempt for the spirit of the Renaissance and for Puritanism left him indifferent to two centuries of utopia following the publication of the New Atlantis. His interest only awakens again with the nineteenth century, in response to several minds whose interests
match his own and whose influence is the greater as his disagreement becomes more violent.

I do not feel there is much to gain by lingering over Plato and Campanella. The only reference to the author of the Republic that I have managed to glean from Morris's writings is in the letter of 2 February 1886,\(^1\) in reply to the questionnaire sent out by the Pall Mall Gazette to a number of writers about the authors they preferred. The fact that Plato figures in the list (without any comment, incidentally) reveals little. I am quite prepared to believe that it was the Republic that Morris had primarily in mind when he put down his name, thus acknowledging his debt to the common fund of utopia to which the Athenian philosopher was one of the first to contribute. Apart from this general consideration, he was undoubtedly responsive to the poetry and elegance, the memory of which was inseparable from that of happy days at Oxford. Having said that, it seems to me that it would be straining a good deal to attribute influence to a work of which the metaphysical idealism is quite foreign to the inclinations of our poet, and the social ideology of which faithfully reflected the structure of slave-owning antiquity, which, as a follower of Ruskin, Morris scorned and rejected.

As far as Campanella is concerned, things are even easier. There again, one single allusion throughout the works, and the name of the Calabrian monk is even missing from the list of favourite authors; one single allusion, clearly and healthily discouraging, from an 1885 lecture, in the course of which Morris sketched the chief features of the sixteenth century:

“But the times were stirring, and gave birth to the most powerful individualities in many branches of literature, and More and Campanella, at least from the midst of the exuberant triumph of young commercialism, gave to the world prophetic hopes of times yet to come when that commercialism itself should have given place to the society which we hope will be the next transform of civilization into something else….”

There it is, plain and simple: the socialist of the 'eighties vaguely acknowledges those he considers as predecessors and refers exclusively to the common theme of their utopias: collective ownership of goods. There again, it is too general and abstract a subject for one to talk of inspiration or influence, and, if one troubles to look closer, nothing resembles the London of Notes from Nowhere less than does the City of the Sun, with its theocratic order and its geometries.

2. Thomas More

It is quite another matter when we come to Thomas More's Utopia. Morris does not refer to that passingly and in general terms. We can even say that it constitutes for him the basic utopian reference book. He goes as far as to say, in the draft of a lecture delivered on 1 October 1885 before the Bloomsbury section of the Socialist League, which I have unearthed in Mr. Chimen Abramsky's collection:

“I do not know of any better description of the new form of Society than that described in More's Utopia.”\(^2\)
The practice of utopia and growing maturity led Morris to qualify that judgment, but More’s work remained for him a basic text and food for thought. As early as 1882 he gave readings from it at Kelmscott and, in a letter of 1 January 1883 (probably to Mrs. Burne-Jones), he saw in the imminent canonisation of the humanist a cause for satisfaction among socialists. Throughout the years of militancy, More remained on a special plane. He is, of course, included in the list of favourite authors. The columns of Commonsense are studded with quotations borrowed from Utopia and they also contain a study of More written by a certain T. Tonkin. Another of the League’s militants, S. M. Ward, devoted a Sunday-evening lecture to him at Hammersmith. For a number of years Morris was tempted, with a somewhat simple enthusiasm, to include the sixteenth-century humanist among the socialist classics and he was astonished to discover in the course of a tour in Scotland that not a single working-class comrade had read him. When, in 1893, he published at the Kelmscott Press a fine edition of Utopia, he wrote an important foreword for the occasion, and in it he still affirmed that it “is a necessary part of a Socialist’s library”. No doubt, having reached this stage in his own development, Morris was no longer content, as we shall see well enough, with this brief judgment, but it must be recognised that he was so content for a long time. The two extracts I have just quoted, from lectures given in 1885, are very significant in this connection, and in Justice and Socialism, (the draft of which I publish in an appendix) it is particularly worthy of comment that he takes as a text for his socialist sermon More’s condemnation of private property:

“... where every man under certain titles and pretences draweth and plucketh to himself as much as he can, so that a few divide among themselves all the while riches: be there ever so much abundance and store there to the residue is left lack and poverty... no equal and just distribution of things can be made, nor perfect wealth ever be among men, unless this propriety be exiled and banished.”

So More appeared then in Morris’s eyes as a socialist before his time, a precursor, “representative of the nobler hopes of his day”, just like Robert Owen three centuries later. But, from this stage on his earliest acquaintance with historical materialism led Morris to look more closely at the political rôle played by More, as an opponent of absolute monarchy and especially as a denouncer of the robbery of the peasants by the new men of agrarian capitalism. He could not fail to be impressed by the famous pages of Utopia dealing with the enclosures and probably also by the use Marx made of them in his exposition of primitive accumulation. More then became in his eyes, not only the prophet of socialism, but also the witness to the economic and social revolution of the sixteenth century, just like Latimer, with whom Morris liked to link his name. The two martyrs, one Catholic, one Protestant, drew a striking picture of the misery engendered by the dispossession of the freeholders, a process of nascent commercial greed that finds its echo in our times and inspires our struggle for a future free of the scourge of mercantilism.

Such were Morris’s first reactions and, if they were still of a rudimentary nature, they contained the germ of the development of his later conclusions.
The second stage, which is clearly the one to claim our attention, came several years later at the time when Morris, writing *News from Nowhere*, incorporated the heritage of More into his own utopia. Our poet's thinking had developed remarkably, and the very fact that he felt a need to give it form does indicate that he no longer believed that there could not be "any better description of the new form of Society than that described in More's *Utopia*".

As Victor Dupont has shown, with great insight, Thomas More's utopia is two-fold. On the one hand, Henry VIII's Chancellor is formulating a set of propositions calculated to raise both the moral standard and the effectiveness of the Tudor exercise of monarchy. That, if one will, is the reformist aspect of his ideology; it was justified by immediate political considerations and it is obvious that Morris's glimpse of the future could draw nothing from this outdated historical context. No less obviously, it is the other aspect, the revolutionary and constructive one, that engaged the thought of our poet, with its description of the institutions and customs of the utopian kingdom. When, in 1885, in his lecture on *Justice and Socialism*, Morris was putting forward More's work as the one model of the society to come, he simply referred his listeners to it,

"... for all purposes, whether of Domestic Life, Laws, Learning, Philosophy, Marriage, War and Religion." 15

On all these points, we observe that, in the end, the conceptions of the two utopists offer as many differences as similarities, and, despite his lasting admiration, one may say that what Morris found in More was less an ideology than a set of problems, constituting a basis for all utopias. It was only in the third stage of his thinking, in 1893, that he defined all that separated him from the humanism of the Renaissance and all the historical reasons he had for being particularly responsive to its way of posing the problems.

The fundamental theme that captivated Morris, was, from the outset, communism. No doubt he had no need to read More to rally to it; reading Marx was amply sufficient, and what was, for a sixteenth-century humanist, an unattainable and more or less unfounded aspiration, became, in *Capital*, the logical culmination of man's material history. Nevertheless, there was, on the theoretical plane, a rigidity of thought which gave More's utopia an extraordinarily original appearance and which foreshadowed Morris's own rigour. If it is true, as Victor Dupont has said, that this utopia is two-fold, it is not ambivalent, and it is surprising that commentators have taken so little account of the poor opinion More had of his own reformism. After enumerating the palliatives which could, "in some measure, lessen the evil", More "utterly denies that it can be wholly taken away":

"By such laws, I say, like as sick bodies that be desperate and past cure be wont with continual good cherishing to be kept and bunched up for some time, so these evils also might be lightened and mitigated. But that they may be perfectly cured, and brought to a good and upright state, it is not to be hoped for; whereas every man is master of his own to himself." 16

Communism appears, in the same passage, as the only remedy for social injustice and as the condition for abundance. More insists upon this last point
over and over again: "though no man have anything, yet every man is rich". 19

However satisfying these theoretical assertions may have been for Morris, and it is possible that they helped him form his own, it is, above all, their practical applications to utopian behaviour that may have been an influence. This common ownership of goods seems more absolute in More's accounts than in Morris's. Houses in Amaurote are never locked. "Whoso will may go in, for there is nothing within the houses that is private or any man's own. And every tenth year they change their houses by lot." 19 Matters are not pressed so far in *News from Nowhere*, and it is more a state towards which things are moving: as we shall see, the situation described appears as a transition between private ownership of consumer goods and their simple enjoyment.

It is in the economy of distribution that Morris seems to have followed More most faithfully:

"In the midst of every quarter there is a market-place of all manner of things. Thither the works of every family be brought into certain houses, and every kind of thing is laid up in several barns or storehouses. From hence the father of every family or every householder fetcheth whatsoever he and his have need of, and carrieth it away with him without money, without exchange, without any gage, pawn or pledge. For why should anything be denied unto him, seeing there is abundance of all things, and that it is not to be feared lest any man will ask more than he needeth?" 19

Nothing remains for Morris to do but illustrate by means of lively and picturesque anecdotes the details of this world where money has been abolished. More insists more than once on the absence of any cash token. The peasants of the kingdom of Utopia come and freely provide themselves in the town with everything that is lacking in the countryside. 20 Travellers take no provisions with them: "they lack nothing, for wheresoever they come, they be at home." 21 Goods lacking in one town will be provided by another town which has abundance of them, without there being any accounting or exchanges, and so there are no poor or needy anywhere. 22

This egalitarian abundance derives from two causes, which Morris, among others, will equally count upon. One is common to all utopias, and we mention it without stressing it: it is the general obligation to work and the abolition of all idleness and parasitism: no more nobility to be maintained with their innumerable followers and mercenaries, no more wretched beggars, no more vagabonds. Thanks to this equitable use of the whole work force, the working day is reduced to six hours. 21 But there is another reason for this abundance, to which Morris certainly paid more heed in that it was directly linked to what was advocated by Ruskin, his first mentor. This reason is the elimination of all unnecessary production. After referring to the multitude who live off the work of others, More exclaims:

"Now consider yourself of these few that do work, how few are occupied in necessary works. For where money beareth all the swing, there many vain and superfluous occupations must needs be used, to serve only for riotous superfluity and unhonest pleasure... But if all these that be now busied about unprofitable occupations, with all the whole flock of them that live idly and slothfully, which consume and waste
every one of them more of these things that come by other men’s labour than two of the workmen themselves do, if all these (I say) were set to profitable occupations, you easily perceive how little time would be enough, yea, and too much, to store us with all things that may be requisite either for necessity or for commodity, yea, or for pleasure, so that the same pleasure be true and natural."

To vain luxury products for the rich, Morris’s condemnation added the cheap rubbish which nineteenth-century capitalist industry was thrusting upon the poor, but, like More, he based the abundance and happiness of the communist age on the satisfaction of reasonable needs and the elimination of all artificiality. However, this “real and natural pleasure” is free in Morris from the tendency to asceticism which marks More’s utopia. Precious metals, freed from all monetary significance, are largely used for ornament in News from Nowhere, whereas More contemptuously assigns them to the manufacture of slaves’ chains and chamber pots. In Utopia there is no dustman bedecked in gold: clothing is of monastic simplicity, and of the same colour for everybody. However, the two utopists come together again in respect of the human body. Like Morris, More includes among the most legitimate pleasures those which satisfy natural needs, those of the table as those of procreation. Health is, for him, the supreme good and his Utopians hold beauty, strength and agility in high esteem. Their race is handsome and life is longer there than elsewhere. It is strange that these common conclusions derive from such dissimilar ideologies. What is for one the result of moral and religious meditation is, with the other, the expression of uncompromising materialism and a pagan love of life. This is also the very reason that the similarities and dissimilarities of the organisation of daily life are inextricably linked. If the streets of Amaurote are severe and monotonous, the gardens ranged behind the houses foreshadow, in their beauty and the love with which they are tended, those which will fringe the houses of Hammersmith, on the banks of the Thames, in Morris’s urban fantasy. If, on the other hand, the inhabitants of the kingdom of Utopia have their meals in common, they do so by obligation in a monastic order and discipline which contrast with the pleasant freedom of the Guest Houses of twenty-second-century England.

It seems difficult, perhaps pointless, to seek for some particular inspiration for utopian institutions. The elective democracy described by More, hierarchic and authoritarian, has little in common with the final stage of withering-away of the State which we find in News from Nowhere. The use of slaves in the utopian system in itself provides one point of fundamental opposition, even if these slaves do not form a social class, since they can redeem themselves and since their children are born free; even if the slavery envisaged by More derives from a progressive ideology since it represents, in contrast with Tudor repressiveness, a humanisation of punishment; even if, in the sixteenth century, such slavery provided the only possible reply to the question of who, in the kingdom of Utopia, would carry out the chores and dirty jobs which Morris hands over to machines. There is scarcely anything other than secondary and fleeting suggestions which might foreshadow Morris’s thoughts, and he could quite well have found them elsewhere: a tendency towards the fusing of counties, or ultimate recourse to direct democracy. More worthy of
attention is the idea expressed by More that the abolition of private property, leading to the disappearance of conflicting interests, renders futile the existence of many complex laws and makes recourse to lawyers unnecessary. On this point it even seems that More’s text was imprinted on Morris’s memory. Finally, we could not end this rapid examination of More’s political ideas without recalling his genial and bold concept of the significance of the State, considered for the first time, I believe, as an instrument of domination and exploitation by the ruling class:

"Therefore, when I consider and weigh in my mind all these commonwealths which nowadays anywhere do flourish, so God help me, I can perceive nothing but a certain conspiracy of rich men procuring their own commodities under the name and title of the commonwealth. They invent and devise all means and crafts, first how to keep safely, without fear of losing, that they have unjustly gathered together, and next how to hire and abuse the work and labour of the poor for as little money as may be. These devices, when the rich men have decreed to be kept and observed under colour of the commonalty, that is to say, also of the poor people, then they be made laws." 32

William Morris had read Utopia before reading Capital and the Manifesto. Perhaps the reading of More made him more receptive to Marx. Perhaps, too, more probably, it seems to me, the assimilation of what was solid argument in Marx allowed him to give full significance to what, in More, was happy intuition.

I do not feel it useful to linger over More’s theories about the family, of which his patriarchal and authoritarian conception would scarcely attract Morris, despite a relative tolerance of divorce. At the most one can pick up the point that More does not seem to have given high importance to consanguinity. When a family became too prolific and passed certain numerical norms, the surplus was transferred to other families. 33 In the same way, when a child wanted to learn another trade than that of his father, he had himself adopted into another household where the trade of his choice was carried on. 34 We shall find a memory of this mobility in scattered thoughts by Morris.

We know that, for the latter, the touchstone of any social philosophy was its attitude to work, considered as man’s prime need and the condition of his happiness. More’s attitude contained nothing to upset him. If it is difficult to speak of inspiration or borrowings, it is at least permissible to say that in this connection Morris found his natural tastes and the bent of his thought reinforced by reading Utopia. It is even curious to observe that, in the first part of his account, More, intervening in the discussion with Hythloday, constitutes himself devil’s advocate and doubts whether one would feel impelled to work under a communist régime. His question remains practically unanswered in the course of the rambling conversation, 35 and it is in News from Nowhere that a long chapter replies to it. But if Hythloday is evasive at that moment in the dialogue, he formulates an indirect answer in his description of utopian customs, which Morris was to develop in a systematic way. In fact, More is already insisting upon the need to diversify occupation. Each young Utopian learns, as well as agriculture, one or several trades, notably weaving, building, the art of the smithy or of carpentry, and has the right to be employed as he
chooses. Town dwellers go in rotation to till the fields for two years and find such pleasure in it that some of them obtain permission to work there longer. At harvest time, they are mobilised and go to reinforce the teams already on the spot, just as Dick and his friends will go up the Thames to help with the haymaking. Similarly, they turn out in crowds to mend the roads, and perhaps we should see in this the origin of the episode which enlivens the carriage journey from Hammersmith to Bloomsbury. There stands out, then, in *Utopia*, a firm belief in the dignity of manual labour, as R. W. Chambers rightly points out, seeing its most significant manifestation in the fact that the magistrates, although they are excused from it, take part to set an example. Although this belief is just as emphatically expressed by Morris, there is, nevertheless, a perceptible difference between the two utopias. For More, work remains an austere obligation, and the whole organisation of his utopian world tends to reduce it as far as possible, “that all the citizens should withdraw from the bodily service to the free liberty of the mind and garnishing of the same. For herein they suppose the felicity of life to consist.” So the Catholic More was not entirely emancipated from the theological concept of the original curse. Only with Morris is the gospel of joy in work preached, work as its own reward, abolishing the distinction between work and leisure.

To become clear about what brought him near to More and what separated them, Morris needed to write his own utopia. He needed also, in the light of Marxism, to be able to define his position with regard to More in a clear historical perspective. He had reached this level of maturity when, in 1893, he wrote his introduction to the splendid Kelmscott Press edition of *Utopia*. He observes, first of all, that it is thanks to the current upsurge of socialism that More’s work has ceased to be regarded as a “charming literary exercise”. This “great event of the end of the century has thrown a fresh light upon the book; so that now to some it seems not so much a regret for days which might have been, as (in its essence) a prediction of a state of society which will be.”

But we must beware of hasty comparisons. Certainly, the common enemy of the socialists of the nineteenth century and of the Renaissance thinker was the capitalist bourgeoisie. But whereas modern revolutionaries attack it as it draws near to its final stage, and when an industrial proletariat capable of overturning it has come into being, More was “the man who resisted what has seemed to most the progressive movement of his own time”, and he did so by carrying on a rearward action, in favour of “the surviving Communism of the Middle Ages (become hopeless in More’s time, and doomed to be soon wholly effaced by the advancing wave of Commercial Bureaucracy)”. Morris insists upon

“what was yet alive in him of mediaeval Communist tradition, the spirit of association, which among other things produced the Guilds, and which was strong in the Mediaeval Catholic Church itself”.

It is apposite to remark that More’s text fully justifies this interpretation. The chapter in which Hythlodaeus relates how he converted the Utopians to Christianity and gives the reasons for his success, is particularly suggestive:

“Howbeit, I think this was no small help and furtherance in the matter, that they heard us say that Christ instituted among his, all things com-


mon, and that the same community doth yet remain amongst the
rightest Christian companies."

Such an observation, from More’s pen, amounts to a bitter comment on the
new ways and is a declaration of backward-looking nostalgia. So it is not sur-
prising that Morris writes:

“In fact I think More must be looked upon rather as the last of the old
than the first of the new.”

This judgment throws a sharp light on Morris’s mediaevalism: he did not
hide his affection for the pre-capitalist tradition and made it the historical
reference point of his utopia, but he was careful not to become its captive. He
defines its limits and transcends it, in a remarkable dialectical effort. The con-
ceptual starting-point for taking up More’s mediaeval heritage and raising it to
a higher level is

“... the longing for ... a society in which the individual man can scarce-
ly conceive of his existence apart from the Commonwealth of which he
forms a portion”.

Thus will be rediscovered, on a new plane, the vast organic unity of the
mediaeval world which Sir Thomas More hopelessly defended against the
combined assaults of mercantile individualism and aggressive nationalism.

This does not at all mean that Morris blindly and purposefully ignores
More’s humanism and the post-mediaeval content of his ideology, but he is
able to pick out the essence and has a sure feeling that the acquisition of the
classic heritage, far from producing a revolutionary contradiction, is, in More,
the revelation of an evangelical and harmonious conception of the Christian
ideal:

“Moreover the spirit of the Renaissance, itself the intellectual side of
the very movement he strove against, was strong in him and doubtless
helped to create his Utopia, by means of the contrast which it put before
his eyes of the ideal free nations of the ancients, and the sordid welter of
the struggle for power in the days of dying feudalism, of which he himself
was a witness. This Renaissance enthusiasm has supplanted in him the
chivalry feeling of the age just passing away. To him war is no longer a
delight of the well born, but rather an ugly necessity, to be carried on, if
so it must be, by ugly means. Hunting and hawking are no longer the
choice pleasures of Knight and Lady, but are jeered at by him as foolish
and unreasonable pieces of butchery: his pleasures are in the main the
reasonable ones of learning and music. With all this, his imaginations of
the past he must needs read into his ideal vision, together with his own
experiences of his time and people. Not only are there bondslaves and a
king, and priests almost adored, and cruel punishments for the breach of
the marriage contract, in that happy island, but there is throughout an
atmosphere of asceticism, which has a curiously blended savour of Cato
the Censor and a medieval monk.”

So, at one and the same time, adds Morris, one finds in More “the man in-
stinctively sympathetic with the Communistic side of Mediaeval society” and
“the enthusiast of the Renaissance, ever looking toward his idealised ancient society as the type and example of all really intelligent human life”.

Such is this utopianism, product of a dual tradition, which, in his 1893 analysis, Morris extracts from More’s work. This work continued to fill him with admiration. He drew his theme and setting from it, as well as the idea for more than one definite detail. But this ideal could no longer bring him the same complete satisfaction as in 1885. This picture of the new society, he writes, is “his own indeed, not ours”, and these words constitute the real conclusion of his preface. After three centuries that had seen a remarkable raising of the level of productive forces and a profound transformation of productive relationships, looking ahead could no longer have the same character. What, for More, had been a vain hope, for Morris became a possibility, and that was the essential difference from which others stemmed. The road to the future, for Morris, was proletarian and revolutionary. More’s utopia could only be the act of a prince, a charter granted. “For from the prince,” he wrote, “as from a perpetual well-spring, cometh among the people the flood of all that is good or evil.” It is King Utopus, whose name the imaginary island bears, who

“also brought the rude and wild people to the excellent perfection in all good fashions, humanity and civil gentleness, wherein they now go beyond all the people of the world.”

and it is he who drew up the plans and institutions of Amaurote. This explains the hierarchic and autocratic order which ruled the smallest details of the daily lives of the Utopians and which is as foreign to Morris’s communism as is the domination by an intellectual aristocracy instituted by More. This also explains the mistrust of the people which led R. W. Chambers to say that More was to be reckoned among “the greatest of our reforming conservatives”, a mistrust which gave him a lifelong hatred of Lutheranism, in which he saw the ferment of peasant rebellion, a mistrust to which, in that same year 1893, Morris drew attention in his manual of socialism:

“. . . throughout modern history, there has been in all democratic fermentations a discrepancy, indeed often an instinctive antipathy, between the theoretical movement, as conceived of by thinkers, and the actual popular or working-class struggle. The latter intent on immediate advantages, and unconscious of any ideal; the former full of the ideal which they have grasped intuitively from the first, but finding the necessary steps towards it so repulsive to them, that they are incapable of taking action. Sir Thomas More, for example, who imagined a society free from the evils of privileged commercialism, which was first raising its head in his time, had no sympathy with the western rebels in England or with the Peasant War in Germany.”

Only the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, bringing in its wake the conscious organisation of the working class, could enable scientific socialism to resolve this contradiction and to open up the prospect of a decisive social transformation. Marxism directed history towards the fertilisation of the workers’ movement by theory and the enrichment of theory by the workers’ experience. Carried along by this tide, William Morris, if, like More, he remained faithful to certain human values which had been destroyed by capitalism,
while divesting them of their theological covering, projected them forward, not out of time, but into a future whose chronology he had already worked out, a future in which those values, not simply reproduced, but transformed, would express the flowering of a humanity which had reached the supreme stage of its logical development. This development would not be the act of a prince, but the work of men themselves, aware of the laws of history and having learned, through their knowledge of these laws, to become masters of their destiny.

3. Samuel Butler

Nothing could be less surprising than the fact of Morris’s having naturally turned to More throughout his thinking about utopia, and obviously it was appropriate to define the extent of this influence, while indicating its exact limits. However, it seems to me that there is no need to linger so long over that which Samuel Butler may have had. Various critics have felt it necessary to establish likenesses between *Erewhon* and *News from Nowhere*: they have done it somewhat general terms and we need perhaps to look a little more closely.

One fact is certain: Morris showed great admiration for Butler’s story, and even read it aloud to his friend Burne-Jones. His daughter May tells us that references to *Erewhon* were conversational small change in the family circle. We note, though, that it did not figure in Morris’s list of favourite books: one may wonder about this omission without giving it too much importance.

Let us come to the point without more delay. The problem before us is threefold, because we must give attention to three aspects of the work: its moral as a fable, its satire and its utopia. On the first point I shall have little to say. The narrative thread of *News from Nowhere* has nothing in common with that of *Erewhon* and even represents a complete break. While Morris figures among the initiators of the novel about the future, Butler, as A. L. Morton correctly observes, is one of the last authors of the geographical utopias. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that our author must have been enamoured of the first fifty pages of the book. The description of Higg’s adventurous expedition, over almost impassible peaks and a dreadful landscape, is a great literary achievement, and the sense of nature which inspires it, its mixture of precise suggestion and romanticism, could not but please him. If we find none of the same type of narrative in *News from Nowhere*, we can certainly find similar narratives in the majority of the “late prose romances”, and it is not impossible that echoes of *Erewhon* may be mingled with memories of the countryside of Iceland.

On the second point, I am bound to the same brevity by the very nature of the present work. My purpose is to analyse the constructive aspect of Morris’s utopia without lingering over the negative or satirical counterpoint which is an inevitable aspect of every utopia. On this occasion it is certainly a pity, because it is clear that Morris’s admiration and enthusiasm were aroused by the case against Victorian hypocrisy which is the main theme of *Erewhon*. Although he refrained from any direct attack against religion, Morris must have revelled in the reading of the sparkling chapter about musical banks. He showed less reserve in his criticism of the family and perhaps he echoed (though with much more human warmth) Butler’s bitter diatribes. He joined hands with the latter in his denunciation of the universities and, more generally, of the educational
system. Perhaps it is here that a definite influence can be detected. And what is there to say about the cruel description of the cult of Ydgrun (Mrs. Grundy), something for which Morris had an equal hatred? However, a profound difference separates the two men. In our poet, this hatred is implacable, steadfast and quite uncompromising, but one cannot say the same about the author of Erewhon. After having branded the followers of Ydgrun, is it not true that, petit-bourgeois as he was all his life, he went so far as to declare openly that their hypocrisy is a necessary evil which, in the end, assures the happiness of mankind. Should we not see here the reason for Morris's reticence, already mentioned? In a more general sense, was he not somewhat put off by this ambiguity, this ambivalence even, which characterises Butler's approach?

It is extremely difficult, in Erewhon, to disentangle utopia from satire. Some critics tend to stress the utopian side of the book by giving utopia a definition which seems to me to be exaggeratedly wide. Others, the majority, rank it with the philosophical tales which, in the Swift tradition, have no other purpose than to exercise a caustic wit against institutions and manners. Butler, despite his sly harking back to social conformity, draws his contemporaries with vitriol, but does he propose a better social order? This barely concealed conformity clearly prevents this, and the only glimpses of something more or less positive come from the workings of a logic at once peremptory and ponderous, reinforced by a love of paradox. Such is the appearance of the theory of machines, which seems to be just a pseudo-scientific joke, since Butler immediately sets up against it a counter-theory, (which in political terms might be called a 'minority report') containing the germ of that teleological vitalism which was to characterise the writer's approach and final break with Darwinism. Morris could not have failed to react to this picture of humanity destroying machines for fear of their acquiring consciousness by a process of biological evolution, and enslaving mankind. His Londoners of the twenty-second century similarly rid their world of mechanical clutter, but one must stress that their motives were totally different. Despite the legend, Morris never rejected the use of machines or the development of energy sources, and it is on this very development and the immense leisure so produced that he based the possibility of artistic and craft activity capable of giving back to man joy in his work, natural ease of life and the secret of happiness. We may add that Butler's hazardous speculations had little chance of intriguing Morris, and that paradox has no place whatever in his utopian thought, which was ever eager to get its roots into a materialistic science based upon the real world and the laws of history. The only point upon which the two story-tellers are at one, when all is weighed up, is in the denunciation of a mechanical civilisation in which man becomes nothing but an adjunct to the machine. All the same, it would be too strong to talk of definite influence. The theme runs through nineteenth-century literature and Butler's use of it only caught Morris's attention to the extent that he found it a variant of Ruskin's ideology.

There is, then, an element of utopia in Erewhon, and its expression sometimes takes on disconcerting aspects precisely because the dividing line between utopia and satire is ill-defined. Indeed, is there not a contradiction between the gloomy moral picture Butler paints and the extraordinary physical beauty of the people of Erewhon, which foreshadows that of Morris's humanity to come? E. P. Thompson does not hesitate to regard this as direct
Without wanting to deny all value to this assertion, I would like to point out that every utopian person is of necessity beautiful, and also that this beauty is very differently explained by Butler and by Morris. For the latter it is the fruit of a social revolution which permits the free flowering of the individual, whereas for the former it is the implicit consequence of a satirical paradox: the Erewhonians, in fact, consider that it is immoral to be ill and punish the crime severely. More interesting, from our standpoint, is the other aspect of the paradox, namely that in *Erewhon* what we call crime is considered an illness and treated as such. If, in Morris’s humanist ethic, the treatment is very different, the idea is certainly the same, and one cannot in this case reject a priori the possibility of inspiration.

Another trait common to the humanity of *Erewhon* and that of *News from Nowhere* is the natural politeness and gentleness shown by the inhabitants. But there again the motivation is totally different. Although Butler does not say so (and the ambivalence to which I have referred is shown in this silence) we are obliged to suppose that these qualities are pure hypocrisy, necessary hypocrisy, but also that they might be spontaneous in the ideal humanity after which Butler’s morality secretly hankers. Morris’s explanation, on the contrary, is without any psychological or ethical idealism: the transformation of human relationships results from the abolition of the antagonisms aroused by private property. So, however numerous the resemblances undeniably are between the two works, they remain illusory. *Erewhon* is a moral satire whose bitterness leads only to conservative conclusions: as J. B. Fort justly writes: Butler “remains to his dying day pretty well a stranger” to the social question. This is at the very heart of Morris’s work, and his conception of man is materialist and revolutionary.

4. Richard Jefferies

On his return from a propaganda tour of Scotland in April 1885, William Morris spent a day or two with Edward Carpenter, at Millthorpe, and from there he wrote to Georgiana Burne-Jones:

“I read a queer book called *After London* coming down: I rather liked it: absurd hopes curled round my heart as I read it.”

The book had just appeared, and seems to have fascinated Morris Carpenter, in his memoirs, writes: “I remember him arriving from the train with Jefferies’ book *After London* in his hands – which had just come out. The book delighted him with its prophecy of an utterly ruined and deserted London... And he read page after page of it to us with glee that evening as we sat round the fire.” This enthusiasm was in no way passing: Mackail records: “*After London*, the unfinished masterpiece of Richard Jefferies, was a book that Morris afterwards was never weary of praising. It put into definite shape, with a mingling of elusive romance and minute detail that was entirely after his heart, much that he had himself imagined; and he thought that it represented very closely what might really happen in a dispeopled England.”

From 1877, in fact (and I shall have occasion to return at greater length to this point), Morris’s utopian aspiration took the form of an alternative
inspired by a profound hatred of industrial and commercial "civilisation", he longed for its destruction by revolutionary overthrow and considered that, if this did not happen, only an inevitable return to barbarism could offer mankind an acceptable solution. Being by nature an optimist and readily persuaded to take sides, he inevitably made the first part of the alternative the main theme of his political and utopian message, but there is room to assert that the second part did not cease, because of that, to linger in his thoughts. An even more striking fact, as we shall see, was that such a return to barbarism did not strike him as in any way a horrible or desperate prospect. While it is true that he thought about it more readily during phases of depression, it did not negate his optimism at all, for he saw therein a possibility of human regeneration. His historical thinking about the Middle Ages and later, about gentle society, led him into a certain idealisation of the barbarian ages, particularly in the prose romances of his later years. We shall see that, in the last stage, Morris's utopian thought culminated in a dialectical synthesis of the two parts of the alternative.

In 1885, this alternative still presented itself in its contradictory form. The extraordinary naturalism of Jefferies overwhelmed him, because his own plastic genius inclined him to prefer speculation embedded in fiction rather than as an abstraction; Jefferies had a feeling so close to his own for the life of plants, animals, and the earth, as well as respect for human dignity. The relationship between the two temperaments is quite striking. Jefferies' catastrophic, mediaeval utopia, had the note, with scarcely less poetry, of Morris's romantic stories. Our poet must have found himself oddly at ease and marvelling to find the embodiment of some of his own dreams. A study of *After London* is much more than the study of an influence or a source; it is, in fact, an examination of an extreme form of an important aspect of Morris's utopia; it is picking up a book he might almost have written and which probably freed him from an obsession.

The titles of the two parts of the narrative: "The Relapse into Barbarism" and "Wild England", are distinctly suggestive and must have induced Morris to begin reading. The starting point of the story is an unexplained cataclysm which suddenly ravaged England. Following the passing of a mysterious heavenly body, the levels of earth and sea were abruptly changed, resulting in the destruction of cities and the annihilation of almost all the population. With a certain humour cloaking his critical intention, Jefferies says: "And those whose business is theology have pointed out that the wickedness of those times surpassed understanding, and that a change and sweeping away of the human evil that had accumulated was necessary, and was effected by supernatural means. The relation of this must be left to them, since it is not the province of the philosopher to meddle with such matters." We may note that this passage is the only one in the book containing a reference to religion, and its negative character echoes Morris's own rejection.

With hallucinatory realism, Jefferies describes depopulated England invaded by exuberant vegetation. Pastures and ploughland become covered with thistles, sorrel, couch grass, nettles, gilliflower and a thousand other weeds. Brambles and thorn bushes spread impenetrable tangles and efface all traces of roads. The survivors have no choice but to follow animal tracks or hack themselves a passage. After thirty years, England is all forest and marshland.
Mice and rats swarm. Formerly domestic animals, dogs, cats, cattle, pigs, sheep, horses return to their wild state.48

The description of the former site of London is especially impressive. The ruins are buried in a pestential swamp where there is nothing but decay, fever-laden miasmas, choking phosphorescent mists, where the stagnant water, penetrating deeper and deeper into the ground, brings up as foul gases the contents of millenary sewers replete with the excreta of hundreds of millions of human beings. In this vast accursed region no life can exist,70 and nobody dreams of venturing there. In some spots the ground seems to be burning, giving off sulphurous fumes from the combustion of chemical products accumulated by the men of former times.71 The hero of the story, having reached the place thanks to a storm which has temporarily dispersed the deadly vapours, moves about there in a nightmare atmosphere and is only saved by flight. This frightful symbolic vision must have filled Morris with vengeful satisfaction.

The geography of the country has been upset. Obstructions and changes in the level of the ground deflected the course of rivers. Enormous masses of water gathered in the middle of England, forming a great lake, dotted with contorted uninhabited islands, and also providing great sheets of water of incomparable beauty.72 On this lake the adventures of the young hero Felix Aquila are unfolded, and there seems to be no doubt that there Morris found the setting and the inspiration for The Water of The Wondrous Isles. It is also very probable, in this story as in several others, that Morris recalled After London in his descriptions of fearful forests. Finally the theme of the hero leaving his family to seek adventure and gain glory is common to Jefferies and to Morris, but there is nothing particularly original in the theme, and it would be going too far to claim to discern any influence.

When the cataclysm happened, the "upper classes", custodians of culture and civilisation, managed, thanks to their money, to leave England, but no one knows what became of them, for it seems that there were similar disasters on the continent. The only survivors were ignorant and uncouth, and former mechanical inventions (railways, telephones, aeronautical machines) left no trace beyond a mysterious legend.73

Those who escaped, dispersed across the countryside, reverted to the most primitive conditions, living at first by hunting and re-establishing the cultivation of scattered bits of land wrested from the brambles. Little by little, villages were formed, then small and separate little kingdoms.74 On the fringe of this working population another race dwelt in the forests: on the one hand Bushmen, dreadful savage bands living by plunder, and on the other, the Romanies or Zingaris, tribes of gypsies exactly like their ancestors, living in a matriarchal society.75 The sinister threat of these cruel and savage men added to the difficulties which burdened the rural communities, which were also menaced by continual invasions of Welsh, Irish and Scots, bent upon taking revenge upon the descendants of their erstwhile oppressors.76

The régime of these feudal communities was based upon slavery and the constant fear of being reduced to slavery. The number of slaves, ten times greater than that of freemen, and the savage squabbles between local chieftains, demanded an enormous military machine.77 Everywhere reigned insecurity, terror, despotism, cruelty, contempt for human life. Felix Aquila, whose
morality is strangely superior to that of his contemporaries, waxes indignant, seeing how tyrants never lack executioners to carry out their base deeds, providing an echo in advance of the indignation of the men of Nowhere at the memory of the misdeeds of their Victorian ancestors. Without expressing such advanced views, he is nevertheless led by circumstances to revise the prejudices nourished by his caste education. He can see that the king is a commonplace man, owing his throne to the chance of birth and not to any superiority. Sheltered and fed in the course of his misadventures by a disabled yokel, he is shocked to discover that his host is a slave and decides after heart-searching to shake his hand, nevertheless. Joining an army in a lowly rank, he lives the life of the common soldiers and, through their astonishing remarks, is brought to see with other eyes the society in which he lives. He is very surprised to discover that these men, illiterate and uncultured as they are, are capable of expressing opinions on public affairs and of understanding the motives which govern men's behaviour. Much more – and one can easily imagine the interest with which Morris must have read these lines – Felix discovers that the manual skills of which he is so proud amount to little, and that the only masters of their crafts are the lowly artisans. So, in the very bosom of the most brutal and cruel of barbarians, true human values appear, leading to a hope for a better future than in the lost days of "civilisation".

It is a curious premise that the nobles of the new age are descended from men who, alone in the midst of an ignorant mass, could still read and write, and who endeavoured to maintain this privilege, jealously preserving the few manuscripts. But the taste for culture has been lost, books are rare and nobody wants them, and education is not esteemed. Science and the techniques of railways and flying machines arouse no interest or research. On the other hand, men have kept the memory of the great legends of Greek and Latin antiquity, and during a festival we are presented with a production of Sophocles’ Antigone, carefully transcribed by successive copyists. One cannot help thinking of old Hammond’s remarks about the world’s new youth during the meal at the Bloomsbury Guest House. But Jefferies finds an explanation for this unexpected taste for Greek tragedy which is not without depth and which Marx would not have disavowed:

"In some indefinable manner the spirit of the ancient Greeks seemed to her" (referring to Aurora, Felix’s fiancée, who plays the part of Antigone) "in accord with the times, for men had, or appeared to have, so little control over their own lives that they might well imagine themselves overruled by destiny." By the force of events, and apart from the courts of princes, life has become simple again, and Jefferies finds great charm in it. He describes it with the same healthy realism and gentle lyricism that we find again in William Morris. In Aquila’s house in the country, a relic of the past like the old house in News from Nowhere, which it resembles in more than one respect, the Prince’s ridiculous messenger is quite baffled: "Though interested, in spite of himself, Lord John, acknowledging the flowers, turned to go with a sense of relief. The simplicity of manners seemed discordant to him. He felt out of place, and in some way lowered in his own esteem, and yet he despised the rural retirement
and beauty about him. The garden, lovingly cultivated by Baron Aquila, is described with the same tenderness and in almost the same terms as Morris uses in his descriptions. We find the same taste for rural styles of building and roofs. The men of the new age like spacious rooms and need elbow-room, like the inhabitants of Nowhere. The interior is decorated and furnished in accordance with Morris's own preferences: "The bed itself was very low, framed of wood, thick and solid... There was no carpet, nor any substitute for it: the walls were whitewashed; ceiling there was none: the worm-eaten rafters were visible, and the roof-tree. But on the table was a large earthenware bowl, full of meadow orchids, bluebells and a bunch of may in flower," Felix and his brother Oliver make the furniture for the rooms in which they live with their own hands, and the latter carves it tastefully. Felix's art is certainly more rudimentary, but the solid oak chest in which he keeps his manuscripts would probably not have displeased Morris. Even the coarse window glass recalls his disdain for the too-perfect glass of commerce.

Thus, in Jefferies' eyes, the return to barbarism contains the seeds of a fresh blossoming for mankind. But the author of After London is none the less aware, as we have seen, of the moral degradation introduced by this slave society, giving free rein to the most brutal instincts, and his utopianism is not satisfied. This explains the meeting of Felix with the Shepherd people, who live in idyllic equality, and who shower the most generous hospitality upon their guest. Felix anticipates the gesture of William Guest at Hammersmith: "Having nothing else to give them, he took from his pocket one of the gold coins he had brought from the site of the ancient city, and offered it. They laughed and made him understand that it was of no value to them; but they passed it from hand to hand, and he noticed that they began to look at him curiously." But they are impressed by the young man's knowledge and skills and rapidly show great respect for him. He helps them to defend themselves against the Romans, teaches them how to build fortifications, and their gratitude is so great that they invite him to reign over them, and do not wish to let him leave. But Felix wants to be back with his fiancée Aurora and flees through the forest to rejoin her. The story ends abruptly here but, although unfinished, it by no means excludes the possibility of the young man's return to the Shepherds in company with Aurora.

This brief final episode certainly did not leave William Morris unmoved. The Shepherds of After London are the very brethren of the Innocent Folk of The Well at the World's End and of those primitive people from whom the heroes of The Wood Beyond the World escape and towards whom they return. Does not the development of Jefferies' story foreshadow the long evolution of Morris, plunging further and further into the past in his quest for the pure virtues of pre-capitalist ages, attracted, after the Middle Ages for which he maintains his enthusiasm, by the barbarian epic of the Nordic or Germanic tribes, or the romantic world of an almost timeless pre-mediaevalism?

Perhaps A. L. Morton is too severe in judging that Jefferies depicts the roughness of barbarism as without hope, and the poverty of the Middle Ages as without vitality. It seems excessive to me to see After London as a pessimistic utopia, and Morris's enthusiasm for this book is an indication that he did not look upon it as such. It certainly helped him to give form and substance to the alternative of "barbarism or socialism" which haunted his
thoughts. It encouraged him to impregnate them both with his belief in man before projecting them into the future in a harmonious dialectical synthesis. The “absurd hopes” which “curled round the heart” of Morris as he read the book were not a reaction, but direct inspiration.

5. Edward Bellamy

If his enthusiastic reading of *After London* in 1885 freed Morris from the tendency to dwell, as it were nostalgically, on imagined cataclysms, he was provoked to an opposite reaction by reading *Looking Backward*, the utopia of the American Edward Bellamy. Its success of 1888 in the United States soon spread to Britain, thanks to an English edition in 1889. Morris wrote to Bruce Glasier on 13 May:

“I suppose you have seen or read, or at least tried to read, *Looking Backward*. I had to on Saturday, having promised to lecture on it. Thank you, I wouldn’t care to live in such a cockney paradise as he imagines.”

Remember Morris’s stubborn refusal ever to read any book which he knew intuitively would displease him. There had to be serious reasons for him to break this habit. The success of this utopian novel, already considerable in the first year (ten thousand copies sold), suddenly became enormous and by the end of the second year reached a sale of three hundred thousand copies in the United States alone, a figure which in subsequent years reached the half-million, passing the record figure set up by *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. The same craze swept England and seems to have been particularly marked in political circles close to Morris. “Many socialist friends”, recounts his daughter May, “were accepting Bellamy’s conception of the Ideal State, some with satisfaction, others with resignation”. This conception acquired the status of doctrine. Just as in the United States it formed the basis for the constitution of a real party (the “nationalist” movement, as it was called) so, in England, there was created an ephemeral society for the nationalisation of work, intended to “put into effect the principles of Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*”, and it founded a no less ephemeral journal, *Nationalisation News*: this society seems to have set up at least seven sections.

It is probable that, if the vague and influence of Bellamy were less extensive and less deep in Britain than in America, part of the reason was the stand made by Morris, and not only this stand, which only affected a limited circle, but still more the publication of *News from Nowhere*, which was its direct result. No text (if ever one was written) has survived of the public talk Morris gave on 12 May 1889 in Hammersmith. But the point of view he expressed on that evening is known to us through an article devoted to *Looking Backward* in the columns of *Commonweal* six weeks later: this simple fact shows the prolonged violence of Morris’s reaction and the importance he gave to Bellamy’s book.

This latter is too well-known for me to make a detailed analysis of it; we can confine ourselves for the moment to recalling its essential themes, which I shall come back to, moreover, by way of Morris’s reflections. The utopian story-line is commonplace enough, despite certain details intended to be startling. Julian West, the hero of the tale, is a young and wealthy Boston bourgeois, very reactionary in his views and very much annoyed by a building strike which delays
his marriage to a young woman of his circle, Edith Bartlett. A sufferer from
insomnia, he sleeps, without anyone knowing, in an underground chamber at-
tached to his house where a specialist "mesmerises" him to induce sleep. One
night in 1887, a fire destroys his home and he is assumed to have perished in
the flames. But, protected by the thick walls of his unsuspected shelter, he con-
tinues in his cataleptic sleep until the year 2000. Then, during building
operations, he happens to be discovered by an old doctor, named Leete, who
arouses him and introduces him to the novelties of a socially transformed
world. The doctor has a daughter, also named Edith, who turns out to be a
descendant of his lost fiancée and who falls in love with Julian, whose
photograph she already possessed. A conventional enough idyll ensues and
reaches a happy conclusion. Its trifling vicissitudes at more or less regular in-
tervals lighten the dreariness of long theoretical dialogues and monologues
in the course of which Julian has the workings of the new society explained to
him. It is in fact a very strongly hierarchical and disciplined society, in which
the State owns all the means of production and distribution. This situation
came about gradually and peaceably in the early years of the twentieth cen-
tury: the progressive concentration of big trusts culminated in the formation of
a single trust which became the State. Workers were mobilised into an in-
dustrial army from the age of 21 to the age of 45 and enjoyed a long retirement.
Mechanisation had developed and eased the burden upon men. Money had
disappeared and products were distributed equally to all by means of deduc-
tions on an annual credit card.

The story-structure itself did not appeal to Morris. In fact, he considered it
so detestable that he could only account for the success of the novel by
reference to the growing interest in socialist ideology among his contem-
poraries:

"It seems clear to me from the reception which Mr. Bellamy's Looking
Backward has received that there are a great many people who are turn-
ing hopefully to Socialism. I am sure that ten years ago it would have
been very little noticed if at all: whereas now several editions have been
sold in America, and it is attracting general attention in England. To
anyone not deeply interested in the social question it could not be at all
an attractive book. It is true that it is cast in the form of a romance, but
the author states very frankly in his preface that he has only given it this
form as a sugar-coating to the pill, [106] and the device of making a man
wake up in a new world has grown so common, and has been done with
so much more care and art than Mr. Bellamy has used, that by itself this
would have done little for it; it is the serious essay and not the slight
envelope of romance which people have found interesting to them." [107]

The judgment is severe; it is even somewhat unjust. No doubt the utopian
procedure of awakening in another world is handled by Bellamy with a wealth
of pseudo-scientific detail that produces a feeling of oppressive heaviness. But
Morris himself had had recourse to the fiction of a dream in A Dream of John
Ball and would again in News from Nowhere. It is true that he does so, if not with
such great care, with infinitely more art, and his fervour allows him with im-
punity to convince us that it is not a dream but a vision. However, to deny
Bellamy's book all artistic merit is too much and no doubt stems from a stub-
born ideological rancour. Certainly clumsiness abounds, and Victor Dupont, in his thesis on the utopian novel, has made a penetrating list. The general structure of the book is unattractive:

"Of 28 chapters, 5 are essentially literary, 7 are of pure sociological discussion, 5 are tables illustrating social theories, 11 filled with didactic dialogues or monologues, linked with the rest by all-too-obviously artificial introductions." 108

In the plot itself, explanatory coincidences pile up ponderously. More irritating, the characters – very few, (at most three), who represent the new mankind, only appear in their conversations with Julian West. We know nothing whatever of their separate existence, and their comprehension of the nineteenth century is such that no aspect of their psychology is truly revealing. They are hardly individualised and lack all depth. As Victor Dupont justly observes:

"The physical appearance of the doctor and his wife remain unknown to us; and we cannot feel their daughter's charm." 109

Old Hammond, so lively and so visible, who, in News from Nowhere, fulfils the same didactic function as the colourless Dr. Leete, slips less readily from the memory. Something even more serious: Julian West is literally confined to the doctor's house and has no direct contact with the utopian world, which we know only through abstract descriptions. William Morris's Visitor, on the contrary, lives with extraordinary intensity, from the first moment to the end of the dream, in a reborn England with a countryside and inhabitants quivering with life.

All this is true, but there are in Looking Backward, nevertheless, some remarkable pages, so remarkable even that Morris's memory (which it would be difficult to describe as unconscious or subconscious) has recorded them without argument. In particular those which record the pathetic anguish of Julian West, finding himself in an unknown world, anguish bordering upon nausea and increased by the feeling of loss of identity and mental balance. It really seems that Bellamy has here introduced to utopian literature an original and very human element. Similar feelings, in a less dramatic, more vague, possibly more engaging form, are expressed by the Visitor in News from Nowhere, chilled and aged by the warmth and youth of the new humanity and, at the same time, forever trembling lest the vision fade away. There is also, as in Morris's utopia, the continual contrast between the old and the new which, without reaching the emotive quality of the counterpoint achieved by the poet, is not without its effect: in both stories the present is continuously exposed to the judgment of the future. Similarly, one could, though on a trivial level, pick out minor direct borrowings on the part of Morris, such as the conversation over a bottle of wine between old Hammond and the Visitor at the end of the meal, when the others have left, just like that which Bellamy describes between Dr. Leete and Julian.

But there is much more, and Morris's unfairness is only equalled by his anticipatory ingratitude! Edward Bellamy is the first Anglo-Saxon utopist, ahead of Morris, to abandon the exploration of terrae incognitae in order to build
in his own country, and to put the time dimension in the place of geographical distance. With both of them, this new and original form comes from the urgent doctrinal concern to prove to contemporaries and compatriots that socialism in possible; but, at the same time, the need to convince gives each utopia a definite national quality which in itself has artistic validity. The Boston of the year 2000 is the result of typically American economic and cultural factors just as the England of the twenty-second century stays familiarly English. Morris wanted to write an anti-Bellamy utopia, and could not resist tinging his theoretical disagreement with anti-Americanism. But in taking his stand against Bellamy he was inevitably obliged to borrow from his opponent his very concept of utopia in all that was newest and most fundamental. Morris's debt is immense, and since he neglected to acknowledge it, we may do so on his behalf, with the deepest gratitude.

The only merit which Morris admits in Bellamy is that of having shown capitalist civilisation in a true and pitiless light: "his criticism of the present monopolist system is forcible and fervid", and he unreservedly praises his "due economical knowledge". On this point, in fact, nothing separates the two utopists unless that Bellamy tends to stress the immorality of the system a good deal more. One other theme they have in common: the indignation aroused by the enormous waste of materials and of human energy for which capitalism is responsible. I shall not insist upon this negative aspect of utopia, which I have deliberately kept out of this study, but it is appropriate, before leaving the purely literary analysis, to stress that here too Bellamy shows himself a writer. The parable in which he compares class society with a coach laden with privileged, unmoving passengers, dragged by the multitude, with everyone outside trying to get aboard and every occupant fearful of falling out, is not lacking in liveliness and would be worthy of Pilgrim's Progress. Although, on the other hand, the description of the utopian world is dry and abstract, there is real feeling running through the chapter in which Julian West dreams that he is back in his nineteenth-century Boston and suddenly understands the horror of it in the light of revelations of the year 2000.

Morris has paid implicit lip-service to these real qualities in the brief appreciation we have quoted. For him that is not the essence. It is the proposed social system that he resents, and he is the more cantankerous for feeling that he is up against an unyielding dogmatism. Morris rebels against this dogmatism, observing that the "the only safe way of reading a utopia is to consider it as the expression of the temperament of its author". In fact, what is striking about Looking Backward is that nothing is left to chance and that the whole has formidable coherence. Life there, says Morris, is "organized with a vengeance", Notice, too, that it is not a dream: Julian West really is transported to the year 2000 by the end of his catalepsy, and the situation described is presented forcibly as an inevitable fact. Morris's utopia, if we consider its mode, arises from a very different temperament. All his writings show that he is dealing with a hypothesis, one that seems most logical and pleasing to him, but more than once he stops himself making a doctrine out of it. He deliberately leaves obscure the answers to various problems and is not afraid of allowing imprecision, even inconsequence, to creep in now and then. He is careful not to draw up a detailed plan of future society and aims above all to suggest a utopian scale of values. Bellamy would never have given his tale the
general and modest sub-title which Morris gives his: “Being some chapters from a Utopian romance”.

Just as I have excluded from the scope of my analysis the indictment of bourgeois society as it exists in Morris’s work, I have in the same way excluded his theory of revolution. However, we must (at least negatively) look at certain aspects in connection with Bellamy, whose system rests upon a certain conception of the achievement of socialism, because this was the very thing that first enraged Morris. The starting-point of Bellamy’s utopia, which is what Morris calls its “distinctive part”, is the establishment and development of trusts in the United States. Far from deploring the fact, Bellamy sees it as a decisive factor in progress:

“Oppressive and intolerable as was the régime of the great consolidations of capital, even its victims, while they cursed it, were forced to admit the prodigious increase of efficiency which had been imparted to the national industries, the vast economies effected by the concentration of management and unity of organisation, and to confess that since the new system had taken the place of the old the wealth of the world had increased at a rate before undreamed of. To be sure this vast increase had gone chiefly to make the rich richer, increasing the gap between them and the poor; but the fact remained that, as a means of producing wealth, capital had been proved efficient in proportion to its consolidation.”

It is at the beginning of the twentieth century, writes Bellamy that “the evolution was completed by the final consolidation of the entire capital of the nation”. Far from causing indignation, this fact was accepted by the people without resentment, because they recognised that monopolies represented a necessary link, an indispensible transitional phase. Then peacefully and without any clash came the final result:

“The industry and commerce of the country, ceasing to be conducted by a set of irresponsible corporations and syndicates of private persons at their caprice and for their profit, were intrusted to a single syndicate representing the people, to be conducted in the common interest for the common profit. The nation, that is to say, organized as one great business corporation in which all the other corporations were absorbed, it became the one capitalist in the place of all the other capitalists, the sole employer, the final monopoly in which all previous and lesser monopolies were swallowed up, a monopoly in the profits and economies of which all citizens shared.”

As one can easily imagine, this friendly transfer by unanimous consent, this “gradual and peaceable revolution” without class struggle or seizure of political power appeared a monstrous illusion in Morris’s eyes. He naturally reproaches Bellamy with confusing the contents and the container:

“...by the use of the word monopoly he shows unconsciously that he has his mind fixed firmly on the mere machinery of life, for clearly the only part of their system which the people would or could take over from the
monopolists would be the machinery of organization, which monopoly is forced to use, but which is not an essential part of it. The essential of monopoly is, I warm myself by the fire which you have made, and you (very much the plural) stay outside in the cold." 121

Bellamy declares that "it (the labour question) may be said to have solved itself", and adds,

"all that society had to do was to recognise and cooperate with that evolution, when its tendency had become unmistakable". 122

That is why "there was absolutely no violence". 123 Later, addressing the Nationalist Club in Boston, which had been founded to spread the doctrine set out in Looking Backward, Bellamy declared "We aim to change the law by the law." 124

This legalistic gradualism, founded upon the conviction of a happy, spontaneous transformation of capitalism into its opposite, in fact presents, through its systematic logic directed to its aims, a bold and original formulation: it foreshadows what, thirty years later, was to be Kautsky's "super-imperialism", denounced by Lenin as reformist, unrealistic and anti-Marxist in character. Bellamy was in this respect both bolder and more dogmatic than the Fabians, against whom Morris was at the time hardening his attitude. He was not long in grasping the relationship between them and the American utopist and seeing in it a reason for his following:

"The success of Mr. Bellamy's Utopian book, deadly dull as it is, is a straw to show which way the wind blows. The general attention paid to our clever friends, the Fabian lecturers and pamphleteers, is not altogether due to their literary ability; people have really got their heads turned more or less in their direction." 125

Bellamy's bold logic held nothing, in fact, to shock the Fabians, even if it did slightly jostle their cautious reserve and their distrust of utopianism. In one chapter of Fabian Essays, Annie Besant in 1889 expressed her admiration for "the ingenious author of Looking Backward" and went on to considerations largely drawn from it. 126 Reciprocity was not lacking and, a few years later, in 1894, there appeared in Boston an American edition of Fabian Essays with an introduction by Edward Bellamy. 127 Bellamy, in his many articles and lectures following the publication of his book, very faithfully reproduced the Fabian programme of municipal socialism. 128 Even if it were only an account of this reformism and belief in spontaneity (and we shall find other reasons), it is a little surprising to find Victor Dupont asserting that Looking Backward is "one of the rare examples of utopias directly inspired by scientific socialism", while he paradoxically tends to deny this quality to Morris's work. 129 A certain knowledge of the general characteristics of capitalist economy (to which Morris himself paid homage) is really not enough for one to see Bellamy as a Marxist. It also involves taking little account of a fact hard to ignore: namely that, according to emphatic witnesses including Bellamy himself, he was totally ignorant of Marx and of socialist literature at the time he was writing his book. It does not appear that he subsequently read any of Marx's
works. The only very indirect knowledge of him that he possessed derived from a later reading of Gronlund’s *Co-operative Commonwealth*, and he avowed himself put off by materialism and economic determinism. In the course of his political activity he clearly showed his hostility to socialism, going so far as to declare it an anti-American doctrine. The word “socialist” he wrote to William Dean Howells,

“is a foreign word in itself, and equally foreign in all its suggestions. It smells to the average American of petroleum, suggests the red flag and all manner of sexual novelties, and an abusive tone about God and religion, which in this country we at least treat with decent respect.”

A. E. Morgan, Bellamy’s interpreter, who perhaps has a tendency like every specialist to exaggerate his hero’s rôle, does not hesitate to assert that his influence was decisive in bringing into being that hostility which American opinion has displayed towards Marxism. No doubt there are other reasons for this, which it is not relevant to discuss here, but one cannot deny that this judgment contains some truth.

In this respect *Looking Backward* contains hints about which one could hardly be mistaken. The final transformation of society, Dr. Leete recalls, came about with the support of the “national party”, which was able to accomplish what none of the “labour parties” could do, because “their basis, as merely class organizations, was too narrow”:

“It was not till a rearrangement of the industrial and social system on a higher ethical basis, and for the more efficient production of wealth, was recognised as the interest, not of one class, but equally of all classes that there was any prospect that it would be achieved.”

Not only, writes Bellamy, have “the followers of the red flag” not played any part in establishing the new order, but they were an obstacle as long as they existed, “for their talk so disgusted people as to deprive the best-considered projects for social reform of a hearing”. On so good a road the author does not stop. Following a procedure employed by many a “party of order” he lumps together in his description socialists and anarchists, and does not hesitate to assert that they were financed by the capitalists:

“No historical authority nowadays doubts that they were paid by the great monopolies to wave the red flag and talk about burning, sacking, and blowing people up, in order, by alarming the timid, to head off any real reform.”

Such insinuations seemed too crude to Morris for him to deign to reply. Putting himself on another level, he was very aware of the danger involved in the spreading of a theory of spontaneity, which must, inevitably, be counter-revolutionary. On the one hand this hope of a peaceful evolution of trusts towards their complete concentration appeared an illusion to him.

“I cannot help thinking”, he writes...
and re-formations of this kind of monopoly, under the influence of competition for privilege, or war for the division of plunder...

On the other hand, the idea that a simple enumeration of the miseries and waste engendered by capitalism is enough to bring about a better state of affairs seemed all the more dangerous to Morris because his own political thinking had developed remarkably over the last year. Following an article by Bax, published in *Commonweal* in July 1888 and probably inspired by Engels, drawing attention to the penetration into Africa of financial interests, and to the consequences which could follow from this at home, Morris stopped believing in the natural decay of capitalism. On the contrary, he judged it to be capable of singular recoveries, and of successfully coming out of the 'great depression' of 1889. So he was led to write of Bellamy's book:

"The economic semi-fatalism of some Socialists is a deadening and discouraging view, and may easily become more so, if events at present unforeseen bring back the full tide of 'commercial prosperity'; which is by no means unlikely to happen." [134]

The influence of Bellamy's theories seemed to him so harmful that six months later, giving an account of *Fabian Essays* in *Commonweal* and speaking of this same matter, he denounced this ideology which disarms the working class:

"Though we may well hope that the extravagance of exploitation and contempt of the public shown by these 'captains of industry' will lead us on towards Socialism, it is dangerous to rest our hopes on this development, as Mr. Bellamy does in his *Looking Backward*. It may, after all, be nothing but a passing phase of that capitalist organisation of robbery, which surely must be attacked in front by the workers grown conscious of their slavery." [133]

This reformist gradualism and this theory of spontaneity, while they provoked Morris's indignation and encouraged him to broaden and sharpen his attacks against the Fabian ideology, would not have been sufficient to provoke the violent reaction whose direct consequence was the writing of *News from Nowhere*. The thing that drove him to fury was Bellamy's picture of future society, primarily its regimentation. All workers from 21 to 45 years of age are strictly enrolled into the industrial army, according to "the principle of general military service, as it was understood in our day", and Dr. Leete explains that "our entire social order is wholly based upon and deduced from it" (this principle). The great event of the year is the day of the recruitment parade, 15 October, when young people reaching their majority enter production and the quadragenarians leave active service. [136] The organisation of this army is uniform for all professions and is somewhat complex. Without going into fussy details, we note that the workers are split into four main classes: that of labourers, in which all beginners remain from 21 to 24 years; then that of apprentices, where they remain one year; then, workers proper from 25 to 45 years, split into three grades, each divided into two classes; finally, the officers. Every year everyone is promoted or degraded according to his deserts. [137] The officer corps is a carefully ordered hierarchy up to generals of guilds, lieutenant-generals of groups of guilds and general-in-chief, who is president of
the United States. The junior officers are appointed by their superiors and the officers-general are elected by retired members of the guilds, who thus constitute a sort of gerontocracy. 138 Women constitute a separate army corps, no less hierarchical, and are given lighter tasks. 139 Even the sick, the crippled and mentally defective are grouped into a special corps, wearing its special badge, and carrying out tasks consistent with their aptitudes. 140 Discipline is strict; woe betide him who refuses to carry out his duties, because he can be "cut off from all human society"! 141 Dr. Leete proudly compares the resultant efficiency with "the German army in the time of von Moltke". 142

Bellamy intended to follow a military career, and at the age of seventeen was rejected at the West Point entrance examination because of physical inadequacy. 143 It seems that this setback was an enormous disappointment for him and left him with a lasting sense of frustration. If every utopia is a matter of temperament, it certainly appears that Bellamy’s springs from a well-defined desire for compensation. This seems to be shown in an article he published in 1890 to expand his theories, in which he wrote:

"Is it a wonder that war has a glamour? That glamour we would give to the peaceful pursuits of industry by making them, like the duty of the soldier, public service." 144

Julian West, returning in his dream to the Boston of his youth, witnesses a military parade and reflects upon the power industry would achieve by introducing "the scientific manner in which the nation went to war". 145 We are not astonished to hear that the first "nationalist club" was founded in Boston in 1888 by a group of retired officers, probably very little suspect as socialists! 146

The idea of humanity transformed into a "huge standing army, tightly drilled", 147 could only horrify Morris. After reading Looking Backward he exclaimed that "if they brigaded him into a regiment of workers he would lie on his back and kick". 148 This strict discipline is reinforced by a bureaucratic production organisation, divided into ten departments and innumerable subordinate services, which exercises so meticulous a control that "even if in the hands of the consumer an article turns out unfit, the system enables the fault to be traced back to the original workman". 149 The distribution of goods, which Bellamy describes particularly complacently, is inspired by the same care for efficiency and centralisation. Little local shops have disappeared, replaced by vast establishments where the citizens do not receive products directly but are presented with a vast range of samples, the same in all localities, from which they make their choice and put in their order. Their purchases are deducted on their credit cards from the annual amount constituting their salaries. The order is transmitted by a system of tubes to a central warehouse which, by means of other tubes, promptly delivers the goods home. 150 It goes without saying that such an organisation, founded upon immense industrial concentration, excludes all craft, all imagination, all human contact between consumer and producer. It is absolute authoritarian uniformity.

Undoubtedly Morris did not reject Bellamy’s forecast en bloc, and, without being able to speak of borrowings, one detects certain ideas that appealed to him and which he developed in his own utopia, although in different forms and in another spirit: general abundance, the elimination of middlemen and
parasites, the abolition of money and trade. One can observe certain similarities, not only in the realm of economics but even in that of institutions: the disappearance of politics and parties, the simplification of legislation, the enormous decrease in crime and misdeemeanour: in the absence of any clash of personal interests, the replacement of prisons by hospitals, the absence of lawyers, of fiscal administration, of army and navy.

All these transformations are drawn, certainly against a socialist background, but just what kind of socialism is it? It is true that in the political field the State apparatus is strikingly reduced. However, we observe the survival of a judiciary and of a police force. Much worse, in Morris’s eyes, the State is more centralised than ever and the governments of the states of the Union have finally disappeared. He criticises this "huge national centralisation, working by a kind of magic for which no one feels himself responsible", whereas the communism he foresees tends towards direct democracy practised in territorial units as small as possible with everyone participating in public affairs. He objects to the powers given to the retired, who "should form a kind of aristocracy (how curiously the old ideas cling)". But above all it is the weight of this enormous economic machine, this "organisation of life with a vengeance", this "huge standing army", which seem overpowering to him. Bellamy’s system, he writes, "may be described as State communism, worked by the very extreme of national centralisation".

Morris’s condemnation of Bellamy’s utopia seems to have been misunderstood by most critics, because of their lack of sufficient understanding of the Marxist theory of two stages upon which Morris’s predictions were founded. I shall come back to this at length and at the proper point in our study. For the moment I briefly indicate that Morris, following Marx, saw two successive stages in the construction of the future society. The first, socialism, following the seizure of power by the working class, would be a period of slow and difficult building, in the course of which the proletarian State would liquidate the old class society, take possession of all the means of production and set up an efficient and democratic economy. This State, by force of circumstances, would be authoritarian and would need to possess means of coercion. But it would only be transitional. When democracy was established and the new economy reached abundance, when many of the contradictions had been overcome, a new era would dawn, that of communism, the fundamental characteristic of which would be the withering away of the State. Morris looked forward to the first stage, characterised by state socialism, without pleasure and even with some apprehension, but he regarded it as inevitable. He hoped it would be as short as possible, and in his utopian fervour, all his hopes and attentions were centred on the second stage, that of a fully achieved communism as described in News from Nowhere. The essential idea is that the first stage could not in any circumstances be regarded as the culmination, an end in itself. Now this is exactly what he reproaches Bellamy with. The latter, in his preface, certainly speaks of "the progress that shall be made, ever onward and upward, till the race shall achieve its ineffable destiny". In an article published in September 1889 by the Christian-socialist magazine Dawn and reproduced as a postscript in many editions of Looking Backward, he asserts that the Americans of the year 2000 would not be content with the social state they would have reached and would not consider it as "anything more than a single
step in the infinite progression of humanity towards the divine". Nevertheless, there is not a single line of the story to suggest what this "ineffable destiny" might be. The social system in question is an enormous State machine with minute gears, of which it seems to be impossible to modify the tiniest cog. Everything in it seems to be immutable, and there is no prospect of evolution. But in the eyes of Morris, the Marxist, the state of the productive forces would allow transition to a higher stage, and such socialism could only be a dead end or an abortion. This excessive centralisation appears to him as a caricature of a structure of the first stage, during which the first lineaments of the succeeding stage should appear little by little. That is exactly why the success of *Looking Backward* seriously worried Morris:

"The book is one to be read and considered seriously, but it should not be taken as the Socialist bible of reconstruction; a danger which perhaps it will not altogether escape, as *incomplete* systems impossible to be carried out but plausible on the surface are always attractive to people ripe for change, but not knowing clearly what their aim is."  

At that particular time, Bellamy's book, with its dogmatic form, risked both distorting the theoretical education of the militants and turning away sympathisers.

"It requires notice all the more because there is a certain danger in such books as this: a two-fold danger: for there will be some temperaments to whom the answer given to the question, How shall we live then? will be pleasing and satisfactory, others to whom it will be displeasing and unsatisfactory. The danger to the first is that they will accept it with all its necessary errors and fallacies (which such a book must abound in) as conclusive statements of facts and rules of action, which will warp their efforts into futile directions. The danger to the second, if they are but enquirers or very young Socialists, is that they also accepting its speculations as facts will be inclined to say, *If that is Socialism, we won’t help its advent, as it holds out no hope to us.*"

It was to give hope back to socialists that Morris wrote *News from Nowhere* to show that beyond the wall raised up by Bellamy opened the great humanist concept of communism, that the future could not be brought to a stop in the sacrosanct and mechanical discipline of state socialism. More's utopia was also presented in the form of a hierarchical, disciplined and immutable world. But Morris did not think it necessary to criticise this aspect. Steeped in historical materialism as he was, he saw this as the healthy reaction of a man of true mediaeval values face to face with the mad individualism of the new men; the hierarchy remained a formal hierarchy based upon human relationships. But above all More was not looking into the future; his utopia was timeless, and, on his own avowal, still unrealisable. Bellamy, on the other hand, was starting from the definite economic circumstances of the nineteenth century to build the future, and, if Morris could not agree about the manner of the change to socialism he accepted willy-nilly the eventuality of state socialism. What he would not accept was the extreme nature of the imagined régime, nor would he accept its permanence. Over and above the deep repugnance he felt for the mechanismisation of life in Bellamy's system, Morris's
opposition was, most of all, based upon his conception of finalities, that is of chronology. It seems very probable to us that the revolutionary chronology of 

"News from Nowhere" was determined in relation to Looking Backward and in reaction against its implications. Bellamy's tale is placed in the year 2000 and, he writes, "the present organisation of society is, in its completeness, less than a century old". 441 Morris deliberately puts back the date of the great change to 1952: he is no gradualist, the change was to be a real revolution with a seizure of power by the proletariat, and the ability of capital to survive and to resist was not to be under-estimated. His own story is placed in the middle of the twenty-second century, and, of the two hundred years which have passed since the revolution, the first fifty were enough to effect the transition through the first stage. He feels sure that after one and a half centuries of communism nothing could be left of state socialism after the Bellamy pattern.

To these theoretical oppositions was added the profound clash of two totally different sensibilities and of two fundamental conceptions of the very quality of life. Morris placed work at the heart of existence. If, in capitalist society, it had become a sordid chore, the first task of communism would be to make it once more a need and a joy, by way of diversity of occupation and man's expression of himself through his work. The Calvinist Bellamy would have none of this; faithful to the theological concept of the original curse, he explicitly calls it "the edict of Eden". 442 The strict discipline which prevents anybody's avoiding work comes not only from economic necessity but also from moral, even religious needs. Work is man's natural punishment, but utopia, founded on the right to happiness, removes its excessive bitterness and unfairness by mechanising it, and rewards twenty-four years of toil by a long retirement free of all productive effort, to allow the free blossoming of individuality:

"Know, O child of another race and yet the same, that the labor we have to render as our part in securing for the nation the means of a comfortable physical existence is by no means regarded as the most important, the most interesting, or the most dignified employment of our powers. We look upon it as a necessary duty to be discharged before we can fully devote ourselves to the higher exercise of our faculties, the intellectual and spiritual enjoyments and pursuits which alone mean life." 443

Such a break seems completely senseless to Morris:

"... everybody is to begin the serious work of production at the age of twenty-one, work three years as a labourer, and then choose his skilled occupation and work till he is forty-five, when he is to knock off his work and amuse himself (improve his mind, if he has one left him). Heavens! think of a man of forty-five changing his habits suddenly and by compulsion!" 444

For him it would be a poor compensation to become a member of a judicial and political aristocracy. 445 Nothing was more alien to all Morris's aspirations than this total break between the individual and his job, which Bellamy made a real article of faith. 446 In the America of the year 2000, the allocation of labour is done according to the law of supply and demand. If a particular occupation is short of workers it is made more attractive by decreasing the work-
ing hours. But diversity of employment is excluded. The individual is free at
the beginning to choose his work according to his aptitudes, but thereafter he
is a specialist. If he has mistaken his vocation, he can go in another direction,
but he is not encouraged to do so and can only do so up to the age of
thirty-five. This monotony, added to the traditional concept of task-work,
repels Morris:

"... variety of life," he replies to Bellamy, "is as much an aim of true
Communism as equality of condition, and ... nothing but a union of
these two will bring about real freedom." 167

What incentives to work would there be in such a society? Not the hope of
a higher standard of living, since the credit card is the same for all, and Morris
congratulates him, moreover, on having understood

"the necessity for the equality of the reward of labour, which is such a
stumbling-block for incomplete Socialists". 168

Bellamy recognises that disciplinary obligation would not be enough, and,
on the other hand, he does not share the confidence in mankind that animates
Morris's humanism. No doubt, he writes, there are noble-natured beings who
do not need stimulus.

"But all men, even in the last year of the twentieth century, are not of
this high order, and the incentives to endeavor requisite for those who are
not must be of a sort adapted to their inferior natures." 169

Well, first there is the desire to reach the higher ranks of the industrial army.
"Our young men," says Dr. Leete, "are very greedy of honours." 170 They will
be laden down with them:

"diligence in the national service is the sole and certain way to public
repute, social distinction and official power". 171

There will even be "special privileges and immunities in the way of
discipline". 172 Another factor just as much at work is the sex urge. The code of
education for women trains them only to give their hands to meritorious
workers. 173 These, thinks Morris, are wretched expedients:

"In this part of his scheme, ... Mr. Bellamy worries himself unnec
cessarily in the seeking (with obvious failure) some incentive to labour
to replace the fear of starvation, which is at present our only one,
whereas it cannot be too often repeated that the true incentive to useful
and happy labour is and must be pleasure in the work itself." 174

In the same way Morris has no sympathy for the way machines have in
vaded the world of Bellamy's utopia. He himself did not hide the need, during
the first stage, to rely largely on mechanisation to produce the plenty needed
for the introduction of communism. But for him it is only transitional, and we
shall see how he envisages development into a world where man, master of
energy and its uses, refuses to sacrifice the harmonious use of his native skills.
Looking Backward, on the other hand, certainly seems to introduce a gadget
civilisation. A gigantic network of tubes ensures communication and distribu
tion, and all operations connected with it are performed by machines.
Washing, cooking, repairs are all done electrically in public establishments. An automatic system of canopies shelters the pavements in the event of bad weather. And, above all, every house is telephonically linked to a transmitting station with many programmes which pours music and sermons into each home, twenty-four hours a day. As A. L. Morton ironically remarks, that appears to be the only pleasure the inhabitants know, and another historian of utopias, certainly better disposed towards Bellamy, cannot refrain from reproaching him for a "grim mechanical ideal". That is certainly the opinion of William Morris, who attempts to overcome the problem and get to the bottom of things:

"In short, a machine-life is the best which Mr. Bellamy can imagine for us on all sides; it is not to be wondered at then that his only idea of making labour tolerable is to decrease the amount of it by means of fresh and ever fresh developments of machinery. This view I know he will share with many Socialists with whom I might otherwise agree more than I can with him...this ideal of the great reduction of the hours of labour by the mere means of machinery is a futility. The human race has always put forth about as much energy as it could in given conditions of climate...and the development of man's resources, which has given him greater powers over nature, has driven him also into fresh desires and fresh demands on nature, and thus made his expenditure of energy much what it was before. I believe that this will always be so, and the multiplication of machinery will just—multiply machinery."

That is exactly what Morris observes in the world described by Bellamy. Dr. Leete proudly proclaims that they have "given a prodigious impulse to labor-saving inventions in all sorts of industry", but also that there are products for which "popular taste fluctuates, and novelty is frequently required". This gigantic industrial army, writes Morris, is "compelled by some mysterious fate to unceasing anxiety for the production of wares to satisfy every caprice, however wasteful and absurd, that may cast up among them".

In a rational, egalitarian and truly human society, men's burdens would at last be lightened, and they would regain their dignity and their essential being simply by the elimination of unnecessary tasks:

"...it is probable that much of our so-called 'refinement', our luxury—in short our civilization—will have to be sacrificed."

This unlimited industrialisation has another consequence which Morris finds abominable, that of reducing life to a totally urban civilisation. It is a fact worthy of comment, showing clearly the extent to which the logic of a system can override personal tastes, that Bellamy himself was by no means a town-dweller. He spent almost his whole life in his straggling village of Chicopee Falls and hardly knew Boston; he even had to use a town plan when writing Looking Backward. Compton-Rickett sets the "urban socialism" of the American utopist against the "rural socialism" of Morris, which is excessive because Morris's aim was to resolve the contradiction between town and country. But it is certain that this does not show for a moment in
Bellamy's account, with one near exception which our poet picks up with acerbity in his criticism:

"Mr. Bellamy's ideas of life are curiously limited; he has no idea beyond existence in a great city, his dwelling of man in the future is Boston (U.S.A.) beautified. In one passage, indeed, he mentions villages, but with unconscious simplicity shows that they do not come within his scheme of economical equality, but are mere servants of the great centres of civilization. This seems strange to some of us, who cannot help thinking that our experience ought to have taught us that such aggregations of population afford the worst possible form of dwelling place ...." 18

All these elements contribute to creating or reinforcing the petty-bourgeois climate, this atmosphere of "cockney paradise" which exasperated Morris when he read the book. He himself, to tell the truth, was apprehensive that some such climate would obtain during the first phase of socialist society and that the proletariat, after centuries of privation, would be content with a "dull level of mediocrity". But what Bellamy described seemed worse still to him, and further worsened by its permanent nature. The characters introduced are cut off from any industrial or rural working background. They are petty-bourgeois, as little different as possible from their 1887 ancestors, having kept the same way of life and the same cultural ideal.

"The equal wealth and equal opportunities of culture which all persons now enjoy," Dr. Leete explains to Julian West, "have simply made us all members of one class, which corresponds to the most fortunate class with you." 189

The development of teaching, he says again, has allowed everyone to acquire "what you used to call the education of a gentleman", 190 and the reasons he gives for this development are suggestive:

"The cultured man in your age was like one up to the neck in a nauseous bog solacing himself with a smelling bottle. You see, perhaps, now, how we look at this question of universal high education. No single thing is so important to every man as to have for neighbors intelligent, companionable persons." 190

One cannot even say that Dr. Leete's conversation reveals a very high level of culture or imagination. He refuses to be astonished at anything whatsoever "when it can be explained scientifically", 190 and his complacent and selective admiration is given to anything which, in this new world, contributes to efficiency and comfort. He has a good measure of philistinism and utilitarianism à la Gradgrind, wrapped in insipid and unctuous spiritualism. His life in retirement, with his daughter and colourless wife, has something traditionally cramped about it, and one cannot say that the frequent listenings to the telephone-radio bring a very elevating stimulus to it. The Sunday sermon broadcast in this way, which Bellamy reproduces from beginning to end, without sparing us a line, devoutly punctuated with "Ahh! my friends!", exalts the divine mission of the new society in the flattest tones of neo-conformism. We know nothing whatever of how Mrs. Leete occupied herself, freed as she was from domestic cares by perfect equipment. As for the occupation of their
daughter Edith (who, curiously enough, does not appear to have been conc-riscribed into the female corps of the industrial army), they appear to consist exclusively of going round the shops: "an indefatigable shopper", her mother calls her. We admire the tenacity of Victorian customs: thus, at the end of a meal, the ladies withdraw, leaving the men to talk freely. Bellamy's collectivism is tempered by very interesting traces of the spirit of keeping oneself to oneself. In general, meals are no longer prepared at home and we go with the Leetes and their guest to the local communal restaurant, hoping to see the new humanity more closely and to meet them in their daily existence. Our hopes remain vain, for in this restaurant each family has its private dining room, where it is served by a waiter in a "slightly distinctive uniform" and whose manner is that "of a soldier on duty". Did Morris think of this dreary picture when he was writing about his pretty girls and jolly guests in his Guest House? A whiff of individualism seems, too, to impregnate the whole of public life in this world where each strives to achieve a higher rank. The women are not left out, for, as Dr. Leete informs us, "our girls are as full of ambition for their careers as our boys". As for Julian West, he has no trouble over linking up with his past and one of his first cares is to insinuate himself into the new structure and find himself a good position.

A. L. Morton, whose penetrating observations are always worthy of attention, sees in this collection of details the reason for the extraordinary popularity of Looking Backward.

"At a time," he writes, "when the professional classes and the small producers, who were still very numerous, felt caught between the Trusts and the militant workers, they were offered a prospect of Advance Without Tears, a socialism which did not force them to take sides in the battle." 197

We are convinced, from his own evidence, that such was Bellamy's exact and deliberate intent. In a letter to one of the organisers of the "nationalist movement", he wrote explicitly:

"I thoroughly approve what you say about directing your efforts more particularly to the conversion of the cultured and conservative class. That was precisely the special end for which Looking Backward was written." 198

Morris made no mistake. In his article in Commonwealth, he wonders whether Bellamy really is a socialist and presumes that he would be

"... perfectly satisfied with modern civilisation, if only the injustice, misery, and waste of class society could be got rid of; which half-change seems possible to him. The only ideal of life which such a man can see is that of the industrious professional middle-class men of today purified from their crime of complicity with the monopolist class, and become independent instead of being, as they are now are, parasitical." 199

Morris's tone becomes violent and personal when he comes to the defence of the human values to which he was most strongly attached. If utopia is a matter of temperament, Bellamy's is, typically, "unhistoric and unartistic". It is plain that one cannot find in Looking Backward the slightest consideration of
humanity's past, the slightest search for a cultural heritage. The absence of a living tradition, which makes American civilisation so unattractive in Morris's eyes, is accentuated by an arid and formless modernism, bizarrely intermingled with the worst Victorian hideousness. The occasional precise details which bedeck the narrative must have turned our poet's stomach. The description of the neighbourhood big store is especially distressing:

"...above the portal, standing out from the front of the building, a majestic life-size group of statuary, the central figure of which was a female ideal of Plenty, with her cornucopia".

Inside stretches a vast hall, its air freshened by a "magnificent fountain", and the light, coming from a vast cupola, is softened by the velvet tones of the frescoes which adorn ceiling and walls: we are left unaware of the subjects or motifs and their only purpose appears to be to "soften" the light. Such are the only revelations of the visual arts of the new age. The most that we learn in addition is that the public buildings are "of colossal size", and that Boston is full of fountains and statues, but on this occasion we are spared the description of them. As in Morris's utopia, the taste for luxury is transferred to these buildings and simplicity prevails in the home, but whereas Morris likes "elbow-room", the houses are small and contain the minimum of furniture in order to facilitate upkeep. The furniture, moreover, has not changed at all since the nineteenth century. Bellamy's only aesthetic originality is his insistence upon diffused artificial lighting. Finally, in the matter of dress, although women's clothes have shed their grotesque voluminousness, men's have not undergone any appreciable change. But these are details which have a very secondary place in the story. Beauty for Bellamy is clearly a conventional adjunct giving the whole the seal of respectability. This philistine attitude arouses Morris's indignant repudiation. Art, he replies,

"is not a mere adjunct of life which free and happy men can do without, but the necessary expression and indispensable instrument of human happiness".

The happiness and, more accurately perhaps, the blossoming of mankind are the major themes of Morris's utopia. It would be unjust to imagine that they lie outside Bellamy's preoccupations, but his passion for organisation at any price seems to override any other consideration. This results in the profound difference of viewpoint which we sense immediately in their approach to anything to do with human development. However, they both foresee certain similarities of progress, and I am very tempted to believe that Morris has taken several ideas from Bellamy, even though they assume a very different hue in his own utopia. The first, undoubtedly common to many utopists, but which takes a particular twist and convincing force through the new form of anticipatory vision, is that of man's physical transformation and the general improvement in public health. It would be surprising, says Dr. Leete to Julian, if it were otherwise:

"In your day, riches debauched one class with idleness of mind and body, while poverty sapped the vitality of the masses by overwork, bad food, and pestilent homes."
Morris does not put it any differently. On a definite point, we may wonder whether he did not find in Bellamy the suggestion of another idea to which he gave loud expression: the women no longer have the elegant chlorotic pallor of the Victorian era and have no shame over their splendid health. This seems to stand out from the portrait of Edith Leete:

"Feminine softness and delicacy were in this lovely creature deliciously combined with an appearance of health and abounding physical vitality too often lacking in the maidens with whom alone I could compare her." 288

This difference from the women of the nineteenth century, "who seem to have been so generally sickly", 289 Bellamy attributes to their obligation to work. From this improvement in general health, due to better conditions of living, he deduces one consequence which Morris advances much further: the increase in the expectation of life to eighty-five or ninety. 210 In News from Nowhere the idea of longevity achieves triumphal expression. It is probably inaccurate to assume that we are dealing with a borrowing, or an inspiration. But perhaps the recent, stormy reading of Looking Backward caused in Morris's mind the crystallisation of certain ideas which had already matured or again the realisation that these ideas should be picked up and improved on in the development of his own utopia.

It is curious that Bellamy, despite his Fabianism, uses the same terms as Morris to condemn the tendency of the contemporary feminist movement to create among women an "unnatural rivalry with men", and he wants account to be taken of the natural differences between the sexes in the allocation of tasks. 211 Bellamy, like Morris (and perhaps more than him), proclaims absolute equality, but he also stresses one interesting aspect of the new people: women no longer have any timidity, any feeling of inferiority to men and can, "without any discredit to her sex, reveal an unsolicited love". 212 It is true that when placed in this situation Edith Leete shows wholly conventional reactions, giving the lie to this fine principle, and simpers unrestrainedly at the idea of "throwing herself into the arms of one she has known but a week". 213 Her general attitude is that of a well-brought-up young lady of the worthy bourgeoisie, she differs very little from her ancestor, Edith Bartlett, Julian's fiancée of the previous century, and nothing is more striking than the contrast between her and the wonderful Ellen of News from Nowhere, who passionately embodies the happiness and freedom of communist mankind. Other stale whiffs of bourgeois values must have put Morris off during his reading. Eugenics is a natural preoccupation of all utopists, but Bellamy's fancies on the point were hardly calculated to attract him. "For the first time in history," says Dr. Leete, "the principle of sexual selection, with its tendency to preserve and transmit the better types of the race, and let the inferior types drop out, has unhindered operation." Here in fact is the new feminine morality:

"...to wed greatly now is not to marry men of fortune or title, but those who have risen above their fellows by the solidity or brilliance of their services to humanity. These form nowadays the only aristocracy with which alliance is distinction."

Therein, asserts the doctor, lies the surest and most efficacious spur to work.
The whole upbringing of girls is strictly orientated in this direction. One of them would need a great deal of courage and would be forced to "defy the opinion of her generation" if she fell in love with a man of inferior type, who was, consequently, pledged to celibacy:

"Our women have risen to the full height of their responsibility as the wardens of the world to come to whose keeping the keys of the future are confided. Their feeling of duty in this respect amounts to a sense of consecration. It is a cult in which they educate their daughters from childhood."

Nothing was more alien to Morris than this idea of coercive selection. It bore too much resemblance to the distortion of the Darwinian theory of natural selection that the nineteenth century bourgeoisie had adopted to justify their rule, and the idea of this matrimonial aristocracy of merit held nothing appealing. In the smiling world of News from Nowhere, liberation from the scourge of capitalism has, after several generations, sufficed to "take the sting out of heredity" and spread intelligence and beauty broadly among men and women, so that "each finds his own" without conflict and while humanity continues to blossom.

When we get down to basic facts, a fundamental divergence shows between Morris's ideology and Bellamy's. The latter remains true to the old speculative humanism. He believes in an abstract, unchangeable man, who responds to changing stimuli as the conditions of life itself change. In fact, Bellamy's eternal man has remained, in the year 2000, the man of 1887 and has adapted the new institutions to his "eternal nature". For Morris, the Marxist, on the contrary, the human essence, in the words of the Theses on Feuerbach,

"is no abstraction inherent in each single individual; in its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations".

So the mankind described in News from Nowhere, transformed by the production relationships of communism, has nothing in common with that of Bellamy's "cockney paradise".

However, these two humanisms, the one abstract, the other dialectical and concrete, meet in parallel formulations, whose similarity, at the first glance, goes a long way. Bellamy speaks in his novel of the "solidarity of the race" and of "the brotherhood of man". He had written an article on "the religion of solidarity" and, defining the principles of his "nationalist movement", he asserted that "the sentiment of human brotherhood, which is the animating principle of Nationalism, is a religion in itself". Morris for his part speaks over and over again of the religion of humanity. This was a formula made fashionable by Comtism, which he adopted without, as far as he was concerned, giving it any mystical character. But this language in Bellamy produces an unexpected turn of thought that appears to have inspired Morris directly. In the sermon broadcast over the telephone, the preacher declares that, after the transformation of institutions, "it was for the first time possible to see what unperveted human nature really was like", and that these noble qualities, rediscovered, have "for the first time in human history tempted mankind to fall in love with itself". Stripping this humanism of its speculative ideology, Morris says that the "religion of humanity" will cease, in
the era of communism, to be a ritual formula which the present hardly justifies, and it will be so not at all because “eternal man” will have been cleared of the blemishes of bourgeois civilisation, but because the new social relationships will have created new individuals, truly worthy of being loved. With Bellamy, in fact, one is always dealing with man in the abstract and not with individuals. In private notes, which A. E. Morgan published for the first time in his study, he repudiated the diversity of the psyche:

“The important variations are very few. The Deity did not task his ingenuity much in devising personalities. And rightly, for the impersonal life which all have in common is the only important part of men or women.”

...#

Starting from this conception, one understands better how much there could be in Bellamy’s future humanity that is all-embracing, undifferentiated, even totalitarian. Against this is ranged Morris’s utopian ultimate, where communism means the free development of the individual.

This religion of human brotherhood which, in Morris’s case, possesses the simple quality of depth of feeling, totally devoid of any metaphysical content, is, with Bellamy, saturated with a deistic spirit which, while not strictly confessional, never breaks with the Christian theology that Morris’s materialism had long since discarded. The high point of the American story is reached when they listen by telephone to the Sunday sermon on the moral and divine value of the new institutions. “It is very easy,” asserts the preacher, “to believe in the fatherhood of God in the twentieth century.” Men, he goes on, are now “images of God indeed, not the travesties of Him they had seemed.” And in concluding his sermon he evokes mankind’s utopian future in mystical terms:

“For twofold is the return of man to God ‘who is our home’, the return of the individual by way of death, and the return of the race by the fulfilment of the evolution, when the divine secret hidden in the germ shall be perfectly unfolded.”

It is not in the least surprising to discover that Bellamy’s nationalist movement, founded by retired officers, was later taken under the wing of the Theosophical Society. Despite his profound tolerance and the respect he always showed for anybody’s convictions, Morris could not fail to feel his antipathy increased towards a utopia where traditional belief in God was added to so many elements which aroused his indignation. The violence of his reaction can be measured by the opposite extremes he sometimes reaches in News from Nowhere. It can be measured, too, by the promptitude with which he began to write his own utopia. A bare six months separate its first appearance in Commonweal (11 January 1890) from the article on Looking Backward (22 June 1889). When, at the end of 1890, a pirate edition of News from Nowhere appeared in the United States, copied straight from the issues of Commonweal, not only did he not take offence or show any intention of prosecuting, he announced the news to Bruce Glasier joyfully. It must have given him satisfaction to be able in this way to carry his contradiction of his adversary into his own land
and to put his vision of the future full development of humanity in direct opposition to a prediction he regarded as an aberration and a dead end.

I would not want to close this chapter on the possible influence upon Morris of earlier utopias without making, in an interrogative way, one complementary suggestion. Bulwer Lytton's novel *The Coming Race*, published in 1871, had a degree of success. Did Morris read it? The total absence throughout his writings of the slightest reference to this book leaves it doubtful. Certain themes important in *News from Nowhere* had already appeared there. The mysterious "force" which propels Morris's barges and which is available everywhere recalls the "vril" of Bulwer Lytton. The theme of longevity is common to both utopias. Finally, on one very particular point, namely the new direction assumed by literature in the new society, I have taken a passage which curiously resembles later remarks by Morris's Ellen. A Utopian of the underground world described by Bulwer Lytton says to the visitor:

“We find by referring to the great masterpieces in that department of literature which we all still read with pleasure, that they consist in the portraiture of passions which we no longer experience — ambition, vengeance, unhallowed love, the thirst for war-like renown, and such like. . . . No one can express such passions now, for no one can feel them, or meet with any sympathy in his readers if he did. Again, the old poetry has a main element in its dissection of those complex mysteries of human character which conduce to abnormal vices and crimes, or lead to signal and extraordinary virtues. But our society, having got rid of temptations to any prominent vices and crimes, has necessarily rendered the moral average so equal, that there are no very salient virtues.”

The tone is undoubtedly very different, but the idea is the same. However, in the absence of any evidence, let us beware of jumping to hasty conclusions.
CHAPTER TWO

Mediaevalism and its Utopian Ferments

William Morris's utopian speculations did not take shape until the 'eighties and did not find final expression until after his active adhesion to socialism. The ideological framework of his investigation of the future, as we shall have ample opportunity of establishing, was historical materialism. But when, in 1883, he joined the ranks of Hyndman's Democratic Federation, he was already forty-nine, with a great volume of aesthetic and literary creation behind him. Not only did he not deny this past, but he found in it the rational justification for his decision. It was as an artist that he became a revolutionary. It was because capitalist society stifled art and annihilated the human values necessary to its development that he wanted to take part in political and social action to overthrow this inhuman system and assure men the full development of their capacities. This new humanity, as it grew up before his utopian eyes, was not abstract and speculative but presented composite characteristics. On the one hand, it was the logical result of a new way of life, the communist way of life, founded upon theoretical data conforming to historical laws; on the other hand, it was the realisation of the aspirations of a real man living in the real conditions of the nineteenth century - not merely the aspirations of an isolated individual, but those of a great social stratum, expressing itself through his voice after having been expressed through those of many artists and thinkers whose message had shaped his own evolution.

I feel it would be superfluous, when so many others have already done so, to make another analysis of the revolt against industrial civilisation, against its ugliness and its injustice, which mark the art and literature of the Victorian era. I only wish to refer here to one aspect of that revolt which seems to me to have been important in the construction of Morris's utopia - namely, the glorification of the Middle Ages by the writers and artists of the nineteenth century. In the face of the hideousness of the industrial towns, the poverty of the workers, the impoverishment and humiliation of the petty bourgeoisie, of unbridled individualism and the profit motive, many among them felt the need to justify their inadaptability or their failure to conform by having recourse to a historical reference. Incapable, through their class loyalties or lack of political and social awareness, of glimpsing the least prospect for the future beyond timid reforms, they turned to the past, towards what seemed to be the most perfect antithesis of the unacceptable present. And their romantic fervour converted the Middle Ages into a golden age. Their mediaevalism was sometimes pure aesthetic escapism, sometimes a critical weapon, sometimes passionate historical research. Morris passed through all these phases. His originality lay in going far beyond, and in transforming, as it were, negative
mediaevalism into positive mediaevalism. Abandoning nostalgia and jeremiads, he armed himself with the data of scientific socialism in order to push ajar the doors of the future. But the very uncertainty of anticipation drove him to give the characters of his utopia definite features, moral and aesthetic as well as material. He was obliged to draw upon the ensemble of pre-capitalist values, rediscovered by his immediate predecessors, to suggest the face of the new humanity. The stage of thinking he then reached separated him radically from many of the forms of previous mediaevalism. This is why our study of sources in this field will be purposely limited to the ideological aspects which survived this great transformation. We shall pass rapidly over minor survivals, even if they are linked with great names, and come to the ideology of Ruskin which was already a synthesis and even more: in fact, it constitutes a first draft of positive mediaevalism, and was the original inspiration of Morris’s utopianism before it was grafted into the framework of his scientific socialism in a strange, almost harmonious intertwining.

1. Walter Scott, Keats, the Pre-Raphaelites, William Blake

I shall not, then, retrace the successive stages of Morris’s immense mediaeval culture, and on this point refer the reader to Mackail’s biography and to the solid and documented studies of E. P. Thompson and Margaret Grennan. Let us just recall that at the age of four the poet was devouring the novels of Walter Scott, that by the age of seven he had read them all, and that he reread them passionately all his life. This lasting tenderness was not without banter, and he reproaches the author of The Antiquary for having felt the need to excuse himself for loving an art and a way of life which it was still general to regard as barbarous. What Morris owes to Scott, much more than a taste for a certain kind of imagery, was “a longing to know something real of the lives of those who have gone before us”. From his childhood he found among the characters of the Waverley Novels, not conventional heroes with set attitudes, but human beings leading ordinary lives; not only lords and great ladies, but yeomen and swineherds. Warlike prowess goes side by side with the lowly details of daily life. Scott’s inspiration was often of the people, and the rebellious tones of John Ball echo the sarcasms of the buffoon Wamba. It is a Middle Ages characterised by a robust attachment to the things of this world.

This realistic mediaevalism had to withstand the considerable ascendency of aestheticism during the Oxford years and the Pre-Raphaelite period. The daily décor of what remained of old Oxford, whose quadrangular architecture haunted Morris’s memory when he came to describe the homes of the twenty-second century, was a real setting which his history-ridden imagination peopled with real characters, despite their stylisation. The poems of The Defence of Guenevere, with their passionate humanity and the absence of languor, contrast sharply with the dreamings of Rossetti. The influence of Keats, then predominant, did not affect both poets in the same way. Certainly it turned Morris towards an escapist mediaevalism for some long years. But Keats’s escapism already contained the denunciation of the hideousness of the modern town (“the jumbled heap of murky buildings”) and a yearning for visual beauty closely allied with a love of nature. Even along the road of escapism Morris extracted lessons in realism. What he appreciated above all in Keats was that
he, quite unlike Shelley, had eyes to see. The dream held living forms and Morris’s utopia strongly maintained this characteristic. In this respect nothing seems more significant than the memory of the final lines of the Ode to a Nightingale, (“Was it a vision or a waking dream? – Fled is that music; Do I wake or sleep?”) which we find in the last lines of News from Nowhere, “... and if others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream”. Whether it is concerned with the past or the future, the reading of Keats blazed the trail from dream to vision for Morris. It sharpened his eye at the same time as it encouraged him to leave reality behind.

This fervour of vision, thus enriched, is perhaps even more important than Morris’s debt to Pre-Raphaelitism, and here one must walk cautiously. In fact, it has become a lazy habit to include Morris among the Pre-Raphaelites. This hasty definition is doubtless explicable, but only corresponds to facts in a very partial way; it takes no account of the time factor and is a result of several confusions. When, in 1856, Morris became acquainted with Rossetti, the Brotherhood, properly speaking, hardly existed any more. It was only an aftermath of the Pre-Raphaelite ideology, crystallising for Morris through the personality of Dante Gabriel, who held him under his spell for two years.  But it was not long before events separated these two completely dissimilar men. The silent intimate drama of the shared affections of Jane, who had become Rossetti’s fantasy figure, and the latter’s petty attitude at the time of the creation of the Morris Firm, emphasised the incompatibilities and led to the final break in 1875. The mediaevalism which marked Morris’s poetical work during all this period quickly diverged from the mystical and sensual subtleties which delighted the genius of Rossetti. While imitation of him is clear in youthful poems such as Praise of my Lady, with its refrain of Beata mea Domna, one can find scarcely a trace remaining of this infatuation in The Earthly Paradise where the much more earthy influence of Chaucer is predominant. The two journeys to Iceland, in 1871 and 1873, freed Morris, as he states himself, “from the maundering side of mediaevalism”.  He had found a people living in somewhat primitive conditions, faithful to ancestral traditions, among whom social inequality was not blatant and whose human contacts, warm and simple, perhaps lingered in his memory as a preliminary outline for the easy fraternity of News from Nowhere. He had also become acquainted with nordic literature, and the heroic ruggedness of the Sagas gave him a taste for virile activities and feelings. This was the starting point for a study of barbarian society which was to have a two-fold influence upon his thinking. On the one hand, he came to think that whatever was best in the mediaeval heritage was a survival from an older past. On the other, the catastrophic ideology of the Sagas, with their myth of the twilight of the gods, the “ragna rök”, involved his utopia in a long alternative between barbarism and socialism.

About 1877, Morris’s new political and social preoccupations snatched him for ever away from the lures of pure art. However, in the realm of the visual arts, the break with Pre-Raphaelite mediaevalism is, at first glance, less appreciable, and it is because of this that the hasty judgment to which we have referred has been made. Such an idea comes naturally to the mind of anyone visiting the William Morris Room at the Victoria and Albert Museum and seeing the Gothic heaviness of his furniture, adorned with very conventional mediaeval scenes. Remember that this room, formerly the Green Dining
Mediaevalism and its Utopian Ferments

Room, was decorated by the Firm in 1867. If the same visitor explores the furniture rooms in the Museum, he will discover a later and very different phase in the Firm's products, with a simplicity and elegance of line foreshadowing the trends of modern art. Nevertheless it is true that, up to the last stage of typographical design at the Kelmscott Press, the Pre-Raphaelite influence persisted. That is where the ambiguity comes in. Most of these creations were the result of collaboration, the decorative part being Morris's work, and the figures by Burne-Jones, who remained true to Rossetti's aesthetics to the end of his life. That is exactly why I am inclined to think that, taken together, Morris's visual creations leave a sometimes false impression and that they retarded his literary and ideological creativity. The two artists were liked in a friendship that was extraordinary and, when one examines it closely, rather mysterious. The destruction by Lady Burne-Jones of a great part of her correspondence with Morris is suspect in more than one respect, and the nature of their relationship is not altogether clear. Morris's friendship and admiration for Burne-Jones were total and, it seems, blind. He flew into mad rages if anyone criticised him in his presence. He remained faithful despite their complete political disagreement from 1883 on. Possibly Morris did not realise that his own development, even in the field of art, was taking him a very long way away from the position which Burne-Jones still kept, and we may wonder if this continued collaboration was not, in the long run, a handicap: to my way of thinking it has confused the real image of Morris in the eyes of the public. In due course we shall see how the human and material pictures in News from Nowhere no longer had anything in common with the Pre-Raphaelite style. Neither Ellen nor Clara could be imagined on the canvases of Burne-Jones or Rossetti.

If, in 1880, Morris, speaking of the Pre-Raphaelite painters, still called them "my masters", their chief merit in his eyes lay in having restored the link with mediaeval art, in having "caught up the golden chain dropped two hundred years ago" and yet more in having spread "discontent at the ignoble ugliness that surrounds them". He sharpened and developed these ideas in 1891 in a lecture which he gave in Birmingham upon Pre-Raphaelite painting. It is noticeable that his tone has become more detached. He speaks of it in the past and as something outside himself. He sees in the movement "a portion of the general revolt against Academicism in Literature as well as Art" and considers it to be "a branch of the great Gothic art which once pervaded all Europe". He praises it for its rediscovery of the ancient qualities of naturalism, of narrative expression and of decoration. However, this same lecture allows doubts to show through. It was a weakness he asserts, to have abjured any representation of contemporary reality and to have taken refuge only in the evocation of the past, even though the ugliness of the age fully justified such escapism. But he stands even further apart when, coming to more general considerations in the full development of his thought, he declares to his listeners that it is impossible to re-do the work of the past, and that tradition is without value unless it helps us to create something new. In an article which appeared in 1884, he asserted that it was in plunging into the mediaeval tradition that the Pre-Raphaelites had done original work. His 1891 lecture did not renew this assertion, and the generalised judgment which Morris then uttered leaves the point indeterminate.
In the field of historical thinking, the most real and characteristic thing which our poet owed to Pre-Raphaelitism was not just the exaltation of mediaeval art (that he had already rediscovered), but above all the consequent condemnation of all artistic production since the Renaissance. Holman Hunt, the theoretician of the movement, had long attacked the decay of painting from the generation after Raphael up to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who became the favourite target for vituperation. Graham Hough strangely points out about this that Ruskin, the leader of thought and the protector of the Brotherhood, was, in his turn, influenced by it. In the first two volumes of Modern Painters, his references to Raphael are always respectful, and it is only in the third volume, published in 1856, that he follows his disciples in discovering the poison introduced by the corruption and pride of the Renaissance. 13

In truth, this particular debt goes further back, long before Pre-Raphaelitism had yet played the rôle of conveyor belt. In 1847 Rossetti had acquired for ten shillings a book of manuscripts (prose, verse and drawings) by William Blake, and subsequently had assisted Gilchrist in the compilation of his biography. Blake’s epigrams and jeers are contemptuous about Correggio, Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt, Reynolds and Gainsborough, and there seems little doubt that they helped form the beliefs of the young group. And, again, was it not Blake who had written, with a turn of phrase already typically Ruskinian, “Grecian is Mathematical Form. Goth is Living Form”? 14 There is nothing to give us the measure of Morris’s knowledge, at this stage, of Blake’s work and thought. Perhaps he was mainly responsive to his graphic art. In any case, we can find no earlier allusion than 1880, and then it is only to praise the limpidity, the purity, the simplicity of his language after the pretentious jargon of the versifiers of the eighteenth century. 15 The chronology of the references leads us to suppose that he must have reread him in 1884, at the start of his life as a militant. His admiration was first aesthetic. He marvelled at “the almost miraculous phenomenon of a painter of that period who had a real and strange genius for the decorative or beautiful side of the art”, and who, “visionary as he was understood not only the power of words in verse but also the power of form and colour to delight the eye at the same time that it exalts the mind” 16. Gradually his interest turned to the poetry rather than the engraving, and again it was in order to set it against that of the classical age. Blake is the first, he writes, “who drew English poetry from the slough of conventional twaddle in which the eighteenth century had sunk it; and visionary as he was, he was able to look at realities, and to make his words mean something”. It is in these terms that he presented The Little Dreamer to the readers of Commonweal, 17 so his attention had turned to the social aspects of Blake’s work, to the denunciations of poverty and hypocrisy, as is indicated by the later publication in the columns of his weekly, of London, 18 of Auguries of Innocence 19 and of Holy Thursday. 20 But it does not appear that Morris was aware of Blake’s utopian efforts or followed him in his abortive quest for a new Jerusalem. He cites him among his favourite authors in his reply to the Daily Mail Gazette enquiry, but adds after his name: “the part of him which a mortal can understand”. 21 He was put off by the complexity of the prophetic books and also, possibly, by the religious and metaphysical forms of his millenarianism.
2. William Cobbett

Conversely, his robust appetite for the things of this world made him unreservedly receptive to the fiery prose of William Cobbett. According to E. P. Thompson, he seems to have come into contact with his works in 1882 and to have delved extensively into them during the following year. However, I have found a use of Cobbett’s contemptuous epithet for London, “the Wen”, in a talk given by Morris in 1881. It is somewhat surprising that these readings should have come so late, for they were well calculated to please him. Cobbett rapidly became one of the classics read aloud in the family circle and Morris was sufficiently fond of him to forgive the disdainful judgments he had often passed on corners of England dear to the poet. He never stopped recommending the reading of Cottage Economy, Advice to Young Men and, above all, of Rural Rides, which he knew by heart, if one is to believe Mackail. No doubt he read other books, and probably a certain number of brochures and pamphlets taken from the Political Register. This seems to emerge from a letter of 1883, in which he writes “such queer things they are, but plenty of stuff in them”. His impetuous temperament was bound to be captivated by the aggressive verve and the rustic radicalism of the man Coleridge called the rhinoceros of politics, whom Heine regarded as the English bulldog, who himself took the pseudonym of Porcupine and who became for Morris “the master of plain-speaking”. There is evidence to indicate that the polemical style of many of the articles published in Commonweal is deliberately modelled upon Cobbett’s style.

Did he read A History of the Protestant Reformation, which is Cobbett’s great contribution to the mediaevalism of the nineteenth century? I would not venture to assert this with Professor Le Mire’s confidence, because Morris never mentions it. In truth the question is not very important, because the main ideas developed in it reappear scattered through Rural Rides. Cobbett’s point of departure was his desire to reply to the campaign carried on across the country against the emancipation of the Catholics. Basing his ideas upon the works of the historian Lingard, but demonstrating much less circumspection in his judgments, Cobbett saw in the Reformation the source of all the evils that were rife in his own time. Relying, like many another of his contemporaries, upon the methods of contrasts, he set against the England of barracks, of fiscal structure, of Poor Law and prisons, the mediaeval England of convents, hospitals, guilds and houses of charity:

“Monks and nuns, who fed the poor, were better than sinecure and pension men and women, who feed upon the poor.”

He insists at length and many times over upon the rôle played by the monastic communities and upon the fact that, thanks to them, pauperism was unknown for centuries. Morris, less responsive to the religious aspect of the problem, no doubt paid attention to the picture Cobbett painted of conditions of life in the Middle Ages. This explicit refusal to regard history as a succession of reigns and wars, and the desire to find out, above all, how the people lived, “comparing the then price of labour with the then price of food”, provided him with material for fruitful thought. Sometimes relying upon figures and often, also, upon the resources of his style and argument,
Cobbett showed that England was then the "land of roast beef" before being transformed by the Reformation into a "land of dry bread and oatmeal porridge"; even the bread finally had to give way to the potato, just as the invigorating mug of beer was to be replaced by the cup of tea, the mother of all vices. Not only were the pre-Reformation English better fed, better clothed and better housed, but they enjoyed greater freedom. What, in fact, were the vassalage and serfdom of the feudal régime in comparison with the lot of industrial workers "compelled to work fourteen hours a day, in a heat of eighty-four degrees; and who are liable to punishment for looking out at a window of the factory"? 13

Cobbett vehemently rejects the idea that the population figures for nineteenth-century England were higher than they had been in the Middle Ages. The opposite is true, he claims, and needs no more proof than the number and size of the churches built everywhere to accommodate the many more parishioners than the locality now possesses. 13 Abbeys, monasteries, and cathedrals bear witness to the prosperity of mediaeval England. They were built at a time when there were no poor and no poor-rates, "when every labouring man was clothed in good woollen cloth; and when all had plenty of meat and bread and beer". And that is why the construction of such buildings is impossible today. 34 Those who built them strove in exemplary fashion, "to make the country beautiful, to make it an object of pride with the people, and to make the nation truly and permanently great". 13 Modern man is filled with a sense of inferiority "upon merely beholding the remains of their efforts to ornament their country and elevate the minds of the people". If, he adds,

"in all that they have left us, we see that they surpassed us, why are we to conclude, that they did not surpass us in all other things worthy of admiration?" 13

For my part, he says again,

"I could not look up at the spire and the whole of the church at Salisbury, without feeling that I lived in degenerate times. Such a thing could never be made now." 37

Before speaking contemptuously of the "dark ages", one should compare such monuments with "that great, heavy, ugly, unmeaning mass of stone called St. Paul's". 13

This impetuous rehabilitation of the Middle Ages is quite closely linked with other themes which are, also, constantly recurring with Morris. I would like to be able to go on quoting at greater length (but it would mean departing from the line I have laid down) from Cobbett's thundering invective against Parliament and the parties wrangling over power and sinecures: these pages are masterpieces of English prose, and here the master leaves the disciple standing. Another idea frequently expressed is of more direct interest to us, because it plays an important part in Morris's utopian economy, and that is the need to have done with the middlemen and parasites. Concerning the first, the similarity is particularly striking. We will pass over generalities on the subject of

"those locusts, called middle-men, who create nothing, who add to the value of nothing, who improve nothing, but who live in idleness, and who live well, too, out of the labour of the producer and the consumer", }
But here is something more interesting, because we find clearly defined the mediaeval origin of an idea dear to Morris:

"The fair and the market, those wise institutions of our forefathers, and with regard to management of which they were so scrupulously careful . . . bring the producer and the consumer in contact with each other . . . The fair and the market bring them together, and enable them to act for their mutual interest and convenience. The shop and the trafficker keeps them apart; the shop hides from both producer and consumer the real state of matters. The fair and the market lay everything open . . ." 40

In Morris's utopia, where cash relationships no longer intrude, this human contact between producer and consumer is an important element of the new brotherhood. The denunciation of parasitism is made by Morris as sharply as by Cobbett. With the latter, it is true, it has an individual and systematic twist. The major evil is the national debt, and he uses the term "Dead Weight" for the band of parasites who live upon it, at the expense of working taxpayers. The term embraces

"twenty thousand parsons, more than twenty thousands stock-brokers and stock-jobbers perhaps; forty or fifty thousand tax gatherers; thousands upon thousands of military and naval officers in full pay", to whom are added the swarms of military pensioners and their beneficiaries. 41 It is "an accursed system that takes the food from those that raise it, and gives it to those who do nothing that is useful to man". 42 It has even brought into being dynasties of parasites, passing pensions and sinecures from father to son. 43 As Morris was to do, Cobbett links the idea of parasitism with that of ugliness and physical degeneration. What is a watering place? It is, he writes,

"a place to which East India plunderers, West India floggers, English tax-gorgers, and debauchees of all descriptions, female as well as male, resort, at the suggestion of silently laughing quacks, in the hope of getting rid of the bodily consequences of their manifold sins and iniquities. When I enter a place like this I always feel disposed to squeeze up my nose with my fingers."

44 He particularly resents the army, "that the Government pays with our money". 45 If one recalls that it then performed the functions of a repressive police force against popular movements, Cobbett's reflection goes a long way:

"... the whole amount of these poor-rates falls far short of the cost of the standing army in time of peace! So that, take away this army, which is to keep the distressed people from committing acts of violence, and you have, at once, ample means of removing all the distress and all the danger of acts of violence!" 46

Another class of parasites for whom Cobbett has a sharp tooth is the clergy, whom he vehemently reproaches for becoming rich with the tithes which were intended in the Middle Ages to help the needy and which must one day revert, along with all the property of the Church, to the community. 47 If at least, he
odds, the clergy did a useful job in devoting their enormous leisure to writing
the histories of their respective parishes, the evil would be lessened. 68

To the parasitism of the rich is added the equally artificial parasitism of the
poor. Farmers lack the means to pay day-labourers to do essential work, but
have to pay rates enabling the parish councils to employ these unemployed
labourers digging holes one day and filling them the next, or levelling roads so
that the bide of parasites stuffed with food should not be disturbed by jolting. 69
The same misuse of labour-power is represented by the construction of useless
and unproductive barracks. 70 Like Morris later, Cobbett was indignant at the
anarchy and injustice of the allocation of work.

Another aspect of the mess is the dread of the overproduction of com-
modities on the pretext that it lowers the price, when millions of workers are
too poor to acquire them. 71 But it is these same economists and "feolosofers"
who, following Malthus, fear an overpopulation of workers consuming all the
foodstuffs, when everything indicates that the national product is capable of
supporting a number three to ten times greater than the number of
producers. 72 If there is overpopulation, it is of parasites, encouraged by the
system of pensions. 73 Cobbett's indignation is expressed in terms that must
have appealed to Morris:

"To suppose such a thing possible as a Society, in which men, who are
able and willing to work, cannot support their families, and ought, with a
great part of the women, to be compelled to a life of celibacy, for fear of
having children to be starved; to suppose such a thing possible is
monstrous. But, if there be such a Society, every one will say, that it
ought instantly to be dissolved; because a state of nature would be far
preferable to it." 74

Such language must have found an echo in Morris's mind at the time when
he was seeking the antithesis of "civilization" in a social state capable of recon-
ciling "barbarism" with socialism.

The parasite overpopulation has arisen, in Cobbett's eyes, through the
monstrous growth of big cities and especially of London, the Wen. This word,
"the Wen", studs all his writing and Morris takes it up untiringly. The
Malthusians, writes Cobbett, "never say a word about the too great popula-
tion of the Wen; nor about that of Liverpool, Manchester, Cheltenham, and
the like!" 75

... formerly the people were pretty evenly spread over the country, in-
stead of being, as the greater part of them are now, collected together in
great masses, where, for the greater part, the idlers live on the labour of
the industrious. 76

The latter see the product of their labour transferred there "to fatten those
who live in these new houses". 77 The horror he feels at it makes Cobbett
prophesy:

"Depressed this Wen must be, mind, by some means or other! This must
happen at last . . . Of the million and a half people who are drawn
together here, more than a million have no business here. They have
been drawn here by unnatural causes. They must and they will be
scattered." 78
Parasitism and urban concentration have contributed to removing men from that healthy "state of nature" which existed in the Middle Ages. One of the signs of that degeneration appears in the growing acceptance of the adulteration of foodstuffs, particularly beer and bread, and Morris later outbids Cobbett in his denunciation of the use of substitutes. One is struck, too, by the similarity between their likes and dislikes. Both of them, passionately devoted to the English land and countryside, protest at the pollarding of trees. Cobbett, for example, will laud the beauty of the country between Worth and Tunbridge Wells where "nobody is so beastly as to trim trees up like the elms near the Wen". He feels the same horror as Morris at the modern craze for travel for travel's sake:

"... the facilities, which now exist of moving human bodies from place to place, are among the curses of the country, the destroyers of industry, of morals, and, of course, of happiness. It is a great error to suppose, that people are rendered stupid by remaining always in the same place."

There is another subject upon which one remarks a notable similarity of outlook, that of education. Here the influence of Cobbett is obvious. The same condemnation, perhaps less qualified than with Morris, of the public schools and universities, which produce nothing but milksops and frivolous idiots. Oxford and Cambridge are institutions devised to develop a class spirit above all else, for there one finds

"both precept and example for all that is servile towards the powerful and all that is insolent and cruel towards the weak."

The education dispensed in all the schools has the sole objective of preparing the children of the rich "to live, in some way or other, upon the labour of other people", and to inculcate into the poor "the rudiments of servility, pauperism and slavery". The teaching methods are odious. "What are called the learned languages operate as a bar to the acquirement of real learning", and, in a more general way,

"it is no small mischief to a boy, that many of the best years of his life should be devoted to the learning of what can never be of real use to any human being. His mind is necessarily rendered frivolous by the long habit of attaching importance to words instead of things; to sound instead of sense."

What seems to Cobbett to be no less serious is that the study is generally premature and takes no account of the child's natural development. It is "the spoiling of the mind by forcing on it thoughts which it is not fit to receive". It is unreasonable to try to "put old heads on young shoulders... The mind, as well as the body, requires time to come to its strength". The only way to encourage its progress is to give "to the body good and plentiful food, sweet air and abundant exercise". The first objective should be the happiness of the child, and "book learning, if it tend to militate against this, ought to be disregarded". Preceding Morris, he thinks that for him salvation lies in rejection: "It has always been observed of these schools that the most indolent and restive boys turn out to be the brightest men". Finally there is no need for schools or masters. Scolding and driving are quite useless for giving
Reading itself should not be unduly encouraged, for in excess it favours idleness and pretension. The only discipline suited to the child is to get up early and take part in manual labour in the open air. All these ideas are found again in Morris, but, while Cobbett confines himself to harsh criticism of book learning, Morris, though certainly in an inadequate and clumsy way because of the influence of his predecessor, has the merit of approaching the problem from the angle of the unity of human activity within the diversity of occupation.

It is plain that mediaevalism is only one of the aspects of Cobbett's ideology appealing to Morris. In conclusion, it does not seem inappropriate to me to consider that ideology as a whole; on the one hand because it has much in common with the ideas of other laudatores temporis acti who inspired Morris, and, on the other, because, despite evident borrowings, we shall in this way better assess all that separates the two men.

Like the Christian socialists, like Carlyle, like Ruskin, Cobbett was far from being a revolutionary. He was at once Radical and Tory, like so many social writers of the nineteenth century. Their fundamental motivation was a hatred of utilitarianism, of rapacious individualism, of laissez-faire. But they condemned these things in the name of the past and denounced Whig industrialism in the name of a traditional order. Certainly, Cobbett's Radicalism could go a long way. He applauded the French Revolution and considered that England made war on France "to prevent the disembarkation, not of Frenchmen, but of French principles." Looking more closely, Jacobinism for him nevertheless comes down to the absence of rotten boroughs and the suppression of ecclesiastical tithes. He was filled with a sincere love of the people, above all the workers in the fields, the chief victims of the National Debt and the parasite system, he waxed indignant at the contempt showered upon them and the names with which they were labelled (the Populace, the Rabble, the Mob, the Swinish Multitude), he protested against repressive police measures taken against them and the disproportionate punishments meted out to them for the crime of poaching; he saw them abandoned by those who should have been their natural support and thought somewhat fearfully, that the only hope for an adjustment in the State could come from them alone. The religious propaganda spread among them by the moneyed class could only encourage hypocrisy. It was itself hypocrisy:

"As an ailing carcass engenders vermin, a pauperized community engenders teachers of fanaticism, the very foundation of whose doctrines is, that we are to care nothing about this world, and that all our labours and exertions are in vain."  

If one wants him to live morally, "the labourer must have his belly full and be free from fear; and this belly full must come to him out of his wages, and not from benevolence of any description."  

William Morris more than once paid tribute to this sturdy materialistic conception of human progress and even found in it the justification for workers' struggles.

But that was a paraphrase probably exceeding Cobbett's intentions. His
Radicalism had serious limits. If he passionately defended the agricultural workers, he sympathised just as much with the farmers and even landed proprietors whom he tried to rally against the domination of the earth by the moneyed bourgeoisie. Much more, he respected the ancient nobility and declared that “we should lose more than we should gain by getting rid of our aristocracy”.

His social ideals remained somewhat confused. In some remarks of unexpected boldness he went so far as to say:

“... in the public property we see the suitable thing. And who can possibly object to this, except those, who, amongst them, now divide the possession or benefit of this property?”

But that was just a sort of outburst with no morrow. It seems to us that the depths of his thought were more clearly shown when he wrote:

“The land, the trees, the fruits, the herbage, the roots are, by the law of nature, the common possession of all the people... Before the Social Compact existed, there were no sufferers from helplessness. The possession of everything being in common, every man was able, by extraordinary exertion, to provide for his helpless kindred and friends by the means of those exertions... And when he agreed to allow of proprietorship, he understood, of course, that the helpless were, in case of need, to be protected and fed by the proprietors.”

Common property was, then, less for him a dream of the future than nostalgia for a “state of nature” which he agrees cannot return. But his gaze remained fixed upon a mediaeval past when feudal relationships were hierarchic and humane. Despite the thunderous roll of his invective, the reforms he proposed were remarkably moderate:

“The remedy... consists wholly and solely of such a reform in the Commons’ or People’s House of Parliament, as shall give to every payer of direct taxes a vote at the elections, and as shall cause the Members to be elected annually.”

One should not be surprised that the mountain brought forth a mouse. Obsessed by the National Debt, the source, in his eyes, of all evil, Cobbett never for one moment suspected the mechanisms of production relationships or the exploitation of labour, either in the countryside or the factory. Society, as he saw it, is divided into two classes:

“the idlers living chiefly on the taxes, in one way or another, and the industrious, who have their earnings taken from them to maintain the idlers”.

So, it will be enough to abolish the National Debt to restore social justice: a parliament elected by all tax-payers will provide for it. As for the rest, nothing is to be touched.

“We want great alterations”, proclaims Cobbett, “but we want nothing new. Alteration, modification to suit the time and circumstances; but the great principles ought to be, and must be, the same, or else confusion will follow.”
These great principles, which he hardly defines, seem to be, in his mind, those of pre-Reformation England. Despite the following he was at times able to attract, this free lance was never able to master his individualistic temperament and carry out a consistent and co-ordinated action. Enthusiastic though William Morris was about him, conscious as he was of his debt towards him, he was none the less clear about this. In his theoretical manual of socialism, he praises his "great literary capacity" and admires his having "flashes of insight as to social matters far before his time," but these flashes, he writes, were "clouded by violent irrational prejudices and prodigious egotism"; he was "a powerful disruptive agent, but incapable of association with others." 90

3. The Historians

Cobbett's example shows to what extent social thought in the nineteenth century constantly referred to history. Not only did Morris not escape this rule, but perhaps no one more than he had recourse to historical science itself. I do not think it appropriate here to study the use he made of first-hand documents in his mediaeval stories. In Margaret Greenan's remarkable book we find a penetrating analysis of the use he was able to make of ancient chronicles, Froissart's in particular, in A Dream of John Ball. 91 What seems more interesting to us is the debt he acknowledged to the historical school of the nineteenth century, from which he acquired certain important aspects of his conception of history.

His reading of historians strengthened his conviction that history was a fundamental science upon which he felt constantly dependent in his thought as in his art. From his Oxford years he had devoted himself "vigorously" 92 to its study. In 1883, at a moment when personal worries were overwhelming him and driving him to gloomy thoughts, the only merit he could find in his earlier poetic works lay in "showing my sympathy with history". 93 He declared to Sydney Cockerell that "whatever study he undertook was interesting only or mainly for the light it threw on history". 94 History literally became a part of his life:

"...what romance means is the capacity for a true conception of history, a power of making the past part of the present. I think that is a very important part of the pleasure in the exercise of the intellectual faculties of mankind which makes the most undeniable part of happiness"

And he added that any disdain of it was no proof of a practical spirit, but a degradation. 95 He rejoiced to observe "that appreciation of history which is a genuine growth of the times". 96 It had become, he wrote, "so earnest a study amongst us as to have given us, as it were, a new sense". 97

In effect, the very conception of history had been radically transformed:

"Time was, and not so long ago, when the clever essay writer (rather than historian) made his history surrounded by books whose value he weighed rather by the degree in which they conformed to an arbitrary standard of literary excellence, than by any indications they might give of being able to afford a glimpse into the past. So treated, the very books were not capable of yielding the vast stores of knowledge of history which they really possessed, if dealt with by the historical method. It is true that for the most part these books were generally written for other pur-
poses than that of giving simple information to those who came after; at
their hontest the writers were compelled to look at life through the
spectacles thrust on them by the conventional morality of their own
times; at their dishonestest, they were servile flatterers in the pay of the
powers that were.” 97

Morris is clearly objecting less to the dull rhetoric than to the misrepre-
sentations and class prejudice. He execrates “the dull gulf of lies, hypocritical
concealments and false deductions, which is called bourgeois history” 98 Such
attitudes vitiated the very approach to a study of the past:

“History . . . was once little more than a string of doubtful tales of the
bloody wars and unaccountable follies of kings and scoundrels in which
the necessary slavery of the people was taken for granted . . .” 99

Morris had another objection to this history of events, partial in both senses
of the word, which exalted the great and ignored the people; it was that it only
paid attention to such earlier civilisations as had structures and ideologies in-
spiring confidence in the established order.

“ . . . academic historians . . . were cursed with a fatal though un-
conscious dishonesty; the world of history which they pictured to
themselves was an unreal one; to them there were but two periods of con-
tinuous order, of organized life: the period of Greek and Roman classical
history was one, the time from the development of the retrospection into
that period till their own days was the other. All else to them was a mere
accidental confusion.” 100

Morris makes these criticisms in general terms, and only rarely takes up the
 cudgels against some particular historian. Among the exceptions, we will take
the case of Gibbon for whom he had, moreover, a great admiration and whom
he re-read to the end of his life.101 He holds it against him that he looked less to
the lot of the people than to the doings and deeds of “kings and scoundrels”, 102
and still more that he imagined that the society of the eighteenth century was
“eternal, or as long lived rather . . . as the world”, 103 and that it was safe from
any reversion to barbarism: the concept of barbarism was evidently, for
Morris, very different in its content from what it might be for the author of The
Decline and Fall. At bottom these various complaints expressed unyielding op-
position to the ideology of the Enlightenment and to its speculative and
abstract humanism.

In another case, in a very incidental but also very significant way, Morris
takes to task his contemporary Froude. In many respects we might say that
Froude is an anti-Cobbett, on account of his virulent hatred of Papacy and his
extreme exaltation of the Reformation. A dominant feature of his work is his
exaggerated apologia for the part played by Henry VIII; he justifies all his
mistakes and even all his tyranny, including the plundering of the monasteries
and the execution of Thomas More. A faithful disciple of Carlyle, whose
biography he was to write later, he pushes the cult of the hero to the point of
regarding the people as insignificant, giving them very little place in his picture
of the sixteenth century. That is just what Morris accuses him of when he
refers to the growing impoverishment of the peasants, driven from their lands
and hanged in thousands” by Mr. Froude’s pious hero, Henry VIII” 104
Although a contemporary, Froude represented a very different tendency from that of the Oxford School, whose work aroused Morris's admiration and inspired his utopian thinking about the Middle Ages. In 1877 he was proposing the establishment of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in the name of "the newly invented study of living history," and to the end of his life he rejoiced that in his time "history is studied so keenly through genuine original documents," thus acquiring extraordinary vitality. Since 1830, in fact, the science of history had been transformed and given new life, thanks to the publication of an enormous mass of archives, chronicles and documents:

"... history has been illuminated ... by careful research: we have counted our forefathers' pots and kettles and chairs and pictures, we know what their clothes and their houses were; we have read not only their books, but their family letters, their bills and their contracts, in short we have followed them from the church, the battlefield, and the palace to their houses and workshops and tilled fields, and we find that these men of the same blood as ourselves, speaking the same tongue, connected with us by an apparently unbroken chain of laws, traditions, and customs, were yet amazingly different from ourselves."  189

Thus was shattered to pieces the myth of eternal man, so dear to the philosophers of the Enlightenment. All these facts "ignored by the historians of the eighteenth century, have been laid open to our view by our modern school of evolutionary historians." 190 Drawing aside the curtains hiding the Middle Ages has given us back the logic and continuity of history and made it possible for us to explore the future rationally:

"... a new science grew up, almost a new sense one may say, and real living history became possible to us; not a dry string of annals, not a mere series of brilliant essays or comparisons between the past and the present; but a definite insight into the life of the bygone ages founded on a laborious and patient sifting of truth from hearsay; the story of the past I say became possible for us to read, and we began to see why we are placed as we are at present, and whitherward we are tending." 191

This new concept is due to "the researches and labours of enlightened historians in recent times, such as Hallam in the early part of the century, and, of late years, of men like Green, Freeman, and Stubbs." 192 Hallam (A View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages, 1818) played a pioneering rôle. More jurist than artist, he concentrated mainly on the history of institutions, and his sententious tone is sometimes offputting. But he had an insatiable curiosity and was not uninterested in any detail; yet he maintained a remarkable sense of synthesis. He had the considerable merit, in Morris's eyes, of drawing attention to the importance of domestic architecture. Sweeping away the legends created by a mass of romantic literature, he brought out the simplicity of customs which obtained at all levels of society, even among the feudal nobility: here, no doubt, is where one should look for the origin of Morris's idealisation of the Middle Ages where the separation of the classes of society held nothing scandalous. Finally, above all, taking Cobbett's concerns upon his own shoulders, but putting them on a scientific basis, Hallam established accurate-
ly that the consumption of meat was sensibly higher than in the nineteenth century and that the purchasing power of the mediaeval workman was much greater than that of the modern worker.

Morris's debt to Stubbs (Constitutional History of Mediaeval England, 1874-78), "the greatest historian of his time", according to G. P. Gooch, is more difficult to define. He also concentrated mainly upon the history of institutions, but, with incomparable mastery, he made it dependent upon economic, political and military conditions, with a steady regard for objectivity and reference to first-hand documents. It is an odd fact that he seems to have influenced Morris by the things that later criticism has found questionable, namely, his tendency to exaggerate the importance and the maturity of mediaeval parliamentarianism and, especially, to consider Magna Carta as a popular victory rather than that of the barons anxious to safeguard their privileges. On the other hand, Morris owes to him the fundamental notion of the survival, in the feudal institutions, of the heritage of the customs of the Germanic tribes.

This democratic Teutonism is, after all, a distinctive feature of the Oxford School and is expressed with more vigour, if not so much caution, by Freeman and Green, whom Morris seems to have consulted more than Stubbs and with whom he cites as examples of the new science of history. It is, he writes, "the school of historical criticism of our own days" that has revealed the egalitarian tendencies which were so much alive in the Middle Ages. Freeman (The History of the Norman Conquest, 1867-79) was a militant Radical, moved by a propagandist spirit. He constantly laid stress upon the popular nature of English institutions before the Conquest, and he too insisted that they survived through the Middle Ages, despite the Norman intervention, which he regretted as much as Morris; all his sympathies went to the other camp, and he draws an enthusiastic picture of Harold. He was the first English historian to appreciate the importance of an exact knowledge of the places where events happened and of the architectural remains from the past. He certainly helped to develop in Morris his native taste for closely linking geography with history even in anticipation, and his appreciation of Gothic art was expressed in terms which Morris would not have disowned.

Green's Short History of the English People (1874), is all the more important a work for having been the first of this kind and because the warmth of its style immediately made it popular. It is generally agreed that the section devoted to mediaeval history is the best and the most appreciated. For Green, more than for earlier historians and even for his contemporaries, the real hero is the people. Kings are relegated to second place, and Chaucer receives more attention than the battle of Crécy. Thanks to him, writes Gooch, "the pyramid which historians had tried to balance on its apex now rests on its base". His frank siding with the people was more attractive to Morris than Stubbs's care for impartiality and the pages devoted to the Peasants' Revolt certainly held his attention. Green is observant of all aspects of daily life and describes them with an imaginative gift which he sometimes perhaps indulged at the expense of exactitude. He shares with Freeman the taste for the geographical account, and was happily skilled in reproducing the Anglo-Saxon and mediaeval landscapes. Finally, like Freeman, he stressed the democratic nature of the ancient institutions of England.
Besides these prominent historians of the Oxford School, whose influence Morris recognised, there is another whom historiography tends to neglect and who played a considerable role in the formation of Morris’s mediaeval ideology. In 1866, Thorold Rogers had published his History of Agriculture and Prices in England and in 1884 appeared the two volumes of Six Centuries of Work and Wages. This Oxford professor was a courageous Liberal whom Morris found at his side at the time of the affair of the Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria and in the struggle against the Sudanese War. It is probable that the high esteem in which he was held by Karl Marx, who approvingly quotes his theses in Capital, increased Morris’s interest in his works. We note in this connection that, before the 1914–18 war, these were generally included among the books socialists regarded as essential to their political education.

The influence of Thorold Rogers was exerted upon William Morris in three ways. The author of A Dream of John Ball found in this historian a copious documentation of the great Peasants’ Revolt. Morris was even led into error by him about the motives of the movement. More recent criticism has proved that there could have been no question of the re-establishment of serfdom on the part of the feudal class, but this mistake led Morris to give a view of the succession of social structures which was certainly too schematic, but more striking and artistically satisfying. In the second place, Rogers appears to have been the first historian to bring out the elements of that “religious socialism” which informed the propaganda of the disciples of Wiclf, and in this way he certainly encouraged Morris to make of John Ball a sort of ideological ancestor, and, more generally, to formulate his theory of a mediaeval communism in a latent state. Finally, and his merit here is incontestable, Thorold Rogers, inspired by Cobbett and Hallam, established a detailed and scientific record of wages and prices through the mediaeval centuries and was thus able to establish that the workers of the Middle Ages had enjoyed a situation of “coarse plenty”: “all the necessities of life in ordinary years were abundant and cheap”. Their lot was far superior to that of Victorian workers, “whose condition is more destitute, whose homes are more squalid, whose means are more uncertain, whose prospects are more hopeless than those of the poorest serfs of the middle ages and the meanest drudges of the mediaeval cities”. Morris had long felt all that Rogers’ precise analysis had revealed. This confirmation was precious. Speaking of the mediaeval artisan at an annual conference of the S.P.A.B., he exclaims:

“We who have studied the remains of his handicraft have been, without any further research, long instinctively sure that he was no priest-ridden, down-trodden savage, but a thoughtful and vigorous man, and in some sense, at least, free. That instinct has been abundantly confirmed by painstaking collectors of facts, like Mr. Thorold Rogers, and we now know that the guild craftsman led the sort of life in work and play that we should have expected from the art he produced . . . for art, as Mr. Thorold Rogers justly says, was widespread.”

4. Christian Socialism

The need for a certain thematic logicality has led me to take a small liberty with chronology. We must now turn back and pass through the
critical sieve all that might remain, at the moment of creation of utopia, of the ideological influences experienced at Oxford. It seems superfluous to linger over a study of the Christian socialism of Maurice and Kingsley. Their influence, certainly that of the latter, was definitely important during the years of youth. Morris willingly recognises it, but he indicates that he owes to these readings "some socio-political ideas which would have developed probably but for the attractions of art and poetry". Which is saying that, twenty-five years later, when he came to public life, this influence had had time to become blurred and be replaced by others. May Morris tells us, too, that while he had once been attracted by Kingsley's writings he came later to detest "the false sentiment and the strained tragedy of him". In the course of his conversations with Sydney Cockerell, Morris once declared that his interest in the Christian socialist movement had, after all, only been, like his interest in Pusey's movement, "a reaction against Puritanism". That is a judicious assessment, which we should not disregard, but it is certainly incomplete, because even if it had no immediate effect, the reading of Maurice and Kingsley revealed to the young student the problem set by the conditions of the workers.

Morris scarcely seems afterwards to have maintained the smallest attachment in this direction and we are a little surprised to see him, in 1883, correspond with C. E. Maurice, the son of Frederick Denison, whom he vainly tried to recruit to the Democratic Federation. We do not know the nature of their relationship, which does not appear to have been kept up after this fruitless attempt. In the field of ideas, what remains of this youthful contact? Really very little, I believe. Morris, so interested in co-operative solutions, never makes the slightest reference to the abortive utopian experiments undertaken by the Christian socialists, which, nevertheless, must have inspired that of Ruskin, when he founded his St. George's Guild. Perhaps, on the other hand, there is in Morris a memory of a certain vocabulary relating to the unity of Heaven and Earth and human fellowship to be found in A Dream of John Ball. Above all there remains the respect which he retained for the good faith and disinterest of the representatives of this ideology. This sentiment is certainly in line with his rejection of all sectarianism towards religion, and, at the limit, it could be the origin of his idea of the absorption of Christian values into the materialistic morality of utopian society. In the political field, on the other hand, Morris makes a clean break with the Christian socialists as with all his other forerunners and sources of inspiration, rejecting their Tory Radicalism which bases social progress upon the goodwill of an aristocracy whose authority is justified by birth.

For the rest, it is quite certain that one finds scattered through Kingsley's abundant works ideas that recur with Morris: denunciation of the division of labour, the need to restore the unity of town and country, etc. But had Morris read these pages and did he not find the same ideas in other thinkers who were much more familiar to him? However, on one precise point Kingsley's paternity is undeniable: it is the use of the expression "cheap and nasty", which Morris borrowed from the
well-known pamphlet *Cheap Clothes and Nasty*, in which the author of *Alton Locke* pilloried the exploitation of home tailors. For Morris, the words describe the shoddy stuff of the poor which, together with the costly trivialities made for the rich, will finally disappear from production in communist society. But if Morris made an original use of this borrowing, he was not alone in so doing. The expression had become so commonplace in the nineteenth-century literature that one may even wonder whether it was a direct borrowing.

5. Carlyle

The preaching of the Christian socialists was largely inspired by the message of Carlyle, which Morris also had encountered with enthusiasm during the Oxford years. If he had quickly lost sight of the former, he had, on the contrary, followed with interest the writings of the prophet of Chelsea and continued to show a certain attachment to him. It is customary in most studies to establish a spiritual descent Carlyle-Ruskin-Morris. I shall respect the custom during my analysis, while introducing reservations to which textual study has brought me.

It does not appear that Morris ever met Carlyle, and we do not know what the latter thought of him. Ruskin must certainly have spoken to the Master about the merits of the poet, since he offered him a dedicated copy of *The Earthly Paradise* that can still be seen at Carlyle House in Cheyne Walk. There was however, one circumstance, which oddly, and in an indirect way, put the two men in touch. When, in 1877, Morris founded the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, he was insistent that Carlyle should be one of the sponsors, and we catch him red-handed, compromising, for the only time in his life, I believe. He who hated the architecture of the classical period, who detested Wren and St. Paul's Cathedral, agreed, in order to inveigle Carlyle, to carry on a campaign against the destruction of the City churches built by Wren. Not only did he allow his friend De Morgan to negotiate the matter in these terms, but he wrote to the press and spoke at the first meeting of the "Anti-Scrape", lauding the genius of Wren, "the greatest English architect". This was really going a very long way, and shows the respect which Morris still felt for Carlyle at the time.

Which of his works (which he mentions among his favourite reading) did he know? In 1853, he was reading *Past and Present*, then considered by the young students of his circle "as inspired and absolute truth". In 1856, he founded *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, which flourished for a whole year and contains various articles (written, incidentally, not by him but by his collaborators) dealing both with Chartism and Sartor Resartus. Later he praised the excellent art and power of expression of the latter book which set it above many others, notably, the *History of Frederick II of Prussia*, which he found extremely dull. We know from the memoirs of Cornell Price quoted by Lady Burne-Jones in her *Memorials* that in 1855 he had read *The French Revolution*. To tell the truth, Morris makes only one reference to it, in the theoretical treatise drawn up by himself and Bax in collaboration, and that brief phrase might well have been written by the latter rather than by him. While he might believe with Carlyle that the lot of the workers had improved under the *Terror*
thanks to the law of maximum, he would not have thought their law better than it had ever been before; that would have been a denial of his whole mediaevalist faith. Had he read Heroes and Hero-Worship? It is possible, since he constantly jeers at the cult of the hero, but as the theme constantly recurs in all Carlyle’s work, it is by no means certain. Finally, we know that in 1881, after the great man’s death, he read the Reminiscences and, in 1882, the biography Froude devoted to him; and that it interested him “in spite of Froude.” For the other works, we are reduced to conjecture.

From a close examination of all these writings, several conclusions derive which I find it convenient to state without further delay, however clumsy the procedure may appear. First, that the essence of the influence exerted by Carlyle upon Morris was of a critical order: it was in Past and Present that our poet first encountered the denunciation of bourgeois society. Also, in the same book he found a clear picture of mediaeval society based upon the consideration of human relationships. On the other hand, neither in Past and Present nor in any other of Carlyle’s works is there any definite proposition which could have inspired Morris’s utopia. Very much to the contrary; Morris’s humanism was plainly and flatly opposed to Carlyle’s ideas.

The social criticism of the Scottish prophet deserves our brief consideration, despite the limitations I have imposed upon myself. In fact it was decisive, not only as the starting point of Morris’s political thought but also as the motive force of all social thought in nineteenth-century England. For depth of analysis, however, there is nothing remarkable about it; in fact its shallowness is surprising. His merit lies in having found, in striking style, formulations which straightway gripped the imaginations of his contemporaries, and their rumbling repetition was obsessive. The central theme, that of the “cash nexus”, payment in cash as the sole link between men in a society devoted to the worship of Mammon, is too well known for us to have need for quotations. It rang through all the literature of the last century and one even finds it in The Communist Manifesto, despite the bitter criticism of Carlyle and feudal socialism which Marx and Engels made there. This theme is constantly linked to the denunciation of the economic dogmas of supply and demand and laisser-faire, dear to the Manchester School, and of their political expression in parliamentary Whiggism. Morris saw in Carlyle and Ruskin the first two great champions in the fight against “the measureless power of Whiggery” and recognised in them the guides who rallied him to the fight. However, let us note that in these tirades against laisser-faire Carlyle is already showing the cloven hoof when he thinks that this official doctrine is “as good as an abdication on the part of the governors” and that it constitutes “an admission that they are henceforth incompetent to govern, that they are not there to govern at all”. The attack against economic liberalism is launched not in the name of public interest, but in that of an authoritarianism whose form we shall examine further on. This liberalism is an unworthy anarchy setting overproduction against poverty: “millions of shirts, and empty pairs of breeches, hang there in judgment against you.”

Carlyle characterises this tragic contradiction by making use of the myth of Midas:

“With unabated bounty the land of England blooms and grows, wav-
ing with yellow harvests, thick-studded with workshops, industrial implements, with fifteen millions of workers, understood to be the strongest, the cunningest and the willingest our Earth ever had: these men are here; the work they have done, the fruit they have realised is here, abundant, exuberant on every hand of us: and behold, some baleful fiat as of Enchantment has gone forth, saying, "Touch it not, ye workers, ye master-workers, ye master-idlers; none of you can touch it, no man of you shall be the better for it, this is enchanted fruit!" 139

The memory of this allegory must have been lingering with Morris when he wrote:

"The world had to learn another lesson; it had to gain power, and not be able to use it; to gain riches, and to starve upon them like Midas on his gold . . . in a word, to be so eager to gather the results of the deeds of the life of man that it must forget the life of man itself." 140

Nevertheless, Carlyle's accounts of working-class poverty are very sketchy. One has a strong feeling that knowledge of the industrial proletariat is a long way off, and there is a striking contrast between these powerful but vague tirades and the extraordinary documentation that Engels was publishing in the same years. We must recognise that we are dealing with a visionary genius, capable of converting an odd news item into as shattering a parable as that of the Irish Widow. 141 But let us be on our guard all the same: Carlyle's preoccupation is much less social than moral. It is that of a Calvinistic bourgeois who does not know what it is to be hungry and who deplores the sight of poverty which he observes to be conducive to a sordid materialism: "We plead and speak, in our Parliaments and elsewhere, not as from the Soul, but from the Stomach", and if we demand free trade, he writes, it is only "that the poorer classes, who are terribly ill-off at present, may have cheaper New-Orleans bacon". 142 The social evil in this poverty is not exclusively material:

"It is not to die, or even to die of hunger, that makes a man wretched; many men have died; all men must die – the last exit of us all is in a Fire-Chariot of Pain. But it is to live miserable we know not why." 143

What man needs is to recover the meaning of life within moral and divine law. Such an attitude, shared by Ruskin, would be inconceivable for Morris. Rather than this phariseeism he prefers the solid good sense of Cobbett who sees no human progress except for a mankind that is well fed, well clothed and well housed.

However, this typical Victorian had the merit, in Morris's eyes, of having throughout his works stigmatised the hypocrisy of his own class. In the respectful tone which he still employed in his pre-Marxist years, our poet said in 1880:

"Mr. Thomas Carlyle, who still lives to be the glory of England, has warned you off shams and poured his scorn on cant many a time." 144

It is noteworthy, in this connection, that Carlyle's fiercest attacks were directed against false religion: his allegory of the Dead Sea Monkeys is
unforgettable. The universe is for him "a cockney nightmare" and Morris clearly hopes that this definition will cease to be current in the new world of his utopia. All these faults, all this degeneracy, are the results of mad materialistic selfishness. The human race has ceased to be a great organic unit. It is fragmented into individuals between whom the division has become such that any communication is impossible:

"Encased each as in his transparent 'ice-palace'; our brother visible in his, making signals and gesticulations to us - visible but forever unattainable: on his bosom we shall never rest, nor he on ours. It was not a God that did this; no!"  

Carlyle's God is denied by the industrial age, which destroys the natural contacts existing between men in feudal times:

"all human dues and reciprocities have been fully changed into one great due of cash payment".

Certainly, all these dues and reciprocities were not, in the Middle Ages, founded upon equality; quite the contrary. But it was this hierarchical order of human relationships which, for Carlyle, constituted natural and divine law. It was this order which assured for each individual the entire solidarity of his neighbour:

"Gurth, born thrall of Cedric, it is like, got cuffs as often as pork-parings, if he misdemeaned himself; but Gurth did belong to Cedric; no human creature then went about connected with nobody";

and this feudal aristocracy carried out, in return "whatsoever in the way of governing, of guiding and protecting could be done". Constantly using the device of contrast, dear to his contemporaries, and which Morris used in his turn to set the future against the present as the present against the past, Carlyle compares the merits of "the hard, organic but limited feudal ages" with the feebleness of "the immense industrial ages, as yet all inorganic, and in a quite pulpy condition, requiring desperately to harden themselves into some organism".

In *Past and Present* he sets out to reconstitute for us an exemplary picture of the monastic community of St. Edmundsbury in the twelfth century. To this end he makes use of the chronicle written in Latin by one of monks, Jocelin of Brakelond, which the Camden Society had published in 1840. But, refusing to be held within the confines of dry pedantic erudition, he attempts to show us "men of flesh and blood, made altogether as we are". The resulting analysis is as primitive as that which he applies to the contemporary era, but this part of the book is filled with a lyrical glow to which one can understand Morris's response. The Abbey houses the remains of St. Edmund, a great landowner who lived simply and was "a recognised Farmer's Friend". After the disastrous rule of Abbot Hugo, the monk Samson is chosen by his peers to take over control of the sanctuary. He restores the tottering finances and, through his authority, justness and ability, obtains the obedience and love of all the populace dependent on him.

"Yesterday a poor mendicant, allowed to possess not above two
shillings of money . . . this man today finds himself a Dominey Abbas, mitred Peer of Parliament, Lord of manorhouses, farms, manors and wide lands. 130

He is a hero after Carlyle’s heart. To defend the interests of an orphan heiress, he does not hesitate to stand up to Richard Coeur de Lion, who yields, impressed by his manliness, and grants him his friendship. 146 He is a leader and protector and is, in addition, a great builder, of religious edifices as well as of houses and barns. 156 The life of men working in those days was rough, but

“in no time . . . was the lot of those same dumb millions of toilers so entirely unbearable as it is even in the days now passing over us”. 136

A man like Samson certainly lived in the world among the men dependent upon him, but this was part of his faith and of their religion. That was taken for granted, and had no need of long hypocritical speeches.

“Religion is not a diseased self-introspection, an agonising enquiry . . . Religion lies over them like an all-embracing heavenly canopy, like an atmosphere and life element, which is not spoken of, which in all things is presupposed without speech.” 157

Such was the natural and divine order, which we had to recover. Carlyle proposes, upon the basis of the past, to “illustrate the present and the future”. 158 But this past must have its real face restored.

“To predict the future, to manage the present, would not be so impossible, had not the past been so sacrilegiously mishandled; effaced, and what is worse, defaced!” 159

Let man return to the law of God and of Nature, and “their acted history will than again be a heroism; their written history, what it once was, an epic”. 160 In any case we cannot go on living as we do at present.

“There must be a new world, if there is to be any world at all . . . These days of universal death must be days of universal newbirth, if the ruin is not to be total and final! It is a Time to make the dullest man consider; and ask himself, Whence he came? Whither is he bound?” 160

This idea of a renaissance runs right through Carlyle’s works and appears in Sartor Resartus with the myth of the Phoenix. So the question of utopia is posed, although the answer is not clear. The prophet admits: “I have got no Morrison’s pill for curing the maladies of Society”, other than a return to nature. 164 The road to this transformation will not be “by smooth flowery paths”, but will have to cross

“steep untrodden places, through stormclad chasms, waste oceans, and the bosom of tornadoes; thank Heaven, if not through very Chaos and Abyss!” 164

Where is this apocalyptic vision leading? Carlyle has great difficulty in telling us: “the ray of prophecy, at a short distance, expires”; “to shape the whole future is not our problem”; “the general issue will, as it has always done, rest well with a Higher Intelligence than ours”. 164 When he agrees to suggest
measures designed to ameliorate working-class poverty, they are measures of sanitation, education and, above all, emigration. This last solution was to have a degree of success during the nineteenth century, and one imagines that it did not come up against any official hostility. If the workers take to it, writes Morris indignantly "their desertion will surely put off the Revolution..." and if the bourgeoisie look upon it with so much favour, it is "to get rid temporarily of their responsibility and trouble over the people thrown out of work by the system of artificial famine".

It is very rare for Carlyle to consider practical solutions. That is not at all his real concern. For him the essential is the restoration of authority and the cult of the hero; it is from that starting point that any regeneration becomes possible, and the people have no other rôle than to listen and to obey:

"Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here", and "the most significant feature in the history of an epoch is the manner it has of welcoming a Great Man". There is no book of Carlyle's in which such phrases are not to be found. What, then, of his enthusiasm for the Middle Ages and what is the motive for this enthusiasm? It is, simply, that then "the bravest men, who...are also on the whole the wisest, the strongest, every way best, had...been got selected", and the example of the monk Samson shows that "a most 'practical' hero-worship went on, unconsciously or half-consciously, everywhere". Such a view of the Middle Ages held nothing in common with Morris's. While he had been attracted by the conception of a society based upon human relationships, he could not follow Carlyle along this other road, and his interest was first and foremost to find in the ways and institutions of bygone centuries the survival of a brotherly, egalitarian community. The very idea of the cult of the hero seemed odious and ridiculous to him: democracy (and here he meant bourgeois democracy)

"will never be free from this hero-worship, and all the traps which the heroes (poor devils!) wittingly and unwittingly lead their worshippers into".

In his eyes, all forms of this cult were ludicrous and the "aristocracy of talent", to which Carlyle devoted a whole chapter of Past and Present, provoked his contemptuous merriment.

One can imagine what Morris's feelings might have been, seeing Carlyle develop his theory to its end. The latter begins by defending, in the name of an avowed conservatism ("all great peoples are conservative"), hereditary aristocracy linked with land ownership: by virtue of this ownership, it is "bound to furnish guidance and governance to England!". Unfortunately it has become a "phantasm". The "Owners of the Soil of England" are nothing more than an "Idle Aristocracy", good only for collecting rents and shooting partridges, presenting a spectacle before which, says Carlyle "we stand speechless, stupend, and know not what to say". It is time for this class "to find its duties and do them". The prophet threatens them with the thunderbolts of the French Revolution and the Meudon tanneries of human skin. The dead wood must be trimmed out and the aristocracy given back
its sense of obligation so that it can "learn what wretches feel, and how to cure it!". By right, power belongs to it, but this power must be shared with the clergy, and of these two classes "there can be no doubt that the priest class is the more dignified":

"Europe requires a real aristocracy, a real priesthood, or it cannot continue to exist. Aristocracy and priesthood, a governing class and a teaching class, these two, sometimes separate, and endeavouring to harmonise themselves, sometime conjoined as one, and the king a pontiff-king." 182

This quasi-theocratic régime is founded upon a hierarchy imposed by the laws of nature:

"True enough, man is forever the 'born thrall' of certain men, born master of certain other men, born equal of certain others, let him acknowledge the fact or not. It is unblessed for him when he cannot acknowledge this fact; he is in the chaotic state, ready to perish, until he do get the fact acknowledged ..." 183

One has a strong feeling, however, that Carlyle, despite the strength of his convictions, has little hope of seeing the nobility mend its ways and accept the responsibilities of its position. With no fear of self-contradiction, he then turns to industry. Having very little sensitivity to the ugliness which horrified his contemporaries, he was bewitched by the immense progress in factory production and, in Chartist, he praised Arkwright and his mechanical inventions, the steam engine and even the beauty of Manchester. 184 In the factory owner he perceives "insight, courage, hard energy". These are aristocratic qualities; there are "Master-Workers who are not vulgar men; who are Nobles, and begin to feel that they must act as such". At present they are "England's hope", 185 and he exhorts them to accede completely to nobility:

"It is you I call; for ye are not dead, ye are already half-alive: there is in you a sleepless, dauntless energy, the prime-matter of all nobleness in man ... ye know at least this, that the mandate of God to his creature man is: Work!" 186

They constitute the last resort: "if there be no nobleness in them, there will never be an aristocracy more". 187 What has become inevitable is "an actual new sovereignty, industrial aristocracy, real not imaginary aristocracy". 188 It will constitute the "Chivalry of Labour", that of "Captains of Industry". 189 Obviously this new aristocracy will have to contribute something of its own, and above all, says Carlyle very seriously, "must understand that money alone is not the representative either of man's success in the world, or of man's duties to man". 190 It will suffice to convince it that "Mammonism is not the essence of his or of my station in God's universe". 191 The Captains of Industry will give proof of their nobility by reducing workers to obedience, by inculcating in them "order, just subordination, noble loyalty in return for noble guidance", and by making them into "a firm regimented mass". 192 And so will be resolved the silly old quarrels between Capital and Labour: their reconciliation will "put away the Evil Spirit" and both will strive together for "the guidance of a Good Spirit". 193 This idyllic atmosphere having been achieved, Carlyle even
wonders (timidly, it is true) whether, in a more or less distant future, the employer might not be able to grant his workers some interest in his business. Good

But, as the years went by, Carlyle became sour. The revolutions of 1848 scared him; henceforth the stress was laid upon bringing the working class to heel and upon its regimentation. The "universal vital Problem" is to prevent the workers becoming "banditti, street-barricaders — destroyers of every Government". It is necessary to transform "Pauper Banditti into Soldiers of Industry". Once this regimentation has begun, the workers themselves will recognize its benefits and beg their employers to regiment them further until, finally, "there be no unregimented worker ... any more". And there is the culmination of Carlyle's social thinking. As Jean Freville so aptly remarks: "the denouncer of capitalism becomes its apologist. He has struggled only to strengthen it, to infuse new blood into it, to teach it energy and harshness." In his last stage he reduced to mildness the criticism made by Marx and Engels of "feudal Socialism; half lamentation, half lampoon, half echo of the past, half menace of the future", but the authors of the Manifesto had not missed the mark when they wrote of the champions of feudal socialism that "what they upbraid the bourgeoisie with is not so much that it creates a proletariat, as that it creates a revolutionary proletariat".

There is hardly any need to say that the whole of this aspect of Carlyle's ideology is the complete antithesis of William Morris's political and utopian thinking. On a closer examination, this opposition has its roots in the fundamental difference between Morris's and Carlyle's conceptions of work and happiness. For the latter, it remains theological: work is punishment for original sin. Certainly he praises it, but in what terms!

"All work, even cotton-spinning, is noble; work is alone noble... And in like manner too, all dignity is painful; a life of ease is not for any man, nor for any god ... Our highest religion is named the 'Worship of Sorrow'. For the son of man there is no noble crown, well worn or even ill worn, but a crown of thorns." For Carlyle all work is an act of religious submission: "sweat of the brow, and up from that to sweat of the brain, sweat of the heart ... up to that 'Agony of bloody sweat', which all men have called divine." In this ascetic ideology, where is there room for any urge to work? "The wages of every noble work," replies Carlyle, "do yet lie in Heaven or else nowhere"; difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death are the allurements that act on the heart of man. Does that leave room for surprise that his social thinking should lead to constraint and regimentation? Was William Morris not thinking of Carlyle when he wrote:

"It has become an article of the creed of modern morality that all labour is good in itself — a convenient belief for those who live on the labour of others"?

It is precisely because today a curse lies upon work that Morris wishes, in his utopia, to transform its nature radically and make it the source of all human happiness. The reward for work, he says, will be the work itself.

So there seems to me to be little justification for regarding Carlyle as an in-
spirit of Morris's utopia. Certainly his social criticism, bristling with striking phrases, had an indisputable influence upon Morris, and we can say of it what Marx and Engels said of feudal socialism: "its bitter, witty and incisive criticism, striking the bourgeoisie to the very heart's core".

His denunciation of Victorian hypocrisy was also for Morris very satisfying moral provender. But these were points of departure, from which their roads diverged. When Carlyle died in 1881, our poet felt a loss, although he considered that his work was long since finished. Full of indulgence and conscious of his original debt, he considered that he was, after all, "on the right side, in spite of all faults". But it is quite certain that, apart even from his cult of the hero and all that derived from it politically, Morris had difficulty in accepting "the ferocity of his gloom" in which he saw, purely and simply, evidence of a chronic liver complaint. He detested puritanism and must have felt but little interest in his theological and transcendentalistic effusions. Not only Carlyle's conception of work, but also his indifference towards art were calculated to alienate his sympathy. No doubt his Teutonism fitted in with Morris's personal inclinations but the content of this feeling differed greatly from one to the other; one exalted Nordic strength, the other Nordic democracy.

Perhaps Morris never expressed better the impression which reading Carlyle left with him than in this remark recorded by Yeats: "Somebody should have been beside Carlyle and punched his head every five minutes." This reading, I repeat, must be regarded as a starting point, a kind of stimulus. the shock of which was strong enough to be gratefully remembered by Morris for the rest of his life. But it would be going too far to try to make more of it. This conclusion seems to me to be confirmed by scrutiny of two texts. Recalling the influences which bore upon him in his earlier years, Morris cites Carlyle and Ruskin; but he straightaway launches upon an enthusiastic evocation of the latter, without adding the smallest comment to his mention of the former. Further, in a letter of 1882, he said of Ruskin that he was "the first comer, the inventor", which eliminates Carlyle, who was, nevertheless, chronologically earlier.

6. Ruskin

The lasting attachment Morris displayed towards Carlyle is a shade surprising, despite its detached and reticent nature. There is a strong temptation to seek the reason for it in the greater influence exerted upon him by John Ruskin. The latter worshipped the prophet of Chelsea all his life, in a filial respectful sort of way. He wrote that he owed everything to him and, he added, I have "read (him) so constantly, that, without wilfully setting myself to imitate him, I find myself perpetually falling into his modes of expression ... I find Carlyle's stronger thinking colouring mine continually".

Not without a certain irony, John D. Rosenberg goes further and observes that "if Turner taught Ruskin how to see, Carlyle taught him how to preach". Perhaps Ruskin would have achieved the preaching tone on his own, but there is no doubt that so impressive a use of the Gospels and the Prophets offered a precedent and model that he could not disregard. It is not
too much to add that this tone can sometimes be detected, watered down and laicised, in Morris's early lectures.

If our poet, in all probability, allowed the influence of Ruskin to impose a principle of fidelity to Carlyle, the same influence appears to have kept him away from another inspiration to which he would probably have responded, that of Pugin. The publication of Contrasts in 1836 had been an event. It was a declaration of war against the architecture and the civilisation of the nineteenth century, with its ugliness and impiety thrown into graphic relief by the praising of Gothic monuments. But with the fanatical zeal of a new convert, Pugin identified the Gothic revival with a return to the Catholic faith. That was enough to arouse the anger and aversion of Ruskin, long imprisoned in narrow, sectarian Protestantism. It is obvious that many an "anti-Romanist" passage in The Stones of Venice is a violent attack upon Pugin's aesthetic and religious ideology. From the same source also comes the persistent tendency to look for anti-papist elements in mediaeval art. With a vigour that is perhaps not without some bad faith, Ruskin asserts that he owes absolutely nothing to Pugin. The assertion certainly leaves room for discussion; however, our object here is to study Morris's sources, not those of Ruskin. The former had no inclination to become involved in religious squabbles that aroused no echo within him. His admiration for the art of the Middle Ages would scarcely have been reconciled with Catholic and theocratic proselytism and more readily joined forces with Ruskin's enthusiasm, inspired with more human and deeper feelings, even if they were soaked in a biblical spirituality. Let us not forget either, that, on Morris's own admission, it was reading Ruskin's books that snatched him from the Anglo-Catholicism which had so greatly attracted him in his student days. He no doubt found it repellent to see Pugin applying ecclesiastical norms to all his architectural achievements. These achievements were, in themselves, antipathetic: it seemed absurd to him to create Gothic (and what Gothic!) in the conditions of the nineteenth century, copying and re-inventing forms in the absence of the survival of any creative urge in the Victorian worker. They provoked his scornful irony on the only two occasions in all of his works when he makes any reference to Pugin. If it is true, as several writers claim, that one can observe certain aesthetic and ideological resemblances between the two men, it would be dangerous to look for direct influence. Morris followed Ruskin in his aloof attitude towards Pugin. If there is an effective influence, it can only be through Ruskin himself, who, albeit grudgingly, turned over and embroidered in his writings general ideas which were in any event already more or less based upon the general body of mediaevalist ideology of the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, it was this elaboration in depth which provided Morris with the basic matter for his thinking up to 1883, before it underwent the modifications necessitated by the assimilation of Marxist thought.

If Morris never had any direct contact with Carlyle, with Ruskin, on the other hand, he had a lasting friendly relationship from 1856, and there were even closer links between Ruskin and Burne-Jones. The latter recounts in ecstatic
terms the enthusiasm then felt by the two young men. Ruskin encouraged their early artistic careers, he promised (without being able to keep his word) to collaborate in *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, and held Morris's talents as an illuminator in high esteem. In the following year he visited the group which was painting the short-lived murals in the Oxford Union. Later, he admired Morris's poems and, after the publication of *Jason*, did not hesitate to compare him with Keats, praising in both of them truth that is "vital, not formal"; a typical formula which recurred for some time in Morris's writing. We find evidence of various visits and meetings between the two writers, and the tone of their conversations seems to have been filled with easy cordiality. When, in 1877, Morris gave his first public lecture, he excused himself for repeating what had been said so well before by his "friend, Professor John Ruskin". That was the year of the foundation of *Anti-Scape*. Not only did Ruskin agree to be a member of the committee, but Morris credited him with being the father of the movement and asked his permission to include in the manifesto a fragment of *Seven Lamps of Architecture* relevant to the sacrilegious "restoration" of ancient monuments. He had the master's support and signature for the petitions organised by the Society, notably in 1881, when it protested against the widening of Magdalen Bridge in Oxford, and, in 1889, he was still invoking his authority at the annual general meeting. This flow of friendship was not only in one direction, and in 1878, on the occasion of the famous lawsuit brought by Whistler, Morris expressed his support for Ruskin, support less direct and more cautious than that of Burne-Jones, but which gained the poet a warm letter of gratitude. He was happy to be able to do him a service; so, at his request, he gave him detailed information about the technique of stained glass, as he practised it at Merton Abbey.

However, it seems, and it is a fact of which we should take note, that these direct contacts came to an end after 1883. One striking event for Morris of that year, during which he experienced the revelation of Marxism, was the lecture he gave in Oxford on *Art under Plutocracy*, with Ruskin in the chair, and which provoked an uproar. It was the first in which Ruskin's aesthetic and human message was closely linked with his own socialist convictions. The attitude of the latter, during the lecture, is not really known to us. According to a late and rather indefinite piece of evidence, he appears to have behaved with great tact and to let it appear, in the face of the attacks directed against Morris, that he was in agreement with him. He spoke of his lecture again, a year later, in *The Art of England*, but his comments are somewhat odd and he does not appear to have had the slightest idea of what the speaker was aiming at. He was content to follow his own line of thought and to attribute to Morris intentions quite alien to him. I shall return to the point later. The fact is that, during the following years, we find no further trace of any meeting or correspondence between the two men. Certainly, the deterioration in Ruskin's health and his intermittent mental unbalance would be an explanation. However it does not seem enough. It is striking, in fact, that Morris does not seem to have read or wanted to read the books which the master published after 1862, in which his expressions of political thought became more and more confused. One has a very clear impression that he wished to remain true to the message of Ruskin's great years and had the unexpressed feeling that it
was preferable not to ruin a friendship and an enthusiasm which later contact would risk changing.

And so they kept their mutual esteem intact. On 6 April 1887, Sydney Cockerell visited Ruskin, who told him that Morris was “beaten gold” and, again, “a great rock with a little moss on it perhaps” and one does not know quite what to make of that last simile. He told him that his “love of Turner, primroses and little girls had prevented his ever being Morris’s close friend, but he had a great reverence for him and for his views”.

On 15 April 1892, Cockerell paid another visit. The Kelmscott Press had just published The Nature of Gothic, and a copy, with an affectionate inscription from Morris, lay on Ruskin’s table. He told his visitor what pleasure it had given him and declared that Morris was “the ablest man of his time”. The poet, told two days later of this appreciation, was overjoyed, and that evening, dining with Emery Walker, “ordered up a bottle of his favourite Imperial Tokay for the proper celebration of so great a compliment”. 232

This late date shows clearly that Morris’s personal feelings for Ruskin remained just as fervent, 233 despite or perhaps because of this physical separation (but was it only physical?). He always remained responsive to the magic of Ruskin’s style and he considered that the passage in The Nature of Gothic where Ruskin gives a bird’s-eye description of the lands of the north and the south was to be reckoned among “the finest writing in the English language”. 234 His early lectures overflowed with admiration for “his unequalled style” and “his wonderful eloquence”. 235 One feels him to be, during these pre-Marxist years, entirely under the spell of his master, and he humbly declares himself to be content “to be echoing his words”. 236 In the famous 1883 lecture, to which I referred and which marks a decisive turning point, he recalls Ruskin’s ideas on art, expressing man’s joy in work, and adds:

“If those are not Professor Ruskin’s words they embody at least his teaching on this subject.” 237

Nevertheless, it was the last occasion upon which Morris was content to be just an interpreter and message-bearer.

This attention I am paying to dates by no means stems from a gratuitous preoccupation with erudition. Ruskin’s influence upon Morris was not only undeniable, but lasting. But it is still appropriate to define its limits. While one can distinguish certain constant factors in Ruskin’s thought, it is none the less true that contradictions abound and even multiply as his work becomes more abstruse, more confused and (we must not be afraid to say it) more rambling. Morris clearly made a choice, and I think that nothing will better help us to define its nature than a close examination of the readings to which he refers himself or that are indicated by his contemporaries and biographers.

We learn from Canon Dixon’s memories, recorded by Mackail, that in 1864 Burne-Jones and Morris, then students at Exeter College, read The Seven Lamps of Architecture, the first volumes of Modern Painters and the Stones of Venice for the first time and with passionate enthusiasm. It appears, in fact, that they had been acquainted with at least the last two of these works since 1853. 238 Their admiration for Modern Painters seems to have been, at that time, mainly literary and aesthetic, since Morris chose especially to read aloud to his friends the descriptions of the Slave-ship and Turner’s skies. 239 One may nevertheless
suppose that, from that time, his love of nature not only found sustenance there, but also the embryo of thought close to Ruskin's. He himself does not refer to the *Seven Lamps* until 1877, as we have seen, when he claimed Ruskin's authority as he joined battle with the "restorers"; but it is clear that he must have been struck by the insistence upon the rôle and significance of architecture. If he speaks relatively little of this book, it is because the ideas were taken up again in *The Stones of Venice*, to which it forms a prelude, with infinitely more breadth and brilliance.

Obviously it is there that the essence of Ruskin's influence is to be sought. Morris never ceased recalling the "deep impression" 240 that these three volumes, in particular chapter IV of Volume II, *The Nature of Gothic*, made upon him. This is the chapter to which he constantly refers in his early lectures. These are "the truest and the most eloquent words that can possibly be said on the subject". 241 "Words more clear and eloquent than any man else now living could use". 242 His enthusiasm remained just as fervent afterwards. He saw in the conception of mediaeval art unfolded in this chapter "a marvellous inspiration of genius". 243 Finally, in 1892, he published, in the magnificent editions of the Kelmscott Press, *The Nature of Gothic*, which "can be well considered as a separate piece of work", and to which he supplied a preface in which he declared that "it is one of the most important things written by the author, and in future days will be considered as one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century".

He considers the chapter important, less for its "artistic side" than for its "ethical and political" side, and it is this aspect, he adds, "which has had the most enduring and beneficent effect on his contemporaries, and will have through them on succeeding generations". In defining art as the expression of man's joy in his work (and it is this fundamental idea that Morris selects here from the chapter) Ruskin "has done serious and solid work towards the new birth of Society". 244

In this same preface Morris mentions another of Ruskin's writings, *Unto this Last*, "a great book" marking the "culmination" of the ethical and political thought already expressed in *The Nature of Gothic*. He had, his daughter May tells us, a great admiration for this work as a "direct and eloquent statement of the condition of Art & Labour in the century". 245 At the moment when the chapter from *The Stones of Venice* was being published, he mentioned to Sydney Cockerell his intention of publishing *Unto this Last* also at the Kelmscott Press. 246 He did nothing about it, however, and it is worthy of note that he changed his mind. In fact, although the book expressed many ideas dear to Morris about true riches, the need for real human relationships, and the misdeeds of mercantilism, it also contained a clear profession of paternalistic and anti-socialist faith and many other hardly democratic observations with which Morris was in complete disagreement. Undoubtedly the same tendencies were already present in *The Nature of Gothic*, but their expression was still veiled and infinitely less brutal than in *Unto this Last*. One can very well understand why Morris did not carry out his first intention, and it is a measure of the insincerity of Mackail that he should have written: "The whole of the Socialism with which Morris identified himself so prominently in the 'eighties had been implicitly contained, and the greater part of it explicitly stated in the pages of *Unto this Last* in 1862". 247 We know what Mackail was getting at: he was trying
to stretch the modest Ruskinian screen beyond its limits to conceal the regrettable influence of scientific socialism. How many imitators have followed in his tracks?

At the same time as she mentions the very understandable admiration her father felt for this book, May Morris also speaks of that which he felt for *The Political Economy of Art* (1857), of which Morris himself never speaks, but which also contains familiar ideas, mingled with others that are less so. We know, moreover, that in 1854 he read the *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*; these are the famous Edinburgh lectures which initiated him into Pre-Raphaelitism and even acquainted him with the name of Rossetti. A brief note of Sydney Cockerell's, dated 1892, tells us that one evening, at Gatti's Restaurant, Morris and P. W. (probably Philip Webb) discussed *Munera Pulveris* (1862) with him. Neither of these two books is mentioned in Morris's works either, but the fact that he read them means that we must take them into account. As far as Ruskin's other writings are concerned, we have no indication. It very much appears that, with the exception of *Fors Clavigera*, he had no contact with any later work than *Unto this Last*, but I cannot possibly state this with any certainty and I have thought it prudent not to neglect such of these works as express ideas close to those which inspired Morris, to the extent that their expression is more explicit, more concise or more revealing.

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It is extremely awkward to analyse texts as well known as those of Ruskin, about which there is already an abundant literature. At the risk of seeming very cursory, I shall avoid long quotations as far as possible and confine myself to the essence. It would be absurd to make here another full study of Ruskin's thought. We must not forget that we are interested simply in examining the depth of the influence he exerted upon Morris and the limits to that influence. So, above all, it will be a study of themes.

The theme which must, chronologically speaking, have first influenced Morris's sensibility and ideology was the love of nature, considered as the source of all beauty and of all art. The dazzling descriptions of *Modern Painters* bewitched him first. The soil upon which these precious seeds were scattered was truly fertile, and the young student, reared in the rustic intimacy of Walthamstow and Woodford, where his gift of observation and his wonder at the things of the earth were shaped, was quite ready to listen to such enchantments. Immediately, however, a fundamental difference showed itself. While Ruskin's landscapes are of delicate literary devising and glitter with a vocabulary bespangled and bejewelled with pictorial analogy, the descriptions which Morris has left us of the banks of the Thames or the mountains of Iceland are strikingly simple. While Ruskin seeks in nature a spirituality that is at once aesthetic and sensual, Morris finds direct, active physical contact. For Ruskin, alpine torrents are the iridescent sinews of a divine essence, but for Morris the banks of the Thames, seen at Runnymede in the early morning, are filled with the simple delight of an angler. For Ruskin, nature is intellectual, for Morris manual, and their tongues to understand and describe it have nothing in common. But their love for it is equally intense and it is with one tongue that they designate it the single
possible inspiration for art. Throughout his life our poet remained faithful to the precept formulated in _Modern Painters_:

"Go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thought but how best to penetrate her meaning and remember her instruction: rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing."

In his practice of the decorative arts as in his utopian aesthetics he was inspired by the master’s injunctions: "whatever is fair or beautiful must spring from natural forms... man cannot advance in the invention of beauty without directly imitating natural forms." This theme is constantly reiterated in _The Stones of Venice_, "All noble ornamentation," writes Ruskin, is "the expression of man’s delight in God’s work... and this is why all beautiful works of art must either intentionally imitate or accidentally resemble natural forms." He goes a very long way in the application of this principle, and, making great use of plates, graphically shows that "our first constituents of ornament will therefore be abstract lines, that is to say, the most frequent contours of natural objects."

It is by virtue of having understood this necessity that mediaeval art was able to attain such a degree of splendour. The Gothic arch is "not the most beautiful because it is the strongest, but most beautiful because its form is one of those which, as we know by its frequent occurrence in the work of Nature around us, has been appointed by the Deity to be an everlasting source of pleasure to the human mind."

The glory of Gothic art lies, in particular, in its having broken away from the artificial models of Greek art and succeeded in rediscovering the true forms of foliage, more generally of having practised the most noble "naturalism," that is the theme of a well known development of the chapter _The Nature of Gothic_. Another trait of this Christian art of the Middle Ages, arising from the "naturalism," is the richness of decoration, born of "a profound sympathy with the fullness and wealth of the material universe." No wonder in that, because "there is material enough in a single flower for the ornament of a whole cathedral."

This love of nature, source of all art, has a particular aspect with Ruskin which we find again in Morris. It is closely linked, in fact, with a love of healthiness, with, perhaps, this difference, that the love was instinctive with Morris and with Ruskin was probably a despairing reaction against his own morbidity. Thus Morris took up the condemnation of "such picturesqueness as results from decay, disorder and disease..." In this range of ideas, where psychology and ideology meet, we may note also Ruskin’s pronounced liking for colour and light, which is shown equally by Morris.

"Colour power," he wrote, "is a great sign of mental health in nations; when they are in a state of intellectual decline, their colouring always gets dull..."

Of all God’s gifts, he says again, "color is the holiest, the most divine, the most solemn," and he proclaims his horror of all painters devoted to browns and greys and who delighted in shadows. Salvator Rosa, the Caracci, Guido Reni, Rembrandt, Morille, Zurburan, Procaccini, Teniers, have kindled...
is as painful as monotony. Such language must have been pleasing to Morris, the sunny utopist, capable by the magic of his vision of transforming merry nineteenth-century London into a city of joyous light and indescribably colour. The visionary of the future was made for the understanding of the visionary of immediately perceptible nature. For one as for the other, comprehension of the world was essentially visual. Ruskin's great merit was that of teaching his contemporaries to see. John D. Rosenberg, always a little acid, reminds us how responsive they were to *ex cathedra* eloquence: "By writing sermons," he writes, "he got the Victorians to lend him their ears that they might open their eyes." This was the purpose of long sermonising, more than once echoed by Morris.

"The greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world," exclaimed Ruskin, "is to see something, and tell what it sees in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion — all in one." To see and to learn to see, that is, indeed, an injunction which Morris, in his turn, never stopped repeating. But to see what? His vision of nature really has nothing in common with Ruskin's. Morris could think as well as see, there was poetry and prophecy. But discreetly he refused to go any further. In fact, feeling for nature, poetry, prophecy, all these were just synonyms for religion for Ruskin. Perhaps not always for that Protestant bigotry which long held him prisoner, but certainly always for that biblical and providential spirituality into which all his enthusiasms flow — and let us note that most of the books which influenced Morris belong to the sectarian period. The successive volumes of *Modern Painters* are a monument of finalist geology; it would be of no interest for our study, and unnecessarily cruel, to pick out Ruskin's verbose declarations upon the finality of rivers, deserts and mountains. All that must have left Morris completely indifferent, until in the end he lost patience at the fifth volume and flatly declared that it consisted of "mostly gammon." The shocked and naive meditations in *The Stones of Venice* upon the problem of evil in nature no doubt made very little impression, and he was ready to accept indulgently, among so many thoughts of admirable profundity, all those which, while being alien to his own way of thinking, did not clash headlong with what was essential to him, his socialist conviction. This explains why he was able to publish *The Nature of Gothic* from the Kelmscott Press and had to give up the idea of publishing *Unto This Last*. It really is a matter of indulgence here, when one recalls Ruskin's many references to Wordsworth, whom Morris detested. For our poet indeed, nature is a primary fact, free from all animism or mystical essence. For Ruskin, on the contrary, the love of nature is the "love of all things that God has created to be beautiful, and pronounced to be good", and (this must have made Morris smile), of two individuals, "the one who loves nature most will be always found to have more faith in God than the other". What must be liked, he says again, "is God's work, which He made for our delight and contentment in this world." On this point, as on many others, Morris's conduct is very characteristic. He is ready to accompany Ruskin a good way along the road. But without fuss, gently stubborn, he takes up his thought and completely secularises it. He leaves Ruskin with creation, original sin and divine finalities, and is satisfied with "pleasure" and...
"contentment in this world". Perhaps he had a feeling (justified, moreover, by the master’s conversions and "deconversions") that the sensual love of nature, source of all art, was of more importance than religious passion, even in moments of evangelical ecstasy. In Ruskin he loved the pagan who did not recognise himself, who refused to admit himself as such, and who could write in his private diary, with the idea of a coming visit to his beloved Alps, "I should be almost fainting with joy, and should want to lie down on the earth and take it in my arms". This is, already, the cry of Ellen in News from Nowhere.

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How are we to know better this nature which is good because it is divine? Ruskin literally overflows with knowledge of geology, mineralogy, botany, ornithology. But this encyclopaedic knowledge is put entirely at the service of his faith and often assumes an appearance comparable to mediaeval symbolics. It cannot be an end in itself and must remain the humble handmaiden of the vision. Flowers "are only to be seen rightly with the eyes which the God who made them gave us; and neither with microscopes nor spectacles". The artisans of the Middle Ages, totally ignorant of chemistry as they were, produced work which "at this day [is] the despair of all who look upon it". Knowledge is only good for man "so long as he can keep it utterly, servilely, subordinate to his divine work". Let us beware of "the old Eve-sin": "We no more live to know than we live to eat. We live to contemplate, enjoy, act, adore". What could be the use of mathematical science, "the most important facts being always quite immeasurable"? A purely technical geography will allow us to know the difference between countries "in detail, but we have not that broad glance and grasp which would enable us to feel them in their fullness". Morris, as we shall see in due course, did not have this attitude of systematic hostility towards science. However, it cannot be doubted that Ruskin encouraged a tendency in him to restrict the part of scientific and technical culture in the sum of values of future humanity Morris feared, as did Ruskin, that the acquisition and application of knowledge might raise a screen between nature and man, hiding, not "his divine task", but simply his human quality.

If Morris’s judgment is much more graduated than Ruskin’s, it is, perhaps, because the latter belonged to a generation closer to the memory of old rural England and, therefore, more traumatised by the onrush of industrial civilisation and the invasion of smoke from factories and trains. It is probable (and we find it difficult to realise today) that this sudden horror was the greater because coal was the only energy source of the time and because urban overcrowding, consequent upon the development of manufacturing industry, took place amidst anarchy, poverty, lack of hygiene and squalor. These "horrible nests, which you call towns, are little more than laboratories for the distillation into heaven of venemous smokes and smells, mixed with the effluvia from decaying animal matter, infectious miasma from purulent disease", at present we "turn every river of England into a common sewer, so that you cannot so much as baptize an English baby but with filth, unless you hold its face out in the rain; and even that falls dirty".
So it is science in the service of industry (Morris says: in the service of profit, which introduces an important distinction) which contributes to the pollution of that nature without which there can be no beauty. It is interesting to note in passing that The Crown of Wild Olive opens with a bitter protest against the transformations which have defaced the countryside along the banks of the River Wandle, near which Morris was to establish his Merton Abbey workshops. Ruskin is full of rancour against steam-driven machinery, incapable of producing “so much as one grain of corn” and against railways, which are an “infernal” means of locomotion, in the literal sense of the word, which transform man from a traveller into a living parcel”, who has “parted with the nobler characteristics of his humanity for the sake of planetary power of locomotion”.279

In truth, Ruskin’s anti-machinism abounds in contradictions and it is very difficult to sort out a clear doctrine. At one moment he sees mechanical progress as “a mere passing fever” at another he is preaching “the conceivable use of machinery on a colossal scale... so rendering parts of the earth habitable which hitherto have been lifeless”.281 Innumerable quotations would be needed to bring order into this confusion, without getting us much further forward. From the mass of texts it seems best to me to pick out a few details which might have influenced Morris’s thinking. What seems to stand out is, first, that Ruskin’s hostility is not so much directed towards the machine in general but above all towards the steam engine with its coal smoke. He accepts “all machinery needful in ordinary life to supplement human or animal labour” provided that it is “moved by wind or water, while steam... may only be employed justifiably under extreme or special conditions of need” for any work “beyond human strength”.282 For him the essential thing is to rid nature and human surroundings of this smoke, this pollution, this ugliness spread by coal and steam engines. At no moment does he feel Morris’s sentiment or the hope for the new and mysterious form of energy, available everywhere, which will liberate life in the future from the scourges of the nineteenth century. His only care is to get rid of it, whatever the consequences, and he goes as far as to ask for those who emigrate (like Carlyle, he advocates emigration) to export industry to the colonies with them in order to allow England to be covered again with cornfields, pasture land and flowers.283 His dream is of a return to agriculture pure and simple and to manual work “through instruments which assist, but do not supersede, the muscular action of the human hand”.284 It is to the point to observe that all these proposals were put forward for immediate action, and Ruskin expected to open the way to such reforms by means of his lamentable utopian experiment of the Guild of St. George. Morris kept well clear of such naiveties. What he drew from them was put into a distant prospect and presented as a logically possible climax to history, based upon the data of scientific socialism.

If, as we shall have many occasions to observe, logic was one of Morris’s supreme qualities, it was not often displayed by Ruskin. However, he did draw certain consequences from the anti-scientific and anti-industrial stand he took. It led, in fact, to a definition of human needs which Morris adapted to his own
system. Abjuring all energy sources other than air and water, and deprived, albeit not without hesitation, of mechanical production (Morris is not guilty of similar impiudence), Ruskin, with the optimism of ignorance, is sure that, with the help of Providence, all that is needed to ensure man’s subsistence is good organisation of work. He does not tell us what this is or how it is to be brought about. What matter!

"The world is so regulated by the laws of Providence, that man’s labour, well applied, is always amply sufficient to provide him during his life with all things needful to him, and not only with those, but with many pleasant objects of luxury; and yet farther to procure him large intervals of healthful rest and serviceable leisure." 285

Coming back to a more realistic viewpoint, and not worried about contradicting himself, Ruskin, after consideration, cuts out the luxury, defining it as:

"All dainty (as distinguished from nourishing) food, and means of producing it; all scents not needed for health; substances valued only for their appearance and rarity (as gold and jewels); flowers of difficult culture; animals used for delight (as horses for racing)." 286

It is better to cut stone than diamonds or rubies, 287 he writes, without caring that three years earlier he said the opposite in *The Stones of Venice*, at that time condemning glass trinkets and imitations of marble and of wood. 288 He considered luxury in funerals and tombs absurd. 289 All these useless products disappear in Morris’s utopia as well, but his originality lies in abolishing at the same time all the wretched shoddy and dull cottons which capitalism reserved to the poor.

The question of clothing also engaged Ruskin’s attention, and one feels him to be somewhat hesitant. He gets out of it by a sort of compromise, justified by his mediaevalist fervour, and it is worth our while to pause a moment, because we find the echo of his words in Morris. Nobleness of dress, he writes, exerts “a perpetual influence upon character, tending in a thousand ways to increase dignity and self-respect, and, together with grace of gesture, to induce serenity of thought”. In the Middle Ages, “the splendour and fantasy even of dress . . . were . . . studied for love of their true beauty and honourableness, and became one of the main helps to dignity of character and courtesy of bearing”. 290

But, he adds, the greatest magnificence is not the most admirable.

"It was still in the thirteenth century . . . when . . . the manner of dress seems to have been noblest . . . . The women wore first a dress close to the form . . . then long and flowing robes, veiling them up to the neck, and delicately embroidered around the hem, the sleeves and the girdle."

It was only from the fifteenth century that luxury attained a “morbid magnificence, devoid of all wholesome influence on manners”, thence to degenerate into modern ugliness. 290 Ruskin returns to this subject in *The Political Economy of Art*:

“No good historical painting ever yet existed, or ever can exist, where the dresses of the people of the time are not beautiful and had it not been
for the lovely and fantastic dressing of the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, neither French, nor Florentine, nor Venetian art could have risen to anything like the rank it reached. Still, even then, the best dressing was never the costliest; and its effect depended much more on its beautiful and, in earliest times, modest, arrangement, and on the simple and lovely masses of its colour, than on the gorgeousness of clasp or embroidery. Whether we can ever return to those more perfect types of form, is questionable; but there can be no more question that all the money we spend on the forms of dress at present worn ... is wholly lost.291

In fact, Ruskin's simplifications come far less from a purpose of "political economy" than he loves to roll the phrase around his tongue, than from moral, even theological, considerations. They are the consequences of that "spiritual condition which every Christian ought to recognise in himself, a state of homelessness on earth, except so far as he can make the Most High his habitation".292

He proclaims also that "the ideal of human life is a union of Spartan simplicity of manners with Athenian sensibility and imagination".293 When he really wants to tackle economic reality, he states that "luxuries, whether national or personal, must be paid for by labour withdrawn from useful things",294 despite the fact that an aphorism of this kind displays a complete ignorance of the nature of the State and of property. He rejects any form of social subversion, and moralises as though classes did not exist, as though the unity of the body politic was a constant fact:

"In due time, when we have nothing better to set people to work at, it may be right to let them make lace and cut jewels; but as long as there are any who have no blankets for their beds: and no rags for their bodies: so long is it blanket-making and tailoring we must set people to work at - not lace." 295

Morris could not but subscribe to this idea, and he did so the more readily because he had resolved the inextricable contradiction in which Ruskin was bogged down. He followed him with even greater pleasure because the latter, being subject to another contradiction, could not for long reconcile his Protestant asceticism with the natural sensuality of his pagan aesthetics.

"Luxury," said Ruskin finally, "is indeed possible in the future - innocent and exquisite; luxury for all, and by the help of all".296

He was ever ready to accord a degree of indulgence to existing luxury. Even when draped in his own censorial toga, he recognised that

"three fourths of the demands existing in the world are romantic; founded on visions, idealisms, hopes, and affections, and the regulation of the purse is, in its essence, regulation of the imagination and the heart".297

So he was brought to the formulation of a reckoning of the fundamental values of existence, which Morris took up in similar language but much more precisely. No doubt Ruskin could not help remembering that, in the Middle Ages, riches were "looked upon by the best men not only as contemptible, but
criminal”, while “the Spirit of Poverty was reverenced”. But his sensual love for divine creation quickly led him to pose the alternative in very different terms, those of true and false riches.

The attempt was first semantic, resting upon the sense given to the three words wealth, money and riches, which “are often used as synonymous, but they signify entirely different things”: wealth signifies: “things in themselves valuable”; money “documentary claims to the possession of such things”, and riches “is a relative term, expressing the magnitude of the possessions of one person or society as compared with those of other persons or societies”. Then, turning to the etymological considerations, he wrote: “What is really desired, under the name of riches, is, essentially, power over men”, and Morris included this definition as part of his own. In truth, Ruskin’s semantic effort petered out, and he quite often used the words riches and wealth interchangeably. Morris, on the contrary, distinguished them and set one against the other with scrupulous care: for him, wealth was always true riches, that is to say, not at all the possession, so much as the enjoyment, of the good things of this world, while riches always meant personal fortune derived from the exploitation of others’ labour. Ruskin sometimes expressed this opposition by inventing a neologism, the opposite of wealth being “illth” (meaning reprehensible riches).

Of course, he did not fail to give moral overtones to his definitions: “the term wealth is never to be attached to the accidental object of a morbid desire, but only to the constant object of a legitimate one”. Nevertheless, when he developed these themes throughout Unto this Last, his thought became more and more earthly and there is no doubt that this tone, so much closer to his own, roused Morris’s enthusiasm for that book. Ruskin defined his “political economy” as assisting simply “in the production, preservation, and distribution, at fittest time and place, of useful or pleasurable things”. The present system is the opposite of such a state of affairs: “capital which produces nothing but capital is only root producing root, bulb issuing in bulb, never in tulip; seed issuing in seed, never in bread”. The aim of production is “consumption absolute” and is its “crown and perfection”, “the wealth of a nation is only to be estimated by what it consumes . . . the money-gain being only the shadow of the true gain, which is humanity”.

“The final outcome and consummation of all wealth is in the producing as many as possible full-breathed, bright-eyed, and happy-hearted human creatures”.

And he added bitterly that “our modern wealth . . . has rather a tendency the other way”. The true science of political economy as he understood it, is “that which teaches nations to desire and labour for the things that lead to life: and which teaches them to scorn and destroy the things that lead to destruction”. True riches are made up of all the goods necessary to man’s existence, but, “as the art of life is learned, it will be found at last that all lovely things are also necessary; – the wild flower by the wayside, as well as the tended corn; and the wild birds and creatures of the forest, as well as the tended cattle”. The final cry of this hymn to joy is: “There is no wealth but life!” which is a veritable prelude to News from Nowhere.
This general and more or less coherent view of nature and life leads steadily to a philosophy of art, itself intimately linked to historical and social thought. Here, undoubtedly, Morris drew the essence of his aesthetics. He preserved one central idea intact — namely the prime importance of architecture and the vigilant care of which it must be the object.

While in fact, Ruskin says, few people feel that painting concerns them, “all men are concerned with architecture, and have at some time in their lives serious business with it.” Today, the ugliness of our towns is such that “we find all men of true feeling delighting to escape out of modern cities into natural scenery”. This evil must be remedied. The advantages of town life are no compensation for our loss of contact with the charms of nature. That is why

“the function of our architecture is, as far as may be, to replace these; to tell us about Nature; to possess us with memories of her quietness; to be solemn and full of tenderness, like her, and rich in portraiture of her”.

Morris certainly remained faithful to this architectural naturalism, but his utopian ideology kept him from pushing it too far. In so far as, in the Marxist expression, he abolished “the contradiction between town and country”, he no longer had any need to palliate the vanished curse of escapism, and Ruskin’s idea was substantially modified. Morris’s preoccupation was rather the marriage of architecture with natural ornament.

However, he was unreservedly in agreement with Ruskin in considering that a building must before any other considerations satisfy the human needs which led to its construction:

“The sacrifice of any of these first requirements to external appearance is a futility and absurdity.”

But, adds Ruskin, once they are satisfied “comes the divine part of the work — namely, to turn these dead walls into living ones . . . Ornamentation is therefore the principal part of architecture”, and it follows “that a great architect must be a great sculptor or painter”. That was a principle which Morris pushed a great deal further: not only did he encompass painting and sculpture in what he called architecture, but he made its service their only function. This rejection of individualistic art was, moreover, admirably expressed by Ruskin when he defined the primacy of architecture by the fact that it is “the expression of the average power of man”.

“A picture or a poem is often little more than a feeble utterance of man’s admiration of something out of himself; but architecture approaches more to a creation of his own, born of his necessities, and expressive of his nature. It is also, in some sort, the work of the whole race, while the picture or statue is the work of one man only, in most cases more highly gifted than his fellows.”

So it is to be expected that all good architecture will express “some great truths commonly belonging to the whole race and necessary to be understood or felt by them in all their work that they do under the sun”. The building then becomes “a book of various knowledge, or a mine of precious thought,” and one must be able to read “a building as we would read Milton or Dante.”
became "the art . . . of any country in an exact exponent of its ethical life," a" all good architecture is the expression of national life and character," b" It is also "the expression by man of his own rest in the statues of the lands that gave him birth." c But even more than its geography, it expresses its history. "We may live without her, and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her." So our duty is, on the one hand, piously to preserve the architectural heritage of the past, and, on the other, "to render the architecture of the day, historical", particularly in public buildings, which should carry no ornamentation "without some intellectual intention". The study of the monuments of the past could not, therefore, be purely aesthetic and detached, and Ruskin assures us that his researches into the stones of Venice present "an interest of a far higher kind than that usually belonging to architectural investigations." d

No doubt Ruskin's approach was idealistic. His constant purpose was to consider art "in its relation with the moral spirit of the age", e that is, to explain one superstructure by another superstructure. Morris, while he faithfully adopted Ruskin's outlines, quite naturally replaced this idealistic approach by that which historical materialism provided. The motive force of history was no longer man's moral conscience, but the class struggle. He made this transformation so spontaneously that he was not aware of the fundamental difference of attitude and even attributed his own point of view to Ruskin:

"The essence of what Ruskin taught us," he writes, "was simple enough, like all great discoveries. It was really nothing more recondite than this, that the art of any epoch must of necessity be the expression of its social life." e

These two formulations, brought together in this way, seem to me to be particularly revealing. Morris's rather purblind enthusiasm has, in effect, given credit to the idea that his socialist vision of history existed in embryo in his master Ruskin (and we have seen how Mackail hastened to spread this tendentious view). On the other hand, Morris, by adopting intact the division of history practised by Ruskin, did not perceive that he was borrowing nothing but a formal framework and that the concepts bounded by this framework, even though he took them too, underwent "a sea-change, into something rich and strange." e

We now come to Ruskin's best known texts, (and if I may be excused for briefly recalling it), to that marvellous fresco of the history of art, The Stones of Venice, a fresco designed to establish the primacy of aesthetic and human values displayed by mediaeval art. This Gothic art is the antithesis both of Greek art and of that of the Renaissance, which began and precipitated the decadence and degradation of Western civilisation.

Ruskin is less prone than Morris about ancient art. He established a distinction between the "constitutional ornament" of the Egyptians and Assyrians, in which the artisan enjoyed some small independence in the sense that he could please himself how he combined models, imperfectly executed though rigorously stereotyped, and the "servile ornament" of the Greeks, absolute in
perfection and precision, but consisting only of geometrical forms incapable of expressing anything human: the monotony of the motifs is a measure of the servility to which the artisan was reduced, and his leaf designs, uniformly stylised, were devoid of any feeling of nature. Morris repeats all that at greater length, more vigorously and in greater detail, and his analysis was notably enriched by his constant references to the slave production methods of Attic society.

When he comes to study the Renaissance, Ruskin stays on the level of superstructures and explains the decadence of art by that of religion and morality. Observing the same effects, Morris makes the same condemnations, but he explains the effects in terms of the sharpening of class differentiation, arising from the appearance of the commercial and manufacturing bourgeoisie; his analysis, if less eloquent and less lyrical, is certainly more robust and more profound.

For Ruskin, the prime cause is the degeneracy of Catholicism and its impregnation by pagan rationalism and aestheticism, while the new-born Protestantism, although it saved the faith, was bound by the needs of the struggle to adopt a sectarian attitude and to reject art along with "Romanism". Since the period when Raphael "ministered, with applause, to the impious luxury of the Vatican... the clear and tasteless poison" of his art "infected with the sleep of infidelity the hearts of millions of Christians", Man has proudly flaunted an ungodly egocentricity. Whereas mediaeval naturalism exalted God's work in a thousand ways the Renaissance artist preferred to use, as his decorative themes, the imitation of man-made objects: armour, plumes, instruments, costume, navigational gear. The exuberance of Gothic foliage disappeared: "the Renaissance frosts came, and all perished". Christianity was professed in art, but paganism was practised.

"In olden times, men used their powers of painting to show the objects of faith; in later times, they used the objects of faith that they might show their powers of painting".

and they put the Madonna and Aphrodite in the same procession. Henceforth, "admiration takes the place of devotion".

This godlessness is expressed as the pride of science, pride in rank and the spirit of order. "The great mistake of the Renaissance schools lay in supposing that science and art were the same things, and that to advance one was necessarily to perfect the other", whereas the domain of art is "much vaster than that of science, as the soul is larger than the material creation". The most striking example is that of the "base pupils of Michael Angelo, who turned heroes' limbs into surgeons' diagrams". Pride in rank cut off art from the people and this art produced for an élite is characterised by "coldness, perfectness of training, incapability of emotion, want of sympathy with the weakness of lower men, blank, hopeless, haughty self-sufficiency". The Renaissance is "rigid, cold, inhuman, incapable of growing, of stooping, of conceding for an instant". Forgetting the human fellowship which inspired Gothic art, the new architecture "was full of insult to the poor in its every line" and eliminated "the rugged cottages of the mountaineers and the fantastic streets of the labouring burgher". Pride mingled with luxury, "not... the luxury of the eye, that is a holy luxury", but "the luxury of the body" favoured
by terraces and grottoes, soft comfort and lascivious decoration. The spirit of the Renaissance was "base both in its abstinence and its indulgence", by its rejection of the wholesome joys of nature as by its gross sensuality. Its funerary monuments express a "ghastly struggle of mean pride and miserable terror", and the statues which adorn them "have all the peculiar tendency to posture-making". The popular humour of the Middle Ages has gone, the Renaissance "having silenced the independent language of the operative".

And pride of system, fossilising the universe in formulae, "under the name of philosophy encumbered the minds of the Renaissance schoolmen". Grammar became the first of the sciences and henceforth one devoted oneself in all the arts to "the exclusive study of restraints". Not that Ruskin in the least "underrates the importance or disputes the authority of law"! No one is keener than he upon strict discipline, but he rejects any that "can be reduced to form and system, and is not written upon the heart". The architect accepted the "laws of the five orders" and forgot those "of the ten Commandments". Everything became "philology, logic, rhetoric"; "the end of human existence" was "to be grammatical", and "the one main purpose of the Renaissance artists, in all their work, was to show how much they knew". Painting, "subjected to Raphaelian rules" was most concerned to observe "proportions expressible in decimal fractions". And so painting remains until today, "and we wonder we have no painters!". The artisan became a simple copyist: he "secured method and finish, and lost, in exchange for them, his soul". The edifice which he had to decorate was nothing more than "a wearisome exhibition of well-educated imbecility." The poetry of stained glass was gone: the builders "left their palaces filled only with cold white light, and in the paleness of their native stones", henceforth we must "bid farewell to colour". Simultaneously there is "a want of thought or of feeling" and "a systematic ugliness". Such is the architecture which brings us from "the Grand Canal to Gower Street", and we "let our architects do the same thing over and over again for three centuries, and expect to be interested by their architecture". So, the inevitable conclusion is: "let us cast out utterly whatever is connected with the Greek, Roman, or Renaissance architecture, in principle or in form". It is "pagan in its origin, proud and unholy in its revival, paralyzed in its old age, invented, as it seems, to make plagiarists of its architects, slaves of its workmen, and sybarites of its inhabitants; an architecture in which intellect is idle, invention impossible but in which all luxury is gratified, and all insolence fortified".

However, Ruskin introduces an important reservation which Morris takes up on his own account and enriches. He makes a distinction between "the requirement of universal perfection" which characterised the Renaissance and its "demands for classical and Roman forms of perfection". Architecture immediately foundered, because "perfection is not therein possible" and "because the classical enthusiasm had destroyed the best types of architectural form". But the same was not true of painting and sculpture and the cinquecento "produced the noblest masters whom the world ever saw". Renaissance armour did not paralyse the "living limbs" of those "mighty men" "Leonardo
and Michael Angelo, Ghirlandajo and Masaccio, Titian and Tintoretto.” The same phenomenon is to be seen in England as in Italy:

“In spite of the rules of the drama we had Shakespeare, and in spite of the rules of art we had Tintoret, – both of them, to this day doing perpetual violence to the vulgar scholarship and dim-eyed proprieties of the multitude.”

But these “noble exceptions” for the most part belonged to the first period of the Renaissance.

“Raphael, Leonardo, and Michael Angelo were all trained in the old school; they all had masters who knew the true ends of art, and had reached them.”

Morris in his turn was to see a survival of the Gothic spirit in the greatness of certain individuals, and, being more literal and more subtle than Ruskin, was to observe the survival even in Elizabethan architecture.

* * *

The only historical reference point, then, is the Middle Ages. For Ruskin, as Margaret Grennan so accurately observes, this reference “was not, as in Carlyle’s case, an isolated adventure, but a repeated pilgrimage to the past”. He brought to it a degree of historical knowledge, definitely less deep than Morris’s, but, like Morris, he linked this knowledge and this search to more general considerations which built up a body of doctrine, which he himself called “Gothic opinions”. It was, moreover, the intuitive element in this exploration of the past which Morris particularly admired:

“By a marvellous inspiration of genius (I can call it nothing else) he attained at one leap to a true conception of mediaeval art which years of minute study had not gained for others. In his chapter in The Stones of Venice entitled On the Nature of Gothic, and the Function of the Workman therein, he showed us the gulf which lay between us and the Middle Ages. From that time, all was changed; ignorance of the spirit of the Middle Ages was henceforth impossible, except to those who wilfully shut their eyes”.

And Morris added that Ruskin’s great discovery was “that the social life of the Middle Ages allowed the workman freedom of individual expression, which on the other hand our social life forbids him” – which introduced the same ambiguity of terminology that I have already indicated Ruskin’s considerations were, in fact, much less social than psychological, moral, even religious, and, if Morris accepted his conclusions, he not only secularised them but also translated them into a materialistic language which took account of the economic relationships of the period in question.

This materialist view of history led him, too, to make more realistic judgments upon mediaeval civilisation than did Ruskin. Despite his enthusiasm, he did not hesitate to decry brutality, feudal oppression, superstition, the roughness of manners. There was nothing of this in Ruskin, who saw in the apogee of Venetian art the reflection of Christian faith and morality in the body politic, choosing to ignore the fact that the prosperity of Venice,
from which stemmed its artistic display, was the fruit of cunning and cold calculation; it was entirely by-the-way that he admitted that England's "feudal lords' lightest words were worth men's lives" and that "the blood of the vexed husbandman dropped in the furrows of her fields", but it was to add immediately that there was greater freedom in mediaeval England than in industrial England.\(^{158}\) He compared "the modern acquisitive power of capital with that of the lance and sword; the only difference being that the levy of black mail in old times was by force, and is now by cozening".\(^{159}\) But such allusions are rare, and his vision of the Middle Ages is distinctly more idealised than Morris's. For him, as Rosenberg writes, it was "a Gothic paradise lost".\(^{360}\) He was willing to admit that then, as today, the populace was reduced to servitude, with this difference however, that it was not then hungry, but plentifully fed.\(^{361}\) "These material details rarely engage his attention. The image he presents to us is, first and foremost, an image of beauty and Christian virtue, and, in this sense, his outlook is perhaps closer to Pugin's than to Morris's. In any case, it is to a large extent an escapist viewpoint, aimed at satisfying "this romantic love of beauty, forced to seek in history, and in external nature, the satisfaction it cannot find in ordinary life".\(^{362}\) His imagination takes pleasure in evoking "the pleasant flat land... garden ground covered with flowers, and divided by fragrant hedges, with a castle in the middle of it".\(^{363}\) The towns are no less fascinating:

"I am not aware of any town of wealth and importance in the Middle Ages, in which some proof does not exist that, at its period of greatest energy and prosperity, its streets were inwrought with rich sculpture and even... glowing with colour and with gold."\(^{364}\)

Domestic architecture in no way lagged behind that of public places:

"every dwelling-house in the Middle Ages was rich with the same ornaments and quaint with the same grotesques which fretted the porches or animated the gargoyles of the cathedral", and in these there continued naturally "a style which was familiar to every eye throughout all its lanes and streets".\(^{365}\) The towns were remarkable as much for the splendour of their palaces as for the exquisite decoration of even the smallest tenements".\(^{366}\) His descriptions never for a moment include any hint of poverty or, above all, of ugliness.

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It seems unnecessary for us to linger here over the detailed and sometimes very technical study of the forms of Gothic art which Ruskin made. It was certainly precious to Morris, influencing his aesthetic vision and his decorative work. However, it is not superfluous to mention that, even at the time when he still wished to be Ruskin's faithful echo, he never felt it necessary publicly to reiterate these formal considerations. Through seeing Morris merely as a wholehearted disciple of the master, and nothing more, the critics, with disconcerting unanimity, have failed to recognise that an absolutely capital change of stress had taken place during the transmission of the message. In
truth there is, with both of them, what we might call a Gothic utopism, but it is not the same with both. Let us start again with Ruskin’s thought:

“Gothic architecture has external forms and internal elements: ... And unless both the elements and the forms are there, we have no right to call the style Gothic.”

Certainly the form is nothing without the content, and he condemns the ‘Gothic revival’ of the nineteenth century in terms which Morris would approve without reservation:

“The stirring which has taken place in our architectural aims and interests within these few years, is thought by many to be full of promise: I trust it is, but it has a sickly look to me. I cannot tell whether it be indeed a springing of seed or a shaking among bones; and I do not think the time will be lost which I ask the reader to spend on the inquiry, how far all that we have hitherto ascertained or conjectured to be best in principle, may be formally practised without the spirit or the vitality which alone could give it influence, value, or delightfulness.”

Ruskin has no doubt that Gothic must be copied, but the whole problem remains: “How is the imitation to be rendered healthy and vital?” He feels repelled by “so-called Gothic or Romanesque buildings” which “are now rising every day around us”, and which serve only “to caricature the noble buildings of past ages, and to bring their form into dishonour by leaving out their soul”. He had his most striking example of this obsession one day, when, passing through Ealing, he came across a public house built in “Italian Gothic, in the style of its best time”. What is one to think of a nation, he exclaims, “which thus delights itself in the defilement and degradation of all the best gifts of its God; which mimics the architecture of Christians to promote the trade of poisoners?” I note, en passant, that Morris, who had no time either for religion or for temperance, did not feel any comparable indignation when he affectionately admired the old inn in Dorchester, transformed in the twenty-second century into a guest house and which “still had the Fleur-de-luce which it used to bear in the days when hospitality had to be bought and sold”. The spirit of ancient art was quite a different thing for him, even if it was also as Ruskin defined it.

But for the latter it seems not sufficient to recapture the spirit, because the spirit is inseparable from the forms which it is just as necessary to preserve in any “future applicability to the wants of mankind”. Of course, he insists upon the essential merit of Gothic forms “capable of perpetual novelty”. It is “the only rational architecture, as being that which can fit itself most easily to all services, vulgar or noble ... subtle and flexible like a fiery serpent, but ever attentive to the voice of the charmer”. It is, he says again, “the glory of Gothic architecture that it can do anything. Whatever you really and seriously want, Gothic will do for you ... It is its pride to accommodate itself to your needs”. None the less, despite all its adaptability and its infinite diversity, it, too, has its canons, and there can never be any question of abandoning them: “the two great Gothic forms, the pointed arch and gable roof, ought to be introduced into modern domestic architecture”. What is more, Ruskin
does not propose an imitation of the general characteristics of Gothic, but that of a very special aspect of it:

"I have now no doubt that the only style proper for modern northern work, is the Northern Gothic of the thirteenth century, as exemplified in England, pre-eminently by the cathedrals of Lincoln and Wells, and, in France, by those of Paris, Amiens, Chartres, Rheims, and Bourges, and by the transepts of that of Rouen." 376

All things considered, even more precisely, his choice is restricted and centred only on early English Gothic, shunning any deviation towards Perpendicular, borrowing perhaps a few decorative elements from French Gothic. 377 It is true that Ruskin’s tastes tended to vary, and, a few years later, after asserting his conviction that "it will be impossible for us, not only to equal but far to surpass, in some respects, any Gothic yet seen in Northern countries", he proposed that we "adopt the pure and perfect forms of the Northern Gothic, and work them out with the Italian refinement". 378 At all events, the gothic mode of architecture should become universal. It should not be just an ecclesiastical form. It is a scandal that our churches should be Gothic and our houses not: "it signifies neither more nor less than that you separated your religion from your life". 379 It will, then, be necessary to "henceforth build alike the church, the palace, and the cottage", and, above all, revert to this style "for our civil and domestic buildings". 380

These few examples clearly show Ruskin’s intransigence on the question of form. Nothing is further from the attitude of Morris, who, on the one hand, expressly declares his complete ignorance about what the forms of future art will be and contents himself with indicative suggestions, as composite as possible, as solid support for his vision; and who, on the other hand, rejects any pure and simple imitation of the past, regarding it as impossible and absurd, and placing the Gothic inspiration in a dialectical perspective, utterly foreign to the spirit of Ruskin and deriving directly from Marxist methodology. This, it seems to me, is what one must understand as implicit in the conclusion of Morris’s preface to The Nature of Gothic:

"Some readers will perhaps wonder that in this important Chapter of Ruskin I have found it necessary to consider the ethical and political, rather than what would ordinarily be thought, the artistic side of it. I must answer that, delightful as is that portion of Ruskin’s work which describes, analyses, and criticizes art, old and new, yet this is not, after all the most characteristic side of his writings." 381

So, contrary to established ideas, it is not in Ruskin’s formal aesthetics that one should seek Morris’s inspiration, but rather in his definitions of the internal elements that constitute "the nature of Gothic". There, in his eyes, lies the kernel of Ruskin’s analysis, and we witness its germination (though in a very different soil) in Morris’s aesthetics and social ethic.

First, let us note a curious fact which prepared the ground for this germination. Whereas, by its very intent, The Stones of Venice studies Mediterranean
Gothic, the famous chapter VI of book II, The Nature of Gothic, constitutes a real parenthesis, even an antithesis or contradiction. This chapter, in fact, which sets out to be an analysis of the general characteristics of mediaeval art in all climates, is overtly an apologia for northern Gothic and a proclamation of its superiority. Ruskin invites the reader to examine with him “this grey, shadowy many-pinnacled image of the Gothic spirit within us; and discerning what fellowship there is between it and our Northern hearts”. Gothic art is, before anything, the

“outspeaking of the strong spirit of men who may not gather redundant fruitage from the earth, nor bask in dreamy benignity of sunshine, but must break the rock for bread, and cleave the forest for fire”.

One sees in it “the habit of hard and rapid working; the industry of the tribes of the North . . . as opposed to the languor of the Southern tribes”,

“strength of will, independence of character, resoluteness of purpose, impatience of undue control, and that general tendency to set the individual reason against authority, and the individual deed against destiny, which, in the Northern tribes, has opposed itself throughout all ages, to the languid submission, in the Southern, of thought to tradition, and purpose to fatality”.

Such a definition was bound to please Morris, a man of the north by temperament and by choice, who had been horribly bored in Italy, to the great despair of Burne-Jones. But this same definition led Ruskin, in a completely inconsequential generalisation, to consider that the fundamental characteristic of Gothic art was its harshness, its “savageness”.

It is this characteristic unjustly despised during the centuries of classicism which “deserves our profoundest reverence”. But there again Ruskin’s thought is not absolutely precise, because he tends to confuse two concepts which are far from being identical: on the one hand, Nordic harshness; on the other, the right to be imperfect, the only common element being vitality. It is finally on the second of these concepts that his thought and lyricism dwell in pages too well known for us to analyse them in detail here. What it is important for us to observe, because there the direction of thought is radically different between Morris and Ruskin, is that, for the latter, the point of departure is theological. Perfection belongs to God alone.

“If we pretend to have reached either perfection or satisfaction, we have degraded ourselves and our work. God’s work only may express that; but ours may never have that sentence written upon it. And behold, it was very good.”

The fall of Adam made man an imperfect being, who must accept the “admission of lost power and fallen nature”. The greatness of Gothic art lies in its being a Christian art, and Christianity, while it admits human imperfection, recognises “the individual value of every soul”. Note, in passing, the Protestant inflexibility which Ruskin thus bestows upon mediaeval religion. Only the art of the Middle Ages has given this “individual value” the chance of asserting itself. Whereas the pagans of Antiquity and the Renaissance had kept the artisan to the servility of the copyist, forcing him to reproduce perfect
and meaningless motifs, preferring “the perfectness of the lower nature to the imperfections of the higher”. Gothic art allowed him, with his limited means, to deploy all the force of his imagination and his sensibility, and from all these unpolished fragments emerged “a stately and unaccusable whole”.

“This is the glory of Gothic architecture, that every jot and tittle, every point and niche of it, affords room, fuel, and focus for individual fire.”

Observe, however, that this liberty is relative and is confined to execution. In a somewhat curious passage of The Stones of Venice, which touches the limits of contradiction, Ruskin suddenly reveals his need of hierarchy, authority, inequality. In the mediaeval system, he writes, “the mind of the inferior workman is recognised, and he has full room for action, but is guided and ennobled by the ruling mind”. The role of the architect is to “calculate only on the co-operation of inferior men, to think for them, and to indicate for some of them at least such expressions of your thoughts as the weakest capacity can comprehend and the feeblest hand can execute”. Mediaeval achievements are “the expressions of the mind of manhood by the hands of childhood”. Morris avoided language of this sort. He did cherish some illusions common to the majority of nineteenth-century mediaevalists, and described the unknown foreman of works of the mediaeval cathedrals, lost amidst the mass of the workers, stressing the gulf which separated him from the bureaucratic and commercial architect of today. In his utopia, when he took up the Ruskinian theme of freedom of expression in work, he took it for granted that the English people of the twenty-second century would express the newly recovered youthfulness of the world with brains and hands alike adult.

Although he remained proof against Ruskin’s theological arguments nevertheless Morris followed him in his conclusions. Breaking with the Christian tradition of Gothic art, “the modern English mind has this much in common with that of the Greek, that it intensely desires, in all things, the utmost completion or perfection compatible with their nature”. Industrialised England, instead of making a man of the worker by accepting his inevitable and innate imperfection, reduced him to the level of a mere machine, “an animated tool”. In demanding the precision of cogwheel and compass from workers “you must unhumanize them”. After ten hours in the factory, they are, mentally, nothing more than “a heap of sawdust”. The admirably finished products of modern England are “signs of a slavery . . . a thousand times more bitter and more degrading than that of the scourged African, or helot Greek”. The strength of the multitudes “is given daily to be washed into the fineness of a web, or racked into the exactness of a line”. The contrast is striking when we look at the facade of a cathedral which displays “the life and liberty of every workman who struck the stone; a freedom of thought, and rank in scale of being . . . which it must be the first aim of all Europe at this day to regain for her children”.

“We have much studied and much perfected, of late, the great civilized invention of the division of labour; only we give it a false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided; but the men. — Divided into more segments of men — broken into small fragments and crumbs of life, so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough
to make a pin, or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin or the head of a nail... if we could only see with what crystal sand their points were polished, - sand of human soul... - we should think that there is some loss in it also.”

This division of labour, this dividing up of a man, is seen again in another form in the barrier which has been set up between the brain which conceives and the hand which executes, arising from the prejudice which despises manual labour. However, “one man’s thoughts can never be expressed by another”:

“We are always in these days endeavouring to separate the two; we want one man to be always thinking and another to be always working, and we call one a gentleman, and the other an operative; whereas the workman ought often to be thinking, and the thinker often to be working, and both should be gentlemen in the best sense... The mass of society is made up of morbid thinkers, and miserable workers. Now it is only by labour that thought can be made healthy, and only by thought that labour can be made happy, and the two cannot be separated with impunity... All professions should be liberal... In each several profession, no master should be too proud to do its hardest work. The painter should grind his own colours; the architect work in the mason’s yard with his men; the master-manufacturer be himself a more skilful operative than any man in his mills...”

And the final form of this fragmentation of man is the total cleavage and opposition between professional life and domestic life. The heart of the worker “cannot go into the form of cogs and compasses, but expands, after the ten hours are over, into fireside humanity”.

The antithesis of this division of labour and of the worker is Gothic art, in which “there is perpetual change, both in design and execution”. The result is continuing joy both for the craftsman and for those who look at his work, because

“we must no more expect to derive either pleasure or profit from an architecture whose ornaments are of one pattern, and whose pillars are of one proportion, than we should out of a universe in which the clouds were all of one shape, and the trees all of one size”.

Were they not too well known, it would be necessary to quote at length from the admirable pages in which Ruskin describes the infinite diversity of Gothic ornamentation, the capitals of the Palace of the Doges, each one a marvel of invention, the pillars and facades displaying an absence of symmetry that is both fantastic and harmonious. The joy of those who contemplate echoes the joy of the creator who can apply in his work, in all directions, all the resources of his personality.

So it is only through the ending of the division of labour, in diversity of occupation, that the reconciliation of the worker with his task becomes possible. The “universal outcry” which today goes up from factories does not arise, claims Ruskin, but from the fact that the workers “have no pleasure in the work by which
they make their bread”. Allowing the internal contradiction between his Protestantism and his aesthetic sensuality to burst forth, Ruskin here resolutely breaks with Carlyle and refuses to believe that it is work itself which is subject to the original curse. “It is written, ‘in the sweat of thy brow’, but it was never written ‘in the breaking of thine heart’, thou shalt eat bread.” Work must be a joy or there is no justification for it:

“I believe the right question to ask, respecting all ornament, is simply this: Was it done with enjoyment – was the carver happy while he was about it? It may be the hardest work possible, and the harder because so much pleasure was taken in it; but it must have been happy too, or it will not be living.”

That is what Morris considers to be essential in Ruskin’s message. When he, in his turn, develops the theme of pleasure in work, he excuses himself for not being able to be more than “an echo of his words”. Art, he repeats, is man’s expression of his joy in labour”, and he adds:

“If those are not Professor Ruskin’s words they embody at least his teaching on this subject. Nor has truth more important ever been stated.”

This is the major theme of his utopia, and when he published the chapter, On the Nature of Gothic, at the Kelmscott Press, it was essentially to acknowledge his debt to Ruskin on the point, as he wrote in his preface:

“For the lesson which Ruskin here teaches us is that art is the expression of man’s pleasure in labour; that it is possible for man to rejoice in his work, for, strange as it may seem to us today, there have been times when he did rejoice in it.”

Ruskin goes a very long way in this direction, and sketches an idea, which Morris developed at length, when he declares:

“Play is an exertion of body or mind, made to please ourselves, and with no determined end; and work is a thing done because it ought to be done, and with a determined end. You play, as you call it, at cricket, for instance. That is as hard work as anything else; but it amuses you, and it has no result but the amusement. If it were done as an ordered form of exercise, for health’s sake, it would become work directly.”

I do not know whether Morris read this text, but it contains the germ of all his utopian thought on the suppression of the contradiction between work and leisure. Man does not draw back in the face of any effort, and even undertakes it voluntarily when he has the joy of being able to express his intelligence and sensibility in what he is doing, and it is from this joy that beauty and art are naturally born. Ruskin distinguishes two kinds of beauty:

“First, that external quality of bodies . . . which, whether it occur in a stone, a flower, beast or in man, is absolutely identical, which . . . may be shown to be in some sort typical of the Divine attributes and which therefore I shall . . . call Typical Beauty; and, secondarily, the appearance of felicitous fulfilment of function in living things, more es-
pecially of the joyful and right exertion of perfect life in man; and this kind of beauty I shall call Vital Beauty." 406

Morris was careful not to reproduce this phraseology, but he thought with Ruskin that beauty results from the full exercise of human functions. It derives from that the notion of beauty is inseparable from the notion of usefulness.

"A good spire or porch retains the first idea of a roof usefully covering a space, as a Norman high cap or elongated Quaker's bonnet retains the original idea of a simple covering for the head; and any extravagance of subsequent fancy may be permitted, so long as the notion of use is not altogether lost." 407

Ruskin praises the Gothic builders for never having accepted that artificial needs of symmetry should prevent a building fulfilling its practical use, and for having, without bothering about conventions, put in a window, added a room, built a pillar where it was needed: the general effect was never spoiled. 408

"We require from buildings, as from men, two kinds of goodness: first doing their practical duty well; then they can be graceful and pleasing in doing it; which last itself is another form of duty." 409

However it must be admitted that, on this point, Ruskin does not shine with coherent logic. Just a few pages further on, he stresses, on the contrary, that utility should not be sacrificed to the pleasure of the imagination and that a distinction must be drawn between the aesthetic and the useful.

"And above all, do not try to make all these pleasures reasonable, nor to connect the delight which you take in ornament with that which you take in construction or usefulness. They have no connection. Remember that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless; peacocks and lilies for instance." 410

Which really is contradicting himself and even forgetting the distinction he had only just established between Vital Beauty and Typical Beauty. What is more, looking more closely and accepting Ruskin's ideology, is this distinction defensible? Should not typical beauty, from his own point of view, be considered as the vital beauty of nature, a work of God, as "the appearance of felicitous fulfilment of function" in that nature? In spite of its religious garb, does not this concept of typical beauty once more betray a passive pagan sensuality existing side by side with active Protestantism which would rather be expressed by the concept of vital beauty? These subtleties and contradictions, which only became painful to Ruskin after the time when his "deconversion" made them more or less conscious, obviously never embarrassed Morris, who, despite his sincere enthusiasm, was always discreetly selective in his acceptance of the heritage of Ruskin and never ceased, strictly and with deepening thoughtfulness, to make an intimate association between art and everyday life.

Even after this inevitable sitting, it must be recognised that the heritage is considerable: a definite vision of the Middle Ages and an understanding of the sources of their vitality, a respect for unpolished work, the greater in that it is the expression of man's joy in his labour; the necessary diversity of occupation, the source of joy in labour and, consequently, of art; the link between beauty
and usefulness. These are the ideal values which need utopia. Industrial civilisation rejects them. What is to be done to get rid of the present alienation of the working class? Ruskin feels that remedies must be provided for the evils he has described. What does he suggest? We must, he says, get rid of machines, but we do not know when or how. Despite his unhappy attempts with the Guild of St. George, he did not, properly speaking, establish a real theory of the labouring class. What he essentially suggested (and this gave Morris ample food for thought) was “a right understanding, on the part of all classes, of what kinds of labour are good for men, raising them, and making them happy” and also “a determined sacrifice of such convenience, or beauty, or cheapness as is only to be got by the degradation of the workman, and ... equally determined demand for the products and results of healthy and ennobling labour”.

These demands, thus presented as immediate, could only, for Morris, remain pious hopes. He certainly retained them, but it was his assimilation of historical materialism which gave them revolutionary consistency. They would be satisfied, not through the acquisition of religious and moral conscience, but through a liberation founded upon an understanding of material needs and the laws of social evolution.

But is there, in Ruskin’s work, any attempt to anticipate, any utopian intent? If one exists, it is no more than a passing hint. He writes, for example, in words which are reasonably typical of his attitude: “The advance from the days of Edward I to our own, great as it is confessedly, consists, not so much in what we have actually accomplished, as in what we are now able to conceive”. In fact, nothing of what he does conceive constitutes a deliberate and definite looking towards the future: a course in morality, even when it sets out to be political, does not constitute a system of reform or a utopia. He himself quite realises this, and refuses to go any further:

“... in a science dealing with so subtle elements as those of human nature, it is only possible to answer for the final truth of principles, not for the direct success of plans: and ... in the best of these last, what can be immediately accomplished is always questionable, and what can be finally accomplished, inconceivable”.

Note, in passing, this abstract and speculative belief in an unchanging “human nature”, a belief totally contrary to the precise Marxist concept of Morris. “The human life of all time ... that human nature which is indeed constant enough ... the heart, which is the same in all ages,” says Ruskin. If man, who is his principal care, is unchangeable, is there any point in worrying about his earthly future? What matters is the salvation of his soul. All efforts in this direction must disdain the reproach of utopism. One must keep within the bounds of the possible, but merit will lie in effort rather than in success:

“Quixotism, or Utopianism; that is another of the devil’s pet words. I believe the quiet admission which we are all of us so ready to make, that,
because things have long been wrong, it is impossible they should ever be right, is one of the most fatal sources of misery and crime from which this world suffers. Whenever you hear a man dissuading you from attempting to do well, on the ground that perfection is ‘Utopian’, beware of that man. Cast the word out of your dictionary altogether. There is no need for it. Things are either possible or impossible – you can easily determine which, in any given state of human science. If the thing is impossible, you need not trouble yourselves about it; if possible, try for it. It is very Utopian to hope for the entire doing away with drunkenness and misery out of the Canongate; but the Utopianism is not our business – the work is. It is Utopian to hope to give every child in this kingdom the knowledge of God from its youth; but the Utopianism is not our business – the work is. 

That is all very vague. The aims are ill-defined, and, to use Babeuf’s phrase, Ruskin leaves the means blank. We must find another approach than the examination of explicit declarations in order to lay bare the essence of his thought about an ideal society; and the approach I have in mind holds a particular interest for us. One is struck, reading The Stones of Venice, by the expression of a nostalgia for childhood, which is to be found again in Morris. Speaking of false pleasures, artificial needs and vain knowledge introduced by the Renaissance, Ruskin writes, referring to the persistence of such temptations:

“This we are exposed to chiefly in the fact of our ceasing to be children. For the child does not seek false pleasure; its pleasures are true, simple, and instinctive.”

All men, he says again in a similar context, “look back to the days of childhood as of greatest happiness, because those were the days of greatest wonder, greatest simplicity, and most vigorous imagination”, and finally: “It is the child’s spirit, which we are most happy when we most recover.”

These reflections, which cast a light for us upon Ruskin’s mediaeval vision, should be set beside a passage of Modern Painters which is a paraphrase of them and which gives us a key to his latent utopism:

“If we ever become wise enough to dress consistently and gracefully, to make health a principal object in education, and to render our streets beautiful with art, the external charm of past history will in great measure disappear . . . Whatever external charm attaches itself to the past, would then be seen in proper subordination to the brightness of present life; and the elements of romance would exist, in the earlier ages, only in the attraction which must generally belong to whatever is unfamiliar; In the reverence which a noble nation always pays to its ancestors; and in the enchanted light which races, like individuals, must perceive in looking back to the days of their childhood.”

All these texts clearly suggest that for Ruskin the golden age lies not in the future, but in the mediaeval past. The “if ever . . .” which introduces the last exposition has the note of pleasant hypothesis and poetic projection. Soon we shall see all that lies beneath all this nostalgia for the Middle Ages, quite aside from the problem of artistic creation. For the moment we will be content with
the observation that these thoughts of Ruskin's perhaps provided fodder for Morris's theme of the renewed youth of the world. However, with Morris it is not empty nostalgia, but a shout of triumph inspired by a reasoned certainty of achievement, and this renewed youth will not be a cyclic repetition of earlier youth, but the youth proper to a new world, achieved at a much higher level in the historical spiral, as defined by Engels.

* * *

One fact, however, is incontestable, and today it is difficult for us to measure the extent of it: that is the extraordinary influence which Ruskin exerted upon different strata of the population in the direction of embracing socialism. We must not forget that he provoked a scandal in his generation as Morris did in his, and that, under the pressure of Victorian opinion, Thackeray had to suspend publication of Unio this Last in the Cornhill Magazine and Froude that of Manora Pulvers in Frazer's Magazine.

In his preface to The Nature of Gothic, Morris notes that a book like Unio this Last had "the most enduring and beneficent effect on his contemporaries" and that "John Ruskin, the teacher of morals and politics... has done serious and solid work towards the new birth of Society." 324 Belfort Bax, in a Commonweal article entitled The Commercial Hearth, violently took to task the young bourgeois enraptured with Ruskinian ideology, and his invective does not lack interest:

"Your societies of St. George, your aesthetic movements, etc.,... only touch a fringe of the well-to-do classes: they have no root in the life of the present day; and because they have no root, they wither away and in a few years remain dried up between the pages of history, to mark the place of mistaken enthusiasm and abortive energies. It is surely time that these excellent young people, together with their beloved prophet, descended for a while from their mound of Ruskinian transfiguration, with its rolling masses of vaporous sentiment, to the prosaic ground of economic science, and saw things as they are."

This was too much for William Morris, who would not agree to publish this article without adding a note of protest in which he declared that Ruskin "has shown such insight even into economical matters, and I am sure he has made many Socialists". 425 Our poet was convinced that, among the middle classes, "most of those who are worth anything have been touched by Ruskin's writings and converted into Socialists of some kind". 422 and, in the course of an interview "he remarked that Mr. Ruskin's influence in the propagation of Socialism was far from small... especially conspicuous in Edinburgh, where there is a Students' Socialist Society". 423 The only circle which appears to have remained unaffected by Ruskin's influence was the Fabian Society and that, we are told by Pease, the historian of the movement, was "by reaction against his religious mediaevalism, and indifference to his gospel of art"; he adds, not without disdain: "Books so eminently adapted for young ladies at mid-Victorian schools did not appeal to modernists educated by Comte and Spencer". 424 Note in passing, that it would need a long study (and this is not the place for it) in order to list all Morris's reasons for hostility towards the
Fabians. However, Bernard Shaw, in an appendix to Pease's book, assures us that "here and there in the Socialist movement workmen turned up who had read *Fires Claniera* or *Unto this Last*; and some of the more well-to-do no doubt had read the first chapter of *Munera Pulveris". And here we really do have a remarkable phenomenon. Morris was surprised to discover "such a hearty feeling toward John Ruskin among working-class audiences: they can see the prophet in him rather than the fantastic rhetorician, as more superfine audiences do". In the columns of *Commonweal* itself, he was able to publish letters from obscure militants, such as that of George Sturt, who wrote that he owed his being a socialist to Ruskin. In the marvellously documented and, unhappily unfinished study of Tom Mann, which Dona Torr left us before she died, she provided us with a number of similar pieces of evidence. Burt, the miners' M.P., had, in his youth, walked nearly twenty miles on each occasion to spend his few shillings on the four numbers of *The Cornhill Magazine* which contained the next chapters of *Unto this Last*. Dona Torr quotes the case of a worker who, being unable to buy this book, copied it out from end to end. Tom Mann himself knew whole passages of Ruskin by heart and, she tells us, it was his reading of Ruskin which prepared him for that of Marx, a remark which is just as valid where Morris is concerned.

It is difficult today to imagine such success for Ruskin among the working-class public. To understand it, one must take into account that, at the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century, socialist literature proper was scanty and of a feeble theoretical calibre. The works of Marx and Engels were only translated into English very late on and in very small numbers. Morris himself was only able to read *Capital* thanks to his knowledge of French. Any book showing any understanding of the workers' cause was seized upon. Such works were, for the most part, by bourgeois writers whose ideology was far from being specifically working-class. But the occurrence was so rare in this generally reactionary society that all the contradictions were readily forgiven and even the slightest expression of sympathy was passionately and selectively treasured. It really does seem that this phenomenon of selective reading was a characteristic of the period, and is not Morris himself a striking example of it? There is another factor to be taken into account. This religious ideology and even the theological argumentation, which run through all Ruskin's writings and are so foreign to modern socialism, were not at all distasteful and seemed normal to a working class which was still deeply Christian and whose ways of expression were strongly affected by Sunday preaching and ecclesiastical literature.

* * *

One would not think of denying that Ruskin's work is saturated by a feeling of commiseration, paternalist and distant perhaps, but none the less sincere and ardent, for the lot of the working class; and the magic of his style expresses this sentiment in unforgettable ways that are almost incantations. He expresses "the animation of her multitudes . . . sent like fuel to feed the factory smoke", "their universal outcry against wealth, and against nobility", the degradation to which mechanical overexertion subjects workers:
"But to feel their souls withering within them, unthanked, to find their whole being sunk into an unrecognized abyss, to be counted off into a heap of mechanism numbered with its wheels, and weighed with its hammer strokes - this, nature bade not, - this, God blesses not, - this, humanity for no long time is able to endure."

In the nineteenth century, few voices denounced the dehumanization of work with such power and brilliance:

'The great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast, is all in very deed for this, - that we manufacture everything there except men; we blanch cotton, and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living spirit, never enters into our estimate of advantages' 429

Ruskin even had a growing realization of the historical importance of the working class: "More and more I perceive, as my old age opens to me the deeper secrets of human life, that the true story and strength of that world are the story and strength of these helots and slaves." 430 And he also had a naiveté and, one must say, typically bourgeois worship of the working class. He exclaimed about its saintliness, its perfection, its purity:

"Strange words to be used of working people! 'What! holy; without any long robes or anointing oils; these rough-jacketed, rough-worded persons; set to nameless dishonoured service? Perfect! - these, with dim eyes and cramped limbs, and slowly wakening minds? Pure! - these, with sensual desire and grovelling thought; soul of body and coarse of soul?' It may be so; nevertheless, such as they are, they are the holiest, perfectest, purest persons the earth can at present show. They may be what you have said; but if so, they yet are holier than we who have left them thus".

Nevertheless, this naive worship was accompanied by strange advice which must have left the working-class readers of *Unto this Last* somewhat bemused:

"The rich not only refuse food to the poor; they refuse wisdom; they refuse virtue; they refuse salvation. Ye sheep without shepherd, it is not the pasture that has been shut from you, but the Presence. Meat! perhaps your right to that may be pleadable; but other rights have to be pleaded first. Claim your crumbs from the table if you will, but claim them as children, not as dogs; claim your right to be fed, but claim more loudly your right to be holy, perfect and pure." 431

This exaltation of the human dignity of the worker would surely have come better had it not been accompanied by this supreme disdain for material demands, disdain which by no means indicated hardness of heart but which is obviously the expression of the ignorance and the illusions of a bourgeois lacking real contact with the people. 432 Let us reread this famous passage, to which I have already referred, from *The Stones of Venice*:

"Their universal outcry against wealth, and against nobility, is not forced from them either by the pressure of famine, or the sting of mor-
tified pride ... It is not that men are ill fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread ... It is not that men are pained by the scorn of the upper classes, but they cannot endure their own." 433

When one thinks of the fearful conditions of life of the English proletariat in the nineteenth century, when one rereads the accounts of Engels, of Mayhew, of Booth or the Hammonds, this mis-placing of stress has something shocking about it. Nothing is further from the thinking of William Morris, who was better informed, not only through his reading but through his militant experience, who waxed indignant at these idealistic preachings and declared that the achievement of dignity and art by the worker is primarily "a knife and fork matter". Ruskin's obtuseness seems to have no limit. The needy readers of his works must have made great call upon the selective fervour to which I referred when they read:

"I will even go so far as to say that we ought not to get books too cheaply. No book, I believe, is ever worth half so much to its reader as one that has been coveted for a year at a bookstall, and bought out of saved halfpence; and perhaps a day or two's fasting." 434

Nor can one help being struck by Ruskin's social terminology. He does speak of upper class and lower class, but this word class is not frequent and has no precision. He more readily speaks of idlers and workers, but the words which come most often to his pen are those of masters and servants, 435 which really is a sign of a lack of direct grasp of the reality of his times, and, also, of a singularly archaic attitude.

We find the same vagueness (and the word is scarcely strong enough) when he attempts to touch upon the history of exploitation, which he calls "the pillage of the worker by the idler" 436 according to him, exploiters were, first, landlords, then, soldiers, lawyers, and priests; finally, merchants and usurers 437. Obviously we are a very long way from the strict definitions which Morris borrowed from Marx and Engels. Despite all this lack of theoretical clarity (and it would be a long task to compile a complete list) one cannot escape the conclusion that, throughout Ruskin's work, attacks and criticisms mount up against the industrial bourgeoisie and the way of life it forced upon England. With incomparable eloquence, he expressed the general feeling of dissatisfaction and frustration. "From John Ruskin to the Dock-labourer," writes Morris, "all are discontented." 438 And looking back in the last years of his life, he exclaims: "How deadly dull the world would have been twenty years ago, but for Ruskin! It was through him that I learned to give form to my discontent." 439 "His feeling against Commercialism," he says further, "is absolutely genuine and his expression of it most valuable. " 440

Many expressions used by Ruskin were re-used by Morris, as, for example the comparison of the injustices of "the morbid power of manufacture and commerce" with "those of the gambling-house", 441 as the observation that "commodities are made to be sold and not to be consumed" 442 and many
more which we shall discover in the exposition of certain ideas often expressed by Ruskin. It is even not too much to say that concepts taken from Marx are often expressed by Morris in the language of Ruskin, which possibly is an extenuating circumstance in the blindness of certain critics. And we must not neglect the fact that certain of Marx's descriptions are to be found in embryonic state in Ruskin. This is true, as we shall see, about the division of labour. It is also true about the accumulation of riches at one extreme and poverty at the other.

"Mercantile economy," wrote Ruskin, ". . . signifies the accumulation in the hands of individuals, of legal or moral claim upon, or power over, the labour of others; every such claim implying precisely as much poverty or debt on one side, as it implies riches or right on the other." 447

Obviously we are a very long way from the extraordinary investigations of Capital, but we cannot deny the existence, upon certain points, of a similarity of matter, such as to favour looseness of vocabulary, all the more understandable because Morris, addressing the public at large, naturally made use of simpler formulations than those of Marx's scientific analyses.

In his attacks against the laissez-faire of the industrial bourgeois, Ruskin multiplies his hammer-blows: "the art of becoming 'rich', in the common sense, is not absolutely nor finally the art of accumulating much money for ourselves, but also of contriving that our neighbours shall have less, "robbing the poor because he is poor, is especially the mercantile form of theft, consisting in taking advantage of a man's necessities in order to obtain his labour or property at a reduced price". 444 He sees two kinds of individual in society: the pluses and the minuses:

". . . the pluses make a very positive and venerable appearance in the world, so that everyone is eager to learn the science which produces results so magnificent; whereas the minuses have, on the other hand, a tendency to retire into back streets and other places of shade, or even to get themselves wholly and finally put out of sight in graves." 445

Addressing the theoreticians of vulgar utilitarianism, he says, "You have founded an entire Science of Political Economy, on what you have stated to be the constant instinct of man - the desire to defraud his neighbour." 446 The business men who are the men of the hour are:

"men who conceive the proper state of the world to be simply that of a vast and disorganised mob, scrambling each for what he can get, trampling down the children and old men in the mire, and doing what work it finds must be done with any irregular squad of labourers it can bribe or inveigle together and afterwards scatter to starvation". 445

And yet this unemployment to which they are reduced is beyond understanding when one thinks of all the works of public utility which our society should be demanding to assure its basic needs and its health. 448 There is no law against all these abuses, but "proceedings may be legal which are by no means just". 449 In terms which we find repeated almost identically by Marx and by Morris, Ruskin deprecates the waste of talent caused by this anarchic competition.
"For aught I know, there may be two or three Leonardo da Vincis employed at this moment in your harbours and railroads, but you are not employing their Leonardesque or golden faculty there, — you are only oppressing and destroying it." 460

The countryside of modern England is a sinister reflection of these contrasts:

"Our cities are a wilderness of spinning wheels instead of palaces, yet the people have not clothes. We have blackened every leaf of English greenwood with ashes, and the people die of cold; our harbours are a forest of merchant ships, and the people die of hunger." 461

I could go on indefinitely quoting descriptions of modern towns, where ugliness vies with poverty, and suburbs where pretentious stucco villas have sprung up, what Morris later called "cockney villas" all with names like Moretimer House or Montague Villa. 462

This bourgeois civilisation horrified Ruskin as much by its hideousness as by its injustice and anarchy, and Morris expressed the same horror. But both of them belonged to the class they condemned, and they could not help showing towards the men they judged so severely an almost painful understanding on the individual level. "They are," wrote Ruskin,

"men capable of compassion, and open to reason, but with personal interests at stake so vast, and with all the gear and mechanism of their acts so involved in the web of past iniquity, that the best of them are helpless, and the wisest blind." 463

Certain individuals among them attempt to exert a healthy influence upon their workers, and their riches are, according to cases, the "Mammon either of Unrighteousness or Righteousness". 464 In the first years of his life as a militant, Morris, filled with illusions, also appealed to the bourgeoisie, exhorting them to redeem themselves, and, later, tried almost desperately to integrate them into the classless society of his utopia. For Ruskin there was no question of such a prospect nor such an upset of property. The great industrial and financial bourgeoisie had nothing to fear from him, but he implored them, in the fashion of Carlyle but with, perhaps, less certainty, to ensure the regeneration of the world and of themselves:

"What less can we hope from your wealth than this, rich men of England, when once you feel fully how, by the strength of your possessions — not, observe, by the exhaustion, but by the administration of them and the power, — you can direct the acts — command the energies — inform the ignorance — prolong the existence, of the whole human race?" 465

Whatever the sentimental attachment which Morris retained for his own class, he could not follow Ruskin along that road, and here the break is complete.

* * *
Morris entrusted the regeneration of mankind, including the bourgeoisie, to the working class. Carlyle, on the other hand, saw the captains of industry as the saviours of society. Ruskin seemed for a moment to subscribe to this idea. In fact, nothing of the kind. Whereas Carlyle turned to the bourgeoisie because he saw no hope in the old aristocracy, Ruskin showed himself to be, at bottom, much more of a petty-bourgeois Victorian than Carlyle by his snobbery. "There should still," he declares, "be a trenchant distinction of race between nobles and commoners," and this distinction should be marked by a profound respect on the part of the latter.

"To yield reverence to another, to hold ourselves and our likes at his disposal, is not slavery; often it is the noblest state in which a man can live in this world. . . . And therefore, in all ages and in all countries, reverence has been paid and sacrifice made by men to each other, not only without complaint, but rejoicingly; and famine, and peril, and sword, and all evil, and all shame have been borne willingly in causes of masters and kings."

The grandeur of Venice lasted so long as the authority of the Doges was based upon the faithful and resolute support of the aristocracy who elected them and which had been instituted "by its unity and heroism", a unity contrasting with the frightful squabbles and revolutions which rent the whole of Italy at that period. There was the same deplorable contrast between the mediaeval order and modern society:

"... of old, the separation between the noble and the poor was merely a wall built by law; now it is a veritable difference of level in standing, a precipice between upper and lower grounds in the field of humanity, and there is a pestilential air at the bottom of it."

This precipice had come into being from the Renaissance onwards; the split was born of impiety, pride in rank and false luxury. The aristocracies of Europe had entrenched themselves in "that insolent and festering isolation, against which the cry of the poor sounded hourly in more ominous union, bursting at last into thunder (mark where, - first among the planted walks and splashing fountains of the palace wherein the Renaissance luxury attained its utmost height in Europe, Versailles.)" Had the English nobility understood this lesson? Ruskin seems to have thought so, because, he writes, it has never "had . . . so much sympathy with the lower [classes] or charity for them". He reminds it that "the first character of all the Nobilities which have founded great dynasties in the world is to be poor", which does not prevent him from asserting, without worrying about inconsistency, that it would be "highly advantageous to the State that a certain number of persons distinguished by race should be permitted to set examples of wise expenditure, whether in the advancement of science, or in patronage of art and literature". But the natural mission of the nobility is not restricted to patronage, and the appeal which Ruskin makes to it is exactly the same as that addressed by Carlyle to the Captains of Industry.

"The people are crying to you for command, and you stand there at pause, and silent. You think they don't want to be commanded; try them
...and they will follow you through fire... They love their old ways yet, and their old masters, and their old land.”

The name of Ruskin should be associated with the notion of feudal socialism much more appropriately than that of Carlyle. He is the most authentic example of that ideology, which Morris must have brushed aside contemptuously, for his mediaevalism was inspired by the desire to renew links with a popular, democratic and even revolutionary tradition.

For Ruskin, on the contrary, the rôle of the aristocracy was “to keep order among their inferiors, and raise them always to the nearest level with themselves of which those inferiors are capable”. His conception of the world was the transposition, pure and simple, of the mediaeval theological notion of the scale of being. Peace, justice and God’s word, he writes, “can only be given by a true Hierarchy and Royalty, beginning at the throne of God, and descending, by sacred stair let down from Heaven, to bless and keep all the Holy creatures of God, man and beast, and to condemn and destroy the unholy”. What makes “the true strength of every human soul is to be dependent upon as many nobler as it can discern, and to be depended upon, by as many inferior as it can reach”. This authoritarian hierarchy is natural and is God’s will: “all human government is nothing else than the executive expression of this Divine authority”. Let every man be aware of this, on pain of coercion: “So the bridle of man is to be the Eye of God; and if he rejects that guidance, then the next best for him is the horse’s and the mule’s, which have no understanding”. Ruskin’s diatribes against any separation of Church and State, and his ideas about the religious rôle of officials, give a frankly theocratic appearance to his ideology.

Thus obedience is the greatest virtue: “any form of government will work, provided the governors are real, and the people obey them”. All means are justified to ensure this:

“The essential thing for all creatures is to be made to do right; how they are made to do it — by pleasant promises or hard necessities, pathetic oratory or the whip — is comparatively immaterial.”

Nothing is more obnoxious to Ruskin than “the pursuit of that treacherous phantom which men call Liberty: most treacherous, indeed of all phantoms; for the feeblest ray of reason might surely show us, that not only its attainment, but its being, was impossible. There is no such thing in the universe. There never can be. The stars have it not; the earth has it not; the sea has it not; and we men have the mockery and semblance of it only for our heaviest punishment.” Let us abandon this word, “by which the luxurious mean licence, and the reckless mean change; by which the rogue means rapine, and the fool, equality, by which the proud mean anarchy, and the malignant violence”.

The doctrines of liberty and equality “affect the whole body of the civilised world with apparently incurable disease”. The whole of Ruskin’s work is peppered with tirades about “the impossibility of equality among men” and the respect due to “every man who is worthily filling his appointed place in society, however humble”. Egalitarian speeches arouse his ire, or, more rarely, his contemptuous indulgence:
"...the common insolences and petulances of the people, and their talk of equality, are not irreverence in them in the least, but mere blindness, stupefaction, and fog in the brains, the first sign of any cleansing away of which is, that they gain some power of discerning, and some patience in submitting to, their true counsellors and governors". 476

Inequality in the distribution of wealth is "always, in some degree, just and necessary", 477 and "justly established, benefits the nation". 478 He would prefer it always to be founded upon "paternal government", which he would want to reconcile with a semi-military disciplining of the masses, that the government might "have its soldiers of the ploughshare as well as its soldiers of the sword". It is only on condition that the workers "yield to the governor the direction and discipline of their labour" that he can paternally guarantee them full employment and protection in adversity. 479 In this manner also it will be possible to establish the same bonds of affection between the employer and worker as unite the military leader with his troops, the master with his servants. 480 His conclusion upon this point is clear and categorical:

"My continual aim has been to show the eternal superiority of some men to others, sometimes even of one man to all others; and to show also the advisability of appointing such persons to guide, to lead, or on occasion even to compel and subdue, their inferiors according to their own better knowledge and wiser will." 481

I will content myself with reminding those who claim to see in Morris nothing more than a complete disciple of Ruskin that in 1877, in his first public lecture, while no socialist influence was yet at work upon him and he was attempting to transmit faithfully the aesthetic message of the master, our poet exclaimed:

"I believe that as we have even now partly achieved liberty, so we shall one day achieve equality, which, and which only, means fraternity." 482

* * *

In 1856, in a letter to Henry Acland, Ruskin described himself as being "by nature and instinct, conservative, loving old things because they are old and hating new ones merely because they are new", and, sixteen years later, he repeated that he was "a violent Tory of the old school". 483 But at the same time he described himself as a "Communist of the old school - reddest also of the red". 484 These assertions did not seem to him to be at all contradictory and perhaps they are not altogether, provided, of course, one knows the meanings he is giving to the terms he uses.

We will leave aside the lamentable experiment of the Guild of St. George, which was for Ruskin little more than an occasion for uttering somewhat empty phrases and showing his incompetence and final loss of interest. 485 It is remarkable that Morris, despite the utopian nature of this adventure, never paid it the slightest attention. Instead, he pored avidly over Ruskin's social writing and, still proceeding in the selective way I have described, he attempted to establish a coherent link between his ethical and aesthetic message and what progressive elements there might be in his social message.
This is more specifically expressed in the later writings, possibly less familiar to Morris, but from the works which he already reread and admired he was able to glean a few encouraging assertions which he must have picked out indulgently from others which were doubtless less so.

One fundamental principle was stated in Modern Painters, that of mutual solidarity: "...The highest and first law of the universe — and the other name of life is, therefore, 'help'. The other name of death is 'separation'. Government and co-operation are in all things and eternally the laws of life. Anarchy and competition, eternally, and in all things, the laws of death." 485 This more horizontal conception of the unity of the body of society was certainly more acceptable to Morris than the vertical and hierarchical concept of the human ladder. Moreover, it was mediaeval, as Ruskin did not fail to notice: "The Gothic had fellowship with all hearts, and was universal, like nature." 487

It was in Unto this Last that Morris succeeded in finding ideas that suited him. One of them was certainly far more revolutionary than Ruskin imagined, with his total ignorance of the laws which governed the value of the labour force. The worker's just wage, he wrote "will consist in a sum of money which will at any time procure for him at least as much labour as he has given, rather more than less." Poor Ruskin did not have any idea that he was demanding, pure and simply, the abolition of capitalist surplus value and of the private ownership of the means of production, and even added a thoroughly demagogic phrase, which Morris avoided supporting. What strikes me as more interesting, in regard to reward for labour, is an idea, which, by the way, contradicts this former one, which Ruskin develops in The Political Economy of Art, with the more or less avowed intention of shocking opinion by its paradox.

"... as for stimulus to exertion, believe me, no good work in this world was ever done for money ... A real painter will work for you exquisitely, if you give him ... bread, water and salt ... And I believe that there is no chance of Art's flourishing in any country until you make it a simple and plain business, providing its masters with an easy competence, but rarely with anything more." 489

This is an idea which Morris readily takes up, but in a very different context. What, with Ruskin, is more or less a paradox, becomes a coherent idea in Morris's communism: in the society of abundance, wages have disappeared, equality prevents any favoured treatment, every worker has become an artist and the reward for work is the work itself. It is, too, surprising that Ruskin did not link this proposition with the idea of pleasure in work. But let us get back to Unto this Last, where he sets out the fundamental principle of the choice to be made between charity and justice:

"... the mistake of the best men through generation after generation, has been that great one of thinking to help the poor by alms giving, and by every other means, emollient or consolatory, except the one thing which God orders for them, justice". 490

One must admit that Ruskin the Christian had gone a considerable way in order to reach this conclusion. But this abstract boldness soon turned sharply aside, because he declared that "we had better seek for a system which will develop honest men, than one which will deal cunningly with vagabonds", and
be deduced from that a proposition of classical idealism: “Let us reform our schools, and we shall find little reform needed in our prisons.” In truth, one cannot tell with Ruskin which is more important, deep feeling or rhetoric based upon a dazzling juggling with opposites. Is not that the impression left when one reads that “whereas it has long been known and declared that the poor have right to the property of the rich, I wish it also to be known and declared that the rich have no right to the property of the poor”? And this impression is confirmed when Ruskin affirms the existence of “the great, palpable inevitable fact . . . that what one person has, another cannot have”. The generous feelings which he displays lead on to practical conclusions such that one wonders what there can be “communist” about them.

“Note, finally, that all effectual advancement towards this true felicity of the human race must be by individual, not public effort. Certain general measures may aid, certain revised laws guide, such advancement; but the measure and law which have first to be determined are those of each man’s home. We continually hear it recommended by sagacious people to complaining neighbours (usually less well placed in the world than themselves) that they should ‘remain content in the station in which Providence has placed them’. There are perhaps some circumstances of life in which Providence has no intention that people should be content. Nevertheless, the maxim is on the whole a good one; but it is peculiarly for home use. That your neighbour should, or should not, remain content with his position, is not your business; but it is very much your business to remain content with your own.”

And in case his self-contradictions might have left the reader under some small illusion, he is at pains to disperse it:

“Observe, in these statements I am not taking up, nor countenancing one whit, the common socialist idea of division of property; division of property is its destruction; and with it the destruction of all hope, all industry, and all justice; it is simply chaos – a chaos towards which the believers in modern political economy are fast tending, and from which I am striving to save them . . . . It is continually the fault or the folly of the poor that they are poor . . . . Put it at the worst, that all the poor of the world are but disobedient children, or careless cripples, and that all rich people are wise and strong, and you will see at once that neither is the socialist right in desiring to make everybody poor, powerless, and foolish as he is himself, nor the rich man right in leaving the children in the mire.”

What is really appalling when one reads these lines is the realisation that, in the eyes of Ruskin, socialists are still “sharers” and apostles of equality at the lowest level. What is even more so, is to see that he is still possessed by the dominant ideology, as it had been codified by Samuel Smiles in his famous Self-Help, and that he declares the workers to be responsible for their own poverty. Podsnap might have used the same language, and one can easily see why Morris, despite the enthusiasm he had felt on reading Ruskin’s pages on true riches should have abandoned the idea of publishing Unto this Last at Kelmscott Press.
However, one can only judge the message behind Ruskin’s contradictions, and judge it also, in terms of his development. Morris must have felt some relief on reading Fors Clavigera, published between 1871 and 1877, that is, much later. He never makes the slightest reference to it in his articles, his correspondence or his lectures, but one finds various quotations in Commonweal, in the form of paragraphs, and possibly in that work we may find the solution to these strange contradictions.

The first striking fact, as soon as one skims through the first volume, is the relatively considerable understanding Ruskin had of the Paris Commune, whereas English opinion was up in arms against it:

“The guilty Thieves of Europe, the real sources of all deadly war in it, are the Capitalists – that is to say, people who live by percentages on the labour of others; instead of by fair wages for their own. The Real war in Europe, of which this fighting in Paris is the Inauguration, is between these and the workman, such as these have made him. They have kept him poor, ignorant, and sinful, that they might, without his knowledge, gather for themselves for produce of his toil. At last, a dim insight into the fact of this dawns on him; and such as they have made him he meets them, and will meet.” 496

An astonishing declaration, deserving of respect, even if it was followed by a withdrawal on the (false) report of the destruction of the artistic treasures of Paris by the Communards, and even if it does underestimate the level of political consciousness. In an article published in 1948 and republished in 1966 in his collection of essays, The Matter of Britain, A. L. Morton, undertaking a remarkable attempt at rehabilitation, underlines the importance of such a reaction, pointing out that for Ruskin’s generation the attitude towards the Commune was the touchstone, just as, in the twentieth century, the touchstone must be with respect to the Russian revolution of 1917. 497

But there is much more in Fors. For the first time, we find definite revolutionary proposals. While clearly dissociating himself from Karl Marx’s International (and this is the first and only reference to it in the whole of his work), he observes that “the squire is essentially an idle person who has possession of land, and lends it, but does not use it; and the capitalist is essentially an idle person, who has possession of tools, and lends them, but does not use them; while the labourer, by definition, is a laborious person, and by presumption a penniless one, who is obliged to borrow both land and tools; and paying, for rent on the one, and profit on the other, what will maintain the squire and capitalist, digs finally a remnant of roots, wherewith to maintain himself.” And he deduces from that that “land should belong to those who can use it, and tools to those who can use them; or, as a less revolutionary, and instantly practicable, proposal, that those who have land and tools should use them.” 498

In fact, the most revealing part of the book is that which he devotes to explaining why he is “a Communist of the old school – reddest also of the red”. On closer examination, this explanation is a paraphrase of the last proposition “less revolutionary and instantly practicable”. What is communism? he asks, and he replies:
First, it means that everybody must work in common and do common or simple work for his dinner; and that if any man will not do it, he must not have his dinner."

This communism "of the old school" is the obligation upon all to work, and he bases it upon extensive quotations from Thomas More which tend in this direction, but he deliberately isolates them from the rest of *Utopia*, probably judging it to be too revolutionary. The second aspect of this communism, equally established by recourse to More, is Christian humility justifying authority:

"our chief concern is to find out any among us wiser and of better make than the rest, and to get them, if they will for any persuasion take the trouble, to rule over us, and teach us how to behave, and make the most of what little good is in us."

His third borrowing from More's communism deserves to be quoted more fully, because it deals with an idea which was to be very dear to Morris and is, at the same time, a very revealing betrayal of the thought of the sixteenth-century utopist:

"... the public, or common, wealth, shall be more and statelier in all its substance than private or singular wealth; that is to say... that there shall be only cheap and few pictures, if any, in the insides of houses, where nobody but the owner can see them; but costly pictures, and many, on the outsides of houses, where the people can see them: also that the Hotel-de-Ville, or Hotel of the whole Town, for the transaction of its common business, shall be a magnificent building, much rejoiced in by the people, and with its tower seen far away through the clear air... The buildings for public or common service, more especially schools, almshouses, and workhouses, are to be externally of a majestic character, as being for noble purposes and charities; and in their interiors furnished with many luxuries for the poor and sick. And, finally and chiefly, it is an absolute law of old Communism that the fortunes of private persons should be small, and of little account in the State; but the common treasure of the whole nation should be of superb and precious things... there should be a common wealth... consisting of pleasant things, which every poor person in the nation should be summoned to receive his dole of, annually."

If this idea of public splendour is common to More and to Morris, and if Ruskin takes it from More as one of the foundation-stones of his "communism of the old school", he is making a fundamental revelation of his thinking and is left far behind, because in More's *Utopia* there were no rich or poor; money had disappeared, along with all property, even private property. Finally, at the end of his lyrical outburst, Ruskin proposes to hold beauty, science and virtue in common.

So what Ruskin retains of More's communism is its least democratic aspect: the discipline of work, the principle of authority and moral preaching. He is not so wrong, all in all, to announce himself as Communist and Tory at the same time, but he is visibly much more Tory than "reddest of the red" and one
cannot even talk of his communism without setting aside all his other declarations in the opposite direction. Is it not typical that, during the very years when he was writing *Fors Clavigera*, he wrote in a letter, on 10 October 1877:

"Let me earnestly beg you not to confuse the discussion of the principles of Property in Earth, Air or Water, with the discussion of principles of Property in general . . . Any attempts to communize these have always ended, and will always end in ruin and shame." 100

* * *

At the end of this analysis, one question inevitably arises. Did William Morris deliberately shut his eyes? Was his selective fervour blind or did it abstain from any criticism? Fortunately, it was nothing of the kind and while he continued to the end to praise what he considered precious in Ruskin's message, on many occasions he dissociated himself. As early as 1882, before any other influence came to interfere, he admitted that "one does not always agree with him". 101 We may even recall that, in 1860, the spiritual ramblings of *Modern Painters* made him lose his patience and he declared that the fifth volume, newly out, was "mostly gammon". 102 Contrariwise, one may remark also that Ruskin, lost in his clouds, was sometimes completely mistaken over the meaning of Morris's socialism. Following the famous lecture of 1883, *Art under Plutocracy*, which was our poet's first profession of political faith and which caused such an uproar when he delivered it in Oxford under the chairmanship of the master, the latter, talking to his students a few days later, made a quick reference to it. Recalling, from Morris's speech, the part that had dealt with the architectural decadence of Oxford, he praised him for having replaced the word democracy by plutocracy in the title of his lecture, and concluded:

"The changes which he so deeply deplored, and so grandly resented, in this once loveliest city, are due wholly to the deadly fact that her power is now dependent on the Plutocracy of Knowledge, instead of its Divinity." 103

But one could not have been mistaken about the meaning Morris gave to the word plutocracy, and the dignitaries who occupied the rostrum had not misunderstood when they had got up and walked out. As for Oxford theology, our poet was no more concerned with that than he was with any other kind of religion, and this marked the first dividing line between the two men. Ruskin's unending contradictions were bound to upset Morris in the end, despite all his tolerance. Speaking to Shaw of this master he held in such veneration, he said, "he would write the most profound truths and forget them five minutes later". 104 The dogmatism of his preaching jarred upon him just as much, and he deplored the "damage Ruskin may have done to his influence by his strange bursts of fantastic perversity". 105

He could not help seeing the ridiculous and vain aspect of his tirades and an account Bruce Glasier gives us in this connection is both odd and significant. Ruskin had been a candidate for the office of Lord Rector of Glasgow University and had been resoundingly rejected in favour of a reactionary opponent.
"But I don't suppose," said Morris, "he was defeated because he called himself a red-hot Communist, or even because he held heterodox views about Capital and Labour... He was defeated, I suspect, because he represented to the generality of the intellectuals what they particularly affect to esteem — namely Literature and Art — but which they really don't. Literature and Art are rebellious jades." 307

In other words, Morris considered that Ruskin's aesthetic and humanistic thought was rightly regarded as more revolutionary and dangerous to the established order than the hodge-podge of socialism which he so nobly profess.

On several occasions he made considered judgements of Ruskin's socialism, briefly, it is true, but in a very revealing way. Disregarding the unending contradictions I have mentioned, and wanting only to retain the affirmation of socialism, he wrote in 1889:

"The pessimistic revolt of the latter end of this century led by John Ruskin against the philistinism of the triumphant bourgeos, halting and stumbling as it necessarily was, shows that the change in the life of civilization had begun, before any one seriously believed in the possibility of altering its machinery." 307

So he sees no constructive character in this "pessimistic revolt" and even stresses its lack of substance. On the other hand, he regards it as a lemma of dissatisfaction, a beginning of understanding, from which real socialism might develop. He explained all this clearly in a lecture delivered in the same year, How Shall We Love Them? Up until now, we only knew the end of the lecture through very incomplete press reports: the manuscript was thought to be lost, but I found it in the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam.

"I know that I had come to these conclusions a good deal through reading John Ruskin's works, and that I focussed so to say his views on the matter of my work and my rising sense of injustice, probably more than I intended, and that the result of all that was that I was quite ready for Socialism when I came across it in a definite form, as a political party with distinct aims for a revolution in society." 307

We note that Morris was well aware of having gone beyond Ruskin's intentions. In a piece written in dialogue form in Commonsal in 1887, the rather muddled quality of which explains why it has never attracted any notice, Morris gives us to understand that Ruskin's socialism is little more than just talk.

"How," asks one of the characters, "should you have known I was a Socialist? If ever I began to talk about the wrongs of the working class or the stupidity of our system of production, you would take me all cross, and think I was only talking Ruskinism." 307

Never had Morris taken disrespect so far, nor so plainly asserted that one cannot claim to be a socialist on the strength of simple denunciation. One cannot help putting this estimate beside a confidence which Ruskin had made to Sydney Cockerell the previous year, and which the latter probably carried back to the poet: "Morris is perfectly right in all he says — only he should not do all he can in his own art." 308 There, again, shows a fundamental difference of attitude.

However, we must admit that it was only exceptionally that Morris's tone was severe to this extent. He was conscious of all he owed Ruskin in the realm of humanist thought (which is where he found the revolutionary element of his message). In his preface to The Nature of Gothic, Morris took into account certain bold statements which appeared in later works (and which he strove to detach from their context) and so persisted in seeing in him a pioneer of the great journey into the future, "in spite of all the disappointments of forty years, and although some of us, John Ruskin among others, have since learned what the equipment for the journey must be." 307

In 1884, filled with the conquering ardour of the neophyte, he went so far as to ask him to join the Democratic Federation. Pleading his state of health, Ruskin refused. 307 He would certainly have done so even without that pretext. He was solitary by temperament, even on the intellectual plane, and his social thinking had matured apart from any reading: the works of contemporary socialists were entirely unknown to him. Was his attitude so very different on the artistic plane? Did he not write:

"Society always has a destructive influence upon the artist; first, by its sympathy with his meanest powers, secondly, by its chilling want of understanding of his greatest; and, thirdly, by its vain occupation of his time and thoughts. Of course a painter of men must be among men: but it ought to be as a watchter, not as a companion." 307

We are a long way from the fraternal warmth of Morris, from that sense of fellowship which inspired his art as well as his socialism. Living among men, joining in with the work, both in his own artistic activity and as a militant, Morris felt the need to have a solid theoretical foundation and an active knowledge of political necessity. He could find neither in Ruskin and frankly said so:

"... though I have a great respect for Ruskin, and his works (besides personal friendship) he is not a socialist, that is not a practical one. He does not expect to see any general scheme even begin; he mingles with certain sound ideas which he seems to have acquired instinctively, a great deal of mere whims, deduced probably from that early training of which he gives an amusing account." 307

When, at the end of his life, he rendered final homage to Ruskin's influence, in the famous retrospective article in Justice, he made use of a phrase which appears not to have been sufficiently noticed. He was my master, he writes, "before my days of practical Socialism" 307 It is clear that these few simple and precise words give the exact dimensions of the problem.

One even begins to wonder if, on balance, the differences do not outweigh the points of agreement, when one draws up a list of all that Morris completely rejected in Ruskin's soul and theological conception of the world: a mediavalism which, although it went back to the best traditions of art, led on to feudal nostalgia and put a return to the past in the place of a prospect for the future, a social ideology based upon the principle that we must be good to be happy, not that one must be happy to be good, 307 a philosophy of history which rejected
any law of development other than that of moral conscience and refused to see
any connection between capitalist exploitation and the decadence of art, sup-
port of class collaboration, a horror of any ideas about liberty and equality, a
vehement authoritarianism which refused the working class any improvement
in its lot other than that charitably granted by its masters by divine right.

That is all true, and all that Morris in fact rejected. But there remains all the
positive content of Ruskin’s humanism, particularly his conception of work
and the worker. That, much more than his socialist whims, forms a coherent
whole which is to be found again whole in Morris’s utopianism. This raises a
question which some will find intriguing. Would it not be tempting to say that
one must distinguish between two completely separate elements in his utopia:
economic and social thought, the paternity of which can be ascribed to Marx,
and a humanism which comes solely from Ruskin’s message? I have no hesita-
tion in saying that such a question derives from a misconception. It betrays an
ignorance, encouraged by recent as well as by earlier theories, of the fact that
Marxism is humanism, totally different from traditional abstract humanism,
but real and fertile; and, as we shall clearly see by the end of our study, it is
this materialist humanism, and not speculative humanism, which is at the
base of Morris’s utopia. But, one may say, what about Ruskin’s theme of work
and the worker? I reply that the same theme is to be found in Marx and
Engels, whose attitudes to problems often match those of Ruskin, except that
with them there is no question of any idealist complications; and this position
of principle is that of Morris. If, for sentimental and aesthetic reasons,
Morris’s formulations are more often inspired by Ruskin’s, the philosophical
inspiration which animates them is certainly different.
CHAPTER THREE

Pre-Marxist Socialism and its Extensions

The present chapter constitutes a parenthesis in our study, but one difficult to avoid if we wish to include without discrimination all the influences which, in varying degrees, bore upon William Morris’s utopian thinking. It is, of course, a question of secondary influences, not in the least comparable in scope or determining rôle with those of Ruskin or Karl Marx. But some aspect or some detail of Morris’s anticipation strongly implies their existence. It may seem astonishing that Morris, whose rigorous adherence to Marxist theory I shall establish, should have drawn unhesitatingly upon the ideology of that utopian socialism so frequently condemned or ridiculed by Marx and Engels. But such astonishment would be simple-minded or tendentious. For one thing, these condemnations and ridicule are very far from black-and-white. They are aimed in essence at the lack of a realistic conception of the class struggle and the fundamental inability to comprehend the historical laws whose application makes it possible to discover the ways and means to revolutionary change. Contrariwise, they show real admiration for certain inspired intuitions (Marx and Engels have no hesitation over using such terms in connection with Saint-Simon, Owen or, especially, Fourier) in the critique of the capitalist system and the expectation of a classless society. 1 Morris knew these writings of Marx and Engels perfectly well, and took note of both condemnation and praise. Any borrowings he may have made do not run counter to either. On the other hand, neither Marx nor Engels ventured into the realm of utopian dreams apart from a general historical view. So Morris felt that he legitimately had an open field and was entitled to bring into his predictions any borrowing which fitted the conception he desired to achieve.

Concerning French socialism, which is our first interest, I am greatly embarrassed. With just one exception, that of Victor Considérant, I cannot find, either in the writings of Morris alone or in the evidence of his contemporaries, any reference to definite reading. Sotheby’s catalogue of the sale of his library in 1898 mentions lots consisting of socialist books and pamphlets, but with no details of titles. At first sight, another source is more interesting. In a paragraph entitled “Books for Socialists”, Commonweal in 1886 published a list of recommended reading for League members, and this list contains titles of books (in English and in French) by Fourier, Proudhon and Saint-Simon. However, there is no proof that Morris compiled the list, and I am, in fact, strongly inclined to doubt it, for two reasons. On the one hand, it contains errors of fact: it is difficult to believe that Morris would credit Fourier with V. Considérant’s La Destinée sociale (the only book in this class which I am sure he did read). On the other hand, the titles given in French bristle with linguistic
errors, which would be surprising on the part of our poet. One last indication claims our attention: an anecdote related by Bruce Glasier. In 1888, during a propaganda tour in Glasgow, Morris, in a long chat with members of the local branch, was astonished that none of them had read Owen, Saint-Simon, Fourier or Louis Blanc. There was no mention made at the time of specific titles, and one must also take into account the fact that Bruce Glasier’s memories dated back thirty-three years, which leaves room for doubt as to their accuracy; he might either have added or omitted.

There remains the theoretical handbook: Socialism, its Growth and Outlines, published in 1893. This work contains two chapters, XVII and XVIII, entitled respectively The Utopists: Owen, Saint-Simon and Fourier, and: The Transition from the Utopists to Modern Socialism. In these two chapters, there is mention, besides the three authors named in the title of the first, of V. Considerant, Cabet, Proudhon, Lassalle, Pierre Leroux and Louis Blanc, and a certain number of their works are mentioned. Does this provide us with a sure key? I do not think so, again for two reasons. In the first place, the book is the joint work of Morris and Bax. Now, the latter certainly had a better knowledge than Morris of the history of socialism and it is by no means certain that our poet had read all the books mentioned. It is very likely that he took second place to Bax in drawing up the list. Secondly, the two chapters are, explicitly, a paraphrase and exegesis, complete with quotations, of Engels’s Socialism, Utopian and Scientific and Marx’s Poverty of Philosophy. The authors faithfully reproduce the analyses and judgments expressed there, and their rare more personal comments are, for the reason already indicated, of ill-defined paternity. On the other hand, in the last chapter of the book, entitled Socialism Triumphant, Fourier is again mentioned, and this passage, dealing with the problem of joy in labour, unmistakably bears the mark of Morris: it is too much in line with his essential interests for there to be room for the smallest doubt. In my opinion, this is the only certainty within our grasp. As for other utopian socialists, it will simply be a question of ideological or textual similarities that may guide our enquiry. Even in such cases I shall avoid unsupported assertions. Sometimes, in fact, it might be a question of simple coincidence and we must always bear in mind the fact that all utopias draw upon a common pool. In other cases, there may have been reading and assimilation, but second-degree assimilation, if I may so put it, that is, in plainer terms, secondary confirmation of a major influence. Finally, and I am tempted to think that this is most often the case, there was perhaps a rapid reading, the traces of which show as scraps difficult to identify. There may also not have been any reading at all without all possibility of influence being thereby excluded. The works of these utopian socialists could have cropped up in many a conversation and discussion between Morris and his comrades in the struggle. Their ideas were “in the air”, and Morris was an attentive listener.

1. Babouvism

Before turning to Saint-Simon and Fourier there seems to me to be some point in looking at another question, that of an influence of Babeuf, or more exactly of Babouvism, because the published writings of the conspiratorial tribune were difficult to come by at that time. One the other hand, the Conspiration pour
l'égalité de Babeuf, which Buonarroti published in Brussels in 1828, had been translated into English in 1836 by Bronterre O'Brien, and this book had made a considerable impression during the Chartist period. It is altogether possible, even probable, that Morris read it. In any case, he had an immense admiration for Babeuf, and, some time before his death, he made Bax promise to write a book on the Conspiracy of Equals; and it was in order to keep this promise that Bax published, in 1911, The Last Episode of the French Revolution. 5

However, references to Babeuf are very rare in Morris's work. There is clearly reference to him in Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, where his attempt at insurrection is briefly recalled and his message described as "the first socialist propaganda". Much more curious is a reference made in a lecture in 1885. There Babeuf is called

"pioneer or prophet ... analogous in some respects to the Levellers of Cromwell's time, but, as might be expected, far more advanced and reasonable than they were."

He had the merit, adds Morris, of trying to put into practice the watchwords of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality which the Republic always emblazoned upon its banners, interpreting them in "a middle-class or ... Jesuitical sense". This comparison with the Levellers is interesting for two reasons. First, because the same comparison already existed in Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, which, without being proof, justifies a presumption that Morris had, at that time, read Engels's pamphlet. And above all, the nature and the sense of the comparison deserve attention. What Morris primarily retained from Babouvism was its egalitarian ideology, which was like a religion to the insurrectionary movement.

"the French republic," wrote Buonarotti, "not accepting any revelation, would not adopt any particular creed; but it would have made equality the only dogma acceptable to the divinity." 8

Of all the writers of utopias, Morris is certainly the one who lays greatest stress upon this principle, and I believe that we can legitimately suppose that this uncompromising attitude, which straightway deliberately broke with the preaching of Carlyle, Ruskin and even Fourier, had its origin in Babouvism. How many times Morris described communism as "the society of equality", clearly he could not subscribe to the notion of an authoritarian equality in penury, inevitably linked to the level of the productive forces before the industrial era, and, in response to Marx's teaching, he could only conceive of communism amid abundance. It is none the less true that egalitarianism rings insistently through his utopia.

There are other ideas in the "programme of the insurrectionary committee" which, even if they had no direct influence upon Morris's thinking, may, at the very least, have confirmed or clarified ideas acquired elsewhere, such as the replacement of the right to property by "an equal right to happiness", subject to "the obligation imposed upon every member to undertake a share in the necessary work". As in More's utopia, "the citizen shall never acquire over anything what is known as property rights; he shall only have the right of use or benefit of the objects placed in his possession". Morris, without being so
deaconian, describes a situation which tends towards this state of affairs. Other ideas of More's are to be found in the conspirators' programme: the distribution of "all the products of earth and industry ... deposited in public shops"; the reduction of the working day to "three or four hours", thanks to the disappearance of "frievous products ... which have no worth but in the eyes of vanity and idleness"; and finally, a conception of town or corresponding to his own.

"When there were no longer any palaces, there would no longer be any bowels, houses would be simple, and the magnificence of architecture and the arts which enhance their beauty would be reserved to public buildings, to amphitheatres, circuses, aqueducts, bridges, canals, squares, archives, libraries and especially to places devoted to the deliberations of magistrates and the exercise of popular sovereignty."

From analogies with the ideas of More, we pass to those with the predictions of Cottetti:

"No more capital, no more big cities; gradually the country would become covered with villages, built in the healthiest and most suitable places, and so disposed as to facilitate communication..."

In the name of republican virtue, the conspirators forbade large built-up areas, as being centres of vice and inequality, which take from the land the only source of all wealth, the arms which it needs."

Although I have only so far mentioned complementary or hypothetical influences, nevertheless there are some aspects of the Babouvite utopia which may have claimed More's attention more directly. First, with the purpose of avoiding "for certain classes too heavy a burden of labour", the conspirators thought "that it would be necessary to call upon the sciences to lighten the toil of men, by the invention of new machines and the perfecting of old ones", which is due to happen during Morris's first stage of socialism. But the machine would not be capable of resolving all difficulties, even at the advanced stage described by Morris, and there is the risk of the continuation of unpleasant and repulsive tasks. For this reason the composers of the "insurrectionary" programme already considered

"that it would be a good thing to charge able-bodied citizens, turn by turn, with the more unpleasant occupations, the objectionableness of which would, one trusted, be progressively diminished by a virile education and the resources of mechanics and chemistry."

This is a solution which occurred to Morris, who also thought that, in a society which had reached the stage of communism, voluntary labour would not be lacking.

Further, he could not but have been sympathetic to the way in which the conspirators proposed to organise the conduct of public affairs. They would,

purer and simpler, suppress "any class exclusively skilled in the principles of social science, laws and administration", because "it would soon find, in the superlativity of its own, and, especially, in the ignorance of its companions, the secret of creating distinctions and privileges for itself". Equality demands, therefore, that the exercise of legislative power be entrusted to all citizens, and
this new idea would not raise any difficulty because "the multiplicity and clash of interests would be wiped out, and the art of conducting public affairs, having become much simplified, would soon be within the grasp of all". Each citizen would, therefore, be "summoned to assemblies where the people would exercise its sovereignty", and these popular assemblies would meet "to discuss, agree or reject laws proposed to the people by its representatives; to consider laws suggested by a certain number of citizens or by other sections of the sovereign body; to be cognisant of and to publish laws approved by the whole people". Here one is certainly talking of a centralised, parliamentary State, and not of the autonomous and apolitical communes described by Morris in his world that has achieved the stage of communism, but there is, nevertheless, an embryo of the direct democracy foreseen by him. The possibility of such a democracy, in a society from which private property has disappeared, is displayed clearly in the programme presented by Buonarotti, and in terms very similar to those used by Morris:

"When one considers, moreover, that the dissension caused today in these meetings by the clash of interests which frequently reduces them to mobs would be banished from them; when one reflects, furthermore, that, having reached a great simplicity in the ordering of public business, all would easily appreciate the usefulness of these assemblies, one will be convinced that, true equality once having been established, they necessarily become objects of interest, of relaxation and of useful emulation". 18

Buonarotti stresses the immense simplification which would result from the new régime and the ease with which democracy would, consequently, be exercised. Here again, the similarity with ideas expressed by Morris is too striking for me to refrain from quoting:

"In order to appreciate the advantages which would derive from legislative power so ordered, one must remember, above all, that a people without property and without the vices and crimes which it engenders, without commerce, money, taxes, finance, civil lawsuits and without want, would not have need of a great number of the laws under which the civilised societies of Europe groan". 19

Finally, we find in the Computation pour l'égalité, a somewhat surprising idea which might well have directed Morris's attention towards one of the fundamental problems of the first stage of the new society, the problem of "unequal rights" which Marx later analysed in the Critique of the Gotha Programme and which Morris raised in 1885 in the Manifesto of the Socialist League.

"All having equally contributed," wrote Buonarotti, "to fertilising the ground and preparing its crops, it is patently just that all should equally participate in the enjoyment of the results, upon which nature has made the preservation and happiness of the species depend"; (but, he adds) "equality is to be measured less by the intensity of fatigue than by the capacity of the worker." 20

This laconic formula risks not being sufficiently clear, and Buonarotti develops his thought in a note following his statement. He is supposed to be
replying to the following objection, which expresses remarkably the point of
the problem: "The physical differences which exist between men do not allow
of the establishment, in the allocation of work and consumer goods, of that
perfect equality which is the objective of the community." Here is the writer's
reply to that objection:

"Here equality must be measured by the capacity of the worker and
by the needs of the consumer, and not by the intensity of work or amount
of goods consumed. He who, endowed with a certain measure of
strength, raises a weight of ten pounds, is working just as hard as he who,
possessed of five-fold strength, moves one of fifty. That man who, to slake
a burning thirst, drinks a bottle of water, enjoys no more than his
neighbour who, slightly thirsty, empties a mug. The objective of the com-

This extraordinary text contains the germ of the famous Marxist definition
of communism: "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his
needs"; but, despite the pertinence of the objection which poses a real problem
in precise terms, Buonarotti gives an answer which can only be theoretical and
abstract. The real answer to the real problem could only be given by the theory
of two stages, as formulated later by Karl Marx and William Morris. But the
fact of having posed it is a praiseworthy act of clear-sightedness at a time when
the conditions for a precise solution did not yet exist. We do not know the date
of Morris's reading of the *Conspiration pour l'égalité*, and it is only the similarity
of certain characteristics which lead me to believe that he did read it. In any
case, it is, at the very least, an altogether probable hypothesis which we have
no right to set aside. It is a pity, as regards the last aspect considered, that our
ignorance of the date of reading does not allow us to understand better the
development of Morris's thought on so important a problem.

2. Saint-Simon

I do not think there is much to be gained by dwelling at length on
Saint-Simon. Nothing leads me to suppose that Morris had any direct
contact with his work, which does not in any way imply that the knowledge of it he
may have had through the writings of Engels was negligible. Aside from the
theoretical handbook of 1893, to which I have referred and to which I shall
return, the only mention I find of Saint-Simon from the pen of Morris goes
back to that same lecture in 1885 in which there was reference to Babeuf in
terms which already suggest the reading of Engels. He cites the name of
Saint-Simon, haphazard with those of Owen, Proudhon and Fourier, to indi-
cate socialists who "have kept up the tradition of hope in the midst of a
bourgeois world", and he only went on with the case of Fourier, who, he
said, deserved special attention.

The only book title to which we can refer is that which figures in the list (of
doubtful paternity) published by *Commonweal* in 1886, *On the Reorganiza-
tion of European Society*. Examination of it does not take us far. Certainly, Saint-Simon
anticipated Marx in general terms when he asserted the primacy of the
economic infrastructure and wrote, for example:
"There is no change in the social order without a change of property.
But the resistance of property-owners cannot be overcome unless the non-owners take arms, hence civil war..."

But these are ideas which Morris would find in much more precise and convincing form in Marxist literature. The invitation to utopia is more attractive.

"The imagination of poets has placed the golden age in the cradle of mankind, amid the ignorance and uncouthness of the first years. Mankind's golden age is not by any means behind us, it lies ahead, in the perfection of social order; our forefathers never saw it, but our offspring will one day reach it; we have to hew out the way for them." 21

Unfortunately, this fine optimism still leaves "the means blank". One may also wonder whether Morris appreciated a progressive ideology based upon such contempt for past centuries. If he had had a more detailed knowledge of the work of Saint-Simon, he would probably have reacted with some vigour against the proposed model industrial pyramid with its whiff of technocracy: it is enough to recall the poor opinion he had of Carlyle's aristocracy of talent. 22 He would have been just as much put off by the contradictions and incoherence which run through the book, and which are lucidly brought out by Gurvitch's introduction. The call to arms of non-owners against property-owners seems to be an extraordinary outburst, and the constant concern with "improving the lot of the poorest and most numerous class" is of reformist rather than revolutionary inspiration. Nor can one very well see how the proletarians would become "shareholders" in a world where the "industrial class", having achieved power, saw the establishment of a hegemony of industrial magnates.

Another point of difference appears in the remarks upon Saint-Simon contained in the book by Morris and Bax - and it is an oddity which claims our attention. The authors quote and translate Socialism, Utopian and Scientific from the shortened edition published by Paul Lafargue in 1880. But they precede the quotation by remarks upon Saint-Simon's mysticism and new religion, taking up and developing a phrase occurring before this passage in Anti-Dühring, from which the pamphlet is taken, and which Bax, an excellent German scholar, obviously knew. Carrying Engels's thought further, Morris and Bax demonstrate the fact that this mysticism finally led into the religion of Comte. This was possibly not Morris's first contact with such a development, because he strongly reproached the English positivists for their claim to wish to make capitalism "moral".

Despite these profound differences between Morris and Saint-Simon, whom our poet probably only knew partially and indirectly, we must pay the closest attention to the judgment made by Engels, which is reproduced in Socialism, its Growth and Outcome:

"In 1816 he asserted that politics were but the science of production, and predicted their absorption by economy. The knowledge that economic conditions serve as the base of political institutions only shows itself here in the germ; nevertheless, this proposition contains clearly the conversion of the political government of men into an administration of
things and a direction of the process of production; that is to say, the abolition of the State, of which such a noise has since been made.***

After thus paying homage to Saint-Simon, Engels, in the second part of his pamphlet, takes up himself, looking forward to communist society, the idea that the State will wither away and that then "the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things."** This fundamental idea is adopted intact by Morris in his utopian thinking and finds dazzling expression in *News from Nowhere.* So if the influence of Saint-Simon was only felt indirectly, through Engels, it was, nonetheless, of capital importance.

3. Charles Fourier and Victor Considérant

Morris's knowledge of the work of Fourier, although it is beyond doubt, poses just as many problems. Textual analysis* leads me to believe that it took effect in four stages. In an article published in *Justice* in 1894, Morris wrote:

"Oddly enough, I had read some of Mill, to wit, those posthumous papers of his (published, was it in the Westminster Review or the Fortnightly?) in which he attacks Socialism in its Fourierist guise. In those papers he put the arguments, as far as they go, clearly and honestly, and the result, so far as I was concerned, was to convince me that Socialism was a necessary change, and that it was possible to bring it about in our own days. Those papers put the finishing touch to my conversion to Socialism... I learned from Mill against his intention that Socialism was necessary."*27

Morris seems to have been very pleased with this anecdote and to have related it to many friends.** Shaw repeats it in his turn,*** but in such a way as to lead the whole tribe of biographers and critics into error, for they followed him in believing that the text to which Morris referred was to be found in *The Principles of Political Economy.* In his unjustly neglected and forgotten work, Gustav Fritzsche, basing himself upon Morris's statements, identified Mill's articles, published in February and April of 1879 in the *Fortnightly Review,* under the title of *Chapters on Socialism.*

The memory of this reading which Morris offers us after a lapse of fifteen years is, moreover, slightly inaccurate in three respects. Mill's articles are not, strictly speaking, anti-socialist, and they constitute an account which Morris himself recognised to be clear and honest. Mill simply wonders whether the systems which he describes are workable.*** One really has the right to wonder whether, instead of the negative character which our poet attributes to him, Mill's influence was not directly positive. Secondly, supposing that Mill did "attack socialism" he did not do so exclusively "in its Fourierist guise." In fact, he quoted about two pages of Owen, three pages of Louis Blanc and six pages of Fourier, which undoubtedly laid the main stress on the latter and claimed Morris's main attention. Thirdly, it is not quotations from Fourier which we find, but, more exactly, from Victor Considérant who, in *Destinée sociale,* had collected and given shape to thoughts scattered by Fournier through many volumes. It is to the point to stress that the presentation was very faithful, and, despite the inclusion of certain rather bold fantasies of the
master's on the passions and sexual promiscuity, more or less complete.

So, it is justifiable to believe that the second stage of Morris's initiation into Fourier was the reading of *Destinée sociale*. We are sure about this reading, not only because the title figures in the catalogue of the Sotheby's sale in 1898, but also because an incidental reference by May Morris gives us to understand that the book was a household word. In any case, it was not in Mill's articles, which are silent upon the point, that Morris could have found the account of the attractiveness of work, which was in his eyes an essential element of Fourier's theories.

The third stage would be the reading of Fourier himself. But although it seems probable, it is not established by any text or any evidence. The famous list of recommended readings for socialists in *Commonweal* is the more suspect in that the titles quoted of works by Fourier are complete fantasy. *Theory of Social Organization, Réalisation d'un (sic) commune sociétale!* However, if we are, concerning this third stage, reduced to pure conjecture, it is of no consequence. Even if Morris never read any book of Fourier's, *Destinée sociale* gives so accurate an idea of his work that the reading of that justifies Morris in claiming an acquaintance with it. Note, though, that in all his writings he always refers to the thinking of Fourier and never to its interpretation by Considérant which constitutes something of a presumption.

Up to 1893, the date of the publication of *Socialism, its Growth and Outcome*, Morris speaks of Fourier only to praise his theory of the attractiveness of work. It is only in this manual of socialism (and this brings us to the fourth stage) that we find a reasonably complete exposition of the whole doctrine. There again, but less so than in the case of Saint-Simon, Bax's collaboration seems decisive, and reference to quotations from Engels shapes the final judgment. Certainly Morris unreservedly supports this judgment taken from *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, which stresses the outstanding rôle played by Fourier in the critique of bourgeois society and the elaboration of an evolutive concept of history. But Engels passes over Fourier's ideas about work in silence, and, since it is dealt with at length in the handbook it can only be as a direct personal reaction on the part of Morris. Bearing in mind the late date of the handbook, when Morris's utopian thinking was more or less completed, it is clear that the overall estimate we make at this stage is of secondary importance and that our attention should be focused upon this particular interest.

It would indicate shortsightedness and subservience to a rigid system on my part if I were to rely exclusively upon Morris's declarations and the single avowed acknowledgement of his debt; it is, in fact, greater than he says. First, it is semantic. The pejorative use which Morris makes of the word *civilization* to describe the society of the capitalist age, in contrast to earlier societies on the one hand, and to socialism on the other, is a direct borrowing from Fourier.

"The word civilisation," writes Considérant, "will be used here to characterise the social period which humanity entered upon leaving Barbarism; it is the state in which we and the greater part of Europe now exist. - Civilisation represents progress by comparison with Savagery and Barbarism, but it is still an incoherent society filled with evil and wretchedness."
After this historical definition, here is a descriptive definition:

"Cheating, oppression, theft, slaughter by sabre and cannon, death by the guillotine, killing by poverty and a thousand other scourges more are the necessary evils of civilisation, offspring it engenders daily with odious fecundity." 35

We have been, declares Fourier,

"in the third phase of civilisation for a century, but, during this short space of time, this phase has developed very rapidly on account of the colossal progress of industry". 36

The "civilised mechanism", he adds, "is a war of each individual against the mass, a régime in which everyone is concerned with duping the public", just as Saint-Simon talks of an "upsidedown world", he talks of a "wrong-way-round world". 38 Writing at a time when the industrial surge was hardly starting, he describes especially the mess made of agricultural production, and, using an expression which Morris repeats almost word for word in News from Nowhere, he refers to "the sad and dirty peasants of civilisation". 40 So it will be necessary

"to rise higher in the social scale, not to wallow forever in this abyss of poverty and nonsense called civilisation, which, with its individual achievements and its floods of false illumination, cannot guarantee the people work and bread." 40

The source of this poverty (and the still inadequate development of the productive forces excuses this lack of insight) is found, for Fourier, not in the exploitation of labour, but in commerce, which represents in his eyes the fundamental blemish of civilisation. Himself condemned to a mediocre commercial career which revolted him, he becomes strident whenever he touches upon the subject and, while it is true that Morris's analysis is based upon more scientific criteria, it cannot be disputed that Fourier's vehemence seems to possess him whenever he himself refers to "commercialism"; we note, too, that with him this term is frequently synonymous with capitalism, introducing an annoying ambiguity of obvious origin.

"These legions of merchants," writes Fourier, "are, relative to true order, social buccaneers, industrial hornets, who, producing nothing, appropriate through their expenses the greater part of the profit and by their extortions ruin producer, consumer and government, under the guise of supplying them." 41

It is time for commerce "to disappear from human society, to which it brings only depravity and ruin". 42 In the social commune, Considerant prophesies (and it is an idea which became dear to Morris), "the producer is in direct contact with the consumer". 43

The consequence of this lust for gain is the adulteration of all natural products. There is no question that Morris’s denunciation of all the "makeshifts" of civilisation is a direct echo of Fourier’s invective:

"It is claimed that men are no more false than formerly; but half a cen-
tury ago we could buy cheaply well-dyed materials and natural foods: today falsification and roguery abound everywhere. The farmer has become as big a cheat as the merchant used to be. Milk, oils, wines, brandy, sugar, coffee, flour, all are adulterated with impunity. The mass of poor people cannot obtain natural foodstuffs; they are sold nothing but slow poisons, so greatly has commerce progressed even in the smallest villages.”

“Indirect depravity of science: among other ways, by the progress of chemistry, which works only for the vexation of the poor by providing commerce with the means to make all foods unnatural: potato bread, logwood wine, imitation vinegar, false oil, false coffee, mock sugar, mock indigo; there is nothing but falsification in foodstuffs and manufactures, and it is the poor who are exposed to this chemical fodder: they alone are the victims of all these mercantile inventions, which could be properly used in a system of trustworthy relationships, but which will be more and more harmful until the close of civilisation.”

The system of individual property (which Fourier calls “simple property”, as against social property) wreaks havoc in the same way. Notice, in passing, this formulation, bolder than anything Ruskin wrote on the subject, and which corresponds very exactly to Morris’s feelings:

“Such is the principle of simple property, the right to manage general interests arbitrarily for the satisfaction of individual whims. Thus one sees full licence accorded to vandals who conceive a fancy to compromise salubriousness and adornment by grotesque constructions, sometimes more costly than a good and fine building.”

Another blot upon civilisation (and Morris was to be of the same opinion) was parasitism. Fourier ranks among parasites:

“three quarters of the women of the town and half of those of the countryside, through absorption with household chores and domestic ties... three quarters of children, quite useless in towns and little use in the country... three quarters of household servants, non-productive... armies and navies... the legions of the administration... customs... rural police, gamekeepers, spies etc... all complicating administrations, such as finance and others... a good half of manufacturers... nine tenths of merchants and commercial agents... two thirds of agents for sea and land transport... unemployed... sophists... idlers, people of good class, spending their lives doing nothing... prisoners, “Scissionnaires” in open rebellion against industry, laws, customs and usages... agents of positive destruction; those who organise famine or pestilence or concur in war... agents of negative creation...”

and by this last term Fourier understands those who engage in “unproductive”, “illusory”, or “baleful” works.

Setting all these parasites to work and establishing a “harmonian” order will permit the rapid achievement of a state of general well-being.

“The first of all conditions to be fulfilled, the condition without which
it is not possible without foolishness to make men live in good sense together, is the creation of an abundance of goods, a social fortune."

There, in the midst of thoughts which are frequently idealistic, is a basic materialist principle to make Morris that much more receptive of Marx's philosophy.

Fourier has other innovatory ideas which certainly raised an echo in our poet's thinking, particularly where education is concerned:

"Harmonian education, in its methods, tends to encourage the development from the earliest age of instinctive vocations, applying each individual to the different functions for which nature intends him, and from which he is diverted by the civilised method which usually, with rare exceptions, employs everyone in ways opposed to his vocation."

With Morris, this free development of aptitudes takes a more detached and less vocational form. For him, the aim of education is far less the preparation for definite functions than the full development and happiness of the child. The similarity remains, and on close examination lies less in the ultimate aims than in the methods:

"The two cherubic and seraphic tribes are to be trained practically rather than mentally. There will be no attempt, as there is in present education, to turn them into precocious wiseacres, intellectual prodigies initiated into scientific subtleties at the age of six; rather to be sought is mechanical precocity; ability in bodily activity which, far from retarding the culture of the mind, accelerates it ..."

"Here the children will not be brought up by their parents nor by tutors, but by themselves, simply by rivalry between different groups. They will certainly have the assistance of older choirs, and by directors of teaching; but each child will be completely free, will work and study only as much as he pleases, and, with this complete freedom, he will be attracted into taking an interest in all agricultural, manufacturing and scientific processes, to excel in some, to touch upon others, then to develop ideas upon the whole and consequently in the totality of the phalange and of all the series."

Here we already find the germ of the polytechnic education that Marx dreamed of, but, in the details, the influence of Fourier seems to have outlived that of Marx with Morris.

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One could not, however, say that Morris's communism derives in the very least from Fourier's institutional conceptions. The single idea which might have his support is that of the autonomy of local communities:

"The organisation of the Commune is the cornerstone of the social edifice, however vast and perfect it may be."

But phalansterian regimentation filled him with horror, and he even tended to see in the phalanstery a sort of charitable hospice or even a kind of
workhouse. This is certainly suggested by certain violent remarks in his 1888 lecture, *The Society of the Future,* and those which he puts into the mouth of old Hammond in *News from Nowhere*:

"The Fourierist phalangsteries and all their kind, as was but natural at the time, implied nothing but a refuge from mere destitution. Such a way of life as that could only have been conceived of by people surrounded by the worst form of poverty."

On this subject, we have no writing of Morris earlier than 1888. As we shall see later, it is probable that this violent revulsion was not immediate. During the first years of his career of militancy he seems, on the contrary, to have been fairly favourably disposed towards a communal organisation of life, and his first anticipations of town planning, with their community services, are not free from a certain whiff of Fourierism. But as his assimilation of the Marxist theory of two stages deepened, his vision of communist society, freed from all the constraints of the first phase, a society of freedom and abundance, became incompatible with so restrictive a system.

In fact, this is the least one can say of the phalanstarian model, which organises life to the limit in its tiniest details. From childhood Fourier loved military parades and went to the changing of the guard at the Tuileries every morning. Existence during every moment in the phalanstery, the composition of groups and series, are described throughout his work with mathematical complexity and rigidity. It is a little amusing, too, that Fourier's most faithful exegetist, Victor Considerant, was a captain of engineers and a former pupil of l'Ecole Polytechnique. While Saint-Simon probably put Morris off by his tendency towards abstract generalisation, Fourier in his turn put him off by an orgy of precise regimentation.

The very description of the buildings of the phalanstery, uniform in type, was enough to fill him with horror at their barrack-like aspect: they surround the "ceremonial courtyard, in which take place the industrial manoeuvres of arrival, departure and parade." The Phalange, Considerant tells us, "is a compact body manoeuvring like a trained army" and the groups which compose it,

"rivaling one another in ardour and fine appearance, deploy themselves in the plains and take up positions in the hills, like campaigning armies, with their work uniforms, their carts, their equipment painted in the colours of each industrial battalion."

But let Fourier speak for himself:

"If today we could see an organised canton, see thirty industrial groups coming out on parade at dawn from the Palace of the Phalange, spreading out into fields and workshops, waving their banners with cries of triumph and impatience, we would seem to be seeing bands of frenzied troops about to put neighbouring cantons to fire and sword."

It is clearly not any picture of this kind that we shall find in *News from Nowhere,* and Mackail is perfectly justified in supposing that the horror aroused by Bellamy's industrial armies carries on the horror that the description of the phalansteries had inspired in Morris. When drafting with Bax *Socialism, its
Growth and Outcome, Morris strove, and one can sense the effort, to keep calm when reproaching Fourier with "formulating dogmatically an elaborate scheme of life in all its details." All details, he stresses, "are carried out by him most minutely, the number of each phalanstery being settled at 1600 souls." Such a scheme "could never be carried out, however good the principles on which it was based might be". 41

If only phalansterian society were the beginning of an egalitarian world! Unfortunately it is nothing of the kind: neither inheritance, nor private property, nor capital, nor interest are abolished. Quite the contrary, for Fourier's mathematical and almost mamalcal subtlety is fully deployed to demonstrate that for the owner of capital the phalanstery is the most profitable of investments, while still providing considerable advantages for the totally dispossessed.

"So that the struggle between capital and labour may be brought to an end," explains Considerant, "capital and labour must be organised in unison, and not just the workers by themselves." 62

Social justice will intervene with the share-out, which must be, for each individual, "proportional to his contribution to production, calculated with regard to the amount of Capital, Work and Talent which he has supplied". 63 Fourier's utopia maintains the social hierarchy and the distinction between rich and poor, who occupy different quarters in the phalanstery. This hatred of equality is sharply singled out in Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, where the division of goods between capital and labour is described as "fantastic". 64 Victor Considerant, who has a gift for precise formulation, is crystal clear:

"Association and Community are very different and are even opposed. Nothing is equal and nothing is in common: in the Phalanstery there are distinctions everywhere, and very graduated distinctions, at that." 65

This anti-egalitarianism is accompanied by a marked aversion for any revolutionary movement. All his life, Fourier retained bitter memories of his blighted hopes at Lyons and Besançon between 1793 and 1796. He rejects the idea of the class struggle and it must be said that the very idea of class is very vague in his mind. The purpose of the Fourierist plan is to suppress this struggle, the existence of which he denies, but which is a blot upon civilisation.

"Division and war are there, indeed! and well did the bourgeois recognise the fact when it shouted with all the power of its lungs, the barbarians are at our gates." 66

A curious and interesting formulation which, we can be sure, was imprinted upon Morris's mind, because it contains the germ of the resolution of the dialectical contradiction between barbarism and socialism, which occupied his thoughts for a long time and which will be the subject of special study. " There is, then, at the bottom of Fourier's utopia, a counter-revolutionary and petty-bourgeois ideology. The transformation of society, in consequence, will not be the result of a seizure of power or even of political reforms. It will be "the act of the prince". All his life Fourier dissipated his energy in approaches to ministers, industrial magnates and financiers, and he vainly awaited day by day the noonday arrival of the "candidate", whose ring on the doorbell would
herald the transformation of the world, "the attempt made by a sovereign or an opulent individual ... or perhaps by a powerful company". The great illusion of Fourier and Considérant was to think that the creation of a single phalanstery in the midst of civilisation would provide an irresistible and contagious example:

"From the moment a single harmonic social element has been set up, harmony and happiness will at once spread like a conflagration across the world." 69

This trait, common to all pre-Marxist socialists, was the object of especially sharp condemnation in Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, to which I shall return when the time comes to draw conclusions as to the influence exerted by "utopian socialism".

* * *

From this miscellaneous assortment, where the best rubs elbows with the worst, Morris, as usual, drew selectively, and it was Fourier's theories upon work which exerted an influence upon his utopian thinking which was, if not decisive, certainly a very long way from being negligible. In a lecture in 1885, after rapidly quoting the names of socialists of the first half of the century, he added at once:

"Amongst these Fourier is the one that calls for most attention: since his doctrine of the necessity and possibility of making labour attractive is one which Socialism can by no means do without." 70

This was not a passing burst of enthusiasm. In 1890, reviewing Fabian Essays for the readers of Commonweal, he felt moved to write:

"Fourier put forward his truly inspired doctrine of attractive industry to a world that could not listen to him, so sunken as it was in misery and slavery." 71

That was the year of the writing of News from Nowhere, and it is noteworthy that in the story old Hammond, referring to the general abhorrence of work during the capitalist period, asserts that this was produced by the economic system of the period and could not survive it. "Fourier," he adds, "whom all men laughed at, understood the matter better." 72 Three years later, when Morris was preparing with Bax the theoretical manual of socialism, the very nature of the work obliged him to be precise in his judgment, and, as I have already explained, everything concerning work was probably due to Morris's personal thinking. This is all the more probable since reference to Fourier's message appears in two quite separate sections of the book. First, there is the general judgment on the doctrine, inspired by Engels's pamphlet, into which he inserts this phrase:

"The most valuable idea was the possibility and necessity of apportioning due labour to each capacity, and thereby assuring that it should always be pleasant." 73

But this quick hint was too brief for his liking. The last chapter of the book is
devoted to an anticipation of what work will be like in the new society, and there he feels the need to acknowledge his debt at greater length:

"With a very few exceptions Fourier was right in asserting that all labour could be made pleasurable under certain conditions. These conditions are, briefly: freedom from anxiety as to livelihood; shortness of hours in proportion to the stress of the work; variety of occupation if the work is of its nature monotonous; due use of machinery, i.e. the use of it in labour which is essentially oppressive if done by the hand; opportunity for everyone to choose the occupation suitable to his capacity and idiosyncracy; and lastly, the solacing of labour by the introduction of ornament, the making of which is enjoyable to the labourer." 74

Morris is plainly making additions and, in his enthusiasm, attributing his own ideas to Fourier. There is very little use of machines in the latter's utopia. True, he does dream of great undertakings like the cutting of the isthmuses of Suez and Panama, or the conquest of the Sahara, but he only envisages their execution by means of "ten and twenty millions of arms". 75 His imagination is more fertile over the material organisation of the phalanstery where there will be installed "hydraulic tubes", trapdoors and hoists. Also to be found there will be manufacturing workshops, relegated to the ends of the buildings, about the working of which we are told very little and which appear to fulfil a secondary, intermittent or purely psychological rôle:

"The social order envisages manufacture only as a complement to agriculture, the means to provide diversion during the emotional doldrums which would break out during the long damp of winter idleness and the equatorial rains." 76

All that does not go very far and it would be ungracious to blame Fourier, bearing in mind the conditions of his day. To discover therein a theory as to the use of machines is not very serious-minded.

With this reservation, one cannot deny that Fourier's ideas tend in the direction later taken by Morris's. On the first point mentioned in the list we have just cited, the agreement is automatic. It is clearly necessary

"that people enjoy, in the new order, a guarantee of well-being, of a sufficient minimum in the present and the future, and that this guarantee should free him from all anxiety for himself and his dependents." 77

Except that Morris was in no way satisfied with this minimum, which was justified by Fourier's anti-egalitarianism.

The fundamental idea is that of pleasure in work.

"But if industriousness is the lot which the Creator has assigned to us, how are we to believe that he would wish to drive us to it by violence, and not be able to bring into play some more noble impulse, some balm capable of transforming work into pleasure." 78

Stripped of its religious wrappings, this idea provides the basis for Morris's utopia. "The characteristic of a good social order," writes V. Considérant, "is the general organisation of attractive-productive work." 79 This organisation is based upon a judicious utilisation of human passions which are "of all God's
works the most perfect and most sublime." One does not argue, says Fourier, over "whether God was right or wrong to give humans this or that passion; social order makes use of them, changing nothing, just as God gave them." Upon which he erects a serial classification of passions of fantastic complexity, which Morris, of course, leaves on one side and which I will spare the reader. Man is motivated by multiple passions which in Fourier's system take on forms often stereotyped and crazy, each one of which can be applied to a specific task. Pleasure results from the accord between the "passionate attraction" and the chosen occupation. But since these attractions are numerous, all must find satisfaction in equal accord. In this theory one can surely detect poor Fourier's personal revolt against his lifelong condemnation to commercial tasks and paperwork which he loathed. "Life is one long torment," he exclaims, "for anybody performing unattractive functions." With a generosity and social sense which command respect, he did not confine himself to personal complaints:

"Health is necessarily impaired if a man devotes himself for twelve hours to unvarying work, weaving, sewing, writing or anything else which does not exercise in turn the different parts of the body and the brain. Various chemical factories, glassworks and even cloth manufactories are veritable murderers of workpeople, through the single factor of continuous work." 61

The solution is to be found in the exercise of a fundamental passion of man which he calls the Butterfly and defines thus:

"The Alternant, or Butterfly, is the need for periodic variety, contrasting situations, changes of scene, stimulating incidents, novelties apt to create illusions, stimulating at once both senses and mind. This need makes itself felt mildly hour by hour, and strongly every two hours. If it is not satisfied, man falls into indifference and apathy." 63

It is therefore necessary in a Phalanstery "to vary the industrial spells about eight times daily", and for the longest to be "limited to two hours." Without this arrangement, adds Fourier,

"an individual could not participate in thirty series; consequently the harmony of sharing and the mechanism of industrial attraction would be vitiated, long sessions would hamper the passion called Butterfly, the urge to flit from pleasure to pleasure." 66

From this derives a complicated organisation, founded upon the principle of "geared" activity, which Fourier explains in this way:

"A man may be:

at five o'clock in the morning in a group of shepherds;
at seven o'clock in a group of ploughmen;
at nine o'clock in a group of gardeners.

In the succession I have just indicated, the three series of shepherding, ploughing and gardening will be geared together by reciprocal interlocking of the members.

This enmeshment does not need to be general, so that twenty men oc-
occupied among the sheep from five to six-thirty would then all go ploughing from six-thirty to eight; it is simply required that each serf provide the others with several members drawn from each of its groups, so as to establish links among them for the enmeshing of various members functioning alternatively in one and another".

Apart from the rigidity of time and the complexity, this is rather the way in which things happen in *News from Nowhere*. Perhaps Fourier's system is more efficient, but the only element of it which Morris chose to retain was that "the chief source of gaiety among Harmonians is the frequent variation of sessions". For Morris, their duration was far less important; that was just a matter of temperament. What he specially admired was the care taken to adapt tasks precisely to each individual's ability, in order to make them pleasant, and he was struck by the sometimes odd forms under which this care sometimes showed itself:

"his dictum that children, who generally like making dirt-pies and getting into a mess, should do the dirty work of the community, may at least be looked on as an illustration of this idea". 89

Morris appears not to have realised that Fourier's employment of children in this way was his solution to the problem of the disagreeable tasks which Thomas More assigned to slaves and he himself to machines: it provides a striking example of the connection between the development of productive forces and ideology.

In the range of passions which must be sublimated from the "subversive" state to the "harmonic" state, the Butterfly, whose function is to create joy by the adaptation of the individual to the task which suits him and by diversifying occupation, is to be joined by the Cabalist and the Composite. The Cabalist, which is emulation between groups, appears to have held little attraction for Morris who must have seen it as a modified survival of capitalist competition and scarcely seems to have considered it other than as a possibility of the first stage. The Composite, on the other hand, claims our attention. It contains the germ of Morris's ideal of the full development of man. I do not in the least dare to claim any direct influence, but (is it sheer coincidence?) we find that the examples given by Fourier are exactly the same as those we find later in Morris:

"Love is only beautiful to the extent it is combined love, uniting the charms of the senses to those of the spirit. It becomes triviality or deceit if it is confined to one of the other of these two provinces.

The composite commands respect to such an extent that in every sphere we agree in looking down on those devoted to solitary pleasure. If a man provides himself with excellent food and excellent wines in order to enjoy them alone, he exposes himself to well-deserved jeers. But if the same man gathers together a chosen company, and they taste the pleasures of the senses in good fare and those of the spirit in friendship at the same time, he will be praised, because his banquets will provide compound pleasure and not simple." 90

But let us return to joy in work, which remains the major theme. In Fourier
we find an exaltation of physical effort which foreshadows the pleasures of “easy-hard work” so dear to Morris:

“This plough, so hateful today, will be guided by the young prince as by the young plebeian: it will be a kind of industrial tournament, with each athlete displaying his vigour and dexterity, to shine before the fair sex, who will close the proceedings by bringing lunch or a snack.”

Did Morris have a memory of this picture when he described the hefty lads repairing the Bloomsbury road, in *News from Nowhere.* This slant resolves the contradiction which Morris hated between work and leisure:

“Oh, heavens! I’m quite willing, they are amusements. But why are these occupations amusements? That is what you must understand; and when you have worked out why, think about seeing whether all the occupations of science, agriculture, manufacture, art, etc., which make up Industry, cannot in some way be changed into amusements – because such amusements exist. That is the whole point.”

Nevertheless, there is one whole aspect of Fourier’s doctrine which Morris firmly rejects. It is necessary, writes Fourier, “for the division of labour to be carried to the ultimate in order to provide each sex and every age with suitable occupations.” In this way a particular horticulturist can pass from one to another of the most diverse arboricultural series, steadily restricting himself to the operation of grafting, if that is his “passionate attraction”, other operations being reserved to other specialists, other monomaniacs, one is tempted to say. “The division of labour,” declares Considérant, “does not inhibit variation of work; on the contrary, it is eminently suited to it”, and he seems even to outbid Fourier:

“... Sub-division within the Group is the true guarantee of the Individual Independence of the worker, and of the Free Development of vocations, for it permits each one to devote himself solely, I will not say to functions, but to those details of functions for which he feels taste, aptitude and inclination.”

Such a theory is obviously contrary to the absolute condemnation of the division of labour expressed by Morris, following Marx and Ruskin. It contradicts the idea, inherited from Ruskin, that the separation between conception and execution must be done away with and the craftsman be given complete freedom of self-expression in all parts of his work. It contradicts the Marxist idea of the “whole man” who will come into his own in communist society. This clash between Morris and Fourier is neither formal nor accidental. It derives from a profound difference of intent. For our poet, the purpose of communism is to ensure man’s happiness. For the phalanstarian utopist, the aim is to ensure a continuous increase in production: the utilisation of emotional attractions and pleasure in work have no other end. As Édouard Guyot pertinently remarks.

“for him, that is quite legitimate, for under the régime which he proposes, and which involves property, one has to be concerned with men’s profit, and not just with their happiness”
It is not only the level of productive forces, but also production relationships which determine ideology.

Among the merits which Morris attributes to Fourier in *Socialism, its Growth and Outcome*, I have mentioned that of having advocated “the lightening of labour by the introduction of decorative creation agreeable to the worker”. This suggestion is rather odd, because one cannot claim that this element plays an outstanding part in the pleasure which the phalansterians find in their labour. I cannot help imagining that, in composing their manual, Morris and Bax did not find themselves in complete harmony over their assessment, and that the latter, in Morris’s eyes, made the mistake of underestimating the value of Fourier’s message; and I am inclined to think that in the last chapter, dealing with work in the future society, a subject upon which Morris had pondered more deeply than his collaborator, he took the opportunity of introducing praise of the phalansterian utopist and pushing it as far as he could. In fact, if we go to Fourier himself, thoughts of an aesthetic order really are extremely rare. It is necessary, of course, “for the workshops and fields to attract the worker by their elegance and well-kept appearance”. Sometimes, however, he does become more eloquent:

“Manufactures, though eminently suitable, could not exercise any attraction if the workshops of the phalanque were disgustingly filthy, as are ours, which, by their meanness do not lend themselves to any pleasing arrangement, any comfort or anything inspiring enthusiasm. Comfort is the first requisite of attraction, so it is difficult for that to arise in an industry from which comfort is excluded. That is the vice of all our civilised workshops.

But if the confectionery seristery is built for a mass of five or six hundred people: men, women and children, with luxury in dress and tools of the trade, it will be possible, even in the oven room, which is the dirtiest place, to introduce elegance. A range of ovens decorated with different marbles, walls frequently repainted grey or brown, borders which are often renewed. The other, unsmoky rooms will be suited to all kinds of decoration.”

All that is very interesting, and Morris expresses on a number of occasions the same desire to beautify and enrich the place of work in the future society. But there is not the least suggestion of introducing this aesthetic joy, which pervades the whole of Morris’s utopia, into work itself. And for that reason Fourierism is only a partial and complementary inspiration of it. On this point Morris was far more lucid than we might suppose from the laudatory summary in the manual of socialism and, at the same time, the text we are about to read confirms my supposition concerning the collaboration with Bax. In the preface to Ruskin’s *Nature of Gothic*, we find, in fact, this judgment which seems to me to define perfectly the nature and the limits of Fourier’s influence:

“Charles Fourier dealt with the subject at great length, and the whole of his elaborate system for the reconstruction of society is founded on the certain hope of gaining pleasure in labour. But in their times neither Owen nor Fourier could possibly have found the key to the problem with which Ruskin was provided. Fourier depends, not on art for the motive
power of the realization of pleasure in labour, but on incitements, which, although they would not be lacking in any decent state of society, are rather incidental than essential parts of pleasurable work; and on reasonable arrangements, which would certainly lighten the burden of labour, but would not procure for it the element of sensuous pleasure, which is the essence of all true art. Nevertheless, it must be said that Fourier and Ruskin were touched by the same instinct, and it is instructive and hopeful to note how they arrived at the same point by such very different roads." 99

It is difficult to define more clearly the dividing line between the internal and external elements of utopia. And yet this delimitation leaves us with a feeling of injustice. If the aesthetic expression of human effort, with all the conception of man and society that these terms involve, was for Morris the essential internal element, is one not entitled to think that variety of occupation, conceived no longer as a stimulus to production and profit, but as the other condition for man’s full development is also an internal element of Morris’s humanism?

4. Louis Blanc

In their rapid bird’s-eye view of “utopian socialism” in France, Morris and Bax touch briefly on several other systems: those of Lammenais, Pierre Leroux, Cabet and Louis Blanc. On the first two, I have nothing to say, and one may wonder whether they ever attracted Morris’s attention. Perhaps he read Icare; he must at least have had an indirect acquaintance with it, since I have found, in a manuscript of H. A. Barker’s, 100 the mention, in an undated list of lectures given by the Socialist League, of a talk by G. Brocher upon the Icarian communities. However, there is little likelihood that this carefully regulated utopia, uniformed and verging on the police state, would greatly have attracted him. On the contrary, and without being prepared to venture definite assertions, I am inclined to think that he must have read Louis Blanc’s Organisation du travail with some interest, although we do not find any mention of it outside the socialist handbook. I have several reasons for the supposition.

First there is, clearly, the evidence of Bruce Glasier, to which I have already referred, to the extent to which we can trust his memory. There is the fact that, in the Mill article which made such an impression upon Morris, three pages are devoted to Louis Blanc: one might expect that reading this would have aroused his interest in the same way as the six pages devoted to V. Considérant. There is also, in his anticipation of revolutionary happenings as related by old Hammond in News from Nowhere, the creation by the desperate bourgeoisie of government factories, which exactly correspond to Louis Blanc’s description. 101 I readily concede that this last argument is no proof, because this reminiscence might just as well have derived from a knowledge of the historical facts of 1848 as from a knowledge of texts.

It must be admitted that the ideology which is revealed by these texts held nothing very attractive to Morris. In the words of Louis Blanc himself, it “rests upon deeply felt idealism”. 102 It defines, in idealist terms, the State placed above social classes. 103 It is steadfastly opposed to any idea of revolution:
“there is no question ... of displacing wealth".\textsuperscript{104} and “capitalists would be called into the association and would receive interest upon the capital they invested”.\textsuperscript{105} In all, it is necessary “to reform society without overturning it”\textsuperscript{106} and the change envisaged consists of “bringing together all classes in society and making them understand that their interests are coincident”.\textsuperscript{107} If Louis Blanc’s book had contained nothing but these assertions which, in Morris’s eyes, could only be opportunistic platitudes, I would shut it up without going any further. But there was more. The place given to Louis Blanc in \textit{Socialism, its Growth and Outcome} is relatively generous. The essential part of it deals with the historical rôle played by the French theorist, and this rôle is judged severely, not so much on account of the Revolution of 1848, in which his ideas were admitted to have been travestied, as on account of his repudiation of 1871 and his rallying to the cause of Versailles. But in this account, at once biographical and theoretical, two facts strike us. First, stress is laid upon Louis Blanc’s Corsican ancestry on his mother’s side and upon a family incident which might have inspired an Alexandre Dumas story. Morris loved reading the novels of Dumas and it is not very likely that Bax indulged in such frivolous reading; so it seems clear to me that Morris had a hand in drafting the account dealing particularly with the \textit{Organisation du travail}. Now, this book is full of strange contradictions. In the midst of the reformist ideas I have picked out, there are others which approach an egalitarianism very close to the Babouvist ideology, some of which go a very long way.

“In this work,” write Morris and Bax, “he put forward the genuine Socialist maxim of ‘From each according to his capacity; to each according to his needs’ as the basis of the production of a true society.”\textsuperscript{108}

The authors exaggerate and are reasoning \textit{a posteriori}. This formula is not found in the work of Louis Blanc, but, in default of the letter, we find the essential spirit:

“In the Saint-Simonian doctrine, the problem of sharing out profits is resolved by the famous formula: \textit{from each according to his ability, to each ability according to its works}. In our project, inequality of aptitude is only transitorily made the basis for the differentiation of reward, and that with important restrictions. So that what forms the moral principle of Saint-Simonism is only, in our project, a necessary concession to ideas which we consider to be false and which we hope to see replaced through education, by ideas of high moral worth.”\textsuperscript{109}

Louis Blanc completes the expression of this idea in the following terms:

“Although the false and antisocial education given to the present generation makes it difficult to seek a motive for emulation and encouragement other than in an increase of reward, salaries would be equal, and an entirely new education would change ideas and customs.”\textsuperscript{110}

It is not strange that this passage should give Morris food for thought, following ideas expressed by the Babouvists on the same subject. Fundamentally he was in favour of this egalitarianism, but, with the later enlightenment
of Marxist thinking, he realised that here the problem of “unequal right” is very badly posed. In the first place, the inevitable period of transition is accepted unwillingly and is shortened in a subjective, arbitrary and aggressive way. Only the Marxist theory of two stages, based upon a scientific understanding of economic laws and historical development, appreciating the material impossibility of skipping stages, can provide a solution. Secondly, this solution, which Louis Blanc envisages through the idealistic means of education and morality, depends, for Morris as for Marx, upon the revolutionary transformation of productive relationships and the surge forward of productive forces resulting from it. Effective equality can only be achieved in the communism of abundance. If, in their handbook, Morris and Bax regard Louis Blanc as a precursor, it is from a corrective angle. They take the precaution of accusing him of never having

“grasped the great truth that only through the class struggle can the regeneration of society be accomplished”.111

In other words, Louis Blanc’s propositions are valid at the level reached in the second stage. Within this corrected perspective, Morris will accept up to a certain point the idea that “it is not to the inequality of rights that the inequality of abilities should lead, but to the inequality of duties”. The formulation must have appealed to him, but the moral concept underlying it probably appeared ridiculous to him. The notion, deeply rooted in him and drawn from Ruskin and Fourier, of pleasure in work, would render any ethical imperative supererogatory. Curiously enough, Louis Blanc, without noticing the contradiction, himself corrected his formulation by declaring:

“Is it not true that truly superior men have always sought and found their chief reward in the very exercise of their abilities?”112

Upon that point, Morris’s agreement was complete, and this idea, taken up in the conditions of the second stage, abundantly justified the egalitarian ideology of his own utopia. In this sense, the thoughts engendered by reading Louis Blanc make an incontestable contribution to the development of his thinking.

5. Robert Owen

Contrary to all expectations, it is not possible to find any inspiration or source for Morris’s utopia in Owenism. In fact, it is the negation of it, and, as we shall quickly discover, Owen’s theories had no effect other than that of reinforcing Morris’s political thinking by reaction.

It is altogether probable that Morris read Owen’s works. Memories recalled by Mackail indicate that in 1883 he was speaking enthusiastically about him.113 We also have the evidence, already mentioned, of Bruce Glasser. It is not without interest to note also that his Edinburgh correspondent and friend, John Glasse, was the author of a book upon Owen,114 and that another close friend, Andreas Scheu, in 1885 gave a lecture at Hammersmith on Owen, Marx and Blanqui.115 However, it is difficult for us to say which books Morris might have read. The only one of which we find the title in his writings is The Book of the New Moral World, and that again is in the theoretical handbook
written with Bax, which underlines any certainty. As it happens, it does not seem to me that this uncertainty is very serious. It would be difficult, in fact, to find anything in Morris's writings that constituted a direct reminiscence. Above all, on the various occasions when he refers to Owen, the judgment which he makes concerns the man, his public role and his influence much more than his works.

For the man he had immense admiration. He calls him "the most generous and best of men." He was "representative of the nobler hopes of his day... and the lifter of the torch of Socialism amidst the dark days of the confusion consequent on the reckless greed of the early period of the great factory industries".

He was "a born philanthropist in the better sense of the word, and from the first showed in all matters unbounded generosity and magnanimity"; he was, he repeats, "the most humane of men." He praises him because he "showed how by companionship and good will labour might be made at least endurable," while still reproaching him, as he did Fourier, for not having understood the real nature of pleasure in work. He praises him even more for having proved "that the conditions under which man lived could affect his life and his deeds infinitely." His "theory of the perfectibility of man by the amelioration of his surroundings" is perhaps Owen's single positive contribution to the maturation of Morris's thought: we can, it seems to me, regard it as a decisive stage in the deconceptualisation of Morris's humanism, and as a direct preparation for the assimilation of the practical humanism of Marx and Engels.

I will say no further, because, for the rest, Morris's judgments are severely critical. This is not a reason for us to neglect them, because it was to a certain extent through opposition to Owen that Morris negatively defined his own conception of the "great change". What he primarily reproaches him with is believing that socialist reforms in isolation, even the most far-reaching, were possible within the framework of capitalist society. The cooperative movement, of which Owen was "the first great champion", seemed a will-o'-the-wisp to him, arising from a failure to understand that nothing "short of universal co-operation would solve the social question." It is an out-of-date theory, and, therefore, reactionary:

"Since the days of Robert Owen the position of Co-operation has been quite changed by the uprising of revolutionary Socialism as a result of the application of the doctrine of evolution to human society, and the consequent perception of the class-struggle. The Co-operationists of Robert Owen's time did not perceive the existence of the class-struggle."

In the theoretical handbook, we find the same reproach that "he ignored also the antagonism of classes." I shall only record here criticisms on the problem of co-operation directed against Owen by name. I should need many pages to consider all his catalogue of complaints of a general nature: the co-operative movement has had no result other than creating a collective form of capitalism, making the workers lose their class consciousness, and strengthening the aristocracy of labour.

Even more than against co-operation (and this is of more direct interest to
us) Morris takes issue against the utopian experiments of Owen and his followers. This was all the more necessary because, in the eighties, the word communism, for the ill-educated public of his readers and listeners, evoked nothing but the memory of Owenite communities. The confusion was in danger of being perpetuated as a consequence of the adhesion to the Socialist League of a certain number of survivors of the movement, such as the strange and picturesque Craig. So Morris makes a point of being explicit; thus, in the course of his controversy with the anarchists in 1889, he writes in Communism:

"Comrade H. Davis misunderstands my use of the word Communist in supposing me to use it as the Owenites did, as implying life in separate communities, whether those communities were mere scattered accidents amidst a capitalist society or not; whereas I use it as a more accurate term for Socialism as implying equality of condition and consequent abolition of private property."

Owen’s experiments, he repeats in the socialist handbook, "could never develop out of the experimental stage so long as the constitution of Society implies the upholding of the so-called ‘rights of property’". 128

"Such experiments are of their nature non-progressive; at their best they are but another form of the Mediaeval monastery, withdrawals from the society of the day, really implying hopelessness of a general change."129

It is not possible

"to establish a real Socialistic community in the midst of Capitalistic Society, a social island amidst an individual sea: because all its external dealings would have to be arranged on a basis of capitalistic exchange and would so far support the system of profits and unpaid labour". 130

That is why these experiments are doomed "to failure and extinction", with the result that the bourgeoisie "has cried out mockery against Socialism over the ruins". They rest upon a foolish illusion, the same as that of Fourier and Considérant:

"Robert Owen thought that if the advantages of a communal or co-operative life were only shown to people clearly enough, they would embrace it as people take to a new form of theology, forgetting that the chain which binds them is real enough and that mere hope and example of the success of such a life on a small scale will not break that chain which it has taken so many centuries to forge." 132

Owen’s experimental utopism was a dead end, and deflected some workers from Chartism, which contained "far more socialism". 133 Owen, in fact, "looked upon Chartism as an interruption to his co-operative schemes, and deprecated it". 134 He was profoundly ignorant of the class nature of the State, and his socialism

"fell short of its object because it did not understand that, so long as there is a privileged class in possession of the executive power, they will
take good care that their economical position, which enables them to live on the unpaid labour of the people, is not tampered with". 131

That is why such experiments have proved to be "anti-Socialistic, as they withdrew themselves from general society - from political society". 138 So, "those, who are young in the movement" need to be put on their guard.

"Although as experiments in association something may be learned from them, their conditions of life have no claim to the title of Communism, which most unluckily has often been applied to them. Communism can never be realised till the present system of Society has been destroyed by the workers taking hold of the political power." 137

This example of Morris's reaction to Owen is most significant, and shows us very clearly that the most positive effect of pre-Marxist socialism was to lead him to write an anti-utopian utopia.

6. Henry George

From the defeat of Chartism until the 'eighties, political socialism in England was in the doldrums. It lived on memories, Owenism continued sporadically in co-operation and in utopian experiments; the working class allowed itself to be influenced to a slight degree by Christian socialism, and even less by moralising positivism; the theories of Samuel Smiles and Malthus were preached by the ruling class; an aristocracy of labour came into being and spread an ideology of selfishness and social collaboration. Marxism was still unknown, and Engels could write to Marx on 7 October 1858:

"The English proletariat is actually becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat as well as a bourgeoisie." 139

England was the workshop of the world, and the power of its ruling class appeared to be unchallenged.

As the 'eighties approached, the situation changed bit by bit. American and German competition made themselves felt and the economy was shaken. A sharp crisis in agriculture aggravated the industrial unease, and that was complicated by the Irish problem and the impoverishment of the Scottish crofters, causing a new exodus to the towns and an increase in poverty and unemployment. The importance of the peasant question at this period has not always been sufficiently regarded by the historians. In any case, it is noteworthy that the revival of socialism in Great Britain was first expressed in movements for land nationalisation or agrarian reforms, and it was this agitation that affected the movement in the towns. This fact must be remembered if one wants to understand the sudden and unprecedented success enjoyed in England by Progress and Poverty (1879) by the American Henry George. The author, who was also a very assured orator, made several lecture tours in Britain from 1882 onwards. They were triumphal, and he sold over a hundred thousand copies of his book. 138 His influence upon English socialists, whether social-democratic or Fabian, was of variable duration, but to start with it was universal and consider able.
There is no essential interest for our study in making a deep analysis of George’s theories, because Morris soon rejected them and, curiously enough, it was something different, as we shall see, that he retained from his book. Also, these theories can be briefly summarised by borrowing George’s own expressions:

“...The great cause of inequality in the distribution of wealth is inequality in the ownership of land... we must substitute for the individual ownership of land a common ownership... we should not think of giving the landowners any compensation for the land... It is not necessary to confiscate land; it is only necessary to confiscate rent... Therefore what I propose is - to appropriate rent by taxation... to abolish all taxation save that upon land values.”

For a long time, too, a confusion persisted in the minds of readers and listeners, and George seems to have maintained it cunningly, between land nationalisation and the single tax. As he drew away from socialism, this single tax was reduced until it came down to 20%. I add, to give the exact tone of the book’s ideology, the expression of a regret: “It is difficult for working-men to get over the idea that there is a real antagonism between capital and labour”; and of a hope, that a new community “may let the labourer have the full reward of his labour and the capitalist the full return of his capital”.

Henry George was able to maintain these various or successive ambiguities thanks to the friendship he met with from Hyndman and Joines of the Social Democratic Federation. The S.D.F. weekly, Justice, steadily supported his campaign up to 1886. In his memoirs, published twenty-five years later, Hyndman makes a fairly clear and moderate assessment of the American theorist, which nevertheless betrays a desire to justify the support formerly accorded. He declares that he had believed at that time (and his remark is not without good sense) that Progress and Poverty “would induce people to think about economic problems who could never have been brought to read economic books pure and simple”, and that “an agitation directed against any form of private property was better than the stereotyped apathy which prevailed all round us”. He said he had defended the book to Karl Marx who saw in it “the capitalist’s last ditch” and had maintained that the gross errors contained in the book would open the eyes of a great many people by their very enormity. Marx did not see it in this light, and replied that “to have error unrefuted is to encourage intellectual immorality”, which questioned Hyndman’s standpoint brutally. However, the latter persisted in thinking that

“George’s temporary success with his agitatory fallacies greatly facilitated the promulgation of Marx’s own theories in Great Britain, owing to the fact that the public mind had been stirred up to consider the social question, and political economy generally, by George’s easily read book”.

This assertion is certainly bold, but perhaps it is not entirely without truth. What one must remember, and what is to our purpose, is that Hyndman persisted for several years in his support for Henry George, against Marx’s opinion and, after the latter’s death, against that of Engels. In a letter to Sorge on 20 June 1881, Marx made a savage analysis of Progress and Poverty. Engels
wrote to Bebel, on 18 January 1884, that Henry George was “a genuine bourgeois” and that his attack upon property in land alone would “not get you far in the foremost industrial country in the world”. In his preface to the (1887) American edition of The Position of the Working Class in Britain, he observed that “what Henry George demands leaves the present mode of social production untouched.

The recalling of these details is not without point, because it throws light upon Morris’s reactions. He seems to have read George’s book in 1882 and, soon afterwards, A. R. Wallace’s Land Nationalisation, which takes up the same theme with variations. He found the latter book “not nearly such a good book as George’s”. The following year he was a member of the Democratic Federation, and saw as proof of the progress of socialism the fact that “Henry George’s book has been received in this country and in America as a new Gospel”. After another year had passed, we see from his pen a strange article devoted to George in Justice. After praising his qualities as a man and an orator, he writes:

“Granted that the depression throughout the country and the serious state of our agricultural industry helped Mr. George to an attentive hearing, he never spared himself but strove to stir an apathy which has lasted almost unbroken for over thirty years. We too desire to overthrow the landlord domination; we too have worked for years to get back the land for the people. But we cannot finish, nay we cannot even begin, here. The worst enemies of the people to-day are those whom our ‘prophet of California’ leaves untouched by his denunciations and unsathed by his sarcasm. To Mr. George the robber of a hundred is a villain indeed: the dexterous annexer of many thousands may pass full-pocketed on his way as a benefactor of the race”.

I consider that this article constitutes a turning-point in Morris’s ideological evolution. It is noteworthy that he starts with a textual refutation of the arguments of Hyndman, for whom he was still professing an immense admiration, and that he finishes with a condemnation about which one may feel that it faithfully reflects Engels’s opinion, probably conveyed by Bax. Here we begin to find ourselves in the presence of the mystery which will concern us in the next chapter.

From then on, the condemnation of Henry George becomes steadily more emphatic, and the reservations which went with it finally disappear. It turns upon the man, whose opportunist development is judged with growing contempt. Morris, so little given to personalities, ends up by declaring that he has “rejoined the capitalist camp”. After George took the side of the executioners in the affair of the “Chicago martyrs”, he used bold type in the columns of Commonweal to label him “TRAITOR”, and he never ceased denouncing him as an “enemy of socialism”. On the theoretical plane, the condemnation is just as forthright and is expressed without the slightest equivocation in the Manifesto of the Socialist League in 1885:

“Nationalisation of the land alone . . . would be useless so long as labour was subject to the fleecing of surplus value inevitable under the Capitalist system”
and a note attached to the Manifesto recalls that "land is but one of the forms of capital." 152

Was there any point, one may ask, in speaking of Henry George since I have just established so complete a break? Morris's development in regard to him seems to me not to be negligible in the interest it offers, and the article published in Justice in 1884 will develop its full significance from the angle of the research to which I shall subject it later. But there is one other thing in Progress and Poverty to which contemporaries did not pay any attention and which, all the same, left its mark upon Morris's utopian thought. In the last part of the book there are reflections upon the future socialist society which are taken up by our poet, even in their form of expression. We read there, for example:

"It seems to me that in a condition of society in which no one need fear poverty, no one would desire great wealth ... For, certainly, the spectacle of men who have only a few years to live, slaving away their time for the sake of dying rich, is in itself so unnatural and absurd, that in a state of society where the abolition of the fear of want had dissipated the envious admiration with which the masses of men now regard the possession of great riches, whoever would toil to acquire more than he cared to use would be looked upon as we would now look on a man who would thatch his head with half a dozen hats, or walk around in the hot sun with an overcoat on." 153

To illustrate the same idea, Henry George uses another image which we find again in Morris:

"Take a company of well-bred men and women dining together. There is no struggling for food, no attempt on the part of anyone to get more than his neighbour; no attempt to gorge or to carry off. On the contrary, each one is anxious to help his neighbour before he partakes himself; to offer to others the best rather than to pick it out himself ... They are greedy of food when they are not assured that there will be a fair and equitable distribution that will give enough to each ... An equitable distribution of wealth, by exempting all from the fear of want, would destroy the greed of wealth, just as in polite society the greed of food has been destroyed." 154

So, reading Progress and Poverty in 1882, Morris could already dream of equality amid plenty and the natural limitation of needs. He also found there ideas about work very close to those he drew from Fourier:

"It is not labour in itself that is repugnant to man; it is not the natural necessity for exertion that is a curse; it is only the labour that produces nothing - exertion of which he cannot see the results. To toil day after day, and yet get but the necessities of life, this is indeed hard; it is like the infernal punishment of compelling a man to pump lest he be drowned, or to trudge on a treadmill lest he be crushed. But released from this necessity, men would but work the harder and the better, for then they would work as their inclinations led them; then, would they seem to be really doing something for themselves or for others ... Work, even of the coarser kinds, would become a lightsome thing. The tendency of modern
production to subdivision would not involve monotony or the contraction of ability in the worker, since toil would be relieved by short hours, by change, by the alternation of intellectual with manual occupations." 155

It is, of course, only a question of parallel and complementary inspiration, but this confirmation should not be neglected. In fact, there is much more in Progress and Poverty. We find there an almost complete draft for an important idea which forms one of the starting points of Morris's utopia. From an idealist viewpoint which is clearly not Morris's, Henry George depicts the succession of civilisations:

"It is the barbarians of the one epoch who have been the civilized men of the next, to be in their turn succeeded by fresh barbarians ... Every civilization that has been overwhelmed by barbarians has really perished from internal decay ... the breaking up and diffusion caused by an incursion of barbarians is necessary to the recommencement of the process and a new growth of civilization." 156

Our civilisation, the blemishes of which are vigorously denounced by Henry George, is, then, doomed, and only a new age of barbarism can save the human race. But, he asks,

"Whence shall come the new barbarians? Go through the squalid quarters of great cities, and you may see, even now, their gathering hordes. How shall learning perish? Men will cease to read, and books will kindle fires and be turned into cartridges! 157

This prospect, which for Morris represents a gleam of light and a hopeful factor, did not fill Henry George with delight. This self-styled socialist never felt any enthusiasm for revolutionary methods. The barbarism he foreshadowed was to take the form of "imperatorship" and "anarchy" and also - for his fine impulse was lost in a very muddled religious development - of "new forms of superstition, of which possibly Mormonism and other even grosser 'isms' may give some vague idea". 158

Admittedly he notes the existence of "a vague but general feeling of disappointment, an increased bitterness among the working-classes and a widespread feeling of unrest".

However, that does not appear to him to open the way to salvation: "If this were accompanied by a definite idea of how relief is to be obtained, it would be a hopeful sign; but it is not so accompanied". 159 His indecision is complete:

"The civilized world is trembling on the verge of a great movement. Either it must be a leap upward, which will open the way to advances yet undreamed of, or it must be a plunge downward, which will carry us back towards barbarism." 159

George's view, as we turn the pages, becomes more gloomy and pessimistic. His book ends in apocalyptic metaphysics and prophecies of glacial catastrophes presaging the death of our planet and its inhabitants. So the only meaning to life is to be found in belief in another life. 161

All of which does not at all separate us from Morris. We shall see that he too, during the groping years of his utopian search, was obsessed by visions of
catastrophe and one may wonder whether his sudden enthusiasm for Jefferies was not more or less consciously prepared by the reading of Henry George. But that is not the essence. What we must grasp is that nowhere did he find so clear a summary of the problem he needed to resolve, the problem of civilisation and barbarism. But whereas George, after suggesting the existence of the new barbarians in "the squalid quarters of great cities", stopped short, Morris took up the idea in a great burst of enthusiasm inspired by his assimilation of historical and dialectical materialism. For the idealistic struggle. For the "recommencement of the process" he substituted the spiral movement of history. For the cycle: barbarism – civilisation – barbarism, he substituted the alternative: barbarism or socialism, and he triumphantly resolved it in a parable which carried Henry George's hesitant intuitions on to a higher plane.

7. Anarchist Literature

There has so often been talk of William Morris's utopian anarchism or anarchic communism that I should doubtless be reproached if I said not a word about it here. In due time, when we consider communist society as he imagined it, we shall have ample opportunity of seeing, basing ourselves upon Morris's own writings, the extent of his hostility to any libertarian ideology. The fact that the critics, in their majority – I should say, in their near-unanimity – have persisted against the evidence in seeing him as a devotee of that ideology is due less, I think, to dishonesty than to ignorance. Not a single one of them has realised that Morris's utopia was based upon the Marxist theory of two stages, the second of these stages being communism, an essential characteristic of which is the withering away of the State. But even if the State has finally disappeared, if the government of people has given place to the administration of things, democracy will still acknowledge one law, that of the majority, which anarchism denies. Morris, as we shall see, is completely explicit upon this point. Admittedly, this distant stage of socialism can, if one omits this important reservation, in some ways resemble the society that the anarchists want to establish overnight. Morris himself did not deny it, although he never stopped stressing the differences rather than the resemblances. These being prudently admitted, can we say that with him they resulted from a reading of libertarian literature?

Apart from a fragmentary translation by Seymour of Bakunin, the latter remained unknown in England for a long time, and at the most we may suppose that Morris heard talk about him. There remain Proudhon and Kropotkin. Before turning to their case, I would make one remark. When, in his article in *Justice*, so often quoted (and no less frequently truncated), Morris, in 1894, cast a backward eye and listed the influences which led him to socialism, he wrote:

"Such finish to what education in practical Socialism as I am capable of I received afterwards from some of my Anarchist friends, from whom I learned, quite against their intention, that Anarchism was impossible, much as I learned from Mill against his intention that Socialism was necessary."
I might be tempted, after so precise and clear a declaration, to close the enquiry and press no further. In any case, it justifies my not extending it unnecessarily. But there is one point which I would like to underline. It is that, where socialism is concerned, Morris tells us of his reading. As for anarchism, he encountered it, not by reading, but from contacts with its followers. In fact, such contacts were many and prolonged within the Socialist League and they finished in bitterness and disruption.

I am inclined to think that he never read Proudhon and he knew of his thinking only through what he learned from Bax and Kropotkin. He only makes a single mention of his name, in 1885, when he is drawing up a list of precursors of socialism, and this juxtaposition is significant in itself, though very understandable at that date. For one thing, theoretical education (even Morris’s) was inadequate, and for another, the working-class movement was too weak in the face of all-powerful capitalism, for him to feel it necessary to draw fine distinctions and even less so to be exclusive among the different currents of thought. I may add that there are so many contradictions to be found in Proudhon’s works that very different ideologies have found it possible to lay claim to him. At that time he could scarcely have been known at all in England, apart from his famous dictum: “Property is theft”; and that would be enough for him to be considered an ally in the common struggle.

His name appears in the list of readings published in Commonweal in 1886, of which I have already spoken. The French titles of several of Proudhon’s works are shortened and mangled, and he is credited with a Histoire de (sic) socialisme which is difficult to identify. I find it difficult to believe that Morris had a hand in drawing up this list. It is only in Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, in 1893, that we find a biography of Proudhon and a somewhat severe judgment upon the confusion of his ideas, which repeats in essence Marx’s strictures. Clearly, the historical documentation which this passage contains was outside Morris’s competence, and, judging by certain details, it can without any risk of error be attributed to Bax, which by no means excludes his having discussed it with Morris and written it with his agreement. In this fragment there is one odd omission. Reference is made to Proudhon’s scheme for mutual aid, but none to his federalist ideas, which might be expected to interest Morris. Is it too much to deduce from this, on the one hand, that the latter’s participation in the writing is doubtful and, on the other, that Morris’s federalism was not directly inspired by Proudhon? In any case, it was an idea that was “in the air” and much discussed in socialist circles.

Let us come to Kropotkin. The problem is much less simple. If we go by the publication dates of his books, it would seem that the only one which could have had any influence upon Morris’s development was the work which appeared in Paris in 1885 under the title of Paroles d’un Révolté. La Conquête du pain appeared in 1892 and it was only after Morris’s death that the Memoirs of a Revolutionist (1899) and Mutual Aid (1902) appeared. In fact, these dates must not carry too much weight with us, because most of the chapters which make up his books appeared in the form of articles in periodicals in Switzerland (Le Révolté) or Britain (Freedom), long before being collected together into
volumes, and Morris might have known of them, particularly those in Freedom. Whether he read Kropotkin’s writings or not, and it is probable that he read some of them, is basically of no very great importance. The two men had frequent and friendly personal contacts, and the exchange of ideas will have taken place in the course of their conversations. In truth, the real problem would be to know which of them exerted influence upon the other!

Morris made Kropotkin’s acquaintance on 18 March 1886 at a meeting commemorating the Commune. He was at once attracted by the personality of the anarchist prince, and spent a long time with him some days later. It was the beginning of an unbroken and cordial relationship. Kropotkin was invited to publish articles in Commonweal and give lectures in Hammersmith. He was even Morris’s guest at Kelmscott House. The latter felt Kropotkin’s ascendency so much in the early days that he feared seeing him captured by the Social Democratic Federation. A passing reference, in a letter in December 1886, even inclines me to the opinion that it was under Kropotkin’s influence that Morris’s anti-parliamentary rigidity hardened, and that he was led to make common cause with the anarchists in the League against the Aveling faction, which, inspired by Engels, was refusing to banish the electoral weapon from the means of struggle. It was probably then that his direct contacts with Marx’s old companion ceased, and there began a period of political sectarianism lasting two or three years, the futility and error of which he later recognised.

At first glance this friendship may seem surprising but it is perfectly explicable if one grasps the subtlety of its nuances. We must not overlook the affinity of class and culture which could be established between Morris, from the upper bourgeoisie, and the Russian aristocrat, their shared taste for mediaeval art and the parallel aspects of their political and social development. Apart from these personal factors, Kropotkin’s anarchism had personal characteristics which suited their exchanges. It was, in fact, a consistent ideology, far removed from the disconcerting contradictions of Proudhon. It laid no stress upon violence, or direct action, and made no apologia for destruction. It is important to note that Kropotkin never gave the slightest support to the League anarchists who caused Morris so much trouble and who, in the end, expelled him from it, despite the immense indulgence he showed towards them. Nor was it an anarchism founded upon a frantic exaltation of the rights of the individual and a denial of any social contract. All in all, it was a utopia having as its aim a society of human brotherhood from which all government, all State and all authority were strictly excluded. But for a few discrepancies, this utopia presented several characteristics in common with Marx’s and Morris’s vision of the second stage. The disagreement, which was clearly fundamental, turned upon means and, even more, upon revolutionary chronology.

Morris never made the slightest concession upon these points of disagreement, but it is perfectly understandable that, as his daughter May writes, “the friendship between him and Peter Kropotkin was undisturbed by this difference of outlook”. The weakness of the socialist movement at this time, moreover, made major excommunications impossible, apart from the multiplicity of sects. Bernard Shaw describes Morris’s attitude with great exactitude when he records that the latter.
"...and he would now experience Anarchism in any term, as genuinely anarchist to discover how its Wu notion of freedom could be reconciled with the positive side of Communism."

This desire was not less keen in Kropotkin and for his part he had published an expression of it:

"Whenever our ideas upon the future organisation of society may be, there is one point common to all sincere socialists: the expropriation of capital must come out of the next revolution. So any struggle which purports for this expropriation must be unanimously supported by all socialist groups, to whatever shade of opinion they belong." 167

And Kropotkin had no hesitation over close contact even with Huxley who saw himself equally to his charm and gave him his friendship, even if his hereditaries, the sheers of attitude and opposition which he once expressed. 168

It is important, in order to understand better the case why each of these ideas between Morris and Kropotkin could develop, to recall that in time neither used any esoteric vocabulary, and introduced the anarchist ideal in terms of socialism or communism. He wanted

"...the abolition of personal property, communism, on the one hand, on the other, the abolition of the State, the free Commune, the international union of working peoples." 169

For Morris, those were long-term rather than immediate ideas and he envisaged, not the abolition, but in the words used by Engels at the time, an "essential change away from the State. No doubt he could subscribe, with a different chronological perspective, to the conception of a society founded upon "absolutely independent Communities". Only, for Kropotkin the process was reversed and, according to him, it was the communities alone which can give the necessary environment for revolution and the means of accomplishing it. 170

Morris, on the contrary, envisaged the necessary, willy-nilly, of a centralised State throughout the first stage before communist society could be inaugurated. With these fundamental reservations made once and for all, Kropotkin was much nearer to Morris than to many anarchist groups who federated the communities into a close network, a "federal society - truly indivisible, free and growing in solidarity through its very liberty."

Perhaps Morris owed to him the notion of a duality in the federal network, resting upon locality and upon occupation at the same time.

"Each group in the Commune will of necessity be attracted to other similar groups in other Communities; it will form groups and associations with them through links at least as strong as those which attach it to co-citizens, and will constitute a Community of interests whose members are spread among a thousand towns and villages." 171

Conversely, it was perhaps under the influence of Morris that in his memoirs published fourteen years later, he detailed his thoughts and formulations, the federations of communities among themselves, the federations of communities with trade organisations. 172

In this new society, where the State apparatus no longer exists, the customs and relationships of men will be completely changed and Morris speaks with the same voice as Kropotkin when the latter writes:

"Three-quarters of all crimes and offences will disappear along with the private property. Law and punishment are abominations which should cease to exist; let us treat as a brother the man who has been driven by passion to do wrong to his fellow." 173

The competitiveness of the capitalist world will be succeeded by a brotherhood "fellowship," says Morris, "mutual aid," says Kropotkin; and this last expression reminds us of Ruskin's "the first and highest law - is help." Moreover, Kropotkin considers this mutual aid as a law in the same way as the struggle for existence and, like Morris, he rebels against the domination of Darwinism that Huxley, starting from this last phrase, had made in a publication of 1888. If one were to follow Huxley's reasoning:

"There is no infamy in civilized society, or in the relations of the white towards the so-called lower races, or of the 'strong' towards the 'weak,' which would not have found its excuse in this formula." 174

For Kropotkin, true Darwinism simultaneously takes into account the struggle for existence and mutual aid, and in nature the latter plays the dominant role. 175 From 1896, he published in the Nineteenth Century a series of articles on mutual aid among animals, savages, barbarians, in the medieaval city and among us, later to be collected and completed, in 1902, in his book Mutual Aid. 176 Kropotkin's reaction to Huxley's theses seems to have preceded Morris's but it is possible that they mutually influenced and strengthened each other's attitudes during their conversations. This also probably happened with their views on the Middle Ages, but Morris's must have been the predominant influence. Because Kropotkin's article on mutual aid in medieaval cities was only published in 1894 and refers to sources familiar to Morris (notably Thorold Rogers) to illustrate the superior lot of the worker of earlier days compared with that of the nineteenth-century worker. 177 In general, this article means the last that the towns and guilds of the Middle Ages were the continuation of old village communities and stresses also the spirit of liberty and cooperation which inspired Gothic art. It is in truth that the last idea was expressed by Kropotkin as early as 1885. 178 There again, it can be a question of mutual agreement and influence.

In the end this is the impression one receives whenever there is a convergence of opinion apparent between them, whether it is in condemning the theories of Henry George 179 or Fourier's phalansteries, 180 in reducing the working day to four hours, 181 in beautifying the places where workers carry on their occupations, 182 in wanting work to be "the free exercise of all the faculties of man," in rejecting its subdivision, 183 in taxing pain and power to enrich it by the practice of mutual work. 184 On these later points, it is, in fact, Morris who influenced Kropotkin, and the latter acknowledged his debt:

176 "Art, in order to develop, must be bound up with industry by a thousand intermediate degrees, blended, so to say, as Ruskin and the great
Socialist poet Morris have proved so often and so well. 186

It is the same when Kropotkin asserts that in the new society needs will be characterised by "a taste for simplicity" and that there will be the means to satisfy them amply "on condition that one knows how to relate the means to the satisfaction of real needs". 192 If one had to draw up a balance sheet of the influences exerted, it would certainly be found that the debit balance was Kropotkin's.

What particularly interests us is to observe that, in essentials, Morris was absolutely adamant about the anarchistic ideas of his Russian friend. And the latter, moreover, displayed a gently obstinate refusal to understand what Morris could not have failed to explain to him. 193

"We cannot hold with the collectivists," Kropotkin writes, for example, "that payment proportionate to the hours of labour rendered by each would be an ideal arrangement." 194

It was not an ideal for Morris either, and he must certainly have attempted to convey that it was simply an aspect of the necessary and transitory phase of the first stage, just like the State socialism which Kropotkin reproached the social democrats, inspired by Marx and Engels, with wishing to institute. In a sufficiently idealistic manner he opposed to scientific socialism, born of Germanic Geist, anarchy, born of the Latin spirit. 195 He denied the need for any revolutionary government, that "sad illusion", and wanted to pass overnight into anarchist society. 196

"Our first obligation," he writes, "when the revolution shall have broken the power upholding the present system, will be to realize Communism without delay." 197

This stubborn rejection of the Marxist theory of two stages, upon which the whole of Morris's utopia was based, is the point of absolute cleavage between the two men. "What I aim at," said Morris to Glasier,

"is Socialism or Communism, not Anarchism. Anarchism and Communism, notwithstanding our friend Kropotkin, are incompatible in principle." 198
CHAPTER FOUR

Marxism

Carrying on a deaf man's soliloquy beyond the tomb, Kropotkin, immediately following Morris's death, purely and simply appropriated him, and various theorists of anarchism have followed him and done the same. This bare-faced annexion was not confined to the libertarians. The Fabians, whom Morris had opposed equally consistently, were not to be left out. In this respect Shaw performed one of the most hair-raising about-turns of his career. In the essay which serves as introduction to the second volume of May Morris's work, he went so far as to write, on the same page, that everything about the Fabian Society, from the bourgeois atmosphere to the furniture, not to mention the tone of the discussions, "would have driven him mad", that he would have walked out in a towering rage, "damning us all for a parcel of half-baked shortsighted suburban snobs, as ugly in our ideas as in our lives", and, a few lines further on, that after the break-up of the Socialist League he no longer preached revolution and "even said that no doubt Socialism would come in Sydney Webb's way: The Fabian way". Shaw had already asserted, in an obituary notice in 1896, both that "he remained unchanged in his socialism" and that "he practically adopted the views of the Fabian Society as to how the change would come about"! Between these two assertions, which really do push the art of contradiction pretty far, lies a Fabian Tract of 1912, from which we learn that "towards the end of his life he was brought in a chastened spirit to bow his neck to the Fabian yoke." It is to the point to recall here that, on 9 January 1896, a few months before his death, Morris wrote to an American correspondent: "I have not changed my mind on Socialism". I may add that the least revolutionary leaders of the Labour Party, particularly Clement Attlee, have frequently claimed him. But there is something even more breath-taking: in 1934, on the occasion of the centenary of Morris's birth, a certain Adam Neil, writing in Fascist Week, extolled him as a pioneer of Fascism, of Nordic racism and the corporate state!

But these categorical appropriations are far less harmful to the establishment of the truth than are the negative attitudes, sometimes underhand, sometimes peremptory, adopted by a near totality of critics towards Morris's socialism, and, particularly, his embracing of Marxism. I could never reach the end of building an anthology of judgments passed in this sense in the innumerable books and articles devoted to his work and theories. So I must be excused for citing haphazard a few of the most typical. First, here is that of W. R. Lethaby and R. Steele:

"There was, in fact, nothing modern or scientific about Morris's
socialism... he never formulated a scientific scheme of socialism.
Indeed, it is doubtful if he can be called a socialist at all..." 9

If one chooses to believe Esther Meynell, "he could not march in step
with the socialists of his day" and "his own thinking on the matter is obviously
muddled". According to Nikolaus Pevsner, there is in Morris's socialism
"more of More than of Marx". Margaret Grennan, so clear in so many other
respects, writes "he did not know much about the theory of value and cared
even less" and that there is as big a difference between him and Marx as
between Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Poverello of Assisi. In the eyes of
Clutton-Brock, "he was never a theorist and was not accustomed to think in
terms of political economy". For Max Nordau, he was "devoted to a cloudy
socialism composed mainly of pity and love for his fellow-man". Henry
Pelling himself declares that "he did not know much about Marxist
economics", and Victor Dupont considers that "he is not sufficiently in-
tellectualised to examine his conviction in the light of a scientific philosophy of
history". These few scattered quotations suffice. We may deduce that for
some, Morris was not the least little bit socialist, for others, his socialism was
vague and sentimental, and that the near-totality assert that, if he was familiar
with Marxism, he was in disagreement with its doctrines or even incapable of
understanding them. We note too that certain biographers and critics do not
hesitate to contradict themselves. Compton-Rickett, for example, writes that
"few men of imaginative genius have been so indifferent to any form of
speculative thought as was Morris", which does not prevent him informing us
a few pages further on, that "he studied Economics with the same
thoroughness as he had given to tapestry weaving, and one of the ablest
thinkers in the movement tells me that Morris's grasp of the subject was
complete". No more realistic estimate appeared before Graham Hough's
study, although it had been preceded in 1934, by R. Page Arnott's emphatic
protest, which still remained unechoed. We had to wait until 1955 for the
masterly political biography by the historian E. P. Thompson for the matter to
be finally revealed in the light of facts and writings. An important part of the
present chapter could not have been written without reference to his work, and
I hasten to acknowledge my debt. Those who have read and appreciated it will
have to forgive me when they find here much of its data, sometimes scattered
and sometimes grouped. I have supplemented it by facts which my own
research has revealed, but I am still, in essence, in complete agreement with
his argument.

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It is appropriate to consider the reasons for the almost general refusal to
recognise in Morris's socialism any revolutionary character or scientific in-
spiration. Some are obvious, others more elusive. The first, as I have indicated,
is the ignorance of most of the commentators, who have no notion of what
Marxism is, or a much simplified and distorted notion. In many cases, this
state of fact coincides with personal political views, admitted or unconscious,
or even a supposed "apoliticality", which can produce analogous effects. Fre-
quently these phenomena are accompanied by contemptuous attitudes
towards everything non-literary: many critics are still scholars who judge a writer only upon his talent and have no wish to follow his secular wanderings. William Morris's poetic and artistic genius demanded everyone's admiration. Almost instinctively the beauty of his poems, his tales and his decorative work has been isolated from the more or less "impure" aspects. Even more, this beauty has itself created illusions. The impetuous rhythm of his work, its lyricism, its visionary imagination have built up a purely romantic image difficult to reconcile with the traditional picture of a materialist thinker. It seemed inconceivable that such aesthetic flowering could be rooted in social thinking and action which everything showed to be deep and serious. There was something almost indecent about it.

Let me say, in extenuation of the commentators and interpreters towards whom I show such severity, that this image of Morris has been transmitted to them, almost thrust upon them, by the picture left of him by the three biographers who knew him best, whose direct evidence is most valuable and irreplaceable: Mackail, May Morris and Bruce Glasier; and one should not forget to add Lady Burne-Jones. Her picture is not the same and it is not beside the point to define the subtle difference.

The Memorials of Lady Burne-Jones are noteworthy for their calculated reticence. We know that she carefully sorted the letters Morris had sent her and destroyed a great many of them, which leaves room for speculation about the exact nature of their relationship. She shows extreme discretion about Morris's political life and one feels strongly that, despite her feelings of deepest affection, she shared her husband's objections and remained aloof. What interests us about her in the first instance is much less what she wrote (or rather left unwritten) than her hidden hand in the preparation of the biography written by her son-in-law Mackail. He was certainly a man filled with good intentions and one cannot blame him for not sharing the convictions of the man who was the subject of his book. We may remark, however, that the book wallows in an atmosphere of Victorian respectability and surrounds all of Morris's love-life with chaste silence. One feels that on this point he was completely concerned not to upset his mother-in-law and above all not to give away her secrets. And that is not the most serious thing, from the point of view which we must clearly adopt. The important fact is that Mackail, who felt fervent and sincere admiration for Morris, was embarrassed by his revolutionary socialism, and constantly strove to minimise, not only the extent of it, but its very existence. He had no way of avoiding the admission of its existence but in his eyes it was a kind of blemish, or shameful inconsistency, this inexplicable intrusion of a phenomenon foreign to the nature of his hero,

"the patient revenge of the modern or scientific spirit so long fought against, first by his aristocratic, and then by his artistic instincts, when it took hold of him against his will and made him a dogmatic Socialist." 20

Diligently he strove to reduce as much as possible the hold of Marxism upon Morris, asserting that Thomas More's Utopia exerted a much greater influence upon him "than the professedly Socialistic treatises - Marx's Capital, Wallace's Land Nationalisation, and the like - which he had been rather dispiritedly ploughing through". 21

In this short passage there is a many-faceted distortion of the truth. We
have, it is true, acknowledged the admiration Morris expressed for Thomas More, but we have also seen that he had a sufficiently clear appreciation of *Utopia* to regard it as a historical document rather than direct inspiration, and that he had accepted isolated details to put them in a new perspective, which is to say, with reservations. On the other hand, Morris never expressed the slightest reservation about his acceptance of Marxism, despite stories whose origin we shall shortly examine. I may add that it is absurd to put a utopia whose arbitrary structure is not contained within any explicit historical causality upon the same plane as *Capital*, which is not a utopia, but a factual analysis of factual economic reality. It is also absurd to put *Capital* upon the same plane as the mediocre book by Wallace, whose conclusions Morris rejected along with those of Henry George. There remains the last point: “the professedly Socialistic treatises . . . which he had been rather dispiritedly ploughing through”. Here we cannot speak of absurdity, but of dishonesty. In fact, a few pages away, Mackail quotes, in truncated form, in support of his thesis, a sentence from the famous autobiographical article of 1894:

“I put some conscience into trying to learn the economic side of Socialism, and even tackled Marx, though I must confess that, (whereas I thoroughly enjoyed the historical part of *Capital*), I suffered agonies of the brain over reading the (pure) economics of that (great) work.” 22

If the reader will read first the complete version of the text, ignoring my parentheses, and then read Mackail’s truncated version, the biographer’s intention, in the face of the reality of Morris’s meaning, is in no doubt. Again, in the passage which contains this quotation, Mackail asserts that Morris was a socialist before reading Marx and that he was struggling in this reading to find an *a posteriori* justification for his faith; but this belief, he adds, “while it was not unreasoned, was not the outcome . . . of abstract economic reasoning”.

All the interpreters have fastened upon this mangled sentence of Morris’s. The dishonesty of Mackail, and of all those who followed in his footsteps, does not stop there: in fact, he separated the sentence from its context. Immediately after referring to his reading of “that great work”, Morris wrote:

“Anyhow I read what I could, and will hope that some information stuck to me from my reading”.

I shall have ample reason to come back to the substance and also to the manner of this declaration. Let me add, as a measure of the credence to be accorded to Mackail, that he ranks the influence of Marx, in the same way as earlier, that of Rossetti, among the “disturbing forces” which acted upon Morris. 23 *A propos* Rossetti, let us also note that Mackail complacently contrasts his open-handed generosity to beggars with the attitude of Morris, who was only interested in the poor “as a class”; in which direction, the biographer seems to be asking with a wink, does true socialism lie? 24 Mackail makes no effort to conceal the fact that he deplores the time wasted by Morris in his militant activity, considering that it led to “a more contracted and perhaps less effective life than was consistent with his real nature”, and it is with relief that in 1886 he sees him return to poetry in translating the *Odyssey* and “swing back into his own orbit”. 25 So we are not surprised that he dwells at length upon certain really minor poetical and novelistic works, while he maintains a
complete silence upon his essential theoretical writings and the whole of the articles published in Commonweal. It can be said that, in this way, Mackail set the tone of Morrisian criticism as a whole, and that his authority was only challenged for the first time in 1949 by Bernard Shaw in an article in The Observer. Mackail, wrote Shaw,

"regarded his Socialism as a deplorable aberration, and even in my presence was unable to quite conceal his opinion of me as Morris’s most undesirable associate. From his point of view, Morris took to Socialism as Poe took to drink", 26

The quotations I have made hardly give the lie to this assessment.

We can say that until 1936, forty years after the death of Morris, the only reliable texts available to commentators were Mackail’s biography, which is remarkable in all other respects, and the twenty-four volumes of the Complete Works (C. W.) published by May Morris between 1910 and 1915, with their respective introductions. These Complete Works do not contain the most revealing political lectures, nor the Commonweal articles. Stress is laid almost exclusively upon poetry, novelistic writing and aesthetic thinking. Why this reticence on the part of May, who was her father’s closest collaborator in his militant activity? A reading of her own commentaries reveals that her theoretical education was much inferior to her father’s. She obviously understood nothing about Marxism. While the physical image of the man is, thanks to her, extremely alive, May tends to endow him with a somewhat mystical sentimentality which only existed in her and which she makes credible by an unjustified use of her father’s self-imposed reticence over religious matters. Perhaps the reason for this selective edition of the works is to be sought also in the influence of Mackail and Lady Burne-Jones (who only died in 1920), in the presence of her mother (who died in 1914) and in her odd and ill-explained dealings with Bernard Shaw. And above all we note that from 1896 (the date of Morris’s death) to 1898 she was a member of the Executive Committee of the Fabian Society; 23 this is the explanation of the distinctly reformist outlook which shows in her own writing. It was only in 1936 that she finally published the two supplementary volumes containing the substance of Morris’s theoretical thinking and it looks very much as though only the general development of the political situation at that time removed all hesitation: it must be admitted that at the beginning of this century it required a certain courage in English society to admit to being the daughter of a communist. But these two volumes only had a print of 750 copies each. They rapidly became unobtainable until the new American edition in 1966, and the interpreters of Morris are somewhat to be excused for not knowing of them, when their ignorance was not deliberate.

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In seeking the origins of the legend which tries to deny Morris the status of Marxist, I have so far dealt only with partial, veiled or embarrassed attempts which, except in one special instance (Mackail’s truncated quotation), spread the lie by omission, through fear of public opinion or from Victorian hypocrisy, rather than from overt dishonesty. It now remains for me to talk of another
biographer who did not hesitate to bear false witness and whose influence upon criticism is not to be neglected. I refer to J. Bruce Glasier who, in 1921, published, under the title *William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement*, a glib, hagiographic account which, while it is full of precious details, was the first deliberate falsification.

This book was published in 1921, a year before his death. At that time Glasier bore very little resemblance to the ardent revolutionary whom Morris had known and trusted. Even then, as Thompson justly remarks, his enthusiasm had been idealistic and romantic and accompanied by a certain disregard for practical reality which sometimes irritated Morris, as well as by a superior attitude towards the working class, which was at fault for not responding to his propaganda. After the break-up of the Socialist League, he joined the Independent Labour Party, became friendly with Ramsay Macdonald and in the British Labour Movement became an avowed opponent of Marxism. 28 I add to Thompson’s information that Glasier finished up as a Theosophist, 29 which is by no means surprising if one considers the smooth deism which saturates his book and from which he would have us believe that Morris was not free. I may add also, that while he was a leading member of the I.L.P. he accepted a paid post as a propagandist for the Fabian Society in 1899; 30 and finally that Lenin, who had dealings with him in the international movement in 1908, commented upon his opportunism and the fact that “he expressed himself very contemptuously about principles, formulas and catechisms”. 31 It is not surprising that Glasier, who tries to pass himself off as a close disciple of Morris (as a new Boswell, says Thompson), looks back from the political viewpoint of his last years and implicitly seeks to justify himself through Morris. It is relevant to remark that May Morris agreed to stand surety for this book by means of a laudatory preface, in which she asserts that her father’s socialism was “fundamentally ethical”.

That is exactly the central theme of Glasier’s book, which he stresses in his opening pages:

“He derived his Socialist impulse from no theory or philosophy or reasoning of his intellect, but from his very being.” 32

So we know from the outset where he aims to arrive and what idea will motivate his book. Nevertheless, he is very clumsy when he admits to us that his memory “is one of the poorest so far as it concerns retaining in the ordinary way a recollection of words or phrases”. It is, on the other hand, “exceedingly retentive of visual or pictorial impressions”, but, he repeats, he is usually obliged “to content myself with giving the barest indication of the conversations”. But he claims that, where Morris is concerned, he has been touched with a sort of grace and can reproduce “the conversations . . . word for word”. So his memory is subject to “a sort of ‘illumination’ or ‘inspiration’”. 33 Which does not prevent his making an enormous admission in the last pages of his narrative:

“I must warn my readers that in these jottings I am giving rather what express my present impression of some of Morris’s observations than what he actually said or meant to convey.” 34

His was indeed a curious inspiration, as we shall be able to judge. The first
surprising incident he recounts, which the critics have reproduced faithfully, is dated December 1884. We are on the eve of the break between Morris and Hyndman which, a few weeks later, led to the split in the Social Democratic Federation and the foundation of the Socialist League. Morris is making a propaganda tour in Scotland, where he discovers proof of Hyndman’s treacherous insinuations about Scheu. With the aim of making the peace, he goes to Glasgow and has a long discussion with the militants of the S.D.F., who are tense and divided. At the end of the conversation, Nairne, the branch secretary and a rigid supporter of Hyndman’s dogmatic line, takes Morris to task and asks whether he accepts the Marxist theory of value. If one is to believe Glasier, Morris then exclaims:

“I am asked if I believe in Marx’s theory of value. To speak quite frankly, I do not know what Marx’s theory of value is, and I’m damned if I want to know ... Truth to say, my friends, I have tried to understand Marx’s theory, but political economy is not in my line, and much of it appears to me to be dreary rubbish. But I am, I hope, a Socialist none the less. It is enough political economy for me to know that the idle class is rich and the working class is poor, and that the rich are rich because they rob the poor. That I know because I see it with my eyes. I need no books to convince me of it. And it does not matter a rap, it seems to me, whether the robbery is accomplished by what is termed surplus value, or by means of serfage or open brigandage. The whole system is monstrous and intolerable, and what we Socialists have got to do is to work together for its complete overthrow, and for the establishment in its stead of a system of co-operation where there shall be no masters or slaves, but where everyone will live and work jollily together as neighbours and comrades for the equal good of all. That, in a nutshell, is my political economy and my social democracy.”

Let me say frankly that all the last part of this speech is entirely probable. Morris had come to calm tempers and exhort the militants to “work together”, setting aside their separate tendencies. It is altogether probable that he was irritated by Nairne’s hostile attitude and sectarian dogmatism. But it is unbelievable that he could have expressed himself in such terms about Marx at a time when, as we shall see, he was making a sustained effort to master the theory of Marx’s doctrine and to expound it in many articles and lectures. The theory of value and surplus value had been familiar to him for two years and up to the end of his life he never stopped making it the basis of his political teaching. At the most it is possible that he might, with his habitual modesty, have declared that his competence in this field was inadequate and that he had wanted to avoid his listeners being discouraged by the difficulties of theoretical education. For the rest, this anecdote of Glasier’s, for which no corroboration has ever been forthcoming, appears as a gross falsification contrary to everything we know about Morris.

But Glasier did not stop there. On 18 October 1890, in an interview given to Cassell’s Sunday Journal which had attracted some attention, Morris had avowed his debt to Karl Marx and said that the socialist movement could never have attained such strength if Marx had not given it a scientific basis. Glasier claims to have been surprised at this declaration and to have asked
Morris for an explanation. And here is the explanation Morris is supposed to have given him:

"I don't think the Cassell's Magazine chap quite put it as I gave it to him... but it is quite true that I put some emphasis on Marx - more than I ought to have done, perhaps. The fact is that I have often tried to read the old German Israelite, but have never been able to make head or tail of his algebraic. He is stiffer reading than some of Browning's poetry. But you see most people think I am a Socialist because I am a crazy sort of artist and poet chap, and I mentioned Marx because I wanted to be upsides with them and make them believe that I am really a tremendous Political Economist - which, thank God, I am not! I don't think I ever read a book on Political Economy in my life - barring, if you choose to call it such, Ruskin's Unto this Last - and I'll take precious good care that I never will!" 37

While one could, in the case of the previously quoted declaration, admit the remote possibility of its being a question of real remarks dishonestly twisted, here everything is obviously invention and falsehood. I overlook the alteration of the name of the paper. It is more serious that Glasier locates this conversation "a year or two after" the Glasgow incident, that is, in 1885 or 1886, whereas the interview took place in 1890, at a time when Morris had declared his position without the slightest ambiguity upon many occasions: is so serious a chronological discrepancy due to a simple lapse of memory?

Let us come to the remarks themselves. Is it conceivable that Morris should have denied himself in this fashion before one who claimed to be his most devoted follower? Why, if the journalist had misrepresented his meaning, did Morris not send a letter of correction to the weekly, as he did on other occasions? Is it consistent with Morris's character to try to appear more knowledgeable than he was, when we are constantly being hindered (I shall come back to this point) by his excessive modesty? Can one believe that he spoke of Marx (and it would really have been the only time in his life) in the terms which Glasier reports? Is it possible that he would have lied to the latter over the extent of his reading? As E. P. Thompson justly says: "the questions are unnecessary. It is easier to ask why Glasier would have liked Morris to have said these things." 38

And that is not all. Glasier carries calumny further, and one is astounded that May should have given her backing to his book. He wrote, in fact:

"It is true that occasionally he used distinctly Marxist phrases in his lectures, and so gave the impression that he accepted in the main the Scientific Socialist position. This was notably the case in that most unsatisfactory series of chapters, Socialism, from the Root up, which he wrote for Commonwealth in 1886-88 jointly with Belfort Bax, or rather, which, as he himself said, Bax wrote and he said ditto to. They were afterwards republished in book-form under the title Socialism: its Growth and Outcome. But no one who knew him personally, or was familiar with the general body of his writings, could fail to perceive that these Marxist ideas did not really belong to his own sphere of Socialist thought, but were adopted by him because of their almost universal acceptance by his
fellow Socialists, and because he did not feel disposed to bother about doctrines which, whether true or false, hardly interested him." 39

Again, the lie is multiple. It is false to say that at this time Marx's ideas were almost universally accepted by Morris's comrades in the struggle, and the fight he had to carry on within his own organisation against very different ideologies is most significant. It is contrary to all we know about him to accuse him of following the crowd, and Glasier goes much further, finishing up by making him a real hypocrite. It is a lie to write that there exists the smallest contradiction between the ideology of the book in question and the whole of Morris's writings after 1883-84. Finally, it is a shameful slander to claim that Morris played no part in writing the book. Not only did he never admit anything of the sort, as Glasier dares to claim, but the preface to the book, intituled by Morris and Bax, ends with these words:

"We have only further to add that the work has been in the true sense of the word a collaboration, 40 each sentence having been carefully considered by both authors in common, although now one, now the other, has had more to do with initial suggestions in different portions of the work." 41

In earlier chapters I was able to establish that this declaration very precisely reflects the conditions of this collaboration, about which I shall have more to say. For the moment I shall content myself with saying, in the words of Glasier himself, that "no one who was familiar with the general body of his writings" could fail to recognise unmistakeably his preoccupations and his style in the very chapter devoted to scientific socialism, illustrated by examples borrowed from Dickens, from mediaeval history and from the art of dyeing.

I would like to conclude this rapid summary of the part played by Glasier in the falsification of the image of Morris by reproducing a very judicious observation of E. P. Thompson's. By dint of attempting to de-intellectualise Morris, by passing over in silence his activity as a militant conscious of his responsibilities and ignoring the seriousness of his thinking, Glasier, who gives a very lively description of the robust impulsiveness of the man in his daily life, manages in the end to give us the impression that he is dealing with a generous and eccentric buffoon, and that too has its part in the legend handed down by tradition. 42

I repeat (and I make a point of doing so that there shall be no misunderstanding about my intentions) that the good faith of the innumerable interpreters has been led astray by these successive distortions, which they found in varying degree in the only direct evidence at their disposal. Their failing has lain in reproducing them without the smallest critical discretion, in complacent ignorance of the works themselves and lacking an understanding of their sources.

However, we cannot indiscriminately grant them a general absolution, because Glasier the twister found at least one among them to emulate him, and I must refer to him because his book enjoyed wide publicity. In 1940 there appeared in New York, under the signature of Lloyd Wendell Eshleman, a book entitled: A Victorian Rebel: the Life of William Morris. The same book, slightly revised, was republished in London in 1949 under the title: William
William Morris: The Marxist Dreamer

Morris, Prophet of England's New Order and under the signature of Lloyd Eric Grey. The author had written to S. Cockerell, probably asking for information or permission. Cockerell sent the letter on to Mackail, who returned it with a covering letter in which he wrote: "It's ambiguity, not to say insincerity, does not give a favourable opinion of him or of his forthcoming 'Life'". The cautious Mackail's apprehension was well-founded, if only on account of the off-hand way in which the author commented upon his work in the bibliography.

Yet it was to Mackail's authority that Lloyd Eric Grey legitimately appealed when he wrote:

"Morris's means, unlike those advocated or employed by Karl Marx and the advocates of Scientific Socialism, were not evolved as the result of economic formulae, nor were they, as Doctor Mackail has pointed out, the result of economic reasoning."

We have seen, too, whence he might have got the idea that Morris "studied Marx with great labour, difficulty and lack of sympathy". But Mackail did not go far enough for his liking, and Bruce Glasier's absurd calumnies no doubt satisfied him more. He quotes a letter written to him in 1936 by a certain Cosmo Rowe (of whom I have been unable to find a trace anywhere) who is said to have known Morris well in the 'nineties and who relates that, whenever the poet was told he should read Marx he invariably replied: "Why should I read Marx? I can see the evils of society without going to him." It is difficult to decide which there is more of, lies or contradictions. It goes without saying that, for L. E. Grey, Morris's writings "do not suggest many Marxian ideas". This ineffable American of the cold-war era asserts that Morris had "a strong aversion to all Eastern influences" and a "preference for Western, or European culture"; in other words, "Morris's ideas were innately English" while "Hyndman, on the other hand, wanted Marxism". One cannot help recalling the famous "Kommunist pas français" uttered by one of Hitler's officers commanding a firing squad at Châteaubriant, and one is left a little bemused when L. E. Grey seeks for Morris a spiritual forefather in Kant, whose influence, even if not Marxist, stems from the same eastern country, and whom Morris could scarcely have known other than by name. But was Morris even a socialist? No, replies Grey, that is pure legend; "he has been made to appear as a man who was in active and violent revolt against the capitalistic government"; such ideas "are not true"; and "Morris was a Socialist only in the etymological sense of believing that man must become a social animal".

Grey does not hesitate to write that "class struggle was abhorrent to Morris". Is there any need to say that all these assertions are unaccompanied by any reference? The scarcity of quotations in the book is, in fact, striking.

However there are some, and one of them is worth re-quotting. So far I have only picked out untruthful insinuations and baseless assertions. They are hardly original and would not have been worth our attention if Lloyd Eric Grey had not distinguished himself by a genuine prowess which Bruce Glasier himself would not have dared to attempt. Here is what he managed to write:

"Morris believed that all historic progress and decay can be inter-
interpreted in terms of the interplay between art and society, artistic causes and effects taking precedence over all others.

It is this philosophy of historic change which caused Morris to disagree at heart with the 'economics' and 'historical materialism' of Karl Marx's Das Kapital (just as a similar philosophy caused Benedetto Croce to disagree many years later) and to write to the members of the Marxist Social Democratic Federation that any one who believes that 'knife and fork' economics takes precedence over 'art and cultivation ... does not understand what art means'.

On 16 June 1894, Morris had written, in the celebrated autobiographical article from which I have quoted several times, and which was published in Justice:

"Surely any one who professes to think that the question of art and cultivation must go before that of the knife and fork (and there are some who do propose that) does not understand what art means or how its roots must have a soil of thriving and unanxious life."

I do not personally know of any example of falsification so impudent as that of Lloyd Eric Grey. It is the latest in date and marks the climax of a long legend. Since the publication of E. P. Thompson's book in 1955, there are certain things one no longer dares say, although the temptation remains strong and sometimes ill-repressed. I ask you to believe that it was necessary to recall these matters in order to appreciate the need for a serious study of the facts. That is the sole justification for this preamble, which is as nauseating as it is long.

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If we are to assess the exact extent of Morris's knowledge of the works of Marx, two preliminary remarks are essential. The first is of a psychological nature. Morris, who at first glance seems so straightforward, so much of a piece, so spontaneous, does not reveal himself so easily. This characteristic, which one observers in connection with his love life, affected his intellectual life also. Seawen Blunt remarked that "of poetry he affected to have little knowledge, and of the work of those he was averse to he would pretend never to have read a word". In conversation, he always moved forward cautiously.

"You never knew how much Morris had up his sleeve," wrote Shaw, "until he thought you knew enough to understand him."

He notes elsewhere that

"there was a certain intellectual roguery about him of which his intimate friends were very well aware; so that if a subject was thrust on him, the aggressor was sure to be ridiculously taken in if he did not calculate on Morris's knowing much more about it than he pretended to."

He had a horror of showing-off and when he was speaking of himself he practised the British art of understatement to the limit. We must not allow ourselves to be taken in.
On quite a different plane of ideas, it is necessary to recall how vast was the ignorance of Marxism in the England of the eighties. The word itself was not yet current and E. D. Le Mire has established, by a careful reading of successive issues of the year 1884 of the weekly *Justice*, then the only English Marxist publication, that it was not used in it on a single occasion. Marx’s death, in 1883, would have escaped the notice of *The Times* if its Paris correspondent had not sent a paragraph recalling his European reputation. The first English edition of *Capital*, in the translation of S. Moore and E. Aveling, only appeared in 1887, and sold 500 copies, half of them in the United States, in the course of a year, from July 1887, only 65 copies went. The author’s royalties paid to Marx’s daughters were derisory. The Communist Manifesto had appeared in English in 1886, as had *Wage-Labour and Capital*, and there was no translation of Engels’s pamphlet, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific* before 1892. Only *The Civil War in France* had been published in England as early as 1871.

Pease, in his *History of the Fabian Society*, gives a picture of the atmosphere of indifference towards Marxism during these years in words which are somewhat spiteful but not at all exaggerated. Even in the privileged circle of the Democratic Federation, knowledge of Marxism seems, if one is to believe Bernard Shaw, to have been limited. At one of the meetings of the D. F., he writes, “I was told that I knew nothing because I had not read Karl Marx. I read Karl Marx and then found that none of the rest had.” The detail is too juicy not to have been contrived, but Shaw was only exaggerating slightly.

Morris joined the D. F. on 13 January 1883. He was to write later that, until then, he had never heard of Karl Marx. Very probably upon Hyndman’s advice, he almost immediately embarked upon reading *Capital* in the Lachâtre French edition (1872–75) and we know from May Morris that he “read French easily.” He read the book, she writes, “with determination” and “with what unrest of spirit his family well remember.” Mackail quotes extracts from a private diary (which Philip Henderson attributes to Cornell Price, and the supposition is plausible) in which Morris is described as “bubbling over with Karl Marx”, under the date of 22 February 1883, which, we note in passing, contradicts his own statements. From that moment, references to *Capital* and, even more, borrowings from it, become increasingly frequent in his work, as we shall see. Like various other socialists in these early years, Pease and Shaw for instance, Morris still only knew the French edition. In November 1886 we find in *Commonweal* an advertisement for the English edition “under the editorship of Mr. F. Engels”, and it is certain that Morris reread *Capital* in English in 1887. We find both editions mentioned in the catalogue of the sale of Morris’s library at Sotheby’s in 1898.

*The Communist Manifesto* does not appear to have been published in England before 1886, but there were American editions dating from before 1883. It is possible that Morris may have known one of them and altogether probable that he had access to Laura Lafargue’s French translation published in August 1885 in the first issue of *Le Socialiste*.

However, in 1884, in a pamphlet published jointly by Morris and Hyndman, *A Summary of the Principles of Socialism*, there is mention of “the famous Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels which first formulated in a distinct shape the great truth of the inevitable struggle of classes so long as classes exist.” We
find a quotation from it in the Manifesto of the Socialist League, 75 and May Morris, à propos the formation of the S.L., indicates that the Manifesto of Marx and Engels "was among the 'documents' of our Socialist history". 76 The whole of Morris's work is studded with ideas borrowed from this document. Reviewing a book by Kempner: Common-sense Socialism, in 1887, he congratulates the author on having used the word communism "in the sense that it is used in the Manifesto of Marx and Engels of 1847". 77 Finally, in Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, which re-issued articles published by Bax and Morris in Commonweal in 1887, reference is made to the Manifesto as being "the first appearance in politics of modern or scientific Socialism", and the first manifestation of "practical unity of aim between the theorist and the agitator for immediate gains". 78

The same is true of Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, by Engels, which is quoted at length, from the French edition of 1880 by Paul Lafargue. 79 We saw earlier that it was from this pamphlet that Morris borrowed the integration into Marxism of Saint-Simon's predictions and the idea of the administration of things replacing the government of people. We saw also, à propos Babeuf, that he had probably read it in 1885.

In 1887 there appeared in the United States the first English-language edition of The Position of the Working Class in Britain. Engels informed his translator, Florence Kelley Wischnewetzky, that he had sent a copy to Morris 80 and two months later he confirmed to her that he had sent it to him "personally". 81 This gesture was certainly appreciated, because in December 1887 there appeared in Commonweal the first of what was to have been a series by H. A. Barker upon the facts brought out by Engels's book. In fact only the first article appeared. 82

As far as the other works of Marx and Engels are concerned we are reduced to conjecture. Wage-Labour and Capital had been translated in 1886 by Joynes, whom Morris knew very well, which implies a weak presumption. In the theoretical handbook reference is made to The Poverty of Philosophy, 83 but the little interest that Morris showed in Proudhon leads me to suppose that Bax was responsible for this reference. The same applies to other works referred to there: The Holy Family, The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon and Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. However, given the very close collaboration which existed for years between the two men, it is not out of the question for Bax to have acquainted Morris with their contents, as well as those of Anti-Dühring and Ludwig Feuerbach. The Civil War in France is not mentioned anywhere, but there is good reason to believe that Morris read this book, not only on account of his enthusiasm for the work of the Commune but still more because the idea that it is necessary to smash the State apparatus is found in his writings.

Engels's Origin of the Family poses a more delicate problem. The first German edition was in 1884. There was an Italian translation in 1885, but it is doubtful whether Morris knew of it (we do not even know whether he knew any Italian), and the first French translation only appeared in 1893. He was not very well informed about Engels's theories in 1886, since he was still confusing clan and family. 84 However, Hyndman had, two years earlier, reviewed the work, in somewhat disdainful terms, moreover, since he saw in it nothing but "an abstract of Morgan's work". 85 Whatever the facts then, it is clear that from 1888 Morris had a very accurate knowledge of these theories, which shows
successively in *The House of the Wolfings* (1888), *The Root of the Mountain* (1889) and in the articles he published in *Communist* under the title of *The Development of Modern Society* (1890); as we shall see, there can be no possible doubt on the subject.° May Morris indicates that this period of barbarism exercised a real fascination over her father and that he “read with critical enjoyment the more important modern studies of it as they came out”; unfortunately, she quotes no titles. I am reduced to observing that the novel about the Wolfings is a paraphrase of Chapter VII of *The Origin of the Family*, that the next novel is full of echoes of Chapter IX and that the articles in *Communist* faithfully reproduce Engels’s ideas about gentle society. The least that one can suppose is that Bax translated whole passages of the book to Morris.

* * *

One question comes to mind: did Morris understand German? No, he wrote, “Goethe and Heine I cannot read since I don’t know German.”°° He explained to the reporter of *Cassell’s Sunday Journal*, in the course of that interview which aroused Bruce Glasier’s venom, that, if he read *Capital* in French it was because “unfortunately I don’t read German”.°° In the course of a friendly gathering at home, in 1883, he chatted with a certain Dr. Bock, who had a specialised knowledge of old traditions in weaving, and who did not know English: “I had to talk English-French against his German-French.”°° In August 1884, relations began to deteriorate between him and Hyndman, who had greatly helped his political education, and he wrote to his Austrian friend Andreas Scheu:

“I feel myself weak as to the Science of Socialism on many points; I wish I knew German, as I see I must certainly learn it . . . By the way, as to the German, do you know any Socialist who knows English who would read with me, say in about a month from now to begin with; it might be convenient to someone.”°°

It would be interesting to know whether this suggestion led to any arrangement. It could, clearly, have been an oblique appeal to Scheu himself, since the latter had settled in Edinburgh a month earlier. In any case, Morris was aware of a serious gap, and it would be astonishing if he made no attempt to fill it.

He certainly would have had no great difficulty in doing so, because the structure of Germanic dialects was familiar to him. In 1869 he had learned Icelandic with Magnusson and, on his own showing, he was capable of reading it and speaking it fluently.°° He appears to have had more difficulty (but he was twenty-three years older) in familiarising himself with Anglo-Saxon when he prepared his translation of *Beowulf*, but he took lessons from a specialist, A. J. Wyatt, and seems to have made rapid progress; in 1893 he felt himself able “to appreciate the language”.°° As for German proper, in 1886 he declared, somewhat oddly, he could “only read even old German with great difficulty”°° and Bernard Shaw relates that “he could read Martin Luther’s Bible, but no later German”.°° Other facts incline me not to pay too much attention to his professions of ignorance. In September 1881 he appeared to be perfectly *au courant* with the contents of a provocative article by the anarchist
Most in the publication Freiheit. In March 1884, Kautsky wrote to Engels that he learned that “Morris is furious with my article in the Frankfurter Zeitung because I described him as a sentimental socialist.” We may note, in this connection, that a book of Kautsky’s Die Freiheit der neuen Sozialisten in German, figured in Morris’s library. Finally, let us say that his daughter May knew the language very well, and used to write to Andreas Scheu in German. Perhaps he had in her a source of help which has not been suspected until now.

From all these facts, it seems that one may conclude that he was not capable of reading original texts effectively, and that he had recourse to intermediaries for those of which no French or English translation was available. But it is not outside possibility for him to have been capable of reading some given passage once the gist of it had been explained to him and I am inclined to suppose that such must have been the case at least as far as The Origin of the Family was concerned.

* * *

If one is prepared to set aside the interested, contradictory and improbable insinuations of Bruce Glasier, which are uncorroborated by any other evidence, one is struck by the constant admiration expressed for Karl Marx in Morris’s writings. I have already quoted the autobiographical article “How I Became a Socialist” (1894), in which he relates his first contact with Capital, “that great work”; and this is the expression he most often uses when he refers to it. I have also quoted the interview given to Cassell’s Sunday Journal (1890), in which the fact is stressed that Marx, by giving socialism a scientific basis, opened the way for it to extend its power. The dates of these two declarations are sufficient to show that, contrary to the accumulation of legends, Morris never changed his attitude and that, to the end of his days, he was, in Bernard Shaw’s phrase “on the side of Karl Marx contra mundum”.

The upsurge of enthusiasm produced by his discovery of Capital in 1883 lasted a long time. On 16 March 1884, he took part in the ceremony marking the first anniversary of the death of Marx and wrote to his wife that he “performed a religious function . . . to do honour to the memory of Karl Marx and the Commune.” One can feel that he was obsessed by the thoughts which these readings provoked and by the need to pass them on. On 1st July, at the seventh annual meeting of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, he obviously could contain himself no longer and said to his probably somewhat astonished listeners:

The exigencies of my own work have driven me to dig pretty deeply into the strata of the eighteenth-century workshop system, and I could clearly see how very different it is from the factory system of today, with which it is commonly confounded; therefore it was with a ready sympathy that I read the full explanations of the change and its tendencies in the writings of a man, I will say a great man, whom, I suppose, I ought not to name in this company, and who cleared my mind on several points (also unmentionable here) relating to this subject of labour and its products.”
This allusion to the fourth section of the first volume of Capital shows the extent to which Morris had been captivated by the Marxist analysis of the division of labour in its evolution.

His special interest in this analysis continued to appear for a long time and in 1888, during another lecture, he again referred to "the admirable account of the different epochs of production given in Karl Marx’ great work entitled Capital", and excused himself for briefly repeating "what, chiefly owing to Marx, has become a commonplace of Socialism". It is even apparent that he must have again reread these chapters of Capital, because, two years later, in 1890, he referred to it in order to criticise the inadequacies of the study of this problem made by Sidney Webb in Fabian Essays.

"Mr. Sidney Webb has ignored the transition period of industry which began in the sixteenth century with the break up of the Middle Ages, and the shoving out of the people from the land. This transition is treated of by Karl Marx with great care and precision under the name of the "Manufacturing Period"... and some mention of it ought to have been included in Mr. Sidney Webb’s ‘history’." 104

But his admiration was not restricted to the treatment of a particular question; it extended to the whole of the doctrine:

"To Germany we owe the school of economists, at whose head stands Karl Marx, who have made modern Socialism what it is."

He contrasts the utopian socialism of the previous epoch, based upon mutual consent and consisting of "more or less artificial" ideal societies, constructed within capitalist society, with the scientific socialism of the new school, its historical conception of the laws of evolution and its demonstration of the inevitability of an entirely new system. Not only does he proclaim his support for Marxism, but he effectively protests against attacks directed against Marx’s works, as is evidenced by a strange unpublished letter from Annie Besant, who was persuaded by Morris to eliminate accusations of prolixity and pedantry from a reprint of her articles. Finally, it was in this same year 1886 that he started with Bax the series of Commonweal articles collected together in 1893 as Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, which provides an interpretation of the theories of Marx, "the author of the most thorough criticism of the capitalistic system of production". In Chapter XIX there is to be found a long analysis of the first volume of Capital, that "epoch-making work". 105

With Morris there was no question of passive admiration, but of study pursued over the years, a long accumulation that was, in the beginning, extremely difficult. Such difficulty was very understandable in the case of a man completely without any theoretical education before the 'eighties and who had lived only for poetry and art. The difficulty was the greater because Marx’s theories overturned all the economic conceptions current at the time, which formed the basis for the social mythology of the Victorian era. The difficulty was, moreover, purposely exaggerated by the opponents of Marxism in order to discourage attempts at first-hand reading of the works, and one can say that this deliberate exaggeration is a practice still assiduously maintained today. In 1889, a reporter of the periodical To-Day, giving an account of a lecture of
Morris's entitled *How Shall We Live Then?* put this sentence into Morris's mouth: "You may imagine," said Mr. Morris, "what my sensations were on taking my first plunge into Karl Marx's *Capital*, and the audience, with lively recollections of mathematical formulae, laughed and cheered sympathetically."108 One may wonder how many of the audience, including the journalist, had themselves read *Capital*. But the question need not be asked, for the simple reason that, once again, we are in the presence of sheer invention. In Amsterdam, I had the good luck to discover the text of that lecture, thought to have been lost, and I affirm that at no point did Morris utter any such phrase. On the contrary, what he did say is not without interest. In fact, he asks the question what can attract people to socialism "at the present stage of the movement":

"Is it intellectual conviction deduced from the study of philosophy or from that of politics or economics in the abstract? I suppose there are many people who think that this has been the means of their conversion; but on reflection they will surely find that this was only its second stage."

The first, he continues, is necessarily effective and leads to an understanding of the suffering that exists in the world, either because one is oneself a victim and sees that it is not accidental but connected with a mass of facts, or because one is an involuntary accomplice of the system and is incited to rebel through better feelings. Such, said Morris, had been his own case, when he came to the conclusion that his artistic work could not be accomplished in present society.

"So that I became a Communist before I knew anything about the history of Socialism or its immediate aims. And I had to set to work to read books decidedly distasteful to me, and to do work which I thought myself quite unfit for." 109

While the normal human starting point, "for anyone who is not a mere ill-conditioned blackgard" (Morris's spelling), he goes on, is indignation in the face of injustice, this sentimental revolt is not enough, and theoretical education, however forbidding and difficult it may be, becomes a duty. Morris did not fail to undertake it, despite all the difficulties which, on his own admission, he encountered, and of which the critics have made a careful display. The comments of his daughter May give us interesting details of his effort. Obviously, she writes, the simplicity of the systems of Thomas More and Owen held something much more attractive to him. That is why

"you will understand how a man with his leanings to these simplicities found it difficult to delve with sustained enthusiasm into the intricacies of the 'scientific socialism' of Marx, with its highly technical arguments and economic formulas for students".

She describes for us his reading of *Capital* in 1883, and the "anguish" with which he tackled "the non-historical and technical part of the great work". The following year, she adds, "in the midst of the ever-increasing work of lecturing and peace-making, he still sought time to study theories of work and wages."110 So, on May's own showing and contrary to the legend, Morris did not content himself with assimilating the historical part of *Capital*. Moreover, even a superficial reading of his writings should suffice to convince us of that. It
is strange that the internal evidence of the works should not be recognised as proof enough where Morris is concerned and that we should be asked with suspicious severity to furnish material proof. That need be no obstacle: it exists!

The *William Morris Gallery* in Walthamstow possesses in its collection a two-page manuscript, in writing very recognisably that of Morris, upon which he had made reading notes upon Chapter XIV, section V, of the first book of *Capital (Division of Labour and Manufacture)*. For my part, I think that there must exist, or have existed, other sheets. The museum, housed in the building where Morris spent his childhood, was only formed in 1950. But in 1934, in his very interesting pamphlet, R. Page Arnot mentioned that "among the papers of the late J. L. Mahon (one-time secretary of the Socialist League) there is a manuscript in the handwriting of Morris, being a short précis of one of the 'economic portions' of *Capital*". This description hardly fits the two pages I examined in Walthamstow. From correspondence I have had with R. Page Arnot, E. P. Thompson, Andrew Rothstein (director of the Marx Memorial Library) and John Mahon (son of J. L. Mahon) it turns out to be a question of other manuscripts which were probably destroyed in the bombing which devastated the Mahon house during the 1939–45 war. In any case, they did exist.

That is not all. One very definite piece of material evidence, which has never, to my great astonishment, been cited, is to be found in the memoirs of T. J. Cobden-Sanderson. This rather odd character, for whom Morris felt a degree of friendship, opened a bookbinding studio in 1884. The poet was one of his first customers and entrusted him with the binding of his French copy of *Capital*. The job was artistically very satisfactory and was finished on 9 October 1884. On the occasion of the sale of Morris's library in 1898, the book was bought for £52 by another friend, named Bain, who had the happy idea of presenting it to Cobden-Sanderson. The latter was very touched by the gesture, which revived old memories, and he wrote in his diary, on 12 December 1898, after having recalled Morris's pleasure over his workmanship, "I should like to add that the book was his own, and before it came to me had been worn to loose sections by his own constant study of it".

As early as 1883, having his first experiencies of militant life and finding himself faced with various concrete problems which each demanded theoretical thought, he felt a growing need to understand "Socialism in detail" and was enraged by being worsted in discussion when he knew he was right, "but of course," he adds, "this only means more study". Despite this "constant study", Morris never felt sure of himself and his modesty was equalled only by his perseverance. In the letter to A. Schu from which I have already quoted, in which he declared that he felt "weak as to the Science of socialism" and asked for the help of a German comrade, he wrote also "I want statistics terribly". From 25 January to 27 April 1887, he kept a diary of his activities. For several months he had been working with Bax on writing the articles of the series *Socialism from the Root Up*, and they had come to the study of Marx's theories on money, which are rather difficult. Under the date of 15 February, he writes:

"Tuesday to Bax at Croydon where we did our first article on Marx:
or rather he did it: I don’t think I should ever make an economist even of the most elementary kind; but I am glad of the opportunity this gives me of hammering some Marx into myself.”

Nevertheless, the hand of Morris is discernable at some points of the article, if only in certain examples drawn from mediaeval history. The second entry relative to this work is dated 23 February:

“Yesterday all day long with Bax trying to get our 2nd article on Marx together: a very difficult job. I hope it may be worth the trouble.”

Finally, on 3 March, he writes: “Tuesday I spent with Bax doing the next Marx article, which went easier.” It is worth noticing this progress in participation and assimilation. I add that, of the twenty-five articles, seven are devoted to a study of the economic theories set out in the first volume of Capital.

* * *

In 1887, in the preface of a little book popularising socialism, Morris wrote:

“The more learned socialist literature, like Marx’s celebrated book, requires such hard and close study that those who have not approached the subject by a more easy road are not likely to begin on that side, or if they did, would find that something like a guide was necessary to them before they could follow the arguments steadily.”

Morris did not have the good luck to have a guide of this kind at his disposal. On the other hand, he did have that of being, successively or simultaneously, in contact with men who helped him appreciably towards achieving an understanding of Marx’s writings. The earliest was H. M. Hyndman, who in 1881 founded the first English group of Marxist inspiration, the Democratic Federation which in 1884 became the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.); Morris joined this group in January 1883. Being anxious not to digress from our purpose, I do not mean to review here the career of this socialist who, having quarrelled with Marx, being rejected and opposed by Engels, was nonetheless the first propagandist for Marxism in Great Britain and, despite his personal deviations and his political vacillations, bore witness for Marx for long years before finishing up in the “social chauvinism” denounced by Lenin. I shall content myself here with recalling certain traits of his personality which led to his break with William Morris, the split in the S.D.F. and the foundation of the Socialist League. He was an upper bourgeois, from a family grown rich in colonial dealings, with a public-school and Cambridge education and by profession a stockbroker. He was converted to socialism after reading Capital in 1880, but remained, as he used to say himself, a man of his class: he appeared at working-class gatherings and sold his weekly Justice in the street clad in an impeccable frock-coat and wearing a top-hat. He was an intriguer and manoeuvrer, given to compromise, but he cannot be accused of having attempted to satisfy personal ambition: of his devotion to socialism, whatever its ups and downs, there can be no question. But it was a socialism intermingled with not very pleasant impurities: xenophobia, chauvinism, colonialism. With him, the revolutionary phrase took turn about with the op-
portunist manoeuvre. He was imbued with his superiority, authoritarian and dogmatic. Understanding on a personal level could not possibly last very long between such an individual and William Morris, particularly after political differences became evident. Their separation was violent and harmful in two respects. It brought schism and antagonism into the scarcely born socialist movement, and reaction against Hyndman’s political opportunism led Morris for several years along a purist and unrealistic path. It is nonetheless a fact that it was to Hyndman that Morris owed his first theoretical education. If the founder of the S.D.F. did have a narrow mechanistic concept of Marxism, he also had a solid knowledge of its basic economic principles and Engels himself, despite his hostility, recognised that he was “among the English who have understood our theory best”.

Hyndman was introduced to Karl Marx in July 1880. He was made very welcome and for several months there were frequent and friendly contacts between the two families, filled with long political discussions. Things went sour in 1881, when the Democratic Federation was set up. At the inaugural meeting, attended by liberal bourgeois personalities and representatives of radical clubs, Hyndman distributed a work he had just published, England for All, two chapters of which were, in the main, purely and simply transfers of fragments of Capital without the slightest reference to the author. Marx was justifiably indignant at this plagiarism, and, even more sharply at the ambiguity of Hyndman’s political tactics which, far from creating a working-class party, sought to reconcile Marxist analyses with a purely reformist programme. Thirty years later, Hyndman, when writing his memoirs, blamed Engels for this split, suggesting that he had poisoned the relationship through personal jealousy and had persecuted him with hostility. Bax, who appears to have read the letter of severance sent by Marx to Hyndman on 2 July 1881 (the draft of which letter has been rediscovered by E. Bottigelli), gives a similar version of the facts. Perhaps these psychological motivations should not be altogether excluded. It is certain that Engels showed himself extremely inflexible and systematically hostile towards Hyndman, despite the latter’s efforts towards reconciliation, and in rejecting him in this way he undoubtedly drove him into the opportunist camp. However, it would be an indication of bad faith to confine oneself to purely psychological explanations, because Hyndman’s errors were serious, and Engels only attacked him on the level of political activity.

From this episode, whose consequences have still not, I believe, been adequately studied, I would, for our purpose, consider two facets. While the tone of the letter sent by Marx to Hyndman was somewhat scornful, it was restrained and does not leave the feeling of an irrevocable separation; moreover, a few months later, on 29 October, Hyndman wrote to Marx informing him of his efforts and of the prospects of the movement. On 15 December, in a letter to Sorge, Marx tells the story of the plagiarism and expresses his low opinion of Hyndman, but adds that “his little book – so far as it pilfers the Capital – makes good propaganda”. On his side, Hyndman maintained a fervent admiration for Marx throughout his life and in his memoirs published in 1911, he continued to regard him as “the Aristotle of the Nineteenth Century”, “the deepest thinker of modern times”, “undoubtedly a genius”.

Hyndman first met Morris in 1879, and then lost sight of him. The contact
was renewed at the end of 1882 or beginning of 1883, when the poet joined the D.F. and he appears to have conceived a warm friendship for him. This is all the more probable in that Morris, filled with neophytes zeal and very conscious of his theoretical shortcomings, declared himself, according to Bernard Shaw, ready to do anything demanded of him and regarded himself as a disciple: "this modest offer of allegiance...Hyndman accepted it at once as his due". However, it would be too much to believe that this passionate devotion on the part of Morris was blind about the man. George Wardle recalls having heard him say at the time:

"I don’t like the man, but he is trying to do what I think ought to be done, I feel that everyone who has similar ideas ought to help him." 18

One gets the same impression from reading his correspondance of this period, when, for example, he writes that he feels obliged to join the ranks of an organisation of which he shared the objectives, and adds:

"nor in doing so should I be much troubled by consideration of who the leaders of such an organisation might be, always supposing that one believes them genuine in their support of certain principles." 19

It was only a month later, however, in August 1883, that he began to give free rein to his apprehension:

"Some of the more ardent disciples look upon Hyndman as too opportunist, and there is truth in that; he...is inclined to intrigue." 20

However this may be, our chief interest here is that Hyndman took him under his wing over a long period to give him a political education, for in this same month of August, Morris speaks of his "usual Monday talk at Hyndman’s". Eleven years later, in that biographical article to which I have recurrent need to refer, he expresses his gratitude for the help given him in understanding Capital. These conversations must have gone on for many months and I have no reason to believe they were interrupted before August 1884, that is, before the moment when Morris began to display open opposition.

In 1884, too, these conversations bore tangible fruit in the form of the publication of a brief treatise, under the joint signatures of Hyndman and Morris, entitled A Summary of the Principles of Socialism. In his memoirs, Hyndman tells how the book was written:

"Our co-operation in The Summary of the Principles of Socialism, the draft of which I wrote and we revised together, brought us into even closer contact and it has been an amusement to me sometimes to challenge a reader of it to pick out a passage for which Morris was specially responsible. Almost invariably the two pages are chosen which I wrote in imitation of Morris and which he laughingly refused to touch, though a few other paragraphs he wrote himself." 22

Experience has shown historians that what Hyndman says should not always be taken at its face value. But no matter. Even if Morris’s active participation was as slight as Hyndman complacently claims, it represented for him a solid acquisition of the principles of historical materialism and political
economy. The work places the need for socialism upon the basis of historical development, and is peppered with echoes of the Manifesto and Capital. It sketches the succession of slavery, servitude and wage labour, and the class struggle which was the driving force of each change. It repeats the classic analyses of the division of labour, capital accumulation, the reserve army, the labour theory of value, surplus value, the contradiction between the social character of labour and the individual character of appropriation and, finally, crises. It praises the work of the first International, recalling that “Karl Marx was the brains of the movement”, and the example of the Commune. It finishes with a programme for the collectivisation of the means of production and exchange.

For Morris, that represented a theoretical apprenticeship of indubitable value. While it is untrue, as has so often been lightly asserted, that he rejoined the ranks of the S.D.F. in his later years, he did become reconciled with Hyndman and again wrote for Justice. For numerous reasons of a political nature he was careful to keep his distance, but he was able to assert without reservation that the S.D.F. had been “the first appearance of modern or scientific Socialism in England”.

So, from the beginning of his life of militancy, Morris personally observed one of the precepts he laid down for revolutionaries:

“... to learn from books and from living people who are willing, or I will say, who can be made, to teach them, in as much detail as possible what are the ends and hopes of Social Revolution.”

Hyndman was not the only one of his contemporaries whose help was of benefit. That which Andreas Scheu gave him was not negligible.

He was an Austrian socialist who fled from repression in Vienna, taking refuge in Scotland in 1874 and in London in 1880. Tall, elegant, with a superb black beard and looking, says May Morris, like one of Dürer’s warriors, energetic, enthusiastic, a good musician and an excellent speaker, he attracted sympathy and played a very active part in the beginnings of the British socialist movement. Morris and he met during the first months of 1883 through the Democratic Federation and their friendship dates from Whitsun of that year. It rapidly became very close, as is indicated by a letter of 5 September, in which the poet tells him of his youth and upbringing. It is true that, in addition to a common socialist faith, they were linked by a common vocation, since Scheu was involved with artistic furnishing and decoration.

Scheu remained in London until the summer of 1884, and during that period he gave Morris invaluable help by translating many passages of Marx, Engels and Lassalle. His departure for Edinburgh, at the moment of the disagreement with Hyndman, left Morris bereft of any help of this kind, and it was then that the latter wrote him the letter already quoted, asking him to recommend a German comrade capable of undertaking to read Marxist writings with him. We should recall that it was Scheu’s political activity in Scotland which incited the ire of Hyndman and led to the split of 1884. In order to defend Scheu against unjustified accusations, Morris came into direct opposition to the leader of the S.D.F. and so prepared the split which led to the birth of the Socialist League. Scheu returned to London in 1886, and their old
friendship was resumed in full. It had, too, some negative aspects. There is no
doubt that the Austrian exile, formerly something of an anarchist, strongly en-
couraged Morris in his anti-parliamentarianism. It was doubtless for this
reason that he never became a member of the circle of intimates of Engels, with
whom his dealings became more and more infrequent. But in any case we see
him assiduously cultivating Morris, and one may suppose that the latter con-
tinued, whenever he felt the need, to fall back on his linguistic and theoretical
help.

* * *

When the Socialist League was formed in 1885, several of those involved with
Morris already possessed a solid Marxist grounding. Foremost among them
were Eleanor Marx, the youngest daughter of the great German thinker, and
the man with whom she lived as wife, Edward Aveling. Their irregular union
caused scandal and earned them many hypocritical attacks which roused
Morris's indignation. From it dates the development of his sober utopian
thinking on free union. The couple lived in close intimacy with Engels, who
always regarded Marx's daughters as his own children.

Eleanor had a great affection for Morris, whom she called "a fine old chap".\(^4\) With the support of Engels, she ensured for the Socialist League
contact with the most important representatives of socialism abroad and she
did a regular feature for *Commonweal*: "Record of the International Movement", in
which she quoted messages and letters from such men as Bebel, Liebknecht,
Paul Lafargue, Kautsky, Lavrov, Stepinak and Leo Frankel. The latter
welcomed the new organisation "as a disciple of Karl Marx, and an old
member of the International Working Men's Association ... presuming that
the Socialist League, as well as its official organ, the *Commonweal*, serves to
propagate the true, i.e. the Scientific Socialism".\(^5\) One can say that Eleanor
Marx played an important part in shaping Morris's internationalist con-
sciousness and helped him to react early against the chauvinism of Hyndman.

It is to the point, in this connection, to note the extent to which Morris and
the founders of the Socialist League were haunted by the memory of the First
International. On 30 December 1884, only three days after the split, a com-
mittee was formed consisting of Eleanor Marx-Aveling, William Morris, Bax,
W. J. Clark, with J. L. Mahon as secretary, with the purpose of drawing up a
constitution for the new organisation. On 12 January 1885, it presented its
report, which ended with these words: "We propose to preface these rules with
the Introduction to the Rules of the International drawn up by Karl
Marx."\(^6\) This constitution, faithfully reproducing the text, appeared in the
first number of *Commonweal* in February, and among the signatories appeared
F. Lessner, one of the veterans of the International, a close friend of Engels,
and who was to become one of the mainstays of the Morris branch in
Hammersmith.\(^7\) The same issue advertised a lecture by Bax on the Inter-
national, and, eight years later, in their theoretical handbook, Bax and Morris
once again extolled the rôle of the International Working Men's
Association.\(^8\) Oddly enough the latter still had a branch in Manchester in
1885, and its secretary wrote to the Socialist League: "If Engels approves your
action, rest assured that you will have our aid."\(^9\)
As for Edward Aveling, he was a complex personality about whom there would be too much to say. His morality was very questionable, but (what matters to us here) his militant activity, his devotion, and his knowledge of Marxism are worthy of respect. It is to him and Samuel Moore that we owe the 1887 English edition of Capital, prepared under the control and guidance of Engels. Up to his leaving the Socialist League, in which he vainly endeavoured to oppose anti-parliamentary sectarianism, he undertook educational functions. In February 1885, he began a series of lectures upon Capital, and Morris participated in the opening session. Two years later, writing some “Notes on Propaganda” for his personal use, the latter mentions these lectures among the memorable achievements of the League. It is not impossible that he attended the earlier ones since, in a letter which I discovered in Hammersmith, he praises them warmly. From April on, Aveling began to publish in Commonweal a series of articles on scientific socialism. Today these articles seem very debatable. Some, particularly the earlier ones, are very good, but as Aveling got further into economic analysis he tended more and more towards mathematical abstruseness, omitting all the specific and historical support which gave Marx’s arguments all their weight and vigour. The result is not only a disconcerting dryness but also an impoverished schematicism: what Aveling most lacked was an assimilation of dialectics. Some readers were put off; others, on the contrary, read the articles with great interest. We have not much idea of what Morris himself thought, but we may imagine that he derived more satisfaction from the original than from the interpretation. However, Aveling’s efforts provided a useful example, and Marxist study groups were set up in the provinces during the following years, notably in Edinburgh and Bolton. His incontestable merit was that of putting theoretical education on the order of the day, and thus creating a favourable atmosphere for the study of works. Morris never had any close personal dealings with him and, consequently, felt an understandable aversion to him that he was not alone in experiencing; but it is not to be denied that contact with Aveling was a very favourable factor in his initiation into Marxist theory.

The Marxist with whom Morris formed the closest and longest-lasting ties was Ernest Belfort Bax. Philosopher, jurist, musician and excellent German linguist, he was deeply impressed in his youth by the events of the Paris Commune, and because the positivists were the only ones to take up the defence of the Commune against public opinion he turned to that school of thought. He may be said to have borne the mark of it all his life; the ethical preoccupations which are to be found in all his writing have their origins there. In the course of a long stay on the continent, he started studying German philosophy and the various political movements, and in 1879 he discovered Capital. In 1881 he published in a monthly magazine, Modern Thought, an article on Karl Marx which attracted the latter’s attention. Through his daughter Eleanor, Marx expressed his thanks, and, in a letter to Sorge on 15 December, while he regretted the young author’s confusion and mistakes, he praised the article.
veded by a real enthusiasm for the new ideas themselves and boldly stands up against British philistinism." 156

Frau Marx had just died, and he himself, more and more ill, was to go in his turn fifteen months later. So Bax was not able to make his acquaintance, but shortly afterwards he received an invitation from Engels and began a life-long friendship with him. 157

In his memoirs, published in 1918, Bax who, like Hyndman and so many others, had changed course, paints a picture of Engels which is both admiring and severe, and which tends to minimise his nobility of character and the breadth of his thinking. 158 In so doing he displayed a singular lack of gratitude, because it was to Engels above all that he owed the theoretical education which enabled him to play a fairly important part in the socialist movement during the 'eighties. He was a regular attender at the Sunday evening gatherings which Engels held for his closest circle and for foreign visitors. The copious correspondence which we still have from the old philosopher tells us of Bax's presence with him on many other occasions. Their intimacy must have been very close, because in the Amsterdam Institute I have read letters written to Engels by Bax between 1884 and 1893 containing constant reciprocal invitations: in the beginning they are addressed to "Dear Mr. Engels" and soon to "My dear Engels" or to "My dear General", 159 this last appellation being hardly used other than by Marx's daughters. I mention in passing that, apart from these few letters, I have never been able to find a trace of Bax's papers, which surely deprives us of a valuable source of information.

It must be admitted that he was a somewhat odd personality: "reasonable on many points . . . quite mad on others", Eleanor Marx said of him. 160 Before anything else, he was a philosopher devoid of any practical sense. He was heavy, incredibly naive and lacking in all sense of humour. He had persistent bees in his bonnet which would suddenly begin to buzz in the midst of sometimes very penetrating observations: an aggressive misogyny, a hatred of philistinism, of established religions and of the bourgeois family. It must be added that he was a chatterbox and was mistrusted on account of his indiscretions. 161 Engels, who paid tribute to his honesty, 162 but regarded him as a "hunter of philosophical paradoxes", 163 sketched a picture of him which appears to be a marvellous likeness:

"I have had Bax here for a week and was daily interviewed by him with the regularity of a clock and the inquisitiveness of an American journalist. But it gave me the opportunity of quiet talk with him on many subjects and, when he has done with his set questions (which, as with most people here, are meant to save them study), and has exhausted his sudden flashes of original ideas about the morrow of the revolution, and so on, he begins to talk sense, and more sense than the preliminary conversation led you to expect. Then you find that after all he has a largeness of view that is but too scarce here amongst the sectarians who call themselves Socialists. But as to unacquaintance with the world that is, as to hermit-like simplicity and being a stranger in the midst of the largest town of the world, an English bookworm beats his German compeer hollow." 164
This estimation is worthy of our attention, because it conveys very accurately the way in which Bax tackled Marxism and the picture of it he must have transmitted to Morris. In fact, one can observe two complementary attitudes in him.

We should recall, first, that Morris had easily absorbed the "historical part" of *Capital*. He had painfully overcome the economic difficulties with the help of Hyndman, Scheu and, to some extent, Aveling, but these three men were incapable of going any further, which explains their somewhat narrow schematism. It was quite different with Bax, who, in his own writings, seems to be little concerned with the mechanics of capitalist exploitation and to be interested above all in the superstructures. In this way we are led to a curious observation. It is almost exclusively in the works written jointly by Morris and Bax that the latter has anything to say about Marx's economic doctrines. He does so in a remarkable way, under pressure from Morris who could not, therefore, remain a passive partner and learned at the same time as he refreshed what he already knew. So, despite the slanders of Bruce Glasier, their collaboration was particularly close in this area, and one is the more convinced of it when one compares the ease of style of the joint writings with the heavy and sometimes almost unreadable prose of Bax alone. But the latter's attention was centred upon philosophical problems and also upon the development of capitalism on an international scale and so there was, between Engels and Morris, an ideological vehicle whose exceptional importance does not seem to have been appreciated up to the present.

Morris and Bax became acquainted in 1883, during the months of the upsurge of the Democratic Federation, but their friendship does not seem to have started until the autumn of 1884, when the split was developing and they found themselves in the same camp. Their collaboration started on 1 January 1885, the date of their joint drafting of the Manifesto of the Socialist League, which was the Marxist charter of the new organisation, and in the following year it became more considerable with the joint writing of a series of articles *Socialism from the Root Up* which the authors reshaped together in 1893 when they published *Socialism, its Growth and Outcome*. During these years, despite a serious disagreement in 1887, we find them continually side by side in the political scene. They were linked by deep affection, and Bax was part of the intimate circle of Kelmscott House. It was very much a family friendship and May Morris amusingly describes the joy Bax could provoke in Morris by his oddities, particularly his misogyny and naive credulity: it was even the cause of puzzlement which, thirty years later, the poor man had still not resolved. Even in his public utterances Morris could not help poking fun at him. So it was that in one of his lectures he referred to the indignation shown by Bax upon seeing monstrous privileges bestowed upon "weak women" and in a theatrical entertainment he even goes so far as to depict him as a dangerous dynamiter. While Bax gave him lessons in Marxism, Morris initiated him into the arcana of architecture and he burst into laughter on hearing his friend "pretend to an independent judgement on the subject".

Despite these sallies, there is no doubt that Morris took Bax very seriously, he quotes his name, before those of Hyndman and Scheu, when in 1894 he expresses his gratitude towards those whose conversation had helped him to overcome the initial difficulties of Marxism, even if he did roar with
laughter, referring to these conversations as sessions of "compulsory Baxination". It is impossible for us to measure the extent of this debt, but, as we saw earlier when speculating about Morris's reading, the references contained in the theoretical handbook of 1893 lead us to suppose that Bax must have acquainted him with the substance of various philosophical works of Marx and Engels. And that went on for at least ten years.

Bax's influence suffered only one eclipse, in 1887, when he refused to follow Morris in his anti-parliamentarianism, remaining faithful to the directives of Engels. It was with lively displeasure and great apprehension that the poet regarded Bax's attendance at the Zurich conference of the German Social Democratic Party. He feared that he would come back with strict orders, and refused to submit to this "pedantic tyranny". That was the only serious disagreement between the two men and it does not appear to have affected their relationship. On the contrary, Morris appears, in general, to have been attentive to Bax's opinion and inclined to follow his advice. One must say that, at times, when he came out of the clouds and put his feet on the ground, Bax was capable of astonishing political intuition. One example, the importance of which is very rightly underlined by E. P. Thompson, appears in an article which he wrote for Commonweal in 1888 about the partition of Africa by the colonial powers. After describing the immense resources which this conquest opened up to "modern capitalistic exploitation" in terms of natural resources, cheap labour, outlets for trade and emigration, he considers that, henceforth, the fulcrum of European capitalism will lie there and envisages "the dread possibility... of the capitalistic world taking a new lease of life out of the exploitation of Africa". His conclusion is frankly pessimistic: "but it is quite conceivable, to say the least, that the present stage should be prolonged in a slightly changed form even for another century". These apprehensions echo the first hints which we find at the time in the writings of Engels of the birth of imperialism. They fell like a cold shower on the enthusiasm of most socialists, who were convinced that the revolution was at hand. This article made a deep impression upon Morris, and provoked what was for him an unusual reaction: he devoted the editorial of the same issue to the topic. While accepting the accuracy of Bax's analysis, he tried to shield his comrades from discouragement, and justly observed that "the movement towards Socialism is as much part of the essence of the epoch as the necessities of capitalism are". The effort that has to be put into the propagation of socialist ideas, he writes, will not be wasted, "though it may be obscured for a time, even if a new period sets in of prosperity by leaps and bounds". This article had a lasting effect upon Morris's thinking. We should not forget that only a year and a half later the first instalment of News from Nowhere appeared in Commonweal, and that the date of the "great change" was put off to 1952.

On re-reading Morris's editorial one is struck by the use of such dialectical concepts as progress by leaps and the unity of opposites. Is he not replying to Bax in the language which Bax taught him? Here, in fact, is where one must look for Bax's most vital contribution to Morris's Marxist formation, one that nobody else could provide. The poet was perfectly aware of this legacy, and several references he made in lectures and articles to his friend's teaching deserve some attention. Notice the manner of reasoning in a passage such as this:
"Will the period of machinery evolve itself into a fresh period of machinery more independent of human labour than anything we can conceive of now, or will it develop its contradictory in the shape of a new and improved period of production by handicraft?... Is the change from handicraft to machinery good or bad? And the answer to that question is to my mind that, as my friend Belfort Bax has put it, statically it is bad, dynamically it is good. As a condition of life, production by machinery is altogether an evil; as an instrument for forcing on us better conditions of life it has been, and for some time yet will be, indispensable."

There is a whole complex of ideas underlying this formulation: the theory of development, the unity of opposites, the negation of the negation, the dialectical relationship between the productive forces and production relationships. The same kind of thinking is found in other passages:

"Our friend Bax... did, I think, really put the matter on its true footing when he pointed out that as a step to something better, civilization was good, but as an achievement it was an evil."

Morris owes to Bax a still more important Marxist idea, which inspires the whole of his utopia, that history repeats itself without repeating itself, that its movement integrates elements of the past and elaborates them on a higher level without there being any retrogression, but on the contrary, "a step upward along the spiral, which, and not a straight line, is, as my friend Bax puts it, the true line of progress". This affirmation was also made as early as 1885, in the Notes, jointly written by Morris and Bax, which accompany the second edition of the Manifesto of the Socialist League. What is really extraordinary is that this great Marxist concept had not at that time ever been published. It is only found for the first time in the Dialectics of Nature, which lay unknown among Engels's manuscripts until the publication of the work in 1925. It must, then, have been through Bax that the idea reached Morris. For the moment, I shall not dwell upon the importance of this idea in Morris's utopian thinking, but in due course I shall show that an essential aspect of his thought would be incomprehensible unless he had assimilated it.

One fact at least is strange: it is that this dialectical philosophy, the principles of which he passed on to Morris, is rarely perceptible in Bax's own writings. When it does appear it is in the form of a bizarre and almost mystical jargon. In a general way, except, curiously enough, in joint writing with Morris and in articles intended for Commonweal, we find muddled prose and reasoning of very debatable Marxist inspiration. One even stranger fact is that, in his memoirs, he reproaches Marxism with being a purely economic ideology, with being "the reduction of all the changes in the development of human society to economic terms"; and he accuses Engels of having "held to the theory in all its one-sidedness". Is this dishonesty or inexplicable amnesia? Must one wonder whether he was no more than a garrulous, half-understanding vehicle between Engels and Morris? And how would one explain then that under these conditions Morris's assimilation of Marxism should have been much deeper than Bax's? This is a problem to which I should like to suggest an embryonic solution, while awaiting the discovery of
new documents (if they exist) to complete or correct the data I have managed to gather.

* * *

None of William Morris's immediate biographers makes the slightest reference to contact between him and Engels, not Mackail, nor Lady Burne-Jones, nor Bruce Glasier nor his own daughter May. Is this their way of preserving a certain image of the poet? It is possible that, with the first three, this silence comes from relative ignorance, due to Morris's extreme discretion on the subject. In all his correspondence known up to the present, there is only one single definite reference to such contacts. It is to be found in a letter sent to Scheu on 28 December 1884, the day after the split in the S.D.F. Now, on that same day, he wrote to Georgiana Burne-Jones to give her an account of the same events and omitted to mention any meeting with Engels. If he told Scheu, it was because the information was needed, and his Austrian friend, himself in touch with Engels, was doubtless aware of the contact. What is striking is that with Georgiana, who was then his confidante in everything, he remained silent. Are there grounds for regarding such conduct on the part of Morris as strange? I do not think so. In 1884 he was a member of the executive committee of the S.D.F., and, if he was meeting Engels, it could only be without the knowledge of Hyndman and in order to organise the opposition secretly. After the foundation of the Socialist League these reasons were less pressing, but habits of secrecy had been formed which neither Morris nor Engels, all in all, wanted to break, the first out of regard for his independence, the second because he did not want to give colour to Hyndman's accusations of direct intervention by the "Marxist clique" and the "Grand Lama of Regent's Park Road" in the affairs of British socialism. This would explain the silence of Lady Burne-Jones and consequently of her son-in-law Mackail. As for Glasier, Morris had no reason to confide in him. On the other hand, May Morris's discretion is more suspect, because she became involved early in all her father's political activity. None of the later critics and interpreters has ever questioned the point and it is only in E. P. Thompson's painstaking book that the name of Engels appears for the first time. However, it is still only a matter of fragmentary and scattered pointers, and the basic problem is not examined as a whole.

The evidence of contemporaries is scarce and contradictory. That of Edward Aveling, in a brief passage from an article devoted to Engels immediately after his death, is particularly disappointing:

"William Morris," he writes, "as far as I remember came once. His mediaevalism Engels regarded with good-humoured toleration." 186

Is it the same prudent discretion which we see here? It is possible, for Aveling played an important part in events leading up to the split and he could not have been ignorant of the occurrence of various discussions in which he himself participated. Could there be some obscure link between this reserve and the cash debts which the none too scrupulous Aveling owed to Morris? I could not say. However, the general tone of the article suggests another explanation, and the assertion becomes more plausible if we take it that Aveling is here referring to Engels's famous Sunday evening gatherings. There would be then no con-
William Morris, the distinguished poet and artist, and the leader of the Socialist League, which in 1884 succeeded from the Socialists Federation, was, up to the time of this schism, an occasional visitor to Engels' house, and Engels always spoke of him with respect, but they never became intimate. The principal reason was this: that Morris was the central star of a circle of his own. Moreover he could only with difficulty get away on Sunday evenings.

In fact, on Sunday evening went by without a gathering at Kelmscott House, under the chairmanship or with the participation of Morris, unless he was away on a propaganda tour. Finally, let us look at a very interesting piece of evidence. George Wardle, who was one of the artist's closest associates in the Firm, wrote in 1898:

"Of Karl Marx all he knew at first he must have got from Aveling. I think, but perhaps also from Engels, with whom I think he had some interviews."

What gives Wardle's evidence uncontested value is that he managed the Firm during the years when the interviews must have taken place, and at that time he was in daily contact with Morris. But rather than rely upon third parties, it is of interest to see what the protagonists themselves have written.

The first mention of the name of Morris in the correspondence of Engels goes back to February 1884. He knew him indirectly through Bax and the Avelings, and, in expressing a harsh opinion of Justice, the organ of the D.F., he had nothing but disparaging remarks to make about the contributors to the weekly. For the poet his severity was somewhat lessened: "Morris is all very well as far as he goes, but it is not very far." The following month, Engels' attitude was still as distant and disdainful. Kautsky was worried that Morris might be furious at being described as a sentimental socialist. Engels, enveloping all the contributors to Justice in the same disdain, replied to him: "The Morris affair is of no importance; these people have thoroughly muddled minds." His reservations were to soften all the same, from the moment when Eleanor Marx reported to him, as she did to her sister Laura, that in the council of the S.D.F. Morris had defended the actions of Paul Lalargue against the underhand opposition of Hyndman.""Morris... also spoke for us"") and that he had been to Highgate Cemetery with her for the first anniversary of Marx's death. Eleanor felt more and more admiration for the poet and, following a lecture he gave in April to open an exhibition of painting in Whitechapel, she gave an enthusiastic account of his "splendid speech." But Engels remained distrustful of the "very rich art enthusiast but untalented politician, Morris", because he observed that Hyndman made use of his own money and of the poet's in order "to buy every socialist movement." The same aloofness was maintained until October, because he declared that he had confidence only in Bax and Aveling, and "a very poor opinion" of the rest.

Between 20 October and 8 November 1884 Morris made the acquaintance of Engels, because on the later date the latter wrote to Kautsky:
"At five o’clock Aveling and Tussy
are coming, and at 7 o’clock
Morris wants to have a long conference with me." 176

It was not easy to gain admittance to Engels and we may suppose that this
meeting was not the first. It was quickly followed by others. On 23 November
in fact, Engels wrote to Laura Lafargue that "Morris . . . was here the other
night and quite delighted to find the Old Norse Edda on my table," 177 which
suggests a very relaxed atmosphere. But soon these discussions were concen-
trated on the crisis within the S.D.F., which Engels followed very closely, keep-
ning an eye upon its vicissitudes. It was at his suggestion that the opponents of
Hyndman ("we, the cabal," wrote Morris) 178 met at Aveling’s house on 16
December and wrote to Schenck in Edinburgh to come back to London to attend
the next council of the S.D.F. and denounce the lies and slanders of Hyndman.

The council met on the 23rd but, because of lack of time, discussion was not
completed and only reached its conclusion on the 27th. Hyndman was then
left in the minority, and his opponents left the S.D.F., resolved to found a new
group, the Socialist League, and a new publication, Commonweal.

This decision had been taken a few days earlier during a meeting of the op-
opposition at Engels’ house. On 31 December, Eleanor Marx related the events
in a letter to her sister Laura, and wrote, in particular

"Our majority was too small to make it possible for us really to get rid
of the Jingo Faction, and so, after due consultation with Engels, we
decided to go out and form a new organisation. This is to be called the
Socialist League. Bas is anxious that we should issue a weekly paper.
But Engels is dead against this, so we shall probably, for the present,
content ourselves with a monthly journal." 179

After this general meeting of the opposition, Engels saw Morris again on 27
December, just before the decisive meeting where the split was to take place.
Writing to Bernstein on the 29th, Engels told him about the development of
the split, repeating what Morris had said about the proofs he had discovered
in Edinburgh of the duplicity of Hyndman, and he added: "Morris and Aveling
were at my place before the session, and I was able to give them some further
advice." 180 About this meeting we have the evidence of Morris himself (and it
is, as I have said, the only document of this kind which we possess). He wrote
to Schenck on 28 December:

"Aveling summoned me to go up to Engels on Saturday – important
business. I was uncomfortable rather wondering what it was. Aveling
told me it was about the Commonweal, that Engels thought we should have
no chance of carrying on a weekly, and had better try a monthly, at first
at any rate, Aveling seemed rather inclined to agree with us and to stick
to the weekly. I saw Engels who said we were weak in political
knowledge and journalistic skill, and that we should find it very difficult to carry on
a weekly paper really well without stuffing it with rubbish and so on. I
must confess that though I don’t intend to give way to Engels, his advice
is valuable; and on this point I am inclined to agree . . . I do dread having
to drop the weekly, whereas I am sure we could carry on a monthly. I am
afraid you will be disappointed at this, and I want to have your opinion
. . . I repeat, we are safe with a monthly even if our progress as an
organization be slow: with a weekly it would always be doubtful: let's try the monthly first.”

I think, like E. P. Thompson, that the tone in which Morris speaks of Engels (“though I don't intend to give way to Engels”) is mainly diplomatic. It was a question of allaying Scheu’s disappointment, for he, always rather “leftist”, tended to rebel against the authority of Marx’s friend. In fact, Morris “gave way” and accepted the reasonable view of Engels against the opinions of Aveling, Bax and Scheu and probably against his own inclination.

With the split, wrote Morris to Scheu in the same letter, “ancient history” ended and “modern history” began. The decision to leave the S.D.F. when the opposition was in a majority aroused a certain amount of surprise. In February 1885, when Paul Lafargue received the first number of *Commonweal*, he wrote to Engels that “everyone here is very surprised that, having a majority, our friends withdrew instead of turning out the minority.” However, Engels had explained to Laura why, after discussion with Morris (“as Morris said to me”), he had come to this decision: the S.D.F. had scarcely more than three hundred members and, as for the provinces, it was all “bosh and bogus” and in his letter of 29 December to Bernstein already quoted, he gave the same argument advanced by Morris.

Engels was full of good will towards the founders of the League, although he expressed doubts about their political capacity. In this same letter to Laura he wrote: “in all England one could not find three men so little fitted for political organisation as Aveling, Bax and Morris; but they are sincere”; and in his letter to Bernstein he uses the same language: “the only honest men among the intellectuals, but also the most unpractical men (two poets and a philosopher) that it is possible to find”. What is important for us to notice is that the militants who were closest to Engels then considered Morris, as well as Bax and Aveling, as being members of the Marxist group: “our friends”, says Paul Lafargue, and Eleanor Marx, speaking of them, says “our people.”

In her letter of 31 December already quoted, Eleanor had already written to her sister Laura:

“The General has promised, now that we are rid of the unclean elements in the Federation, to help us; ... we shall, of course (through Engels) have the Germans with us, and we also count on the Parti Ouvrier.”

As I have mentioned, she took over the direction of the international feature of *Commonweal* and, on behalf of Engels, she approached the continental socialists to ensure their support and to gather their messages of solidarity for publication in the second issue. Morris himself wrote a letter to Wilhelm Liebknecht in his own hand, signed by himself and Aveling, asking him for articles, and telling him he could write them in German, as “we shall have no difficulty in translating” them. On the appearance of the first issue, Eleanor asked J. L. Mahon to put four copies at the disposal of Engels, for him to send to Liebknecht, Bebel, Sorge and Bernstein. Morris was full of plans, With
Bax he prepared a programme of socialist pamphlets, and among the suggestions was one to be written by Engels under the title of *Cheap Goods*. It does not appear that Engels ever wrote it.

However, the latter did give his friends much more spectacular help. The second number of *Commonweal* (March 1885) published his resounding article *England in 1845 and 1885* which provides a remarkable analysis of the development of British capitalism from the period of prosperity after the decline of Chartism to the new period of economic crisis: it was the loss by England of its industrial monopoly which gave socialism new life and prospects. E. P. Thompson justly remarks that, in publishing this article in the journal of the Socialist League, he identified himself with it from that moment, and he also makes the curious comment that, in places, the style of Engels takes on certain of Morris's turns of thought as well as his usage of the word "civilisation". This article made a deep impression on Morris, and he enlarged upon it in a lecture given in July, quoting sentences from this writing of the "great socialist economist F. Engels". In a lecture given at the end of March, one can feel that he is already preoccupied by the problems raised in it. Two years later, in personal notes in which he recapitulates the stages of the movement, he again refers, as a memorable moment, to the "admirable article of F. Engels, which attracted much attention". Contributions from Engels, while not frequent, did continue. In October 1885, *Commonweal* announced that "next month ... Frederick Engels will contribute an article on the Second Part of Karl Marx' Das Kapital". The information was incorrect. The article which appeared in November was purely polemical and denounced an inaccurate pirate translation of *Capital* published by the magazine *Today*.

So, during all the year 1885, relations between Morris and Engels were excellent, and the latter's correspondence does not contain any of the disparaging remarks which he was so prone to make. In fact, one cannot find any reference to Morris. Does that mean that the two men did not meet again? For my part, on the contrary, I think that during this year of close collaboration their meetings were more frequent and that, once the worries over the immediate tactics to pursue at the time of the split were dealt with, their conversations were able to rise to an ideological level which enabled Morris to assimilate certain fundamental aspects of Marxist thought better than through the intermediary of the hazy Bax. The absence of any reference to Morris in the letters of Engels tends to strengthen my belief. In fact, it was rare for him to interfere other than by praising or criticising an action of his interlocutors, and, if he kept silent, it was because these probable visits by Morris were of a routine nature and not concerned with immediate action. Siegfried Bünger, in his thoroughly documented study of Engels, considers it plain that Morris's activities were marked by the effect of discussions he had with him at that time. Unfortunately, he has no tangible proof to support this hypothesis any more than I have. I do not despair of some day seeing appear, through the strange chances of research, some unsuspected document which will provide the necessary confirmation. But is it really indispensible? Apart from the thought-provoking indications which we shall have the opportunity of finding in the work of Morris, would it be believable that these intimate conversations of which we have proof in 1884 should have been abruptly interrupted in 1885, when an improved understanding between the two men was evident?
In November 1885 Paul Lafargue announced to Engels that Le Socialiste was going to publish a "gallery of portraits of foreign socialists". This was to continue from 14 November 1885 to 28 August 1886, presenting successively Marx, Engels, Lavrov, Perovskaya, Morris, Bax, Aveling, Basly, Bebel and Liebknecht. As one can see, Morris was regarded by the Marxists as one of their number. But in 1886 things began to go wrong. Engels felt that the working class would not be long in emerging from its apathy, and wanted the Socialist League to come out of its narrow circle and establish a more direct contact with it. In January he was still hopeful and wrote to Sorge:

"Up to now, the whole movement here exists only in appearance; but if a nucleus of men inside the Socialist League can be educated to understand the situation theoretically, it will constitute a great step towards the real mass movement which cannot be long delayed." 222

A letter not without interest, though one may well wonder just who it is that is to undertake the task of theoretical education! Two months later, Engels was much less optimistic. He considered that "our good Bax and Morris" were "torn by the desire to do something (if they but knew what!)" and that "nevertheless, they have far more truck with the anarchists than is desirable"; they were, he concluded, "two political innocents." 223 Morris's anti-parliamentarianism, which was soon to bring him into open conflict with the Avelings, was forcing him, in fact, to rely upon the anarchist wing of the League, without being a part of it. From the month of April, what Engels regarded as collusion, as well as the transformation of Commonsweal into a weekly, marked the beginning of an estrangement. He became annoyed with "Morris who, like a bull, goes head down against parliamentarianism"; he and Bax "will have to learn by experience what sort of men their anarchists are". 224 He considered that they "are for the moment entirely in their hands" and described Morris as a "sentimental socialist". 225

We observe that, while Engels never made the mistake of confusing Morris with the anarchists, he did make one, in his anger, by referring to him as a "sentimental socialist", a description which came from his pen on several occasions. There is no doubt that Morris himself was to blame for the opinion, on the one hand through his gross underestimation of his own theoretical abilities and, on the other, through various impetuous declarations which were, purely and simply, an expression of that modesty. 226 All those who knew him more intimately than did Engels agree in saying the opposite. "He was anything but a sentimentalist," wrote Walter Crane, adding:

"There is no greater mistake than to think of William Morris as a sentimentalist, who, having built himself a dream-house of art and poetry, sighs over the turmoil of the world, and calls himself a Socialist because factory chimneys obtrude themselves upon his view." 227

His son-in-law, Halliday Sparling, asserts that "there was no sentimentality in him, nor could he stand it in others". 228 I could quote many other similar pieces of evidence. Engels's severity is, nevertheless, understandable: he was protecting a definite and effective political line, and Morris's temporary inflexibility rightly seemed unrealistic to him. I feel that it is to the point to add that Engels always showed an impatient and somewhat disdainful severity towards
the English working-class movement. The continuous growth of a middle-class outlook in the British working-class annoyed him, and he contrasted the backwardness of England with the surge forward of German social democracy, of which he thoroughly approved. R. Page Arnot could not help showing some irritation when referring to this excessive harshness. 238 Marx himself was not altogether free of this trait, and laughingly called the English “diese verdammten Schleswig-Holsteiner”. 239 However, E. F. Thompson, developing in a later lecture certain judgments made in his monumental work, considers that Marx would have shown greater indulgence than Engels towards Morris and would have better understood the humanist content of his personal contribution to the development of Marxism. 232 I may add that Engels did not share Marx’s fervent appreciation of poetry.

However, not all the bridges were destroyed. I think that we can date to 1886 the one letter I have discovered from Morris to Engels. It is only dated April:

“Dear Mr. Engels,
You would do us a great service if you would write us a short article on any subject you please, and as short as you please (if you find that more convenient) for next month’s Commonweal. I venture to ask this though I know how much your time is taken up and how serious your work is, as it is very important that we should have a weighty article to stand at the head of the paper next month. So I will beg you to forgive me for troubling you.

Yours faithfully
William Morris” 233

Engels did not, in fact, find the time to write this “weighty article”, but he did, nevertheless, send in a note, with his initials, about the strikes in Decazeville. 234 In November again, there is another note, in reply to a reader’s request, refusing permission for any English translation of Socialism, Utopian and Scientific not made under his direct supervision. 235 That was the last of his contributions to Commonweal and one must acknowledge that it was a terse and chilly ending. The fact that in May 1886 he asked Paul Lafargue to send the paper an article on the Paris elections can be attributed to his desire to produce irrefutable arguments against the insinuations of Justice, but he did not conceal that “the League is in a complete muddle through their having let the anarchists creep in”. 236 In August, he described the state of the League to Bebel in the same terms: Morris was a “victim of the anarchists”, Bax was at the stage theoretically of “infantile disorder” and Aveling, having to earn his living, was “not in a position to study much”. The latter, added Engels, “is the only one I see regularly”, which still leaves room to suppose that he continued to see Bax and Morris from time to time. 237 A supposition which is confirmed by a letter from Engels to Laura in mid-September:

“Had several visits from Bax and one from Morris lately... Morris is a settled sentimental Socialist, he would be easily managed if one saw him regularly, a couple of times a week, but who has the time to do it, and if you drop him for a month, he is sure to lose himself again. And is he worth all that trouble, even if one had the time?” 238
Despite the usual note of disdain, it is clear that there was no fundamental disagreement between them, other than the political question of recourse to parliamentary action, which was then a burning one. On this point Morris remained intractable, though his position was much less cut-and-dried than it generally stated (but that would form the basis of a study in itself, going beyond the bounds of our present enquiry). It is very probable that this end of Morris to Engels in September 1886 was the last, because in 1887 the crisis within the League became acute and ended in June at the annual conference with the defeat and departure of the "parliamentarians". Letters from Engels to Sorge and to Laura Lafargue express his weariness with socialist "sects" and the interest he felt in the efforts directed by John Burns towards "an independent union of the working men of both societies leaving Hyndman, Morris, Aveling and Co. to fight out their quarrels themselves". Despite the sharpness of this dispute, there is no evidence of any breach between Morris and the militant Marxists. In April he himself translated, published and expressed enthusiastic approval for an article by Paul Lafargue in reply to some somewhat ill-conceived lucubrations on the part of Bax on "the Morrow of the Revolution". Again in December, as we have seen, Engels "personally" sent Morris a copy of the American translation of The Condition of the Working Class in England.

It is no less certain that up to 1889, a real separation is perceptible, but it does really seem that it was not entirely a result of the squabbles of political cliques. In 1887, Aveling's reputation fell to its lowest ebb. Endless evidence (too lengthy to be detailed here) shows that his lack of scruples over money matters and women caused him to be ostracised by most militant socialists. Engels, on the other hand, against them all, took up the cudgels on behalf of the companion of Marx's daughter, and did so with a stubbornness, one must say, verging on blindness: his attitude in the matter had unfortunate consequences in turning away from the movement sincere people who would no longer set foot in his house in order to avoid meeting Aveling. It is very probable that such was the case with Morris, despite his inclination to set aside personal antipathies for the sake of unity and to show indulgence towards the weaknesses of his comrades in the struggle. We do not know what went on between him and Aveling, apart from the fact that the latter got fifty pounds out of him. Things must have been pretty serious for Morris to have reached the point of calling him a "disreputable dog" (we can find no other instance of such an epithet from his pen).

However, Morris remained in touch with the Marxist leaders. In March 1889 Laura Lafargue sent him her translation into English verse of the poems and songs of Eugene Pottier. In a very warm letter, Morris replied that, not only was her translation "excellent" but it was in itself, "good English verse", and he asked her permission to publish it in Commonweal. In this same year, 1889, the International Socialist Workers' Conference was held in Paris, and out of it came the Second International. A dissident congress was called simultaneously by Hyndman and the French "possibilistes", and, as a consequence, the former conference adopted a very definite political and theoretical position. Morris unhesitatingly agreed to take part, along with men like Bebel, Liebknecht, Bernstein and Lafargue. He led the British delegation and spoke against the opportunist proposal to merge the two conferences. Lafargue
co-ordinated the preparation of this great demonstration of revolutionary internationalism, in constant touch with Engels, and for months he corresponded with Morris, who published his letters in Commonweal. It lies outside my purpose to follow the course of this historic event, although the position taken up by Morris on this occasion is by itself worthy of note, in so far as it displays his faith in action in accordance with a definite ideology. It also marked a certain rapprochement with Engels. Lafargue’s letters to the latter, during the months of preparation, clearly suggest this. For example, he wrote in May: “Morris is full of enthusiasm for the Congress; you must keep him up to it and make use of Commonweal”, and in June: “... I will write to Morris ... unless you prefer to do it yourself”.  

Later documents are scarce and we are completely without information about any contacts that may have existed between Morris and Engels during the last years of their lives. We find them together again on the same platform on 1 May demonstrations in 1891 and 1892, 240 and E. P. Thompson seeks this as “symbolic of the direction of his last years of work for the Cause”. In this same year 1892, Engels published the first English edition of The Condition of the Working Class in England and included in his preface the famous article which had made such an impression on Morris, explicitly recalling that it had appeared in Commonweal on 1 March 1885. Finally, in 1894, Engels read the theoretical handbook by Morris and Bax: Socialism, its Growth and Outcome; he thought that the book cut right across the “shoddy stuff” published by Swan Sonnenschein, 241 and he thought well enough of it to send a copy to Sorge. No doubt he had a feeling that the time he had earlier devoted to talking with Morris had not been in vain.

I have no ridiculous intention of introducing here an account of Marxist theory. Nor do I mean to make an inventory of all that Morris owed to Marxism. That would amount, in fact, to a premature study of Morris’s utopia, which I shall undertake in the last part of this work. We shall see that this debt is immense. So I prefer to adopt a method which may not be to the liking of some but which seems to me to be more effective and more alive, and the sources will appear with greater clarity as we examine Morris’s writings and thought. For the moment I want to confine myself to recalling very briefly certain very fundamental data which are not directly involved with his utopian thinking, but which form its basis and its point of departure.

Now Morris repeats in many forms throughout his writings that “the foundation of socialism is economical”. 242 Also we find throughout his writings analyses of Capital and Marxist definitions of value, labour-power, surplus value and the mechanism of capitalist exploitation. I could accumulate quotations filling many pages. Not to overload my text, I will be content with one or two, and note references of various other writings which read just as convincingly. Here is an extract from a lecture of Morris’s which I choose simply because it is one of the best known:

“Under the present system of wages and capital the ‘manufacturer’, having a monopoly of the means whereby the power to labour inherent in
every man's body can be used for production, is the master of those who are not so privileged... He therefore buys the labour-power of those who are bare of capital and can only live by selling it to him... It is clear that if he paid those with whom he makes his bargain the full value of their labour; that is to say, all that they produced, he would fail in his purpose. But since he is a monopolist of the means of productive labour, he can compel them to make a bargain better for him and worse for them than that; which bargain is that after they have earned their livelihood, estimated according to a standard high enough to ensure their peaceable submission to his mastership, the rest (and by far the larger part as a matter of fact) of what they produce shall belong to him, shall be his property to do as he likes with, to use or abuse at his pleasure.”

Many other expositions taken directly from Capital appear in innumerable texts, and I indicate the most characteristic by footnote. Even in his fictional writings, Morris repeats these definitions, as when he explains the coming industrial age to John Ball. The worker, he says

"shall sell himself, that is the labour that is in him, to the master that suffers him to work, and that master shall give to him from out of the wares he maketh enough to keep him alive, and to beget children and nourish them till they be old enough to be sold like himself, and the residue shall the rich man keep to himself."

This brief reminder should not give the impression that Morris contented himself with the most elementary of propositions. In his 1885 lecture, Dawn of a New Epoch, he takes his analysis as far as the division of surplus value between different branches of capital and even tackles the problem of ground rent and property rent. He deals with variations in the value of labour-power in Misery and the Way Out. One whole chapter of Socialism, its Growth and Outcome is explicitly a summary of the economic section of Capital. Morris does not confine himself to these fundamental definitions but, in the wake of Marx and Engels, and often in the same terms, he takes to pieces the mechanism of the capitalist mode of production and displays its internal contradictions in the form of crises and "artificial famines". His language then draws inspiration not only from Capital but also from the Manifesto and from Socialism, Utopian and Scientific. The same applies when he talks of unemployment and or the "labour reserve army", a problem closely linked with the previous one and to which he returns, not only in books and lectures, but also in many articles in Communism. From these same sources he took the idea of the "world market", that "abstraction" which dehumanises work and gives all products exchange value in place of use value, converting them into merchandise for sale and not for use. And this brings us to the threshold of Morris's utopia and putting the world to rights. It is interesting to observe that the essence of all these authentically Marxist economic definitions, and in particular the basic ones, is to be found in the writings of 1884–86. One can sense a need in Morris to keep repeating them until he can feel them to be part of his own thinking.
On the level of superstructures, just as upon that of the economic infrastructure, Morris faithfully reproduces the formulations of Marx and Engels. This fidelity is particularly striking in his materialist conception of the State which is not an abstraction, nor an arbiter above the clash of interests, but, to repeat the words of the Manifesto, "the organised power of one class for oppressing another". This idea, and the idea that the whole state apparatus is an apparatus at the service of the ruling class, is found throughout the columns of Communism and in most of his writings. It is the consolidation of socialism which, once class society is abolished, will permit the withering away of the state that Morris describes in News from Nowhere. And here again, as we shall see, he follows Engels step by step.

One other theme is found unchanged in Morris and in Marx and Engels. It is the plan of the succession of social structures. The only gap is the Asiatic manner of production, but it was hardly touched upon in the books available to Morris and it was normal in his time for attention not to be drawn towards this important stage, the study of which has only really begun at a quite recent date. The whole of the first part of his lecture True and False Society (1886) describes the successive historical structures; primitive communism, slave society, feudalism, bourgeois society, and this description appears in many other of his writings. It is by no means mechanical, but, on the contrary, founded upon the development of the internal contradictions of each structure and upon the class struggle, "the motive force of history". This fundamental theme runs through all his work from 1884 on and it would be pointless to choose between the hundreds of available quotations. Concerning the change from capitalism to socialism, Morris was very much aware of the formulations of the Manifesto which mocked at "the selfish conception that induces you to transform into eternal laws of nature and of reason ... your present mode of production and form of property", a conception shared "with every ruling class that has preceded you". Morris, in his turn, insisted many times, from 1883 on, upon the fact that the very movement of history made it impossible to believe that the present system would last forever. He also remembered that "the bourgeois produces its own gravediggers" and over and over again he drew inspiration from the justly famous passage of Capital upon "the expropriation of the expropriators" and the "negation of the negation". After recalling the dispossession of the peasant and the artisan and their reduction to wage-labour, he asserts in his turn:

"... the capitalist or modern slave-owner has been forced by his very success ... to organize his slaves, the wage-earners, into a co-operation for production so well arranged that it requires little but his own elimination to make it a foundation for communal life ... his own advance in wealth and power has bred for him the very enemy who is doomed to make an end of him."  

Morris returned many times to this central idea of the contradiction between the collective nature of production and the individual nature of appropriation, and to the fact that capitalism itself created the necessary conditions for the transformation to socialism. So, as Marx says, "with the inexorability of a law of nature, capitalist production begets its own
Morris unreservedly supports this conception which,

"starting with a historical view of what had been, and seeing that a law of evolution swayed all events in it, was able to point out to us that the evolution was still going on, and that, whether Socialism be desirable or not, it is at least inevitable."  

It is essential for us to pause a moment at this point, because the Marxist Entwicklungsstheorie, the theory of development, has been and still is the object of totally erroneous interpretations which utterly falsify the thinking of Marx and Engels, and, through them, of Morris. There has never been any question on their part of a mechanistic fatalism leaving no room for human intervention. Posed in this fashion, it would be a theory to prevent action and be anti-human. More than one historian of utopias, through ignorance or lack of understanding of Marxism, has condemned himself to pose unreal problems and formulate strange conclusions. Raymond Ruyer asks how this theory, or rather the theory he imagines he reads in Marx, can be reconciled with soviet planning; it represents, he declares, "the antithesis of the utopian spirit" (which is true up to a point but not at all as he understands it; I shall come back to this in the conclusion of the present work). In the same way, G. Fritzsche declares outright that Morris cannot lay claim to scientific socialism because he does not repudiate free will, even though he sees the "theory of development" as the welcome harbinger of socialism.

Let us set the facts straight and see what was really said by Marx and Engels, and, after them, by Morris. "Men", wrote Marx,

"make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past."  

Engels in his turn said:

"Active social forces work exactly like natural forces: blindly, forcibly, destructively, so long as we do not understand and reckon with them. But when once we understand them, when once we grasp their action, their direction, their effects, it depends only upon ourselves to subject them more and more to our own will, and by means of them to reach our own ends."  

This dialectical unity of the movement of history and the conscious will of man was many times expressed by Morris as well, in very clear fashion, particularly in an article in Commonweal which has never been republished and from which I extract this significant fragment:

"Although commercial ruin must be the main stream of the force for bringing about the revolution, we must not forget the other stream, which is the conscious hope of the oppressed classes, forced into union and antagonism by the very success of the commercial system . . ."  

(Morris's italics.)

It cannot be a matter of a subjective and arbitrary act of will, but of a necessary intervention in the direction demanded by the laws of history:
"we have not set ourselves to build up a system to please our tastes, nor are we seeking to impose it upon the world in a mechanical manner, but rather . . . we are assisting in bringing about a development of history which would take place without our help, but which, nevertheless, compels us to help it". 274

And this essential intervention on the part of man calls all his qualities into play: "intelligence enough to conceive . . . , courage enough to accept . . . , power enough to force . . . " 275 There are many passages of Morris's writings that point in the same direction. 279

And this is the shattering point of fundamental difference between mechanistic determinism and dialectical materialism. In his third Thesis upon Feuerbach, Marx wrote:

"The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to re-educate the educator himself." 277

The Theses on Feuerbach first appeared in 1888, in Stuttgart, as an appendix to Ludwig Feuerbach, by Engels, who had found them in an old notebook belonging to Marx. While this work was still being printed in Germany, William Morris wrote, in the same year, in one of his lectures that was among the richest in content:

"... if individual men are the creatures of their surrounding conditions,... it must be the business of man as a social animal, or of Society, if you will, to make the surroundings which make the individual man what he is. Man must and does create the conditions under which he lives; let him be conscious of that, and create them wisely." 278

A strange coincidence of thought and date! There can be little doubt that Morris had been informed of the Theses on Feuerbach, either through the agency of Bax or directly by Engels himself. Any doubt is made less probable by the fact that another of these Theses, the sixth, which denies the existence of an abstract and eternal human nature and defines the human essence as "the ensemble of the social relations" was familiar to Morris and underlies the ideology of News from Nowhere. 279

"The occurrence simultaneously of a change in conditions and human activity," Marx added in his third Thesis, "can only be comprehended and rationally understood as a revolutionary fact."

But this "revolutionary fact" could not be, I repeat, subjective and arbitrary. It demands a precise understanding of the laws of history and, to the extent to which man bows to their demands, he succeeds in mastering them, in turning them to his own ends and in winning his freedom. Engels has developed this idea in a well-known passage:

"The extraneous objective forces that have hitherto governed history pass under the control of man himself. Only from that time will man himself, more and more consciously, make his own history - only from that time will the social causes set in motion by him have, in the man and
in a constantly growing measure, the results intended by him. It is the ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom."

William Morris subscribes unreservedly to this fundamental thesis of materialist humanism, and in his turn recommends "this knowledge of necessity which has been defined by a philosopher as being the only true liberty". With extraordinary boldness he goes even further and bases morality upon this understanding which comprehends and dominates necessity. Thanks to scientific socialism, the capitalist law of the jungle is, henceforth, counterbalanced by "the two great forces which rule the world, Necessity and Morality". In the same way as Engels declared that social forces "so long as we do not understand and reckon with them" are, like the forces of nature, "blind, violent, destructive", Morris warns against a fatalism or belief in spontaneity which would reject the intervention of this scientific understanding, moral, liberating and, finally, humanising. If, he writes, we "give it all up into the hands of necessity, Society will explode volcanically with such a crash as the world has not yet witnessed".

Similarly, he, in his turn, rejected the conception dear to pre-Marxist socialists, held by Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen, by which the revolution could only be brought about by the act of some prince or leader. The constitution of the Socialist League, repeating that of the First International, followed Marx in proclaiming that "the liberation of the workers will be brought about by the workers themselves". The leap from the rule of necessity to the rule of liberty will be the result of a struggle carried on in accordance with the laws of history, by the mass struggle of the workers enriched by scientific theory. The means of this enrichment and the leadership of this struggle will be the great socialist party, whose task is to "educate and organise" and of which Morris dreamed throughout his work after 1883.

So it is manifestly absurd to attempt to contrast Morris’s ideology with some mechanistic and catastrophic fatalism or other, incomprehendingly dubbed Marxism. On the contrary, with Marx as with Morris, man’s intervention is fundamental, and, far from being diminished, its importance is that much greater for its being conscious, historical and scientific. Men are not passive pawns upon an economic chess-board, and when Marx strove to decipher the laws which determine the evolution and succession of social structures, he himself insisted upon the fact that these are human societies, made up of beings differing from animals in the sense that the worker, as he changes natural materials, "realises a purpose of his own... to which he must subordinate his will." Work, for Marx as for Morris, is the point of departure of a materialistic humanism, whose reality has all too often been wilfully concealed. The sum of social relationships which constitutes the human essence (Sixth Thesis on Feuerbach) has its basis in production, in man’s work.

"By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature. He develops his slumbering powers..."
Work is the distinctive characteristic of the species. It is a necessity for its existence and will become, in communist society, "the first necessity of living" once the leap has been made from the rule of necessity to that of freedom.

It was not as impassive spectators, despite the scientific rigour of their analyses, that Marx and Engels took apart the mechanism of capitalist exploitation and the alienation of the worker. The whole historical section of Capital and the dreadful descriptions in The Condition of the Working Class in England denounce the inhuman character of the present mode of production and the conditions of work in large-scale industry.

"At the same time that factory work exhausts the nervous system to the uttermost, it does away with the many-sided play of the muscles, and confiscates every atom of freedom, both in bodily and intellectual activity. The lightening of the labour, even, becomes a sort of torture, since the machine does not free the labourer from his work, but deprives the work of all interest. Every kind of capitalist production, in so far as it is not only a labour-process but also a process of creating surplus-value, has this in common, that it is not the workman that employs the instruments of labour, but the instruments of labour that employ the workman. But it is only in the factory system that this inversion for the first time acquires technical and palpable reality. By means of its conversion into an automaton, the instrument of labour confronts the labourer, during the labour-process, in the shape of capital, of dead labour, that dominates and pumps dry, living labour-power." 287

Morris finds no stronger terms when he, in his turn, denounces the dehumanisation of work by the machine, and this is true also about the division of labour. He had already encountered this denunciation in Ruskin, but it would come more convincingly in Marx, purged of all idealist moralising and placed in a strictly coherent context:

"It converts the labourer into a crippled monstrosity by forcing his detail dexterity at the expense of a world of productive capabilities and instincts. . . . Not only is the detail work distributed to the different individuals, but the individual himself is made the automatic motor of a fractional operation. . . . Some crippling of the mind and body is inseparable even from the division of labour in society as a whole. . . . [It] attacks the individual at the very roots of his life, it is the first to afford the materials for, and to give a start to, industrial pathology." 288

Against this division of labour, Marx, and after him, Morris, set the necessary diversity of occupation, which, alone, in a socialist society, will allow of the realisation of the "fully developed individual." 289 This division has, as its historical origin and "foundation . . . the separation between town and country" 290 and it was under the impulse of Marx that Morris strove to resolve the contradiction, as well as the one which had grown up between manual and intellectual work. It is through a detailed study of Morris's utopia that we can best assess the close relationship which binds Morris's humanism to that of Marx. I am well aware that certain Marxists, ready as they are to use
William Morris: The Marxist Dreamer

this term when referring to Morris, hesitate, in the name of scientific accuracy, to use it when speaking of Marxism. But it is only a matter of agreeing upon the meaning of words and keeping clearly in mind the definition of the human essence, purged of Feuerbachian conceptualism and identified with the sum of social relationships. It is from this materialist viewpoint that Marxist humanism is revealed in all its fecundity. Morris, as we shall see, made no mistake and, following Karl Marx, conceived of future society as an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

While Marx and Engels did not venture into the details of anticipation, they set out the markers, and Morris's utopia is based upon these primary data with astonishing consistency. For example, it faithfully follows Engels's predictions on the withering away of the State. But we shall find a much greater cause for astonishment in observing that the poet's utopian thinking rests upon the fundamental theory of two stages, as it was formulated by Karl Marx in his Critique of the Gotha Programme, which was not published before 1891 and lay with other unpublished manuscripts among the papers of Engels.

I propose to compare the texts in due course. For the moment I rest content with wondering whether the intermediary of Bax suffices to explain so profound an identity of thought – an identity of thought which shows on many other points and sometimes also when the original passages of Marx and Engels were still unpublished.
PART THREE
COMMUNIST SOCIETY
CHAPTER ONE

Barbarism or Socialism: The Dialectics of an Alternative

In April 1885, William Morris was deeply affected by reading Richard Jefferies' novel, After London. His "hatred of civilisation" had met kindred expression and drew a vengeful satisfaction from this picture of accursed London disappearing in a mysterious cataclysm. Nature, convulsed, freed from artificial constraints, savagely reasserted its rights and wiped out every trace of the great centre of human population, rotted by "commercialism" and by monstrous, mercantile machine-like society. The survivors, roaming in primitive destitution, gradually came together and attempted to set up a new social existence, undeniably cruel and horrible, yet bearing a confused hope for the elaboration of more natural values, more in keeping with the deeper aspirations of the species. A confused hope, vaguely outlined, constantly contradicted and lacking all real prospect. But what matter to Morris! His sturdy enthusiasm and confident vitality found nourishment in this idea, something to chew over. His heart drew "absurd hopes" from it. Obsessed by this phantasmagoria of the cataclysm and the return to barbarism, he wrote to Georgiana Burne-Jones a few weeks later that he no longer had any faith in the future of civilisation, that he knew it to be doomed to destruction, possibly very shortly:

"What a joy it is to think of! and how often it consoles me to think of barbarism once more flooding the world, and real feelings and passions, however rudimentary, taking the place of our wretched hypocries. With this thought in my mind all the history of the past is lighted up and lives again to me. I used really to despair once because I thought what the idiots of our day call progress would go on perfecting itself: happily I know now that all that will have a sudden check - sudden in appearance I mean - 'as it was in the days of Noë'..." ³

The violence of Morris's tone must not, of course, lead us to suppose that he, in the manner of Jefferies, was envisaging the prospect of a natural disaster to resolve all problems. He was not given to such puerility, and his thought, if not yet clarified, was at least fairly complex. Let us not forget that, at the moment of writing these lines, he had just founded the Socialist League. Things he says in the same letter show him to be up against many difficulties that rather discourage him: ⁴ the leadership at his disposal was weak and few in number, and the prospects for the new party were far from brilliant. Contradictory ideas were inextricably muddled in his mind and continued to be so until dialectical clarity showed their simultaneous opposition and unity. He appreciated the paucity of his means while believing with passionate conviction in the
possibility of revolution, and he was no less convinced of the inevitable decay of capitalist society. He had a theory of revolution, but, at the same time, the seduction of spontaneity had not altogether left him. This “sudden check” was, in his thinking, both revolutionary action and (at one and the same time) an unexpected event arising from inevitable development.¹

This reliance upon the timely event was nothing new with him. It was as old as his “hatred of civilisation”. Back in 1874, dreaming of idyllic little rural communities, he thought that, even if it could not be happy, contemporary life would regain historical dignity if it were shaken by serious and tragic events² and in the same year he wrote to Mrs. G. Howard: “So perhaps the gods are preparing troubles and terrors for the world (or our small corner of it) again, so that it may once again become beautiful and dramatic withal …”³

In his first public lecture, on 4 December 1877, mentioning the general decline in the arts, he thought that only a sudden “turn in events” could bring about a reversal;⁴ and, in 1882, talking on the same topic at the Midland Institute in Birmingham, he hoped that: “A change will come, perhaps after some great disaster has chilled us into pausing, and so given us time for reflection …”⁵ One can see just how far Morris’s own preoccupations made him receptive in advance to the utopia of R. Jefferies. Perhaps too, in his more or less conscious memory, reading After London awoke an obscure recollection of Henry George’s somewhat hazy pages on the fatality of a glacial catastrophe. Morris never made any reference to it, but, as we have seen, the idea of a return to barbarism appeared several times in Progress and Poverty, in terms which sketch out some of our poet’s most curious ideas.⁶

Nor must we forget Morris’s ardent familiarity with Nordic mythology. Among the ancient Icelandic myths, that of the “ragna rök”, the great battle of the gods against the forces of evil, which ultimately conquered and inaugurated a new order, made a great impression upon his thinking. It was also the first intimation that no social order was unchangeable and that violence was history’s midwife. The legend wrapped the twilight of the gods in strange and catastrophic mists.⁷ On the other hand, Morris’s long study of the Icelandic cycle brought him his first revelation of the ways of life of barbaric peoples, and the human values which these peoples appeared to sustain were in clear contrast with the hypocrisies, the pettiness and the ugliness of Victorian civilisation.

If the concept of civilisation implicitly contains the opposite concept of barbarism, ambiguity and confusion reigned none the less in Morris’s usage of the two words during the early years of his public life.

Several years elapsed before he finally gave the word civilisation its pejorative sense: the two uses of the term continued side by side for quite a while. The same applies to the word barbarism, and this lack of precision indirectly reflects the complexity and perplexity of his thought, as I have just analysed it from the letter written to Georgiana Burne-Jones in May 1885. However, one important nuance crept into his turn of phrase very early, with the word barbarism only having a pejorative sense in so far as it described a social structure
which had reached a dead end and was doomed to despair: in this sense, barbarism became synonymous with civilisation. We find a very striking example of this usage in a lecture of 1880, *The Beauty of Life*, which Morris published with a very significant epigraph, taken from Juvenal: "*propter vitam vivendi perdere causas*". In this lecture he was warning against the dangers which seemed most imminent in his eyes, namely, that "men in struggling towards the complete attainment of all the luxuries of life for the strongest portion of their race" (his formulation still had nothing Marxist about it) "should deprive their whole race of all the beauty of life", that the mastery achieved over nature would destroy the simplest and widest-spread gifts; that the strongest and wisest would thus enslave the simple people and reduce themselves to slaves, "and so at last drag the world into a second barbarism more ignoble, and a thousandfold more hopeless, than the first". In the same way, a year later, at Nottingham, as he once again tackled the great theme of his early lectures, the degradation and death of art, he exclaimed that unless all classes, including, above all, the working class, joined together to prevent such a disaster, the result would be

"a return to barbarism, nay, to a state of degradation far worse than barbarism, for that was hopeful." 13

Again in 1883, expressing his disgust with a society bloated with material comforts and deprived of all intellectual joys, he compared it to "a huge swine-stye" worse than "the grossest state of savagery which the world has known... for there was hope in it". 14

For such was the alternative which he presented to his listeners in these pre-Marxist years, when the influence of Ruskin was still dominant, although intangibly enriched by a growing perception of the important rôle of the working class: either bring back joy into work and saturate the whole of life in art, taking it from the élite to make it a natural function of the whole people, or else "honestly" accept that art is to disappear and society sink into this "degradation far worse than barbarism". There seemed to him to be no possible compromise, and, for himself, he was quite ready to accept this disappearance. Nor did he nurse any illusions about the survival of art in present society: it would inevitably succumb. 15

But if civilisation, in its onward rush, were to become a barbarism with no hope and no escape, dragging down art in the wreckage, that did not mean that Morris would despair of the future of art. He did not yet know what new world would replace the old nor by what means the change would be brought about. But "...if the imaginative arts perish, some new thing, at present unguessed of, may be put forward to supply their loss in men's lives". 16 The inevitable death of art would even be beneficial. "... it will be but a burning up of the gathered weeds, so that the fields may bear more abundantly. I hold that men would wake up after a while, and look round and find the dullness unbearable, and begin once more inventing, imitating, and imagining, as in the earlier days. - That faith comforts me, and I can say calmly, if the blank space must happen, it must, and amidst its darkness the new seed must sprout". 18 Better to trust it to the earth than to have it to "rot in the miser's granary". Beyond "that possible night of the arts" will come a "new dawn". 19 But while we await this dawn, still ill-defined in Morris's mind, we must
observe with bitterness that art is dying and that, as things are at the moment, its death is a prerequisite to its rebirth. 30

After he finally accepted scientific socialism, Morris’s vision of the future became daily more clear, and his certainties of an extraordinary blossoming of the arts in the new society was constantly reiterated. But he was still convinced that a temporary death of art was inevitable, and that there was even a risk of its coming as a result of the revolutionary events themselves. Nevertheless, he was quite ready to accept it joyfully, because art would be reborn through the while people expressing their pleasure in life. 31 In a truly astonishing moment of reflection, he went much further, to the point of considering that this eclipse might be prolonged far beyond the revolution to the end of the first stage of socialist society, 32 and perhaps even somewhat longer. His reason being, as Marx had already expressed it, that consciousness lags behind experience.

"Strange as it may seem, therefore, to some people, it is as true as strange, that Socialism, which has been commonly supposed to tend to mere Utilitarianism, is the only hope of the arts. It may be, indeed, that till the social revolution is fully accomplished, and perhaps for a little while afterwards, men’s surroundings may go on getting plainer, grimmer and barer. I say for a little while afterwards, because it may take men some time to shake off the habits of penury on the one hand and inane luxury on the other, which have been forced on them by commercialism. But even in that there is hope; for it is at least possible that all the old superstitions and conventionalities of art have got to be swept away before art can be born again; that before that new birth we shall have to be left bare of everything that has been called art; that we shall have nothing left us but the materials of art, that is the human race with its aspirations and passions and its home, the earth; on which materials we shall have to use these tools, leisure and desire." 33

This somewhat gloomy vision of the socialist phase, which must precede the arrival of communist society, expresses, as we shall see, Morris’s personal aversions. But he knew that this stage cannot be cut short, and the hope of the days to come will make it tolerable. For the moment we must be content to observe that this idea of the death of art, although it continues the less precise ideas of Morris’s pre-Marxist period, is no longer linked with the pessimistic idea of barbarism.

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It was the word barbarism which took on a new content for him, and passed from being negative to being positive. His long historical studies and his assimilation of historical materialism brought him to pore with increasing intenseness over man’s most remote past, giving to barbarism the precise meaning given to the word by Morgan, Marx and Engels. But he could not be satisfied with a purely objective study, and his thinking, constantly turning towards criticism of the present and vision of the future, discovered in this exploration of history a new set of human values which were to become apparent again, through the spiral of his dialectics, at a higher level in his utopia. As I have already indicated, we have no material proof that he read Engels’s great work.
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The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. But there is a strong presumption that he knew of it at least indirectly. A study of Morris's writings gives this presumption a probability that it is difficult to deny. In fact, apart from scattered remarks and observations in his articles and lectures, the romantic works of his later years, especially The Roots of the Mountains and even more The House of the Wolfings, contain descriptions of the barbarian society rigorously conforming to the analyses of Morgan and Engels. Finally, on two occasions, Morris published theoretic treatises on the matter which are no less orthodox; the first time, in 1886, jointly with Bax, in the series of articles published in Commonweal under the title Socialism from the Root Up which were later revised and collected in 1893 as the work Socialism, its Growth and Outcome; the second time, under his name alone, in 1890, in another series of articles published in Commonweal and never reprinted, under the title The Development of Modern Society.

Without intending to go into the details of these anthropological studies, which were a matter of popularisation and contained no element of original research, and which would, moreover, take us beyond the strict limits of our purpose, it seems essential for me to make a very brief summary of the fundamental characteristics of this primitive society, as described by Morris for his readers.

The family, in the modern sense of the word, did not exist in barbarian society. The basic unit was the gens or clan (in his romances Morris uses the word kindred), based on consanguinity, each one of which constituted a "House". Relationship was established exclusively through maternal descent. Because of this consanguinity, marriage was forbidden within the gens; each one was exogamous and its members married the members of one or several complementary gentes. These gentes were in this way grouped into tribes, and the latter formed the people, or thiod.

The essential characteristic of the gens was communal ownership and their only institution was direct democracy. The House of the Wolfings abounds in descriptions of these assemblies of clan, tribe or people where the freemen express their opinions and each participates in the collective decision. These common councils took place in the open air in the forest, far from fields and pastures, each in its appropriate place, according to whether it was the clan, the tribe or the people meeting, and every member was present. Although the action of The Roots of the Mountains takes place at a later stage of development, at the beginnings of urban civilisation, the system of direct democracy is still in force. While we now meet the first officials with authority, such as the Aldermen and Wardens, these are elected by the assembly of the people (Folk-Mote), and it is in this assembly, where everyone has his say, that the important decisions about crimes, blood reparation, war and peace are made.

There was no magistrature or police with power to punish murder. Such things were the collective business of the whole of the clan to which the victim belonged, according to a system of which we find the last traces in the Corsican vendetta. There was no central executive body, no State apparatus. Only the assembly of the clan, the tribe or the people was sovereign.

My purposely brief summary cannot unfortunately convey the beauty and intensity of effect of a work like The House of the Wolfings. I may add that any
such attempt would seem superfluous after the remarkable commentary which
has been made upon it by Mrs. Jessie Koeemanova in her invaluable work on
the prose romances of William Morris. But I should like to stress one point,
and that is the evocative power of the narrative. Starting on the basis of solid
historical knowledge (and more solid than he himself readily admitted, but we
are now used to this odd reserve on the part of Morris), our poet described bar-
barian society with as much imaginative force as intuition and verisimilitude.
Also, this lyrical reconstruction so conformed to the facts of the science of the
time that a German scholar wrote Morris a long letter, admiring his erudition
and enquiring after his sources. In commenting upon this somewhat ridiculous
letter, which roused her father’s ire, May Morris wrote that he was capable of
“dreaming realities without having documentary evidence of them”. While
it is true that he could “dream realities” and that all his writing is in many
respects the work of a visionary, we find a fuller and more instructive version
of this incident in the account left us by his son-in-law, H. Halliday Sparling. He,
in fact, gives us the poet’s direct reaction, and Morris, in his boisterous state-
ment, gives us to understand that his novel is pure fiction (“all lies”, he says),
that this fictitious reconstruction is built up from a few true details, just as a
palaentologist builds up a lost species from fossil debris.

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But let us not be beguiled into error by this analogy. While the rediscovery of
barbarian ways and customs was a necessary step for Morris, and a more
painsstaking one than he would have us believe, it was not an end in itself. It
took its place in the quest for human values that was the real object of his
whole life, values he offered for the consideration of contemporary conscience
as it hesitated at the crossroads of the future.

As early as 1880 or 1881 (the exact date of the lecture has not been establish-
ed) he was expressing to his listeners his nostalgia for a primitive pastoral
society in which men were unlettered, but filled with desires, uncouth but not
brutal; their art was unpolished, but sincere and spontaneous, and they were
responsive to poetry and the telling of tales; despite their heavy toil, they had
leisure; no doubt they got drunk, they quarrelled and came to blows, even took
to arms, but they were neither cruel nor unduly sensitive, they loved life and
were ready to face death, and they lived in freedom and equality. This vision
was still idyllic and vague, indefinitely situated in an idealised early Middle
Ages of imprecise period. By 1884, one feels that his reading and study were
more substantial, and it was the barbarians of the fifth century, threatening
the foundations of the power of Rome, whom he praised for:

“hatred of lies, scorn of riches, contempt of death, faith in the fair fame
won by steadfast endurance, honourable love of women”.

Again in 1886, referring to the Saxons of the time of Beowulf, he described
their courage, their love of liberty and due glory: “life amidst all its sufferings
and hardships was a continuous poem to them”.

It was only after 1885 that these value judgments were based upon real
knowledge of barbarian society. In terms very close to those used by Engels, he
attributes the virtues of this primitive world to the gentile organisation
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Itself. The supreme virtue, from which all the others derive — and this is the principal theme of The House of the Wolfings — is attachment to the gens or kindred, "the joy of fighting for the kindred and for the days to be," a formulation typical of Morris, conveying both the confidence of the Teutons in their institutions and the utopian preoccupation of the poet. In the same way, in The Story of the Glittering Plain, the constant motive of the hero Halliblithe, throughout his adventures in search of his stolen bride, is fidelity to his kindred of the Ravens which leads him to reject the attractions and the mirages of immortality of the Glittering Plain.

In a letter to T. J. Wise, explaining his intention in writing The House of the Wolfings, Morris wrote that the purpose of his book was "to illustrate the melting of the individual into the society of the tribes". Having spent years, in his articles and lectures, continuously denouncing the individualism and free competition of bourgeois society, and yearning for a society based upon free association, he sought moral and institutional inspiration in the primitive history of humanity, or simply perhaps a point of reference, since in his day it was not possible to refer to the real historical example of a successful socialist revolution.

In order to make Morris's intentions more clear, I think it useful first to give the negative expression of this nostalgia for the virtues of barbarism. In The House of the Wolfings Wolfkettle describes Roman society as he had seen it to his brothers. Truly, he says, their cities are many and wealthy, but it would be wrong to believe that each city is the dwelling place of a kindred. They have forgotten the kindreds, they do not have them, it matters little to them whom they marry and great is the confusion. Those in power decree where they are to live, what food they must eat, how long they should work even after they are tired, and what their way of life should be in all respects. Those who endure such a life have no claim to be called free men, and no house or kindred can oppose this domination and order. In truth, they are powerful but wretched. Their slaves are worse treated than their beasts of burden. These slaves and these unfortunate free men do all the work of tilling, of rearing and of craft. They are subject to men they call lords and masters, who do nothing. They cannot even forge their own arms, but lounge around all day indoors or out, wallowing in the sunshine or by their fireside, like degenerate dogs.

It is clear that, behind Roman society, it is the bourgeois society of the nineteenth century that Morris has in mind, with its class divisions, its exploitation, its strident inequality and corruption. So for him, the reference to barbarism is in essence anti-capitalist.

In the gentile society of the ancient Teutons, all goods were common property, fields, meadows and woodlands. They cultivated the land in common, grazed their flocks in common and all were adept at woodwork and ironwork. The women ran the house in common and joined in the councils; they were held in esteem and even played a leading rôle in the defence of the people attacked by the Romans. Private interest was something unthinkable and would have seemed a crime or, rather, an incomprehensible monstrosity. Liberty was defined as the responsibility of each towards the community, and we have seen the active rôle played by each, in assemblies, in the affairs of the gens, the tribe or the people, not relinquishing any of his rights or duties into the hands of authority. By virtue of the sexually complementary nature of the kindreds,
peace reigned within the tribe, and no violence was necessary to acquire a wife. In this free, equal and fraternal society, individualism was the ultimate degradation. When, in The House of the Wolfings, Thiodolf, according to the demands of Wood-sun, puts on the magic shirt of mail which will save his own life, so entailing the defeat of his people, he is not long in casting it off, preferring death to such baseness, and in the intoxication of community regained he cries:

"I have lived with them," (i.e., the kindreds) "and eaten and drunken with them, and toiled with them, and led them in battle and the place of wounds and slaughter; they are mine and I am theirs, and through them I am of the whole earth, and all the kindreds of it; yea, even of the foemen, whom this day the edges in mine hand shall smite."

Doubtless to us such a human feeling seems anachronistic, but this consideration is secondary, after all. In Morris's mind, this sentiment was the logical deduction from objective data, and if this deduction was perhaps not achievable in the past period in question, it was a natural necessity for anti-individualist thinking in the present, which justified its transposition to utopia. The fundamental difference, in Morris's eyes, between barbarian society and modern society, was "that between an organism and a mechanism". All the aspects of that ancient life were "aspects of a living body", whereas, in civilised life, "all these elements have become mechanical, uniting to build up mechanical life, and themselves the product of machines material and moral".

Another aspect, rich with lessons, struck Morris; that of abundance in poverty. "Thus then lived this folk in much plenty and ease of life, though not delicately nor desiring things out of measure. They wrought with their hands and weared themselves, and they rested from their toil and feasted and were merry; tomorrow was not a burden to them, nor yesterday a thing which they would fain forget: life shamed them not, nor did death make them afraid." Morris experienced the same feelings about the ancient Teutons as he did when he visited Iceland, and, up to the end of his life, he found "... our artificial poverty of civilization so much bitterer for those that suffer under it than the natural poverty of the rudest barbarism".

When the great barbarian invasions swept over the western empire of Rome, which William Morris held in the contempt just indicated, it was, then, historically beneficial. They brought wholesomeness back to the world. In the enormous upheaval they brought, the "old classical exclusiveness" was swept away, and a breath of freedom revived the world, particularly in the arts. Ancient barbarism, the destroyer of the art of antiquity which, following Ruskin, Morris regarded as an art with the mark of slavery upon it, was also the midwife of the Middle Ages, in which he saw the peak of our civilisation and the most important inspiration for his utopian world. It plunged the conquered lands into long chaos, but the new order arose at last in all its clarity and brilliance. It was not a step back but forward. The corruption of Roman society had led Europe into a blind alley without solution or hope. The barbarians gave hope back and regenerated it. The "Northern Fury" spilt its primitive virtues over a world which was dying from having forgotten them "as the mountain torrent bears the gold". Art, which cannot live in
decadence and artifice, revived, and "set all the world glittering with its brightness and quivering with its energy." 38

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So if the lesson of history is to be learned and turned to profit, the remedy for the bankruptcy of capitalist civilization should be a new barbarian invasion. Throughout Morris's work, this idea is just below the surface, and it loses its original brutal form only by emerging at a higher level, transformed and enriched by the opposing limits of the alternative.

Those Barbarians of other days, in fact, who descended upon Rome "like a thief in the night" constituted a "world which lay outside the rule of Rome." 39 But, he was forced to observe "... there is nothing outside civilization that we can turn to for new birth; whatever there is to help us must come from within." 40 Since there is no longer any strong race left out of civilization, as in the time of the disruption of Rome, the whole struggle in all its simplicity between those who have and those who lack is within civilization. 41 By 1884, Morris reached the goal of his thinking, surmounting the contradiction, he transformed the accounts of days gone by:

"To those who have the hearts to understand, this talk of the past is a parable of the days to come, of the change in store for us hidden in the breast of the Barbarism of civilization – the Proletariat." 42

A little later he says, identifying himself as a communist with the working class,

"So we shall be our own Goths, and at whatever cost break up again the new tyrannous Empire of Capitalism." 43

The significant loading of the word barbarian has, thus, finally changed from negative to the limits of the positive, and the alternative is suppressed by the integration of the opposites. Just as ancient barbarism was the midwife of mediaeval culture, modern barbarism is the bearer of hope, because it will be the midwife of socialism. There is no doubt that the terms in which the problem is here expressed ran a great risk those days of upsetting some people, and equally no doubt that such an approach bears the involuntary mark of Morris's bourgeois conscience, ineradicable on his own admission, despite his disinterestedness, his sincerity and his devotion. An effort of historical comprehension is clearly needed. The picture of the English working class left by Engels or by Mayhew around the middle of the nineteenth century, and, later, by Charles Booth, provides a spectacle of horror and degradation. For a wealthy bourgeois like Morris to have succeeded, through the light of the message of Ruskin and, even more, of the analyses of Karl Marx, in understanding, despite his cultured sensibilities, the historical rôle of that working class, in loving it, in fighting alongside it, that is something which compels respect. The use here made of the word barbarism, far from being intentionally pejorative, is contained within a "parable" that in no way runs counter to the teachings of historical materialism.

In developing that parable, Morris found yet another occasion to express his absolute confidence in the proletariat. It is in itself striking that it should have
appeared very early, within the context of this idea, since his basic preposi-
tion was before all else aesthetic and not yet social. I have quoted from the un-
certainly dated lecture (1880 or 1881), Of the Popular or Decorative Arts, in which
Morris showed how the invasion of the Barbarians had precipitated that
rebirth of art which “set all the world glittering with its brightness, and qui-
ing with its energy”. In the same way, he went on,

“We may surely hope that the residuum of modern civilization, the terror
of radical politicians, and the tool of reactionists, will become the great
mass of orderly thinking people, sweet and fair in its manners, and noble
in its aspirations, and that, we cannot too often repeat, is the sole hope of
worthy, living, enduring art: nothing else, I say, will help the arts.”

This passage is of some interest, for it shows that the “parable” already ex-
isted in Morris’s mind while he was still only a reformist liberal, and that his
conception of a reborn society tallied with the image of a proletariat decently
educated into the middle classes. It is plain that Morris’s confidence in the
working class, as we see it in this first sketch of the parable, is somewhat more
condescending and unattractive than the revolutionary formulation of 1884,
which has a touch of epic grandeur. Then, Morris’s confidence is frank and
without reservation, and the problem of the death of art is resolved without the
slightest ambiguity. In May 1884, coming away in disgust from the annual ex-
hibition of the Royal Academy, he declared that if the revolution were to
sweep away all this sham art without allowing any hope for a renewal, the loss
would not be great, but he thought that not only would this sham art be swept
away, but that there would also be a great prospect of seeing a new art arising
in a society based on equality: “there will be no loss but immeasurable gain.

The myth of the new barbarians is then, a constructive and optimistic myth.
To understand this, it suffices to compare it with the eighteenth-century myth
of the “noble savage”: a sentimental, moralising myth, critical of aristocratic
corruption, an illicit bundle of illusory bourgeois virtues and half-conscious illu-
sion, unrealistic nostalgia, leading to no positive outcome. The only common
element is the reference to social structures which questioned the permanence
of the existing structures, but our poet goes much further!

Morris’s new barbarians have the merit of existing and of having a historical
role to play: he is building the future upon what they will one day be, and
upon what they are already, upon the potential for liberation that exists within
them. It is their very “barbarism” which will be the yeast for the new upsurge
of mankind. At this point I want to bring together two passages which outstan-
dingly illustrate the direction of the development of Morris’s thinking in this
respect. In 1879, he was still a bourgeois aesthete interested in social problems,
horrified by the ugliness of his times, eager to understand history, who had for
a long time been asking himself questions about the future of humanity. He
was already obsessed by the invasion of the barbarians which destroyed the
civilisation of antiquity, with its basis in moral and material slavery. He looked
back to man’s awakening to art following this infusion of new life, and with a
thought foreshadowing the “parable” he exclaimed,

“What has come of that in later times, nay, what may yet come of it in
days that we shall not live to see, we may not consider now.”

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Eleven years later, writing *News from Nowhere*, he knew the regenerative force of this "barbarism", and his hero, visiting old Morson’s museum, admired the first artistic creations made by men after the revolution, "rough and unskilful in handiwork, but solid and showing some sense of pleasure in the making."

"They are very curious," said I, taking up a piece of pottery from amongst the specimens which the antiquary was showing us, "not a bit like the work of savages or barbarians, and yet with what would once have been called a hatred of civilization impressed upon them."

The conclusion of his lecture, *The Aims of Art* (1886), constitutes, if it is read attentively, a sort of self-criticism. It is purely and simply a condemnation of the nostalgia for cataclysm which had possessed him during the previous year after reading Jefferies’ novel. There are, he says, two current conceptions concerning the future of our society. One, that of socialism, is optimistic:

"I have given you the Socialist or Optimist view of the matter. Now for the Pessimist view.

I can conceive that the revolt against Artificial Famine or Capitalism, which is now on foot, may be vanquished. The result will be that the working class – the slaves of society – will become more and more degraded; that they will not strive against overwhelming force, but, stimulated by that love of life which Nature, always anxious about the perpetuation of the race, has implanted in us, will learn to bear everything – starvation, overwork, dirt, ignorance, brutality. All these things they will bear, as, alas! they bear them too well even now; all this rather than risk sweet life and bitter livelihood, and all sparks of hope and manliness will die out of them.

Nor will their masters be much better off: the earth’s surface will be hideous everywhere, save in the uninhabitable desert; Art will utterly perish, as in the manual arts so in literature, which will become, as it is indeed speedily becoming, a mere string of orderly and calculated ineptitudes and passionless ingenuities; Science will grow more and more onesided, more incomplete, more wordy and useless, till at last she will pile herself up into such a mass of superstition, that beside it the theologies of old time will seem mere reason and enlightenment. All will get lower and lower till the heroic struggles of the past to realize hope from year to year, from century to century, will be utterly forgotten, and man will be an indescribable being — hopeless, desireless, lifeless.

And will there be deliverance from this even? Maybe man may, after some terrible cataclysm, learn to strive towards a healthy animalism, may grow from a tolerable animal into a savage, from a savage into a barbarian, and so on; and some thousands of years hence he may be beginning once more those arts which we have now lost, and be carving interlacements like the New Zealanders, or scratching forms of animals on their cleaned bladebones, like the pre-historic men of the drift.

But in any case, according to the Pessimist view, which looks upon revolt against Artificial Famine as impossible to succeed, we shall wearily trudge the circle again, until some accident, some unforeseen consequence of arrangement, makes an end of us altogether."
That pessimism I do not believe in, nor, on the other hand, do I suppose that it is altogether a matter of our wills as to whether we shall further human progress or human degradation; yet, since there are those who are impelled towards the Socialist or Optimistic side of things, I must conclude that there is some hope of its prevailing, that the strenuous efforts of many individuals imply a force which is thrusting them on.”

Here, then, is a clear and plain rejection of what I have called “negative barbarism”. Even more plain and clear is Morris’s choice of words when he touches upon the same theme in *News from Nowhere*. There again, in the course of the long conversation between old Hammond and his guest, the possibility of another solution is mentioned: the destruction of capitalism by its own decay “till it should at last reach a condition as rude as barbarism, but lacking both the hope and the pleasures of barbarism”. Hammond is categorical:

“Between them,” said I, quickly, “they destroyed commercialism?”

“Yes, yes, YES,” said he; “that is it. Nor could it have been destroyed otherwise, except, perhaps, by the whole of society gradually falling into lower depths, till it should at last reach a condition as rude as barbarism, but lacking both the hope and the pleasures of barbarism. Surely the sharper, shorter remedy was the happiest?”

“Most surely,” said I.

The rejection of decay, regarded as a pessimistic and defeatist solution, also indicates a more thorough assimilation of Marxism. It expresses Morris’s rejection of certain mechanistic interpretations and of that temptation to favour spontaneity, to which, as we have seen, he had not been deaf. Here again, self-criticism underlies it all. Henceforth, man’s rôle is, for him, indispensable, and he expresses this fact in 1888, in words that recall the “parable”:

“If the present state of society merely breaks up without a conscious effort at transformation, the end, the fall of Europe, may be long in coming, but when it does, it will be far more terrible, far more confused and full of suffering than the period of the fall of Rome.”

But the socialist rejection of decay was in no way inconsistent with the search for barbarian values. These two streams of Morris’s thought became inextricably mingled. It had nothing in common with the helpless nostalgia against which Karl Marx culminated in 1844, those “good-humoured enthusiasts, Teutomaniacs by upbringing and freethinkers by reflexion, [who] seek for our history of freedom beyond our history in the Teutonic primeval woods.” To these Marx retorted:

“... as one shouts into the wood, so one’s voice comes back in answer. Therefore peace to the Teutonic primeval woods. But war to German conditions, at all events!”

No one can accuse Morris of not having made war against the situation in England. But his exploration of the “Teutonic woods” was not purposeless either. First, he found there the origins and a deep sense of the popular aspirations which inspired the Middle Ages, and which he reflected in his
Engels before him had already reached a similar conclusion. Engels had also thought that the primitive communism of the barbarian gentes was full of lessons for the future:

"... the immense advantage of barbarian production, which was lost with the coming of civilization; to reconquer it, but on the basis of the gigantic control of nature now achieved by man and the free association now made possible, will be the task of the next generations", and Engels ended his work with a quotation from Morgan of which this is the last sentence:

"It will be a revival, in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes."

Morris speaks in just the same language when he refers to the spiral development of history and suggests that

"in the future that shall immediately follow on this present we may have to recur to ideas that today seem to belong to the past only that will not be really a retracing of our steps but rather a carrying on of progress from a point where we abandoned it a while ago".

I shall return to this fundamental idea when we study the dialectics of Morris's utopia.
CHAPTER TWO

The Necessity for Utopia

Although the socialist choice was for William Morris the necessary point of departure for a vision of future society, it could not, by itself, set in motion the machinery of utopian creativity. One can be a socialist or a communist without possessing any urge to explore the future, and it is known that Karl Marx was very circumspect in so doing. So it is necessary to seek the subjective motives and the objective reasons for Morris’s activity.

Two of these motives were of a general nature and would not, in themselves, have been decisive, but they contributed to the decision and I should be wrong to overlook them. They are his taste for happiness and his natural optimism.

Before Louis Aragon, William Morris might have exclaimed; “Happiness exists and I believe in it.” The whole work of him whom Yeats has dubbed “the happiest of the poets” is a constant hymn to joy, a call to battle for the development of mankind, and Morris proclaims that he shares this love of happiness with the human race:

“I want to be happy, and even sometimes, say generally, to be merry; and I find it difficult to believe that that is not the general desire.”

“. . . All men must of their very nature strive for happiness,” and every man comes into the world with that as his birthright. The greatest condemnation of bourgeois society is its total incapacity to ensure this. Such a society must be destroyed, and the original objective of the socialist revolution is to make men happy; if it loses sight of this aim, it opens the way to counter-revolution. The world to be built by the men of tomorrow will be “. . . a society of which no one need ask the question, ‘Why does it exist?’”

This belief in happiness, which nothing in the appearance of the contemporary world seems to justify, could only find untrammelled expression in the depicting of a society in which the material conditions for the de vivre existed. New from Nowhere is an act of faith in the possibility of being happy, and utopia gives Morris’s deepest aspiration its purest expression.

Is that to say that one must see this utopian dream as an escape or a compensation? Such an interpretation is attractive at first glance, and the majority of critics have not failed to accept it with complacency. There has been much stress laid upon Morris’s disappointment in love. In 1964, the release of the correspondence exchanged between Rossetti and Jane Morris strengthened this tendency, and somewhat mechanical use of the symbols and vocabulary of psychoanalysis gave it an air of learning. Reference has also been made to the artist’s professional unfulfilment, forced to cater for the luxurious needs of wealthy customers, when his dream was of popular art. There has been much
talk about his political disappointments and some, such as W. Scawen Blunt, have not hesitated to claim that they finally turned him away from socialism, which is patently absurd. It is certain that it was painful for Morris to meet for so long with the apathy of the working class, that he lost his illusions about a rapid collapse of capitalism and that he developed a serious sense of bitterness about the irreparable divisions which set the various factions of the socialist movement against each other. All that is true, and it gives us grounds to think that his utopian imagination was a great comfort to him. But I find it, at the very least, extreme to venture any further down that road. To speak of compensation, as though the whole of his life had been frustration, does not bear examination. When Morris wrote *News from Nowhere*, he was already a man whose name commanded respect and admiration, even from his political opponents, and he was already beginning to be regarded as a prophet of socialism: he was fully conscious of having made a considerable contribution to the spreading of revolutionary ideas. On the artistic level, his career was dazzling and the art of decoration was transformed by his influence. Even in the sphere of his private life, where he had received some very hard knocks, he had shown an extraordinary ability to sustain them. It appears that, after Rossetti's death, not the slightest upset troubled his married life, and towards Jane he was a husband characterised by delicacy and attentiveness. I must add that we have not the slightest knowledge as to whether he found effective compensation at the time of crisis; the curious destruction of certain correspondence leaves the question in the air. But there are secondary considerations. What one tends too easily to neglect, when striving to explain utopia as a need for compensation, is the dominant rôle of reason in Morris's thinking. The self-control shown in his letters at the height of his suffering is not to be explained by feeble cowardice nor by tactics. It is the fruit of critical thought about the relationship between the sexes, expressed in *News from Nowhere*, in terms of the deepest wisdom, by the rejection of all romantic mawkishness. The psychoanalytical explanation of utopia cannot be rejected, but it is only a fragment of explanation, and in Morris's case its interest is somewhat anecdotal. When, in the course of this present study, I have established the extent to which Morris's utopia wasrationally motivated by political reflection and built upon a scientific theory of society, I believe that it will be apparent that reliance upon this single explanation would display obsessional narrowness and would drive us to distort Morris's thinking. If certain notes struck in the utopia (for example, the dramatic intensity of the character of Ellen in *News from Nowhere*) have their roots in personal frustration, is it legitimate to bring to these a theoretical elaboration in which the part of sheer fantasy is much smaller than it is generally reckoned to be?

After all, how does he himself describe this love of happiness, so deeply rooted in Morris's heart and which was one of the bases of his temperament long before any crisis? Above all, he tells us, happiness is joy in work, the sweetness of leisure, which is itself very often some other form of activity. At no moment in his life was he ever denied this joy and this sweetness, and he needed no sublimation to carry them into his utopia.

The love of happiness was intimately bound up with his unshakeable confidence in the future, with the hope, as he wrote to Georgiana Burne-Jones in 1879, "that civilized people will grow weary of their worst follies and try to live..."
a less muddled and unreasonable life”. He, he asserts, will certainly discover one day that it is more honourable and more worthy to create than to destroy. He never heeded counsels of despair or ceased to believe in humanity’s march towards a better future, even if some found such a prophecy foolish. Those who are regarded as fools today shall be tomorrow’s sages. One can feel confidence in man because the thing that distinguishes him from animals is his sense of justice. No doubt he displays much stupidity and more ignorance, but all in all little malice. There would be no end to the list of expressions of optimism in William Morris, and they came from his pen until the end of his life. It is interesting to note that W. Seawen Blunt, who, pleading pro hoo, would have us believe that Morris, chagrined and disillusioned by his political disappointments, had repudiated socialism, wrote in his diary on 29 May 1896, a few months before the poet’s death:

But he is not a pessimist, and thinks mankind the ‘crown of things’, in spite of man’s destructive action and his modern craze for ugliness. His illness does not make him gloomy.

Morris was very conscious of the fundamental nature of his optimism, and he realised that it was this endowment of nature that had determined his political development. He defined himself by implicit contrast when he said of Rossetti:

“The truth is he cared for nothing but individual and personal matters, chiefly of course in relation to art and literature, but he would take abundant trouble to help any one person who was in distress of mind or body; but the evils of any mass of people he couldn’t bring his mind to bear upon. I suppose in short it needs a person of hopeful mind to take disinterested notice of politics, and Rossetti was certainly not hopeful”.

Morris assuredly was “a person of hopeful mind”. When his lively optimism found new reasons for hope with the discovery of historical materialism, it was not surprising that his confidence in the future should have chosen utopia as the natural outcome of that hope.

* * *

But optimism and a love of happiness would not have been enough to make Morris the unique utopist that he was. It also needed the gift he possessed in a supreme degree, that of vision. In this connection, much has been said about his Welsh ancestry. I mention it too, although, in the event, these facile generalisations are even less tempting since Morris only showed a very passing interest in Celtic legends. It seems somewhat pointless to delve here into the mysteries of race and heredity, and more profitable to examine the aspects of this extraordinary visionary power possessed by Morris.

One thing stands out when one studies biographies and correspondence: it is the importance given to dreams by Morris, his family and his friends. In a letter to Webb, Jane describes his dreams and presentiments. Burne-Jones also dreamed frequently, and when he met Jane they used to compare their
dreams. Morris was no less prone to describe his own. Once he dreamed he had to draw a sausage after he had already eaten it. Another time he saw a shooting star fall into the road and was afraid that it would cause an explosion. I shall refrain from all learned thoughts upon these phantasms, and simply note the fact that, for Morris and his circle, the dream was not a phenomenon to be disregarded and that it held in their lives a place that was natural and, perhaps, privileged. For Morris it was, even, the most intense form of vision, if one is to believe the opening of _A Dream of John Ball_: "Sometimes," he writes, "I am rewarded for fretting myself so much about present matters by a quite unasked-for pleasant dream. I mean when I am asleep . . . I see some beautiful and noble building new made, as it were for the occasion, as clearly as if I were awake; not vaguely or absurdly, as often happens in dreams, but with all the detail clear and reasonable."

And after describing other pictures thus seen in dreaming, he adds: "All this I have seen in the dreams of the night clearer than I can force myself to see them in dreams of the day." Just as, for a number of his predecessors, navigation and shipwreck provided the normal procedure for an introduction into utopia, Morris had recourse to dreams both in _John Ball_ and in _News from Nowhere_. But even more than a procedure for introduction, the dream is almost physiologically the natural form for his utopian aspirations. Is it not significant that, in the land of Nowhere, the Visitor, formerly obsessed by his dreams, finally "was in a dreamless sleep"? It is striking, moreover, that in each of these two books, the force of conviction is such that one does not have the slightest sensation of a contrived artifice: rational thought and dream are here welded with ardent sincerity, to the point that, in Morris's own final words, it is no longer a question of a dream, but of a vision. Particularly characteristic is the episode in the last chapter of _News from Nowhere_, where the dreamer returns to the reality of the nineteenth century through a nightmare of classic form, that of the menacing cloud: it is the dream within a dream, a device which Morris had already used in certain tales in _The Earthly Paradise_ (notably _The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon_). In the same way the evocation of John Ball by Morris coincides with the evocation of Morris by John Ball: their meeting has been a reciprocal dream. But the dramatic intensity is such that we are scarcely aware of it. Morris's feeling and sincerity have destroyed all barriers and all conventions. We are side by side with him inside the vision, and one is not surprised to find him writing to Bruce Glasier, on 7 October 1890, that he had been for several weeks at Kelmscott, "where Ellen vanished, you know".

This visionary gift had impressed his contemporaries. May Morris, in one of her introductions, repeated words written by Ruskin in 1869 about Keats and Morris: "So that you may obtain a more truthful idea of the nature of Greek religion and legend from the poems of Keats and the nearly as beautiful, and, in general grasp of subject, far more powerful, recent work of Morris, than from the frigid scholarship, however extensive. Not that the poet's impressions or rendering of things are wholly true, but their truth is vital, not formal." Morris's vision, in fact, is always "vital", and it is supremely so, when, escap-
ing from the very literary framework of the poems which Ruskin was praising, he projects into utopia his deepest aspirations and his most reasoned enthusiasm. "In comparison with Morris," said Stopford A. Brooke, "most of the other poets are blind." 31

Morris irritably comments upon this blindness in his contemporaries, and reproaches "civilization" with "its eyeless vulgarity". 32 "The suggestion of a hope I may, however, make, which is of course personal — which is that perhaps mankind will regain their eye-sight, which they have at present lost to a great extent ... whereas in times past the eyes were the great feeders of the fancy and imagination." 33

The pleasure in imagining the future came early to Morris, and we find traces of it in letters written as a young man. 34 But the intensity of the vision was not a constant phenomenon; that came only at privileged moments which he could recognise and relish: it was "that thin thread of insight and imagination which comes so seldom to us, and is such a joy when it comes". 35 Similarly, in September 1887, he wrote to Georgiana Burne-Jones: "I had three very good days at Kelmscott: once or twice I had that delightful quickening of perception by which everything gets emphasized and brightened ... Heaven in short. It comes not very commonly even in one's younger and brighter days, and does not quite leave one even in the times of combat ... " 36

But how was he to express what he saw? His correspondence reveals his gropings and uncertainties, but also the very penetrating consciousness of the special quality of his vision. Rossetti had recently urged upon him that there existed no other medium of expression than painting, and Morris had docilely listened. He soon appreciated his mistake, and renounced the art of the easel, which, moreover he detested. Nevertheless, this influence was lasting, and for many years he went on drawing from models. But he experienced a sense of impotence.

"It must be six years now since I made a habit of drawing and I never, if you can understand that, had the painter's memory which makes it easy to put down on paper what you think you see; nor indeed can I see any scene with a frame as it were round it, though in my own way I can realise things vividly enough to myself." 37

His way of seeing was quite different: it could not allow itself to be restricted to the limited and still space of the canvas; he needed the fantasy of decoration and the untrammelled imagination of poetry, of the romantic tale and of utopia.

Even when he was writing, Morris remained before all else visual. His daughter May relates, of the period when he was writing The Earthly Paradise: "Even while he was writing he saw the episodes as pictures and noted in his margins hints for the woodcuts that Burne-Jones and himself were to make for the beautifying of his poems." 38 Not only did writing need a visual backing with him, but his vision of things needed to be precise, whether it was a question of art or politics. 39 The revolutionary positions adopted by the Socialist League in 1885 only really began to satisfy him from the moment when the new order destined to replace the corrupt régime of the bourgeoisie had taken shape in the minds of the militants. The details of this new life, as they were sketched in, only inspired a limited confidence: "And now at last when the
corruption of society seems complete, there is arising a definite conception of a
new order, with its demands in some sort formulated. In the details of that I do
not myself feel any great confidence, but that they have taken so much form is
hopeful." That was characteristic. Morris needed to see. Just recall the
phrase which forms the leit-motiv of the first chapter of News from Nowhere: "If I
could but see a day of it; if I could but see it!" 41

This desire, this need to see the future, dated from the very first moments of
his awakening consciousness of social realities. In 1880, he concluded his lec-
ture on The Beauty of Life by exclaiming:

"... hope must be ever with us, and sometimes perhaps it will so quicken
our vision that it will outrun the slow lapse of time, and show us the vic-
torious days when millions of those who now sit in darkness will be
enlightened by an Art made by the people and for the people, a joy to the
maker and the user." 42

This impatience of vision sometimes wiped out the calm acceptance of the
present. We, he said, are "now living between the past and the future". 43 This
present is nothing but tangled undergrowth, through which the future shows,
first only as a faint gleam, 44 until it becomes, as Morris's ideas take on more
definite shape, the very light of life. 45 He was, in his critique and analysis of
contemporary events, as well as in his articles and his lectures, constantly on
the look-out for straws in the wind, which, he wrote, cannot fail to excite our
imagination and encourage it to shape the picture of the happy world of
tomorrow. 46

In Morris's utopia, this visionary imagination is a fervour mingled with in-
cessant anguish - that of always being apart from the vision. Long before News
from Nowhere, this dark thread is to be found in the weave of his poetic work.
Truly, in the youthful poems it is often nothing more than a somewhat
traditional melancholy, that which inspires the difficult passage from the
world of dreams to the pitiless world of fact. 47 Yet already, in The Earthly
Paradise, we can read quite a curious story, The Land East of the Sun and West of
the Moon, in which the hero, John, wanders desperately in an enchanted land
where the inhabitants do not see him, nor hear him, nor even feel his touch! 48
The atmosphere is already almost that of the last chapter of News from Nowhere.

We do not find a repetition of this extreme tension in A Dream of John Ball,
but the anguish is there again and again. Morris feels himself quite at home
with these fourteenth-century peasants, and yet he has the feeling of being an
intruder. 49 He guesses that John Ball has penetrated the secret of his identity
and knows that his presence is ephemeral. When Will Green speaks to him of
the morrow's expedition, the narrator expresses his agreement, but his eye
catches that of the old rebel priest, and the "half smile" of the latter fills his
heart with foreboding. 50 At the end of his long and dramatic conversation with
John Ball in the old chapel, he would still like to discuss many things and feels
oppressed by time: if he hesitates it will be too late. 51

This anxiety reaches its climax in News from Nowhere for a variety of reasons.
The anguish of being parted from the vision is inextricably linked with the feel-
ing of not being integrated into the new world. Throughout the narrative, the
visitor remains "the man from another planet", and this people from the days
to come remains for him "this strange people". The questions and answers
between one side and the other remain "puzzling." 52 When exploring the medieaval past with John Ball, Morris did not feel this sense of being historically lost in any way: it was a past he loved, that he had studied at length, in which all his culture was steeped and which was more familiar and more welcoming to him than was the Victorian age. But in this world of the twenty-second century, despite his own enthusiasm and confidence, an abrupt gap exists between his yearning for happiness and the achievement of happiness. Despite his hatred of "civilization", the new ways of feeling, of thinking and of living, which he has imagined for himself, which are the objective of his quest and of his struggle, disturb him mightily, and, lost in the historical perspective, he suddenly discovers that he is a Victorian in his habits and reactions. He clings to old Hammond, who knows the nineteenth century so well, for the young people, despite their kindliness, can only regard him with astonishment and curiosity. 53 Constrained, in order to communicate with his new companions, to cast off all his habits of thought and normal behaviour, he feels chilled by this new world, and only the presence of old Hammond provides the warmth he needs. 54 What is more, this uneasy feeling is reciprocated. After the long conversation between the old man and his visitor, Dick and Clara return in search of their guest, and the young woman (who, nevertheless, is the person in the narrative showing the most critical and rational attitude of mind) is suddenly overcome by the atmosphere: "Kinsman, I don’t like this: something or another troubles me, and I feel as if something untoward were going to happen. You have been talking of past miseries to the guest, and have been living in past unhappy times, and it is in the air all round us, and makes us feel as if we were longing for something that we cannot have." 55 Such a longing, in this world of happiness, could obviously only be suffering. Kindly and placid Dick himself is sometimes uneasy at the visitor’s utterances: "... I should have thought... that you had thrown a kind of evil charm over me. Now, you know," said he, suddenly, "that’s only a joke so you mustn’t take it to heart." -- ‘All right,’ said I; ‘I don’t.’ Yet I did feel somewhat uneasy at his words, after all. 56

Despite this uneasiness, which gradually lessens, Morris experiences deep joy at this vision of the new society, but the dread of the inevitable separation is mingled with the joy. It is inspired by Dick’s innocent pleasantry: "... I was half suspecting... that you would presently be vanishing away from us, and began to picture my kinsman sitting in the hall staring at nothing and finding that he had been talking a while past to nobody." 57 Later, during the journey to Runnymede, Dick and Clara amuse themselves by imagining their hosts (Ellen and her father) and themselves as characters in a fairy tale, and Dick says to the visitor: "... You had better consider that you have got the cap of darkness, and are seeing everything, yourself invisible." -- That touched me on my weak side of not feeling sure of my position in this beautiful new country. 58 But he has no need of these unintentional hints to feel the burning question in the depths of his heart. He cannot go to sleep without wondering where he will wake up next day. 59 Finding Ellen makes this idea the more distressing. The girl, like John Ball before her, has guessed his secret; she thinks that he will not stay, and he is overwhelmed when she speaks of it in scarcely veiled terms. 60 From that moment he cannot leave her without wondering whether he will see her again. 61 At times this obsession takes
another form. At the end of their wonderful journey up the Thames, Dick and Clara and their guest arrive at Kelmscott and are welcomed by a crowd of gay and ardent friends, gathered together for the hay-making; and suddenly Morris wonders: "There I stood in a dreamy mood, and rubbed my eyes as if I were not wholly awake, and half expected to see the gay-clad company of beautiful men and women change to two or three spindle-legged back-bowed men and haggard, hollow-eyed, ill-favoured women, who once wore down the soil of this land with their heavy hopeless feet, from day to day, and season to season, and year to year". And the final episode is one of the most full of pathos that Morris ever wrote. He arrives at the harvest feast in the church, but his companions have ceased to see him. In vain he tries to attract the eyes of Dick and Clara, he has become invisible to them.

"I turned to Ellen, and she did seem to recognise me for an instant, but her bright face turned sad directly, and she shook her head with a mournful look, and the next moment all consciousness of my presence had faded from her face."  

Flight, nightmare, and the sinister reawakening in Hammersmith ... This long anguish, inextricably mingled with the inspiring spectacle of future happiness, gives the vision heightened relief and a human warmth one finds nowhere else: most other utopias are intellectual exercises, learned geometry to be read with curiosity, but not productive of any emotion. Morris's originality and genius lie in his making the vision live for us because he has lived it himself.

* * *

A love of happiness, robust optimism, visionary gift, these then are Morris's subjective motivations for utopia. Would they, by themselves, have been decisive? To put the question and to attempt to answer it affirmatively is probably unrealistic: it would, once again, be to disregard wilfully the part of reason in the poet's actions. Few writers have had such distaste for purposeless creation, few among them have given so much thought to their intentions and fixed an aim to their writings. If he took to utopia, it was not simply an account of some predisposition or spontaneous urge, it was of deliberate purpose and because he judged it necessary. After all, he explained it at length over fifteen years of life as a militant, in his articles, his letters, his lectures, even in his utopian writings, which become incomprehensible if one tries to detach them from his political activity, as most critics do. Not only are they not detachable from it, they are an integral part of it.

Is A Dream of John Ball to be regarded as nothing more than a mediaeval illumination? In an article published in 1933, Owen Carroll relates that in 1894 he suggested that Morris make a play of it. The poet replied: "I am not of the timber from which play-wrights are hewn. Why not have a try at it yourself? ... When I wrote my little book, I did it with the intention of bringing in the Socialist dialogues at the end rather than dealing with the literary and dramatic side of the story".

As for News from Nowhere a "jeu d'esprit - a fancy picture, or idyll, or romance", according to Glasier, "romantic pastorale" according to
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Mackail, "holiday republic," according to Monsieur Victor Dupont (and that is but a brief sampling). What does Morris himself think? In an incompletely dated letter, which must, in Philip Henderson's opinion, have been written on 22 December 1890, Morris, declining journalistic requests from Hyndman, gives as his reason that he has too much work on hand, "including two works more or less propagandist; to wit my News from Nowhere and the book that I have been working at with Bax which I am going at last to tackle". In all probability he was referring to the book publication of the novel and to the preparation of Socialism, its Growth and Outcome. Is it not noteworthy that he puts his utopian tale and his theoretical handbook into the same category? One other pointer is not without interest. He, who in general was little concerned over the success of his literary productions, in February 1890 (when the serial production had barely begun a month earlier) was preparing a cheap book edition: "I shall print the News from Nowhere in a book for 1/- or perhaps 6d." In October, a few days after Commonsweal had completed the serialisation, a letter to Bruce Glasier shows him possessed of the same idea. "I shall now presently begin to touch up News from Nowhere for its book form, and will publish it for 1s. It has amused me very much writing it; but you may depend upon it, it won't sell. This of course is my own fault - or my own misfortune." We are sufficiently used to Morris's understatements to understand what he means by, "It has amused me very much." This concern with its reaching a wide public is significant. He seems delighted to announce to Glasier the appearance of an American edition. He authorised the German translation by "someone recommended by the party" and urged Andreas Scheu to undertake that of A Dream of John Ball. Morris's letters never at any time show such concern over the circulation of his books and there seems little doubt that this interest was inspired by the propagandist character which he attributed to his utopian tales. News from Nowhere was, clearly, very close to his heart and he did not hide his pleasure when Scawen Blunt told him that both he and his wife had read it. Some piquancy is added to Scawen Blunt's record of the fact by his relating, two pages further on, that Morris read several of his poems with a very ill grace "as if he were throwing a bone to a dog". It was certainly with more conviction and with deliberately propagandist and educative purpose that he read out fragments from his story at the Sunday socialist meetings at Hammersmith.

William Morris expressly declares that he considered News from Nowhere as a political act, in the course of the narrative itself, in words loaded with significance. Let us turn to the strange episode following the visitor's conversation with old Hammond at the British Museum. The atmosphere is tense. Clara feels the sadness and horror of centuries of human unhappiness hanging in the air. Dick tries to joke and declares that he had wondered whether their guest had "vanished into another world" and whether he would find his great-grandfather talking to an empty chair. But the old man chuckled and said:

"Don't be afraid, Dick. In any case, I have not been talking to thin air; nor, indeed, to this new friend of ours only. Who knows but I may not have been talking to many people? For perhaps our guest may some day go back to the people he has come from, and may take a message from us
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which may bear fruit for them, and consequently for us." (My italics - P.M.)

So the book carries a message, and a message which is not purely educational. It clearly appears that in Morris's mind utopia serves to move people to act, and, no less clearly, that he finally rejects fatalism and spontaneity. He believes with Marx that, although the course of history is irreversible, men must make their own history. But there is more: in these lines heavy with significance, Morris shows us that, while the future is determined by the actions of men in the present, the vision of the future, in its turn, determines the actions of the men of today.

I note briefly here (because there is material for a long study which would go beyond the framework I have set) that News from Nowhere was understood as a political message by Morris's contemporaries. The very anti-socialist Mackail, who himself refused to see anything more in it than a "romantic pastorale" shocking in its "slightness and fantasy", is obliged to record that no other book of the poet's did more to spread his reputation as a socialist. The much fuller evidence of Edward Carpenter moves in the same direction and expresses great enthusiasm. G.D.H. Cole many times declared that reading News from Nowhere converted him to socialism. But it would be wrong to think that Morris's influence was felt only in intellectual circles. It reached an appreciable fraction of the working class. Bruce Glasier describes the warm welcome which the poet experienced in Glasgow and recounts that a working man told him that "I no longer doubt the possibility of an earthly paradise". Morris's writings were successfully used in people's movements in Ireland, and in England itself it would be impossible to exaggerate the decisive rôle of William Morris in the formation of a militant like Tom Mann.

What reasons led Morris to choose utopia as a means of expression and propaganda? They are many, ranging from the most general considerations to the most exact political interests.

Obviously it is the first of these that we shall find at the beginning of his political life, and they are very varied.

"For as life can have no pleasure without memory," he wrote in 1880 or 1881, "so it can have no honour and no use without foresight." It is a matter of dignity, which is also a necessity of our daily life. Only the glow of the peace of days to come can help us endure the tumult and difficulties of our existence and this need cannot but grow as the corruption and decadence of a civilisation strengthen the desire for a better life: hope then plumbs the future. Certainly, progress has been made, the working class is emerging from its long apathy, it is succeeding through demands and struggle to improve its existence, but all these promises would become illusions and lies if we did not have a high ideal before us. It is this very progress which must stimulate and develop man's aspirations. And, he says later, should this ideal not normally take shape in our minds from the moment we decide to believe in the regeneration of the world? Is that not a logical consequence?
Nonetheless, despite the meagre progress recorded, the lot of the working class is wretched; its poverty is so deep and brutalising "... that they are not and cannot be fully conscious of the extent of the loss which they and the whole world suffer as a consequence, since they cannot see and feel the better life that they have not lived." So it is essential to set before it an ideal which will breed and stimulate discontent, and become the "incarnation" of it. Yet it must be remembered," insists Morris in 1896, "that civilization has reduced the workman to such a skinny and pitiful existence, that he scarcely knows how to frame a desire for any life much better than that which he now endures perforce. It is the province of art to set the true ideal of a full and reasonable life before him." In this way dream and visionary imagination take on political functions. Such a conception of art had long possessed Morris's mind. As early as 1881, perhaps in less concise terms, but nevertheless foreshadowing all his later work, he wrote:

"For I suppose the best art to be the pictured representation of men's imaginings ... stories that tell of men's aspirations for more than the material life can give them, their struggles for the future welfare of their race, their unselfish love, their unrequited service: things like this are the subjects for the best art; in such subjects there is hope surely, yet the aspect of them is likely to be sorrowful enough: defeat the seed of victory, and death the seed of life, will be shown on the face of most of them." 95

Such a thought contains in germ A Dream of John Ball, while the declaration of 1896 justifies and explains a posteriori the utopia of News from Nowhere.

So the vision of utopia is necessary for the working class to become conscious of its lot. Equally, or even more, it is a mobilising influence. "The Socialism which we can foresee," writes Morris in the conclusion of Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, "and which promises to us the elevation of mankind to a level of intelligent happiness and pleasurable energy unattained as yet, is to us enough as an ideal for our aspirations and as an incentive to our action." 46 If men would "... try to think of the life you might live and would naturally live if you were not forced into misery by your masters, ... then I do not think you can help combining together to tell the world that you must be free and happy: and then all will soon be won". 95 It is the vision of this better life that alone can give to the struggle the taste of hope without which courage falters: "Go back and be the happier for having seen us," Ellen seems to say with her last look to the visitor, "for having added a little hope to your struggle." 96

"Do not let us fix our standard of endeavour by the misery which has been but rather by the happiness that might be." 97 "I think it of great importance to put the highest ideal before them, so as to encourage them to the utmost." 98

More: "... it is essential that the ideal of the new society should be always kept before the eyes of the working classes, lest the continuity of the demands of the people should be broken, or lest they should be misdirected". 99 When Morris expressed that opinion, at that moment (1893), he was clearly thinking of Fabian opportunism and anarchist phraseology. Finally, "We socialists are often reproached with giving no details of the state of things which would follow on the destruction of that system of waste and war which is sometimes dignified with the lying title of the harmonious combination of capital and labour. Many worthy people say: 'We admit that the present system has
produced unsatisfactory results, but at least it is a system..." 100 So we must
be able to show these people that another solution does exist, and that it is to
be preferred. Not for nothing does John Drinkwater describe William Morris
as a "practical utopian". 101

Things are not, in truth, all that simple. While Morris sees in the contrast
provided by utopia a means of making the workers conscious of their misery, it
is essential at the same time that material need should drive them to struggle.
The future depends upon them, but they can only imagine the beauty of this
future from the moment they begin to move. Otherwise, the most enthusiastic
prophecies are nothing but abstract propositions to them. 102 So our poet does
not in any way get lost in the mists of moralising idealism nor for a moment
deny the decisive rôle, in the last analysis, of economic reality.

So Morris had to face up to a difficult problem: that of making a dialectical
unity between didactic utopism and militant action. He had founded the
Socialist League as a reaction against the political opportunism of Hyndman;
within the League, he fought against the parliamentarianism of the Aveling
group, and, outside it, against the socialism without perspective of the
Fabians. He felt an impelling need to lay stress upon the necessity of never
losing sight of the goal to be achieved, and he tended to make this the central
theme of his written and spoken propaganda. But at the same time, with
tireless devotion, he took on the dreary chores of day-to-day activity, and was
careful not to underrate them. In this same year of 1886, in a lecture justly
called "The End and the Means", he posed the problem and indicated the solution:

"It is good, however much we may plume ourselves on our practicality,
that is, I suppose, on our setting out towards an end which we are
likely to attain, to set before us the actual end at which we aim. It is true
that it is the custom of very practical people to taunt those whose end is or
seems to be a long way off with being idealists; nevertheless I venture to
think that without these idealists practical people would be in a much
worse plight than they now are; they would have but a dull history of the
past, a poor life in the present, and no hope for the future; on the other
hand the idealists in their turn would make a great mistake if they were,
in their vision of better things, to despise the 'practical people', even the
narrowest of them. Indeed so much of the necessary work of progress is
so dull and discouraging that it requires people of somewhat blunted
sensibilities to carry it out, and even perhaps people shortsighted to the
verge of blindness. Yet again it is not a good thing to be blind or blunt;
and moreover there are doubtless some people who are sensitive enough,
apt to be discouraged by the roughness, incompleteness and dullness of
their fellows who are not necessarily far-sighted or steady as to the end to
be reached through all this weary struggle: if any of these can be shown
the glorious end and made to feel it in their hearts, will it not transfigure
for them that dullness and weariness aforesaid, change its relative
proportions, at least make it seem small and easy to hear? Nay enduring
steadiness of purpose is surely impossible without some high ideal to aim
at, nor will a wise man consent to take pains and trouble, to sacrifice his
leisure or his pleasure unless he can see and feel that he has set before
him something worthy of all that sacrifice." 103
Unfortunately, this picture only appears to maintain a balance between militant action day by day and propaganda through utopia. While Morris demonstrates in convincing words that the latter can only enrich the former, he is content to restore the balance by inviting the "idealists" not to despise those who perform the lowly tasks of the struggle and to give them the means of finding joy in their sacrifice. At this time he did not feel the need to show as well that the lessons drawn from militant activity are essential to the fabrication of a vision of the future. He was, in fact, then entering the acute stage of his anti-parliamentarian period, and the tendency showing in this 1886 lecture was not slow to harden. The tone of his articles in *Commonweal* became more violent. In 1888, the practicality of some socialists became unbearable to him. He refrained from accusing them of dishonesty: "I do not mean to say that those onesided Socialists are generally acting disingenuously, or merely trying to smooth down a hostile audience. I believe, on the contrary, that they do not see except through the murky smoked glass of the present condition of life amongst us; and it seems somewhat strange, not that they should have no vision of the future, but that they should not be ready to admit that it is their own defect that they have not." 104

But this time he went too far. In the next week, letters flooded into the *Commonweal* office protesting against his excess. A particularly interesting letter is that of the trade unionist T. Binning, to which I referred earlier, 105 which not only denounces, without any beating around the bush, the bourgeois roots of Morris's utopism, but links it with religious obscurantism:

"The workers have been told by those whose function it is to administer spiritual consolation, that their privations in this life will be compensated in heaven; and it seems to me to be pretty much the same thing to ask them to forego an advantage within their grasp for the promise of a beatific state of society in the indefinite future." 106

The attack was well directed in so far as its target was Morris's anti-parliamentarianism, but was not justified in respect of his utopism, which he never ceased to regard as an essential element in mobilising the masses. It is highly probable that for several months this discussion perturbed the council of the League, because in June *Commonweal* published a declaration, signed by the majority of its members, a better balanced declaration, obviously drawn up by Morris, but which shows the predominance of his viewpoint:

"As to the means for the attainment of the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production, and through that to the equality of condition for all persons, the League believes that the first and most indispensable of such means is the putting before the people its aims, ultimate and immediate, plainly and honestly, and has always acted on that belief; in the confidence that however strange these aims may be to the greater number of persons, the time will come when circumstances will force the workers to accept them as their own, and that it is no waste of energy meantime to familiarise them with these aims and thereby to quicken their desires and give something for their intelligence to seize hold of, and for their hope to feed on. The education of the vague discontent which (happily) is now so prevalent among the workers into a
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definite aim, is the chief business of the Socialist League; nor can this
work ever be dispensed with even on the very eve of the first and obvious
steps towards revolution.”107

This declaration is very significant. It implicitly defines the position
of withdrawal adopted by the socialist movement after the set-back
of “Bloody Sunday”; it supports the idea dear to Morris that the main
activity of the movement must be educative, aimed at “making socialists”,
and it justifies his didactic and mobilising utopism. The last sentence
of this passage demands our notice. When we reread the chapter in
News from Nowhere in which old Hammond relates the vicissitudes
of the “change”, we note that in the middle of the revolutionary crisis,
when reaction at bay is hoping for and expecting a provocative mani-
festo to provide the pretext for armed suppression, the socialist
press is content to publish “educational articles” which “came upon
the public with a kind of May-Day freshness” 108

The discussion which filled the columns of Commonweal and went on in the
council of the League bore fruit, nonetheless. Morris was distinctly more
moderate in his lecture on equality in September:

“It is usual when a Socialist is addressing an audience of those who wish
to know what his socialism means, to touch lightly on the aim that Social-
ism has in view and to dwell chiefly on the means by which that aim is to
be reached. The speaker assumes (usually I am glad to think within
reason) that his audience are sufficiently with him to sympathize with his
wish to better the present condition of affairs, and are eager to know
what process he proposes to them as the means for the bettering of the
life of the great mass of the population; it is natural for people to say to an
earnest reformer, tell us what it is that you wish to have done at once and
then we will look at the matter; and all the more natural perhaps when
the aim of the speaker is far-reaching and all inclusive, when in fact he is
preaching a change in the basis of society and not a mere palliation of its
worst evils: because people say, and reasonably, we cannot be expected
to change that basis suddenly, to go to sleep on Saturday night in our
present condition and wake up on Monday morning with the revolution
accomplished and everything going smoothly with a contented popula-
tion round about us. There must be a long period of half-formed aspira-
tions, abortive schemes, doubtful experiments and half and half measur-
es, interspersed with disappointment, reaction, and apathy before we get
anywhere near the beginning of the obvious and dramatic change which
people know as revolution, and it is a matter of course that people should
ask the would-be revolutionists what their first step is to be, and that
Socialist lecturers generally spend a great part of their lecturing time in
showing what the first step may be and hold keen argument about it with
their audiences.

You cannot however fail to agree with me when I say that not even the
first step can be taken until the advocates of a complete change have
managed to persuade a sufficient number of people that it is necessary,
and should be a change of a certain kind.”109
The moderation he imposed upon himself did not, it is plain, in any way diminish his faith in the need for utopia, and, in the following year, a few months before the publication of the first instalments of *News from Nowhere*, he declared in a lecture, the text of which is in Amsterdam, that socialists should get together from time to time to discuss their ideal. To come sometimes from out of the hedge of party formulas and show each other our real desires and hopes ought to be something of a safeguard against the danger of pedantry which besets the intellectual side of the Socialist movement and the danger of machine politics which besets its practical and work-a-day side.\(^{110}\)

The constant concern to link theory intimately with practice led William Morris to be even more explicit over the purpose of his utopia. While, in fact, it is intended to rouse the reader and move him to participate in the action which is to lead to the establishment of the wonderful new society of the future, it is also intended to give him the taste for undertaking theoretical study.\(^ {111}\) This guessing, these hopes, or if you will, these dreams for the future, make many a man a Socialist whom sober reason deduced from science and political economy and the selection of the fittest would not move at all. They put a man in a fit frame of mind to study the reasons for his hope; give him courage to wade through studies, which, as the Arab king said of arithmetic, would otherwise be too dull for the mind of a man to think of.\(^ {112}\)

But this is not the end of Morris's concern for “teaching them as it were by the future and forming the habits of social life without which any scheme of Socialism is but the mill-wheel without the motive power... let us begin to work against the counter-revolution, by being sure that we who call ourselves Socialists understand what we are aiming at, and should feel at home in our new country when we get there - we and all that we lead into the new country.”\(^ {113}\)

So, for Morris, utopia constituted a deliberate choice dictated by many essentially practical and objective reasons. It was not an intellectual or fantasising game. Nor was it even in any way what Raymond Ruyer calls, in a definition far too general to be applied to Morris's utopia, a “mental exercise upon lateral possibilities.”\(^ {114}\) It was the responsible act of a political leader who happened also to be a great poet. It did not depict a possibility, but a certainty, and it has the fervour of an act of faith.

Such an act of faith was not without daring at the end of last century. The existence, in our twentieth century, of a growing number of socialist states will continue to arouse enthusiasm in some and hostility in others. But they are a real fact, which no one any longer regards with stupefaction or incredulity. It was not in any way so during William Morris's lifetime. The experience of the Paris Commune had been too brief for its achievements to have been any more than outlines, and their meaning and extent escaped the great mass of people. Its tragic end tended to give it the appearance of a hopeless endeavour, naturally doomed to failure. Socialist doctrines were many and contradictory, and many of them totally lacked scientific consistency. The phraseology of anarchism encouraged confusion and bestowed upon revolutionaries the romantic and horrifying features of desperate conspirators, whilst Fabian opportunism was deliberately hostile to all idea of revolution.

Morris was addressing himself to audiences who had to be brought to admit
that the future institutions of socialism were anything other than "fantastic and impossible schemes." One recalls the altercation in the course of which the Rev. J. Page Hopps declared to the poet:

"That's an impossible dream of yours, Mr. Morris, such a society would need God Almighty himself to manage it."

Impossible, that is the word that cropped up unfailingly and was the major argument of all opposition: the majority of socialists, theoretically poorly educated and not then being able to point to the evidence of history, found it very difficult to meet. In a novel published in 1912, *Marriage*, H. G. Wells describes this state of mind in so typical a fashion that I feel impelled to refer to it. In this book we see a young scholar, who has become a company director, arguing with his technical assistant, a self-educated socialist, bitter and aggressive, and he asks him:

"Tell me how to organise things better."
"Much you'd care, they'll organise themselves. Then you'll see."
"Then what's going to happen?"
"Overthrow. And social democracy."
"How is that going to work?"

David had been cornered by that before. "I don't care if it doesn't work," he snarled, "so long as we smash this."

Such were the men whom William Morris was addressing. If David had read *News from Nowhere*, perhaps his reply would have been different. In writing his book, Morris wanted to give these men of good will the chance of being something other than sour, to offer them a reason for living and fighting and, above all, to force upon them the conviction that not only was victory possible, but that its morrows would be triumphant: "We have proved it true!" exclaims Ellen.

In 1919, the American journalist Lincoln Steffens went to Russia with William C. Bullitt, then a young official of the State Department and special envoy of President Wilson. On his return, he uttered these words, which have become famous: "I have seen the future, and it works!"

In order to prove to his readers that a socialist society could "work", William Morris had no other recourse than utopia.
CHAPTER THREE

Socialism – The Two Stages

From 1883, after his impassioned reading of Capital, William Morris's choice was final.

"This present society, or age of shoddy," he wrote to William Allingham, "is doomed to fall; nor can I see anything ahead of it as an organization save Socialism."¹

Certainly, the solution of a return to barbarism continued to cast an intermittent spell over his mind, even beyond its dialectical absorption into the "parable" of 1884. Also, in these first months of enthusiasm, he wanted to avoid committing himself to unduly emphatic declarations, as for example in writing to C. E. Maurice: "Also of course I do not believe in the world being saved by any system, – I only assert the necessity of attacking systems grown corrupt, and no longer leading anywhither."² But that is nothing but a stylistic rider intended to coax a possible sympathiser whom Morris was trying in vain to attract into the Democratic Federation, and it is possibly the only reservation of this kind to be found anywhere in his writings. It was almost with a note of defiance that in October of the same year 1883, when asked by Charles Rowley to take part in lecturing at Ancoats, he warned him that he was "an open declared Socialist, or, to be more specific, Collectivist", and that any lecture he delivered would reflect his opinions.³ Right up to his death in 1896 William Morris was to reiterate this declaration of faith under all circumstances.

But what, to him, was socialism? Once again, and it will not be the last time, it is necessary to reject firmly the opinions of numberless commentators and critics who wish to find nothing but sentimental and poetic dreaming in his utopia. But he cannot be accused of having veiled his thoughts: few writers have been so explicit, so direct, so inimical to any concealment or, I may add, so materialistic in their beliefs. The four letters written in 1888 to Rev. George Bainton constitute an essential document in this respect. They were composed with care, show sustained thought, and every word is weighed. Right at the beginning of the first letter, a key phrase stands out, a deliberately concise phrase, of which the whole argument will be the logical development: "The foundation of socialism is economical".⁴ How many more times shall we see this idea, sometimes expressed calmly, sometimes shouted indignantly! With what disdain, for example, does he trounce those who endeavour to put the question of the future of art and culture before the "knife-and-fork" question: such a one, he declares "does not understand what art means".⁵

There is not (and why should this judgment be regarded as pejorative?)
anything strictly original in the definition formulated by Morris of the production relationships in a collectivist society. It conforms to the strictest Marxist orthodoxy, without addition or omission. The first measure to be taken by the socialists will be "the abolition of the private ownership in the means of production" and the taking over, "for the whole people, duly organized, of possession and control of all the means of production and exchange". Such was the programme of the Socialist League, formulated in its Manifesto of 1885:

"... the land, the capital, the machinery, factories, workshops, stores, means of transit, mines, banking, all means of production and distribution of wealth, must be declared and treated as the common property of all." 

Note again, in passing, that the simple nationalisation of the land, considered as the panacea by Henry George, has long since ceased to satisfy Morris; his list is practically exhaustive and includes all aspects of capitalist property. Brief or detailed lists are to be found in the majority of his political writings. The one in the first letter to Rev. George Bainton, already mentioned, has the interest of being accompanied by a particularly important stipulation: "... the land, factories, machinery, means of transit, and whatever wealth of any sort is used for the reproduction of wealth, and which therefore is necessary to labour and can only be used by it, must be owned by the nation only, to be used by the workers ... according to their capacity", which defines the nature of the community plainly and distinctly. Morris insists, in a note appended to his letter, upon the distinction to be made between ownership and use, a distinction which was not new in his mind and had already been sketched out in a lecture in 1884.

This fundamental imperative for any socialist revolution, this radical transformation in the basis of society, is continually reiterated by William Morris, and it would be wearisome to draw up here a long catalogue of quotations, all similar in spirit and even in form. It is extremely significant that Morris considers the collectivisation of the means of production and exchange as a minimum programme. It is, he says, "the least that the party can accept as terms of peace with the capitalists"; and, he remarks aggressively of this primary revolutionary measure,

"all minor reforms of civilization which have been thought of or would be possible to think of would be included in it".

His declaration of principle is the more peremptory in that its point is turned against reformist ideologies.

"I must add, further," he declares in a lecture, that no programme is worthy the acceptance of the working classes that stops short of the abolition of private property in the means of production. Any other programme is misleading and dishonest.

It is necessary to keep this fundamental theoretical position in mind in order to appreciate fully Morris’s poetical outpourings and to feel their quality and intensity. It is a very conscious utopia which foresees the days when "all mine and all thine shall be ours, and no more shall any man crave for riches that serve
for nothing but to fetter a friend for a slave". Then there will be no more of the "rights of property", which means clenching the fist on a piece of gold, and crying out to the neighbours, You shan’t have this". In that line declares John Ball,

"... shall no man mow the deep grass for another, while his own king lack cow-meat; and he that soweth shall reap, and the reaper shall eat in fellowship the harvest that in fellowship he hath won".

* * *

The evident corollary of the collective appropriation of the means of production and exchange is, in fact, the establishment of a classless society. Then again, Morris faithfully follows the teaching of Marx and Engels. It may be admitted that his line wavers slightly in the early moments of his political thinking, and one can find traces of idealism in it. The revolution, as he then conceives it, is one

"which, by abolishing men’s power of making a profit from their fellows’ labour will abolish all classes: not the mere arbitrary distinction between lord and commoner, gentleman and worker, but the real and dreadful distinction between rich man and poor, between the cultivated and the ignorant, between the refined and the brutal, which now exists and is the foundation of plutocratic society."

This formulation is not without interest: in a very striking way it marks the transition from the influence of the Ruskin of The Stones of Venice to the Marx of Capital, and tries to reconcile in one sentence two conceptions which have radically different points of departure. I have no other reason for paying it any attention, because it represents only a very brief moment in Morris’s thinking. His writing immediately afterwards shows rigorous ideological firmness. In a lecture given in that same year of 1883, the terms he uses are quite free from any ambiguity: he observes in the working class

"a spirit of association founded on the antagonism which has produced all former changes in the condition of men, and which will one day abolish all classes and take definite and practical form."

Pernickety materialists may perhaps regret that Morris often substitutes for "classless society" the more vague and abstract term of "society of equality". It cannot be doubted that the frequent use of the words justice and equality carries the mark of idealistic hangovers, and it is well known how much those abstractions offended Marx. In any case one could not attribute any influence to Ruskin in this connection, given the repulsion he felt for egalitarian ideas, and perhaps one should regard this usage as reminiscent of Babeuf. Anyway, undue severity would be excessive; did not Engels himself write that

"the real content of the proletarian demand for equality is the demand for the abolition of classes."

Such criticism is the less well founded because while Morris does have
recourse to the abstract concept of equality, it always remains a synonym for "a new society in which classes shall have ceased to exist," and this latter formulation, precise and definite, is just as frequent. Even when he speaks of equality, the sense he gives to the word is the more clear because it is used uncompromisingly:

"I call myself a Communist, and have no wish to qualify that word by joining any other to it. The aim of Communism seems to me to be the complete equality of condition for all people; and anything in a Socialist direction which stops short of this is merely a compromise with the present condition of society, a halting-place on the road to the goal." 10

On the other hand, it is possible, at first glance, to find hesitations, a contradiction indeed, in Morris’s vision of the establishment of the classless society. In fact, in 1884 he wrote:

"the upper, middle, and lower classes shall have melted into one class, living contentedly a simple and happy life." 21

This formulation is worth pausing over for a moment. It shows without any doubt the confidence Morris still had in the possible regeneration of his own class within communist society, and this is an aspect we shall examine more closely when we study the transformation of man in Morris’s utopia.22 I must add (and the tense he uses makes this plain) that the picture he draws has its context in the second stage of the new society (a concept we shall tackle shortly) and not in the period immediately following the revolutionary crisis. These details are necessary, for the reader might be tempted to believe that Morris is implicitly denying the leading role of the working class in the process of abolishing social classes. But nothing is further from his thoughts. In a letter written a few months later to William Allingham, he writes that when the workers have realised that they form "the only organic part of society... they will abolish all other classes and become themselves the State." 23

One is struck by how closely Morris repeats the very words of the Manifesto of Marx and Engels:

"the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation." 24

Morris goes even further and sees in the obligation to work, which will be the law of the new world, the factor which will assimilate all society into the working class:

"I have already said that all must work therefore the workmen means the whole of society; there should be no society outside those who work to sustain society." 25

There will no longer, in fact, be any "non-producing class, the organized workers will be the whole community" 26. "They will be society," he repeats, "they will be the community," and there will be "no class outside them to contend with." 27 There will henceforth be one homogeneous class, conformed by its new conditions of existence; the drugs will have disappeared; there will no longer be any "criminal classes." 28
The class struggle, this long war which is the motive force of history, will one day end in peace, but "... that war must go on till the great change comes whose end is peace and not war", when all classes are abolished. 32 Morris addresses himself in particular to the young, and tries to make them understand the close link which exists between the class struggle and the classless society:

"It is most important that young Socialists should have this fact of the class-war always before them. It explains past history, and in the present gives us the only solid hope for the future. And it must be understood that it is only by the due working out of this class-war to its end, the abolition of classes, that Socialism can come about." 34

The vision of a classless society should provide a major stimulus to the class struggle. Utopia, as we saw in the last chapter, seeks to answer the difficult question of the time: "How will it work?", and so to give reasoned confidence to militants. In the event, it replies to a more definite and, at that time, no less current objection: will production be efficient or even possible without the experience of the present class of owners of industry? William Morris does not totally deny the validity of this objection, at least as far as the first steps are concerned, but he re-affirms his faith in the potentialities of the working class:

"If ... the wealth-owners were to disappear, production of wealth would at the worst be only hindered for awhile, and probably go on pretty much as it does now." 35

Just imagine, on the other hand, what would happen if it were the "so-called lower class" which were to disappear. Then the production of wealth would be totally halted

"until the wealth-owners had learned how to produce, until they had descended from their position, and taken the place of their former slaves". 36

Morris finds confirmation of this uselessness of the employing class in certain nineteenth-century experiments. The only merit Morris will allow to the co-operative movement and its "incomplete experiments" is that it has proved in advance that

"the existence of a privileged class is by no means necessary for the production of wealth". 37

The classless society is thus not only desirable but possible in practice. So it is necessary for the workers to assert immediately "their true position of being themselves society":

"they themselves can regulate labour, and by being absolute masters of their material, tools, and time can win for themselves all that it is possible to be won from nature without deduction or taxation paid to classes that have no purpose or reason for existence". 38

"The workman must learn to understand that he must have no master, no employer save himself – himself collectively, that is to say, the commonweal." 39
Such should be the aim of the class struggle, and this struggle is to be carried on with vigilance and perseverance until its final outcome. "Let us . . . take care," says Morris, "that our present struggle leaves behind it no class distinction, but brings about one condition of equality for all." Alongside this desire to see the final disappearance of all survivals from the past, Morris has a worry, which he touches upon several times, that of seeing inequality reappear in another form:

"But will there by any new class to take the place of the present proletariat when that has triumphed, as it must do, over the present privileged class? We cannot foresee the future, but we may fairly hope not: at least we cannot see any signs of such a new class forming. It is impossible to see how destruction of privilege can stop short of absolute equality of condition." 40

But it is a passing preoccupation. He refuses to believe in such an eventuality:

"I believe . . . that after that the class struggle, now thousands of years old, having come to an end, no new class will arise to dominate the workers". 41

Such a risk, however, would exist if the new society were not to pass beyond its first stage, that of State Socialism, establishing the new order by force, and remaining content with bringing the means of production into common ownership, while the resulting wealth remained private property: "it would lead us back again", he said, "into a new form of class society". 42 Such constraint, based upon a hierarchy of abilities, would, as it went on, keep such-and-such a useful producer in a state of inferiority compared with such-and-such another useful producer, and "you at once have your privileged classes again". 43 However, William Morris is convinced that such a situation can and must only be temporary and that the abundance attained will allow of passing to the second stage, that of complete communism, embracing distribution as well as production. At this stage, all danger of a recurrence of classes would be finally avoided. 44 But here we are coming on to new concepts which must be clarified and precisely defined.

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"He lived in no fool's paradise as to the future," writes May Morris, "and sometimes spoke to those about him with a patient and friendly kind of wonder of the men who believed in the immediate advent of the Social Revolution, settling on the morrow into a Socialist scheme of things full blown and in working order." 45

Such illusions were more widespread than we can easily imagine today, and the evidence of Bernard Shaw is interesting in this respect:

"I remember being asked satirically and publicly at that time how long it would take to get Socialism into working order if I had my way. I replied, with a spirited modesty, that a fortnight would be ample for the
purpose. When I add that I was frequently complimented on being one of the more reasonable Socialists, you will be able to appreciate the fervour of our conviction, and the extravagant levity of our practical ideas. 46

How many times did William Morris, using a phrase that was habitual with him, try to calm the naive impetuosity of militants, telling them that it would not all happen in a catastrophic way and that it was no use expecting "that some Monday morning the sun will rise on a communised world which was capitalistic on Saturday night"! 47 No, he would say to them "this complete Socialism, which is sometimes called Communism, cannot be realized all at once". 48 "... We Socialists never dream of building up by our own efforts in one generation a society altogether new." 49

Here we are touching upon one of the fundamental aspects of Morris's utopian thinking, perhaps even its essential aspect, the one which most clearly reveals its maturity and range. At a time when the English nineteenth-century socialists were, in general, divided between opportunism and anarchism, the first relying on a slow penetration of existing institutions or the installation of rigorous and finalised state socialism, while the others imagined the immediate and violent establishment of absolute egalitarianism, only William Morris, in the wake of Marx and Engels, was able to expound the very theory which was to open the historical perspective for the Marxist parties of the twentieth century, the theory of two stages. The law which will govern social relationships during the first phase is: "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his work", and in the subsequent and higher phase: "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs".

I find it impossible to believe, along with E. P. Thompson, that Morris was able, without knowing of the ideas expressed by Karl Marx in *The Critique of the Gotha Programme*, to reach them "in his intuitive way". 50 This assertion (which explains nothing) is, after all, only made in the course of a rapid allusion to Marx’s final paragraph on the second stage. Now, what is most original and remarkable in the famous passage of the *Critique*, is the part relating to the first stage and the analysis of what Marx calls "unequal right" 51 And it is exactly this analysis which we find several times over in Morris’s writings. Despite my sincere admiration for his genius and my refusal to see him as nothing but a dreamer, it is difficult for me to believe that he was capable of rising to this theoretical level on his own. On the other hand, it is obvious that, in all the socialist literature of the period, there is never any explicit reference, other than in Marx’s text, to the theory of two stages and even less to this "unequal right" which characterises the first stage. It was necessary to wait for Lenin and the Soviet revolution for the problem to be finally expounded with the vigour conferred by actuality. It is to be expected, then, that this rare anticipation on the part of Marx should have exerted a considerable influence upon the utopian imagination of William Morris. But here is where the mystery begins. We find the theory of two stages expressed in Morris’s writings from 1885, among the notes appended to the Manifesto of the Socialist League. Now, as I have said, *The Critique of the Gotha Programme*, written in 1875, could not appear, because of reservations on the part of the leaders of the German social democratic party, until 1891. The manuscript was in London among Engels's
papers, and I have indicated the importance of the contacts he had with Morris, contrary to traditional opinion, at the time of the split in the Social Democratic Federation and after the establishment of the Socialist League. Was it during the course of these direct contacts with Engels that Morris was introduced to the contents of the manuscript? Was it not through the intermediary of Bax, an intimate of Engels and a co-signatory of the Notes appended to the Manifesto of the League? At the present stage of research, there is no material evidence to settle the point. In my opinion, the rôle of Bax, while not negligible, does not appear to have been decisive. It is curious, in fact, that in his own later writings, despite his loquacity about the "morrows of the revolution", the theory of two stages is not mentioned and it is, on the other hand, interesting to note that Morris, in works written by himself alone, develops this theory, and even, more strikingly, repeats the idea of "unequal right".

After this brief summary which has enabled me to identify the probable inspiration, 93 we are better able to appreciate the particular characteristics of Morris’s thought. If, chronologically, the starting point of his thinking was the rediscovery of the "unequal right", it was a polemical preoccupation which led him to develop the idea of two stages and to formulate definitions which are curiously anticipatory of modern terminology. So I think it preferable to examine this latter aspect first, as the others will be that much better clarified. It was in 1887 that he gave his lecture, The Policy of Abstention. Morris was then in the acute stage of his anti-parliamentarian period, and he was concentrating his attacks upon what he considered to be parliamentary opportunism. The main enemy was the "parliamentarianism" of the Aveling group, within the League itself, but, beyond this unacceptable ideology he was also thinking of Hyndman’s "state socialism" and so, by reaction, he came to define his personal position.

"Now amongst Socialists there are some who think that the abolition of private property in the means of production only would bring about a stable condition of society which would carry out communism no further, that the product of labour working on raw material and aided by instruments which were common property, should not be common, but would be the prize of energy, industry, and talent, 'to each one according to his deeds'. Those who limit the revolution of Socialism to the abolition of private property merely in the means of production do contemplate a society in which production shall be in tutelage to the State; in which the centralized State would draw arbitrarily the line where public property ends and private property begins, would interfere with inheritance and with the accumulation of wealth, and in many ways would act as a master, and take the place of the old masters; acting with benevolent intention indeed, but with conscious artificiality and by means of the employment of obvious force which would be felt everywhere and would sometimes at least be evaded or even resisted, and so at last might even bring on a new revolution which might lead us backward for a while, or might carry us forward into a condition of true Communism according to the ripeness or unripeness of the State Socialist revolution; in short to some of us it seems as if this view of
Socialism simply indicates the crystallization of what can only be a transitional condition of society, and cannot in itself be stable: ... many of us Communists for our part are willing to admit that the communization of the means of production will inevitably lead to the communization of the products of labour also ... So you see there is hardly a question of issue on this point between the Socialists and the Communists ... The opinions as to the means are not quite conterminous with the two schools of so-called Socialists and Communists, but they are nearly so, and naturally, since the former are prepared to accept as a necessity a central all-powerful authoritative government, a reformed edition, one may say, of the State government at present existing; whereas the Communists, though they are not clear as to what will take the place of that in the meanwhile, are at least clear that when the habit of social life is established nothing of the kind of authoritative central government will be needed or endured."

Before commenting upon this passage, I think it helpful to compare it with another lecture of Morris's, given the year before, which completes and clarifies it. He describes in almost the same words the doctrinal differences between the two schools, one advocating an authoritarian state, the single owner of the means of production, the other foreseeing the creation of a federation of communities enjoying the fruits of their labour in common, and their aim would be

"satisfying the needs of each member, only exacting from each that he should do his best according to his capacity towards the production of the common wealth".

But this is Morris's conclusion:

"These two views of the future of society are sometimes opposed to each other as Socialism and Communism, but to my mind the latter is simply the necessary development of the former, which implies a transition period."

An initial remark is necessary. William Morris was the first, it seems to me, to use the words socialism and communism to denote on the one hand the stages of the new society and, on the other, two political doctrines: the first considering the first stage as an end in itself, the second only envisaging it as a step towards a higher stage. The use of these words by Marx and Engels at the time of the Manifesto was in a different context, and Engels felt obliged to explain, in his 1890 preface, why the adjective selected had been "communist" and not "socialist". "In 1847 Socialism was a middle-class movement, Communism a working-class movement." The two usages, that of Marx and Engels and the quite new one of Morris, have continued side by side up to our time, sometimes causing regrettable confusion. For Morris the distinction between socialism and communism was clear: in his mind, it was drawn, not relative to the past or the present, but relative to the future, which is why he himself preferred the appellation Communist. It is a characteristic stressed by Bernard Shaw in his reminiscences:

"Morris, when he had to define himself politically, called himself a
Communist. Very often, of course, in discussing Socialism he had to speak of himself as a Socialist; but he jibbed at it internally, and flatly rebelled against such faction labels as Social-democrat and the like. He knew that the essential term, etymologically, historically, and artistically, was Communist; and it was the only word he was comfortable with. 63

One can hold it against Shaw, whose theoretical thinking fell short of Morris's, that he did not understand the fundamental reason for this choice, but the evidence he provides is none the less of value. In this matter of terminology, moreover, the poet is as precise as it is possible to be, and he ranks himself among the socialists who go all the way, that is, the communists. 64

It is astounding to observe how most interpreters of Morris, generally through an ignorance of Marxism and often also because of their own political standpoint, have failed to discern in his utopia the constant distinction between the two successive stages, and have inevitably piled up false interpretations and misconstructions, the most frequent of these being, as we shall see, 65 the accusation of anarchism. But once again it would not be possible to accuse the poet of having sinned by silence or concealment. Declarations I have already quoted are eloquent. Others are no less so:

"Pure Communism," he wrote in 1885, "is the logical deduction from the imperfect form of the new society, which is generally differentiated from it as Socialism." 66

"All genuine Socialists admit that Communism is the necessary development of Socialism." 67

"... true and complete Socialism ... what I should call communism." 68

"Communism is in fact the completion of Socialism: when that ceases to be militant and becomes triumphant, it will be Communism." 69

One could multiply these quotations, and I have selected here only the briefest, but Morris develops the theme of the two stages over pages in lectures such as *True and False Society* 70 or *The Policy of Abstention.* 71

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The first stage is characterised by the obligation to work, imposed by constraint and by payment according to the abilities of the individual. But, these abilities being unequal, remuneration will be unequal and so socialism will be "the imperfect form of the new society". There will result an "unequal right", such as Marx had defined in *The Critique of the Gotha Programme* and such as Morris begins to define in Note C which accompanied the second edition of the Manifesto of the Socialist League. I extract a few typical lines:

"The end which true Socialism sets before us is the realization of true equality of condition ... according to the motto, from each one according to his capacity, to each one according to his needs; but it may be necessary, and probably will be, to go through a transitional period, during which currency will still be used as a medium of exchange, though of course it will not bear with it the impress of surplus value ... The com-
munity must compel a certain amount of labour from every person not in
nonage, or physically or mentally incapable ... This labour may be
arranged on the understanding that each person does an amount of work
calculated on the average that an ordinary healthy person can turn out in
a given time ... It is clear that under this system, owing to the difference
of capacity one man may have to work a longer and another a shorter
time than the estimated average, and thus the result would fall short of
the Communistic ideal of absolute equality ... Finally, we look forward
to the time when any definite exchange will have entirely ceased to
exist."68

We must note that this "Communistic ideal of absolute equality" from now
on takes on a very definite aspect and no longer has anything in common with
the vague and abstract formulations which Marx deplored. In Morris's mind it
is sufficiently clearly defined for it not to be possible for the first stage, however
inevitable it seems, to be anything for him other than a stage. At the very time
when this second edition of the Manifesto of the League was published, Morris
gave in Bloomsbury that lecture of which no trace remains anywhere, of which
I found the preparatory notes in Mr. Abramsky's collection. In it he refers
again to the differences in ability from one individual to another. "The
solution," he says, "excellent in its way, that each should have the results of
his own labour, leaves out cripples and those most needing assistance. It must
therefore be regarded as a very convenient but only rough statement of the ob-
ject of Socialism." Its only advantage lies in providing a sharp contrast with
the much greater inequality that obtains in the present form of society.69 But
absolute equality is impossible on this first phase:

"the old habit of rewarding excellence or special rare qualities with extra
money payment will go on for a while, and some men will possess more
wealth than others."68

A situation of this kind may even be prolonged at least to the end of the first
stage and perhaps slightly beyond.69 In short, we are only dealing with "the
incomplete first stages of a society of equality", or, more exactly, "a society
only tending to equality".69 It is, naturally, in the lecture delivered at the
culminating point of his anti-parliamentarianism, The Policy of Abstention, that
this "unequal right" seems most unjust to him and most difficult to tolerate for
long. Note, all the same, that his indignation here is directed, not against
the very existence of the first stage, which he regards as inevitable, but against
those socialists who would be satisfied with it as a final settlement:

"We see no reason for setting up a higher standard of livelihood for A
because he can turn out more work than B, while the needs of the two are
just the same: if society is to be of use to B, it must defend him against
the tyranny of nature; and if instead of defending him against nature it
turns round and helps her to punish poor B for not being born of the
same capacity of developing muscle as A, society is a traitor to B, and he
if he be a man of any spirit will rebel against it."69

His vehemence calmed down in subsequent years, but to the very end he
remained adamant about the temporary nature of this period during which
rights would remain unequal. The revolutionary struggle of modern times

"will end in realising a society wherein the means of production are com-
munised, and a relative equality of condition as compared with modern
capitalistic society will be attained. This and nothing less than this will
be the beginning of Socialism in the true sense of the word; but it cannot
stop at this point, but must have an immediate further development, and
one which we can conceive of as being directly deducible from it." 72

This first stage will be "... the emancipation of labour, which will be
brought about by the workers gaining possession of all the means of fructifica-
tion of labour; and who, even when that is gained, shall have pure Com-
munism ahead to strive for": 73

Would the obligation to work cease in the second stage, that of communist
society? Certainly not: "every one ... as a matter of course would have to pay
his toll of some obviously useful work"; 74 "all shall produce who are able to do
so". 75 What would be new is that not only the means of production, but the
products themselves, would be held in common and "all men's needs must be
satisfied according to the measure of the common wealth". 76

It is a curious fact that this idea had been present in a confused way in
Morris's thinking for a long time. In 1880, when he was still a member of the
Liberal party, during a lecture containing an ardent apologia on behalf of
Gladstone, he made the following remarks, which must have surprised his
listeners:

"I think of a country where every man has work enough to do, and no
one has too much: where no man has to work himself stupid in order to
be just able to live: where on the contrary it will be easy for a man to live
if he will but work, impossible if he will not (that is a necessary corollary):
where every man's work will be pleasant to himself and helpful to his
neighbour; and then his leisure from bread-earning (of which he ought to
have plenty) would be thoughtful and rational." 77

This vague dream was to take shape and become reasoned cogitation when
he discovered Marxism and became familiar with the theory of the two stages.
Once over the transition from the first stage in which everyone is remunerated
according to his work, he sees more and more clearly in his mind the outline of
communist society, the ideal and the aim to achieve, which, as Marx had
written, would blazon on its banners: "From each according to his abilities, to
each according to his needs." This formulation appears incessantly in various
forms in the course of his militant life, 78 and is the principle which governed
life in an England which had reached the second stage in the twenty-second
century in the utopian vision of News from Nowhere.
Notes to the Text

Introduction

1. Professor Norman Kelvin of New York City College is now undertaking the formidable task of collecting and publishing Morris's complete correspondence.
2. It would be less than just not to mention, among the valuable works devoted to Morris, the old study (1945), by an American, Margaret Grennan, of his mediaevalism, which was original and well documented.

Chapter I

2. MACKAIL, I, p. 10. At that time there were many Quaker families in Walthamstow (May MORRIS, II, p. 613).
5. MACKAIL, I, p. 10.
9. Ibid., p. 25.
10. Ibid.
12. MACKAIL, I, p. 31.
15. Ibid., p. 43.
16. Ibid., p. 47.
17. May MORRIS, I, p. 382.
18. MACKAIL, I, p. 62.
19. Ibid., p. 63.
20. "And the idea of a common organized effort by the whole group towards a higher life, which for long had been eagerly planned, gradually shifted from the form of a monastic to that of a social brotherhood" (MACKAIL, I, p. 62).
21. Ibid., p. 61.
22. "Our Monastery will come to nought, I'm afraid... Morris has become questionable in doctrinal points, and Ted is too Catholic to be ordained. He and Morris diverge more and more in views though not in friendship." (G.B.J. : Memorials of Burne-Jones, I, p. 109).
24. He wrote to his mother in November: "I remember speaking somewhat roughly to you when we had conversation last on this matter" (Letters, p. 16).

25. "I am certainly coming back, though I should not have done so if it had not been for my Mother; I don't think even if I get through Greats that I shall take my B.A., because they won't allow you not to sign the 39 articles unless you declare that you are "extra Ecclesiam Anglicanam" which I'm not, and don't intend to be, and I won't sign the 39 Articles" (Letters, p. 14). Note, in passing, Morris's aversion towards the Non-conformist churches, whose puritanism never had his sympathy.


27. (Letters, p. 15). Later, in 1883, in his autobiographical letter to Scheu, the idea of having been destined for the Church is presented as comically improbable: "I who had been originally intended for the Church!!!" (Ibid., p. 185).

28. Ibid., p. 16.

29. Letters, p. 21; MACKAIL, I., p. 161; see also Rosalie Glyn GRYLLS, Portrait of Rossetti, p. 85. May was baptised on 30 May 1862 at Bexleyheath.

30. In fact, he wrote to his wife on 26 November 1870: "Tell Emmie I shall have a Christmas present for her which I hope may tend in some degree towards counteracting a youth spent in - ah!" (Letters, p. 37).

31. "I almost expect to see Aunt Emma this week: she has come up to town on what I must irreverently call holy larks" (Letters, p. 170). "Wot larks" was one of the family sayings. Morris had taken it from Dickens's Great Expectations, one of his favourite books: it was a usual greeting when he wrote to his daughters.

32. "Sunday I must say was dullsome; for it rained hard all day; the others of them went to chapel in the morning, which treat I refused" (Letters, p. 74; see also pp. 65 and 104). Morris even refused to observe traditional festivals. May Morris wrote to Scheu on 25 December 1885: "We don't give presents at Xmas in our family as a rule, and yours was my only gift" (Scheu Correspondence, I.I.S.G., Amsterdam).

33. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 8-9.

34. May MORRIS, I., p. 397.


37. May MORRIS, I., pp. 442-3.

38. C.W., VII, p. XXXVI.


43. "I suppose you saw Bradlaugh's speech; it was very good; as indeed it might well be his position being so strong in fact" (Letters, p. 171). On Bradlaugh's struggles for free-thinking, cf. Annie BESANT: An Autobiography, pp. 253-76.

44. Letters, p. 200.

45. Ibid., p. 282. Cf.: "But while John Ball had been speaking to me I felt strangely, as though I had more things to say than the words I knew I could make clear; as if I wanted to get from other people a new set of words" (A Dream of John Ball, Nonesuch, p. 237). Louis Althusser wrote not long ago: "it is in relation to the concepts and terms available that every fresh theory, even a revolutionary one, should find the means of thinking and expressing its radical newness." ("Sur le travail théorique: Difficultés et ressources", La Pensée, no. 132, April 1967, p. 17).


47. Letters, p. 201.

48. On 6 May 1888, he was to write to Rev. George Bantoun: "As to the metaphysical
side of religion, or its mystical side, I must confess I felt no disposition to discuss them, because I find that such discussions inevitably become word-contests.”

(Letters, p. 290).

49. A Dream of John Ball, Nonesuch, pp. 212-3.

50. Introductory Note to Good King Wenceslas, by Dr. Neale, 1894, May MORRIS, I, pp. 295-6.

51. Feudal England, 1887, Signs, p. 73.

52. See Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 64-5, 82.


54. “In religion I am a pagan,” he confided one evening in November 1892 to Sydney C. Cockerell (C.W., XXII, p. XXX) and Mackail wrote to the latter on 3 March 1899: “Can you date any occasion (there were I think more than one) in which Morris said of himself: ‘In religion I am a pagan?’” (B.M. Add. Mss. 52 734 (22)).

55. Date given by Philip Henderson (Letters, p. 244, n. 1) and by R. C. H. Briggs (A Handlist of the Public Addresses of William Morris, p. 11).

56. May MORRIS, II, p. 221.


58. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 293-4.

59. “... a priori ideas of the relation of man to the universe or some imagined ruler of it...” (May MORRIS, II, p. 313).

60. “Workhouse Socialism”, Commonweal, 1st November 1890, p. 345/II.


62. For example: “‘Go in peace, and God and Allhallows keep thee’ said the hermit... ‘Well, well’, said Steelhead, ‘we will not contend about it, but I look to it to keep myself. And therewith he strode off into the night’” (The Sundering Flood, C.W., XXI, p. 189).


64. Bruce GLASIER, William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement, p. 171


66. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 294.

67. Ibid. p. 295.

68. A Dream of John Ball, Nonesuch, pp. 243-5.

69. May MORRIS, I, p. 80.

70. The Journals of T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, I, p. 322.

71. May MORRIS, I, p. 80.

72. Ibid. She even goes so far as saying that, for Morris, the supreme reason for living was his “reverence for the unsolvable mystery” (May MORRIS, II, p. 2).


75. News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 142.

76. Useful Work versus Useless Toil, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 622.

77. Justice and Socialism, 1885, see Appendix I, p. 579.

78. “He hated Wordsworth as far as any poet could hate the author of Intimations of Immortality; but this must be heavily discounted to allow for the overwhelming reaction against Fundamentalist Evangelicalism, which made it impossible for the vanguard to be just to any poet who was under the smallest suspicion of piety” (G. Bernard SHAW: Morris as I Knew Him; May MORRIS, II, p. XXXII). This hatred is similarly recalled by Cobden-Sanderson: “Morris was unmeasured in his abuse of Wordsworth.” (Journals of T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, I, p. 180). It is interesting to observe that this aversion was proof against the influence of Ruskin, whose piouness frequently led to copious quotations from Wordsworth.

79. May MORRIS, I, p. 79.

back in an open trap on Tuesday, and as I went through Roehampton lane the driver told me about the monastery there, and how he had heard the nun singing angelically out in the garden on Whitson Sunday night. So I stood up and looked over the fence, and lo, a lot of my holy dames, black and white just giving their boats to have a row on the lake there; for you must know that the grounds there are quite splendid. it must be a very rich house." (Letter, p. 172).

81. C.W., VIII, p. 15.
82. The Last Art, 1877, Nonesuch, p. 509.
83. The History of Pattern-Designing, 1882, C.W., XXII, p. 233.
84. Letters, p. 86.
85. Ibid., p. 91.
86. Ibid., p. 121. Morris's indignation sometimes showed itself more directly. W.R. Lethaby tells how, after visiting a 'restored' church, "he rushed to the window of the inn shaking his fist as the parson passed by." (Philip Webb and His Work, p. 15)
87. We find a similar anecdote in W. Scawen Blunt's memoirs. "I took him yesterday to see Shipley Church, a fine old Norman tower, injured with restoration. He was very indignant, swearing at the parsons as we walked up the nave: 'Better Pigs Damn their souls!'" (My Diarics, p. 229).
88. The Last Art, 1877, Nonesuch, pp. 497, 499.
89. The Art of Art, 1886, Nonesuch, p. 590.
90. Letters, p. 150.
92. The History of Civilization, 1885, Signs, p. 113.
93. "It is the consciousness of men which determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness." (Karl Marx, Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Preface, pp. 11-2).
94. The Art of the People, 1879, Nonesuch, pp. 534-5.
95. THOMPSON, p. 856.
96. Letters, p. 290.
97. May Morris, II, p. 301, suggests that the reference is to Rev. Father Joseph Rickaby of the Society of Jesus.
99. The History of Civilization, 1885, Signs, pp. 91, 95.
100. Gothic Architecture, 1889, Nonesuch, p. 488.
107. How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, Nonesuch, pp. 576, 578.
111. Notes from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 72.
112. Art under Pianocracy, 1883, JACKSON, p. 149.
113. "As for the Student I fear that the damned religion is at the bottom of their hanging back." (Letters, p. 203).
117. "Socialism, or Growth and Outcome," pp. 269, 224.
119. "In Short, 1885, Ibid., p. 172."
119. *Down of a New Epoch*, 1885, Sig. p. 179.
122. May MORRIS, II, p. 313.
123. *The Political Outlook*, 1886, B.M. Add. Mss. 45 333-4 (10). May Morris has omitted this passage from the extracts from this lecture published in her second volume.
125. *Notes from Necessity*, Nonesuch, p. 88.
127. "Notes on News", *ibid.*, 12 January 1889, p. 12/II.
128. "Notes on News", *ibid.*, 27 October 1888, p. 337/II.
130. Address at the Annual Supper of the Kelmscott Fellowship, March 1932. The typewritten text of this speech is in the Mattison Collection.
131. "The blatant Atheism of those who entered the movement from the free-thinking side tended effectually to prevent the more thoughtful working-man, who was usually attached to some religious body, from joining the Socialists, and Morris did not find it easy to keep meetings from heated discussion of the subject," (May MORRIS, II, p. 109).
133. On this point, more specially concerning Marx in England, see the excellent work by Henry COLLINS and Chimen ABRAMSKY. *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, pp. 110-1, 120-1.
134. "Religion is gone down the wind, and will no more cumber us unless we are open fools" (*Commonism i.e. Property*, 1892, May MORRIS, II, p. 347).
136. Engels wrote to Laura Lafargue on 5 February 1884: "Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant are furious at the new Socialist ‘rage’ in London which threatens to cut short their wittles, and so have opened an attack or two on T[essay] and A[veling]. Bradlaugh throws about the most mysterious hints about Morh’s having prepared assassination and arson and having been in secret league with Continental governments..." (Friedrich ENGELS, Paul and Laura LAFARGUE, *Correspondence*, Vol I, pp. 168-9). Tussy was the pet name of Eleanor Marx, the philosopher’s younger daughter and Aveling’s companion. Mohr was the name by which Karl Marx was known in his own family.
138. On 9 July 1884 he wrote to Andreas Scheu, who opposed Annie Besant in Edinburgh after opposing Bradlaugh in London: "I was glad to hear that you were knocing about the Freethinkers. What a game for Mrs. Besant to see you jump up in Edinburgh after having had the last of you in London: she must have thought it a sort of nightmare" (*Letters*, p. 201). On 26 November he chaffed William Allingham about those who influenced him, "You have got together a funny menagerie in George Wallace, Bradlaugh, and Harrison: of course the last two curse Socialism" (*ibid.*, p. 213).
139. *Commonism i.e. Property*, 1892, May MORRIS, II pp. 346 and 348. Cf. "Nowadays atheism itself is culpa levis, as compared with criticism of existing property relations" (Karl MARX: *Capital*, p. 13).
140. Interesting evidence from contemporaries stresses this absence of sectarianism. Years writes: "The attitude towards religion of almost everybody but Morris, who avoided the subject altogether, got upon my nerves" (*Autobiographies*, p. 183), H. V. Wiles relates in his book of the recollections entrusted to him by Frank
Colebrook: "I recall, too, that a well-known barrister called Bompas - a Queen's Counsel, I think he was, after a Morris address at a public hall in Hampstead - asked if the principles and the way of life he had commended to them had not also been proclaimed in the New Testament. Thereupon, Morris told the gathering that he had always avoided a religious controversy, he wanted every man or woman to be entirely free in these matters. He therefore declined to give precise answer to Mr. Bompas for he didn't want that afternoon's subject to be sidetracked. He wanted people to go away thinking of a large fellowship effort to make life on this earth more seemly, more friendly; more radiant altogether, for all lack of whatever religious faith" (William Morris of Walthamstow, pp. 34-5). According to Morris, says Bruce Glasier, "anti-religious bigotry was twin brother to religious bigotry, and the socialist movement had suffered from it" (op. cit., p. 139). In an interview which enabled him to define the nature of his socialism, Morris said to his interviewer: "...we do not want to interfere with the speculative belief of any man; 'by their fruits ye shall know them': if the dogmas of any religion lead to the practical support of oppression and injustice, there must be something wrong in them. Otherwise it is possible that at the worst they represent some tendency in human nature, past or present, and were, at any rate, alive once" (William SINCLAIR: "Socialism according to William Morris", The Fortnightly Review, October 1910, pp. 733-4).

141. See May MORRIS, II, p. 100.
144. Manifesto of the Socialist League, THOMPSON, p. 852.
146. Ibid., p. 122.
147. Appeal for the Preservation of Inglesham Church, 1887, May MORRIS, I, p. 160.
148. William Allingham notes in his diary that Morris, discussing with him the existence of God, said: "It is so unimportant, it seems to me" (A Diary, p. 316).
149. "Mind you, I don't think this change in the family (or in religion) can be done by force. It is a matter of opinion, and must come of the opinion of people free economically. I rely on the stomach for bringing it about" (Letter addressed to the Rev. William Sharman, a Unitarian minister and member of the Socialist League, it was published 18 April 1903 in the Labour Leader and completely forgotten; E. P. Thompson reprinted it in his pamphlet: The Communism of William Morris, p. 4).
150. "I agree that it would not be so much impolitic as impossible to pronounce on matters of religion and family. People's instincts are, I think, leading them in the right direction, in these matters, and yet the old superstitions, as they have now become, have such a veil of tradition and literature about them it is difficult to formulate the probabilities (they can be no more) of the new order in words that will not be misunderstood, and so cause offence" (Letter to Dr. John Glasse, 23 May 1887; R. Page ARNOT: William Morris, the Man and the Myth, p. 83).
152. Manifesto of the Socialist League, note E, THOMPSON, p. 856.
155. To Blackwell, ibid., p. 313.
Chapter II

1. Page 16.
3. Georges Duvau considers this problem, but he tends (exaggeratedly, I think) to confuse utopia and planning: "But the discipline of manufacture, in conjunction with the complexity of the contemporary world, today more and more leads the proletariat into accepting the planning that is advocated by men in whom they have confidence and whose all-powerful authority they accept. The dreams of the utopian and the very dialectic of contemporary production tend to meet at a common crossroads (op. cit., pp. 12-3). In planning itself, the modern world tends to live under the sign of utopia (ibid., p. 35)."
   Raymond Ruyer (L'Utopie et les utopies, p. 83) is less black-and-white: "Certainly, a Five-Year Plan does not resemble a utopia like those of Plato or Fourier. But there is surely something in common between utopias and plans, namely, the orientation towards a systematically devised end, which, once attained, will represent a stage of development."
6. THOMPSON, p. 50.
7. MACKAIL, I, p. 49.
8. MACKAIL, I, p. 162.
9. MACKAIL, II, p. 323-4; C.W., XXIV, p. XV.
10. Ibid., pp. 59-62.
12. We read, nevertheless: "As to the price per yard named by you, the only thing we have to consider is the possibility of selling the cloths as a profit." (To Thomas Wardle, 2 November 1875, Victoria and Albert Museum Mss).
13. He wrote to Scheu on 5 September 1883: "I have been working hard at my business, in which I have had a considerable success even from the commercial side ... as it is I have nothing to complain of. . . ." (Letters, p. 187).
14. "An incident which occurred in the Oxford Street showroom . . . gives an instance of what he had perpetually to bear from this invincible ignorance, and of how he sometimes found it past beating. A person of importance called to discuss the carpeting of his new house. The best specimens of the Hammersmith carpets, then produced in a complete range of pure bright color, were submitted to his inspection. He gave them a somewhat impatient and wandering attention. 'Are these all?' he asked. He was told yes. 'But I thought,' he went on, 'your colours were subdued.' At this Morris, who had been gradually boiling up during the interview, boiled over. 'If you want dirt,' he broke out, 'you can find that in the street.' To the street the offended customer turned, and that was the end of his dealings with Morris and Company" (MACKAIL, I, pp. 313-4). The source of this story is to be found in George Wardle's Memorials of William Morris, 1897, B.M. Add. Mss 45 350 (p. 11).
15. "... a rich man (so-called) I never either can or will become: nay, I am trying in a feeble way to be more thrifty - whereof no more, lest I boast now and be disgraced at Christmas" (To Mrs. Burne-Jones, 23 August 1882, Letters, p. 160).
16. "I should very much like to make the business quite a success, and it can't be, unless I work at it myself. I must say, though I don't call myself money-greedily, a smash on that side would be a terrible nuisance; I have so many serious troubles, pleasures, hopes and fears, that I have not time on my hands to be ruined and get really poor; above all things it would destroy my freedom of work, which is a dear delight to me" (To Mrs. Coronio, 11 February 1873, Letters, p. 53).
17. See the description of it left by May MORRIS, C.W., XIII, pp. XVIII-XXI.
18. May MORRIS, II, p. XXIV.
20. Ibid., p. 118.
21. JHS, n° 1200, 11 November 1965, p. 15/1.
22. See the interesting chapter entitled "Mistress and Servants" in Marion Lochhead's book, *The Victorian Household*, pp. 50-44.
23. "His head was always so much buried in his work that I don't think he'd notice a little thing like me," Flora Gunner says modestly (JHS, p. 15/1). Cf. MACKAIL, II, p. 93: "in the ordinary concerns of life, he was strangely incurious of individuals."
24. Huntington Library Mss, San Marino, California, U.S.A.
26. Ibid., II, pp. 94-5.
27. Letters, p. 203.
29. "She is an accidental person with whom I have nothing whatever to do" (Letters, p. 50).
30. Ibid., p. 52. However, in his will Morris left an annual income of £150 to Bessie (see letter of 5 December 1915 from S. Cockerell to May Morris, B.M. Add. Mss. 52740; and the letters from Jane Morris to S. Cockerell preserved at the Victoria and Albert Museum).
31. C.W., II, p. XII; May MORRIS, I, p. 66.
32. Letters, p. 231.
33. Cf. Mackail's manuscripts (Walthamstow Mss, J. 163-6) and the letters sent by Mackail to S. Cockerell in September 1898 (B.M. Add. Mss. 52734).
34. Letters, pp. 388-9; Walthamstow Mss, J. 143.
35. Ibid.
43. Ibid., p. 255.
44. Ibid., pp. 255-6.
45. This paternalistic illusion was long-lasting and, a year after his conversion to socialism, he still wrote: "Now once more I will say that we well-to-do people, those of us who love Art, have for our best work the raising of the standard of life among the people" (Art and Socialism, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 636).
47. "... here and there a few men of the upper and middle classes, moved by their conscience and insight, may and will throw in their lot with the working classes. . ." (Letters, p. 190).
48. "The middle classes will one day become conscious of the discontent of the proletariat; before that some will have renounced their class and cast in their lot with the working men, influenced by love of justice and insight into facts" (Art under Prussianism, 1883, JACKSON, p. 153).
49. "In introducing him, Dr. Glass spoke of the significance of the fact that the most gifted artistic genius of our day had associated himself with a movement that was everywhere condemned as being but the expression of sordid and uncultured discontent. Yet no one could say that William Morris was uncultured or had any reason in a worldly sense to be discontented with his lot. It was because of his extraordinary gift of political and artistic insight that he realised more keenly
than did the men of his class the hopeless ugliness and injustice of our present social system and was in revolt against it. William Morris was not only a prophet of Socialism but was himself a prophecy of Socialism” (Bruce GLASIER. William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement, p. 23). According to Glasier, the lecture in question was “Misery and the Way Out”, delivered in Edinburgh on 17 November 1884, but he is certainly mistaken, because that lecture was chaired by Robert Buist (cf. LE MIRE, p. 224).

51. May MORRIS, I, p. 67.
52. Letters, p. 200.
53. MACKAIL, II, p. 58.
54. We read, for example, from the pen of a certain H. Richardson, in the Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review of July 1892, p. 425: "This Modern Moses of Socialism prefers the ease and luxury of commercial Egypt to the arduous and risky labour of leading the hosts to their promised land.”
55. "... a few years ago the movement was confined to a few persons, of education and of superior intelligence, most of whom belonged by position to the middle classes” ("Why I am a Communist", Liberty, February 1894, p. 14/I). Bax’s memoirs provide identical evidence: “It is noteworthy in this connexion that the Socialism of the eighties and even the early nineties – i.e., the new scientific Socialism of Marx and all that implied – was mainly a middle-class movement. The working classes, to whom in the nature of things the movement ought to have appealed, were largely apathetic and unresponsive in this country for a long time. The work of education in the new social and economic views was mainly done by middle-class men. (E. Belfort Bax: Reminiscences and Reflexions of a Mid-and-Late Victorian, pp. 71-2). In a lecture given in 1884, Misery and the Way Out, Morris exclaimed: "... here I stand before you, one of the most fortunate of this happy class, so steeped in discontent, that I have no words which will express it ... my case is not so uncommon among men of my class: may the members of the S.D.F. who address you are by no means all of them working-men, there are plenty of them who are in the same position as myself” (May MORRIS. II, p. 156).
56. LE MIRE, pp. 144-5 of the typewritten edition.
58. Edward CARPENTER: My Days and Dreams, p. 46.
59. E. Belfort BAX: Reminiscences and Reflexions of a Mid-and-Late Victorian, pp. 173-82.
60. Chushichi TSUZUKI: H. M. HYNDMAN and British Socialism, pp. 26-8, 92, 140-4, 270.
61. THOMPSON, p. 348; Chushichi TSUZUKI, op. cit., p. 49.
62. Chushichi TSUZUKI, ibid.
63. “There was Hyndman in his immaculate frock coat and high hat; there was Morris, dressed in his usual blue serge suit and soft hat; Joynes in his aesthetic dress; Champion looking every inch the military man; Frost looking every inch the aristocrat; Quelch and myself in our everyday working clothes. I am sure we made an impression on that day” (Jack WILLIAMS: "From the Past to the Present", Justice, 15 January 1914, p. 2/I).
64. H. M. HYNDMAN: The Record of an Adventurous Life, p. 252. (The spelling ‘Llanma’ is Hyndman’s.)
65. V. I. LENIN: On Britain, (Moscow, 1959), passim and particularly pp. 88, 111-6, 151.
66. "I found myself clubless in London, which at first was a curious sensation for me” (H. M. HYNDMAN, op. cit., p. 416).
67. Cf. the very characteristic portrait Glasier sketches of him: “Hyndman, striking in appearance, with his long, flowing senatorial beard, his keen, restless, searching eyes, and full intellectual brow, dressed in the city best, frock-coat suit of the day, with full display of white linen – his whole manner alert, pushful, and, shall I say,
dominating — looked the very embodiment of middle-class respectability and upper-class ideology, a man of the world, a Pall Mall dandy from top to toe.

(GLASIER, op. cit., p. 29.)

See, for example, HYNDMAN, op. cit., p. 165.

69. Cf. DONA TORR: Tom Mann and his Times, I, p. 204.

70. "That, as Marx said, the emancipation of the workers must be brought about by the Socialists, any more than we can achieve and carry on in a Republican government. But a slave-class cannot be freed by the slaves themselves. The leadership, the initiative, the teaching, the organisation, must come from an outside force, who are born into a different position, and are used to train their faculties and their life" (HYNDMAN, op. cit., pp. 432-3).


72. "That utterable and sickening misery of which a few details are given above, in reaching us as if from some distant unhappy country, of which we could never expect to hear" (Art under Plutocracy, 1888, JACKSON, p. 140).

73. "...the poor wretches, the news of whom we of the middle-class are just receiving with such noddle wonder and horror..." (Isid. op. cit., p. 144). In 1886, he wrote again: "I confess I have never dared to myself to visit the homes of these poor people though I have seen them in the streets and have heard plenty about them" (Domination and the Way Out, 1886, MAURICE, II, p. 151).


75. "...most true it is that whiles I am sitting at home at work or in rest with all akin to a pleasant life around me which more chance as it seems has given me, and hear outside brutal and drunken voices, murdering with obscene language and coarse tunes the pleasure of the fair spring Sunday there comes up to me the brutishness of my own heart and I would sit me into fury against that other brutality if I were not reminer that these also are my fellows, merely unlucky, that I am not.

And then indeed I am wondering at the strange and slender thread of circumstance which has armed me for doing and bearing with relations which I didn't make myself, but was born down to" (An Address to the National Law Society, 1881, MAURICE, I, p. 201-2).

76. "Do you know, when I see a poor devil drunk and brutal I am told quite apart from my aesthetic perceptions, a sort of shame, as if I myself had some hand in it." (To Mrs. George Howard, August 1874, Letter, p. 64).

77. "...Indeed I have been ashamed when I have thought of the contrast between my happy working hours and the unemployed, unemancipated, demoralised diurnal which most men are condemned to..." (To the Manchester Examiner, 13 March 1880, Letter, p. 166). Cf. "...the contrast of rich and poor are unanswerable" (To C. E. Maurice, 1st July 1883, Letter, p. 176).

78. "...as ashamed of my own position..." (To C. E. Maurice, 1st July 1883, Letter, p. 176).

79. Bruce GLASIER, William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement, p. 27.

80. "...as a sense of shame in one's better luck not possible to express." (From the Worst, Commercial, 19 February 1887, p. 61/1). Year-by-year of the middle classes, as we are getting more-conscious of what we ought to be doing better and more wholesome and contemplative to ourselves and others..." (Morris in the Inaugural Address to the Inaugural Dinner of the Inaugural Dinner of the Inaugural dinner, Commercial, 31 November 1887, p. 363/11). "...we suffer more seriously if we form the idea that the rows of suffering men and women scarceess of the mass of suffering and brutality which lies below the class-ugliness..." (Ministry and the Way Out, 1884, MAURICE, II, p. 173).

81. "...the domains of poorer class are uneasy, anxious, tossed in some new form as to the condition of those they govern..." (THOMPSON, p. 853).
that effect; but I see clearly enough now that one's relations with the former are more artificial by far than with the latter. Still as to those who, however blindly and blunderingly, are struggling towards a certain stage in the progress of humanity which all who have thought and studied know to be sound and possible.

— I don't see how a man can help coming forward and professing these the light of his sagacity and clearness of vision. — We (comparatively) wealthy people who step into the movement, stand at such an obvious disadvantage amongst the rest..." (B.M. Add. Mss. 50 541, f'' 49-50). Incidentally, it is noticeable that May still retained the paternalistic attitude that her father had already discarded.

97. The Hopes of Civilization, 1885, Signs, pp. 114-5. Already, in 1884, he wrote to Mr. Burne-Jones of the early indications of revolution: "... as you know some of us seem to see signs of this on the way, at which I admit that the flesh of this hangman of the capitalist class trembles though his spirit is willing" (1st June 1884, Letters, p. 200).

98. Cf. the pertinent analysis of this poem by Jessie KOCTANOVA: The Poetic Maturing of William Morris, p. 201.

99. THOMPSON, p. 642.

100. B.M. Add. Mss. 50 541 (80).

101. Cf. "Every age has had its hopes, hopes that look to something beyond the life of the age itself, hopes that try to pierce into the future..." in sober truth it may well be that these hopes are but a reflection in those that live happily and comfortably of the vain longings of those others who suffer with little power of expressing their sufferings in an audible voice" (The Hopes of Civilization, 1885, Signs, p. 84).

102. On Thomas Binning, see THOMPSON, pp. 442-3.

103. "Correspondence", Commonweal, 25 February 1888, p. 61/II.

104. The general tone of these attacks is indicated by the following anonymous snippet: "There is nothing of the lean and hungry-looking poet in his appearance. There is far more of the prosperous bourgeois, saving, of course, what suggestion of poetry and revolution may reside in the sombrero. His home at Hammersmith is an artistic paradise. Socialists and painters abound there." (The Echo, 7 November 1888, p. 1/VI.

105. Letter, p. 73; MACKAIL, I, p. 324.

106. In an account of a debate which took place in Cambridge in 1884, we read: "Mr. William Morris at once rose to reply to the personal question, and to confess that, while not a capitalist in the ordinary sense of the word, he must admit to his own conscience that he was one of a class that lives upon the labour of other people" (Justice, 23 February 1884, p. 6/II).

107. "I am not a very rich man..." he said during a public meeting at Somers Town in the 'nineties (Owen Carroll, "William Morris among the Reds", Everyman, 23 September 1933, p. 351/II), "I am not quite a rich man, as rich men go nowadays", he said in Glasgow, replying to a question, and adding: "but I am richer than I ought to be compared with the mass of my fellows; rather, perhaps, I shall say they are poorer than they ought to be" (GLASIER, op. cit, p. 109).

108. "A veteran Glasgow Green debater, 'Old John Torley', as fiery in speech as in the colour of his hair, but without brimful of good humour, made a brief onslaught on those 'High Art Socialists who designed silk curtains and velvet cushions, and got our hand-printed books bound in Russian leather. which only the idle spongers on the roll of the workers could afford to buy'" (GLASIER, ibid, p. 91).

109. "But as time passed he began to question what seemed to be the contradictions in his life. For his great hope in the future was for 'an art made by the people and for the people as a joy for the maker and the user', and yet the goods he made were beyond the means of simple people. As this questioning pressed on him more and more, he turned towards Socialism, and preaching on the Democracy of Art
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became a part of his life” (May MORRIS, Walthamstow Man, J. 191).
110. 1st June 1884 (Letters, p. 200).
111. “... the noble class of hangers-on to which I myself belong” (Miser and the Way Out, 1884, May MORRIS, II, p. 155). But he adds, in this same lecture, addressing his working-class listeners: “... we despise the class of idle slave-owners above us, whose hangers-on we are; if you distrust us because we are their hangers-on, at least make use of us for the furtherance of the cause” (Ibid., p. 158).

112. It is to the point to recall that in 1883 Morris had not yet taken up a stand against a policy of palliatives and stepping-stones, and that he shared Hyndman’s views on the point.

113. This letter was published in The Standard on 23 November 1883, p. 5/VII (and not the 22nd, as Thompson mistakenly says, p. 367, n. 2); it is reproduced in Letters, pp. 190-1, but the last sentence of the letter has been cut by Philip Henderson.

115. Justice, 23 February 1884, p. 6/II.

116. When lady Burne-Jones allowed Mackail to publish extracts from Morris’s letters, she made a selection, and what became of the letters she kept is not known (cf. THOMPSON, p. 204). – There is more evidence of Morris’s doubts in a passage from a letter to G. Wardle to S. Cockerell, 24 August 1898: “...he had ideas of putting the Q[uen] Sq[urae] business on a profit-sharing basis” (May MORRIS, II, p. 603).

117. This is an argument which he took up again the following year in connection with social measures that the employers might take: “...thus do we the well-to-do and prosperous dull the sting of conscience...” (Socialism, 1885, May MORRIS, II, p. 193).

119. Ibid., p. 197.
120. The Journals of Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson, I, p. 174.
121. This letter, dated 21 April 1884, appeared as an appendix to an article entitled “A Day in Surrey with William Morris”, published in July 1886 by The Century Magazine. It was reproduced, following the article in The Gazette of the John Lewis Partnership, 17 March 1962, p. 159/II.


123. Saturday Review, 10 January 1885, p. 43/I.
124. The Oxford Times, 28 February 1885, p. 4/VII.
125. Cassell’s Saturday Journal, 18 October 1890, p. 81/III.
129. On this subject, see the excellent pages in THOMPSON, pp. 821-2.
130. Ibid., pp. 822-3. F. Kitz’s article appeared in Freedom in May 1896.
131. “Morris was evidently pleased to find himself in a smaller company, and especially, so I thought, on discovering that those present belonged to the working class. He seemed, curiously enough, as I then and on many other occasions noted, when in the company of strangers, to feel more at home and freer when among working men than when among men of his own class” (GLASIER, op. cit., p. 67).

132. “...a blunderer who had said to the only unconverted man at a Socialist meeting in Dublin, to prove that equality came easy, ‘I was brought up a gentleman and now as you can see associate with all sorts’ and left wounds thereby that rankled after twenty years.” (W. B. YEATS, Autobiography, p. 176).
133. GLASIER, op. cit., p. 67.
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184. Cf. Letter 1st June 1884, p. 197, the letter to Emma Lazarus (loc. cit., p. 199/ii) and the Owen Carroll article already mentioned.


186. Cf. the description of it given by Emma Lazarus in the article preceding Morris's letter (loc. cit., pp. 158/II, 159/I); see also May Morris's memories, C.W., XIII, pp. XXXIII.

187. "I have taught them to make beautiful things, and some of the works which have passed through our hands will last even when our bones have mingled with the dust. I have treated my workmen not as an employer would, but as a comrade" (Owen Carroll, ibid.).

188. MACKAIL, I, p. 135.
190. "I am more than willing that my riches, such as they are, should be put into the common stock of the nation, and I shall rejoice to work for the community and give it the benefit of whatever talent or skill I possess, for the same wages that I demand for, and that the nation could afford to pay, under a proper economic and moral system, to every workman — dustman, blacksmith, or bricklayer — in the land" (GLASER, op. cit.; pp. 109-10); "whatever advantages we possess are those we are willing and anxious to give up if by so doing we can win a decent life for ourselves and for others" (Miserie and the Way Out, 1884, May Morris, II, p. 157).

192. "In my position of a well-to-do man, not suffering from the disabilities which oppress a working man at every step, I feel that I might never have been drawn into the practical side of the question if an ideal had not forced me to seek towards it" (How I Became a Socialist, 1894, Nonesuch, p. 656).
193. A slight slip on Morris's part: he is her father on p. 169 of the Nonesuch edition, after having been her grandfather throughout the Rumpymede episode.
194. Cf. "Clara... was not unlike a very pleasant and unaffected young lady" (News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 171). Elsewhere, Morris speaks of her airs of a "town madam" (Ibid., p. 145).
196. News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 131
197. The Pilgrims of Hope, 1886, Nonesuch, p. 389. We find here a curious justification of René le Senne's theory of the "cathartic intent" of utopia. But the spiritualistic philosopher only considered this "catharsis" in its moral aspect, not taking into account its origin in a very particular social determination (René LE SENNE, Traité de Morale Générale, p. 707).

Foreword of Part II

1. The Art of the People, 1879, Nonesuch, p. 535.
5. Letters, pp. 244-7.
Part II, Chapter I

1. Letters, p. 244.
2. The Hopes of Civilization, 1885, Signs, pp. 90-1.
3. Justice and Socialism, 1885; see Appendix I, p. 579.
4. MACRAIL, II, p. 89 The date is of some interest: a month later Morris discovered and devoured Capital.
7. See the facsimile of the lecture programme published in Letters, p. 233.
8. Bruce GLASIER; William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement, p. 68.
12. K. MARX, Capital, pp. 791 and 808. See also A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 117.
13. "He who runs may read the tale of this change and its miseries in the writings of More and Latimer" (Architecture and History, 1884, May MORRIS, 1, p. 136), "... the yeomen, whose destruction... was lamented so touchingly by the high-minded More and the valiant Latimer" (Art and Socialism, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 639); "Two representative Englishmen have left in their writings full tokens of how bitterly this spoliation of the people was felt. Sir Thomas More, one of the most high-minded and cultivated gentlemen of his period, a Catholic and a martyr to his honesty in that cause was one. Hugh Latimer, a yeoman's son, the very type of rough English honesty, a protestant and a martyr to his honesty in that cause was another... and now once more it seems as though the axe of More and the faggot of Latimer had still left their spirits with us to produce fruit which they in their life-time, no not even More himself could ever dream would come to pass" (Art and Labour, 1884, LE MIRE, pp. 107-8).
14. Victor DUPONT; L'Utopie et le roman utopique dans la littérature anglaise, pp. 84 et seq.
15. See Appendix I, p. 579.
17. Ibid., p. 131.
18. Ibid., pp. 60-1.
19. Ibid., pp. 70-1.
20. Ibid., p. 58.
21. Ibid., p. 75.
22. Ibid., p. 76.
24. Ibid., p. 66.
25. Ibid., p. 79.
26. Ibid., p. 68.
27. Ibid., pp. 90-4.
28. Ibid., pp. 60-1.
29. Ibid., p. 71-3.
30. Ibid., p. 63.
31. Ibid., pp. 50, 103-4.
32. Ibid., pp. 132-3.
33. Ibid., p. 69.
34. Ibid., p. 64. One should not, however, give too much importance to this fact. R. W. CHAMBERS (Thomas More, pp. 54-5) points out that the practice of putting children into other houses as pages went on longer in England than on the Continent and occasioned disapproving surprise among foreign visitors.
33. In the introduction to her French edition of Utopia (p. 49), Marcelle Botaignières expresses the opinion that the objection raised by More “is so weak as to appear purely formal.” It certainly derives from that skill in dialogue which makes the first part of Utopia an extremely lively text.

34. Utopia, pp. 63-4.
35. Ibid., pp. 57-9.
36. Ibid., p. 69.
38. Ibid., p. 67.
39. Ibid., p. 69.
40. This short introduction is reproduced in May MORRIS, I, pp. 284-92.
41. E. L. Cary, William Morris, Poet, Craftsman, Socialist, pp. 217-8, records a report in this connection: “When the Utopia appeared with this introduction, an Etun master who had ordered forty copies in advance, intending the book to be used as prizes for the boys in his school, withdrew his order, young England not being allowed at that time to keep such socialist company.”
42. Utopia, p. 118.
43. May MORRIS, I, pp. 290-1.
44. Utopia, p. 20.
45. Ibid., p. 56.
46. Ibid., p. 61.
47. Ibid., p. 67.
49. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 277.
50. MACKAIL, II, pp. 89-90.
51. “Butler’s Enthusiasm was a household word” (C.W., XXII, p. XXVII).
52. “...almost the last of the old-style place Utopias” (A. L. MORTON, The English Utopia, p. 148).
53. “Take her all in all, however, she was a beneficent and useful deity, who did no harm how much she was denied so long as she was obeyed and feared, and who kept hundreds of thousands in those paths which make life tolerably happy, who would have been kept there otherwise, and over whom a higher and more spiritual ideal would have had no power” (Enthusiasm, p. 121).
54. Cf. J. B. Fort’s penetrating judgment: “There are three kinds of connection between the ideas of his books and his personal beliefs: sometimes he expresses himself sincerely, sometimes he deliberately jears, and his thought is clad in paradox, humour or irony, but elsewhere he jumbles with his ideas, and an apparent lack of conviction, although it cannot but add spirit to the game, gives it something unreal and disappointing” (Samuel Butler, p. 304).
55. See, for example, J. B. FORT, ibid., p. 116.
57. The very name, an anagram of Morris’s “Nowhere”, translating More’s “Utopia”, reveals an intention which is perhaps not purely ironic.
58. THOMPSON, p. 802, n. 2.
59. Ronald FULLER: (William Morris, Selection and Commentary, p. 154) does not hesitate to call it a borrowing.
60. J. B. FORT, ibid., p. 32.
61. A curious fact is that Butler incidentally expresses views on artistic problems very close to Morris’s, but it would be ridiculous to look for any derivation. Both draw from the same source, that is, the thought of Ruskin. We read in Enthusiasm: “I know not why; but all the noblest arts hold in perfection for a very little moment. They seem reach a height from which they begin to decline, and when they have begun to decline it is a pity they cannot be knocked on the head; for an art is like a living organism – better dead than dying. There is no way of making an aged art young.
Notes to the Text: Part II, Chapter I.

again, it must be born anew and grow up from infancy as a new thing, working out its own salvation from effort to effort in all fear and trembling" (pp. 95-6).

64. Letter, p. 236.

65. Edward CARPENTER: My Days and Dreams, p. 217. Note in passing that Carpenter made a mistake of one year and set the incident in 1886.

66. MACKAIL, II, p. 144.

67. See below, Third Part, Ch. I.


69. Ibid., pp. 1-19.

70. Ibid., pp. 49-52.

71. Ibid., p. 266.

72. Ibid., pp. 43, 54, 56. It is probable that the great lake in After London is, though in a broader vision, Coate's reservoir, around which move the characters of Hevis.

73. Ibid., pp. 21-4.

74. Ibid., pp. 24-5.

75. Ibid., pp. 25-32.

76. Ibid., pp. 35-8.

77. Ibid., pp. 39-42.

78. "...how much stranger it is that any other man, himself a slave, can be found to hunt down or to hang his fellow; yet the tyrants never lack executioners" (Ibid., p. 42).

79. "He was not a cruel man, nor a benevolent, neither clever nor foolish, neither strong nor weak; simply an ordinary, a very ordinary being, who chanced to sit upon a throne because his ancestors did, and not from any personal superiority" (Ibid., p. 90).

80. "He had eaten at a slave's table, and sat with him face to face. Theory and practice are often strangely at variance. He felt it an important moment; he felt that he was himself, as it were, on the balance; should he adhere to the ancient prejudice, the ancient exclusiveness of his class, or should he boldly follow the dictate of his mind? He chose the latter and extended his hand to the servant as he rose to say good-bye" (Ibid., p. 202).

81. "As himself of noble birth, Felix had hitherto seen things only from the point of view of his own class. Now he associated with grooms, he began to see society from their point of view, and recognised how feebly it was held together by brute force, intrigue, cord and axe, and woman's flattery" (Ibid., p. 219).

82. "Felix had never dreamed that common and illiterate men, such as these grooms and retainers, could have any conception of reasons of State, or the crafty designs of courts. He now found that, though they could neither write nor read, they had learned the art of reading man (the worst and lowest side of character) to such perfection that they at once detected the motive" (Ibid., p. 220).

83. "Felix thought that he was himself a hunter, and understood woodcraft; he now found how mistaken he had been. He had acquired woodcraft as a gentleman; he now learned the knave's woodcraft. They taught him a hundred tricks of which he had had no idea" (Ibid.).

84. Ibid., pp. 43-4.

85. Ibid., pp. 44, 62.

86. "Indeed, we have fuller knowledge of those extremely ancient times than of the people who immediately preceded us, and the Romans and Greeks are more familiar to us than the men who rode in the iron chariots and mounted to the skies" (Ibid., p. 24).

87. Ibid., pp. 146-7.

88. Ibid., p. 147.

89. Ibid., p. 104.

90. "...the extraordinary fertility of the enclosure, and the variety of the products.
There was everything, fruit of all kinds, herbs of every species, plots specially devoted to those possessing medicinal virtues. This was only one part of the garden, the orchards proper were farther down, and the flowers nearer the house" (Ibid.).

91. "These buildings were put together with wooden pins, on account of the scarcity of iron, and were all (dwellinghouse included) roofed with red tile. Lesser houses, cottages, and sheds at a distance were thatched, but in an enclosure tiles were necessary, lest, in case of an attack, fire should be thrown" (Ibid., p. 70).

92. "In the front there were originally only two rooms, extensive for those old days, but not sufficiently so for ours" (Ibid., p. 126).

93. Ibid., p. 66.

94. "... he was an expert and artistic workman, and his table and his seat, unlike the rude blocks in Felix's room, were tastefully carved" (Ibid., p. 71).

95. "This chest, though small, was extremely heavy and strong, being dug out with the chisel and gouge from a solid block of oak. Except a few parallel grooves, there was no attempt at ornamentation upon it" (Ibid., p. 59).

96. "The glass made now is not transparent, but merely translucent; it indeed admits light after a fashion, but it is thick and cannot be seen through" (Ibid., p. 126).

97. "The elders and their chief, not to be distinguished by dress or ornament from the rest..." (Ibid., p. 283).

98. Ibid., p. 282.


100. "... the underlying pessimism of Jefferies" (Ibid.), says Jessie KOCMANOVA: The Aesthetic Purpose of William Morris in the Context of his Late Prose Romances, p. 124.


103. May MORRIS, I, p. 503.


105. This article, simply entitled "Looking Backward" (Commonweal, 22 June, 1889, p 194/1–II, 195/1), is reproduced in May MORRIS, II, pp. 501-7. In order to avoid any confusion in references, I shall quote the title of Bellamy’s novel when I am referring the reader to it and simply mention May Morris’s work when referring to the article.

106. "... the author has sought to alleviate the instructive quality of the book by casting it in the form of a romantic narrative, which he would be glad to fancy not wholly devoid of interest on its own account" (Looking Backward, Preface, p. 2).


108. V. DUPONT: L’Utopie et le roman utopique dans la littérature anglaise, p. 754.

109. Ibid., p. 758. It is reasonable to observe that this lack of characterisation is common to most utopias, apart from Morris’s. As H. G. Wells very aptly remarked: "In almost every Utopia – except, perhaps, Morris’s News from Nowhere – one sees a multitude of people, healthy, happy, beautifully dressed, but without any personal distinction whatever" (A Modern Utopia, p. 9).


111. We may note, in passing, that according to Bellamy, the United States were to play the pioneer role in evolution. As we shall see, Morris had very different ideas on the point. (Looking Backward, ch. VIII, p. 50).

112. May MORRIS, II, p. 507.

113. Ibid., p. 502.

114. Looking Backward, p. 4.

115. Ibid., ch. XXVIII.


117. Ibid., p. 504.

118. Ibid.

Notes to the Text: Part II, Chapter I

120. Ibid., p. 21.
121. May MORRIS, II, p. 503.
122. Looking Backward, ibid., p. 18.
123. Ibid., p. 21.
125. "Where Are We Now?" Commonweal, 15 November 1890, p. 362/1; May MORRIS, II, p. 517.
128. A. E. MORGAN, pp. 258-9, offers us a choice of very significant quotations on this point.
129. V. DUPONT, ibid., p. 788. In his introduction to the (Aubier) bilingual edition of Nouvelles de nulle part (p. 69), he repeats that Bellamy's utopia is "strongly inspired by Marxism".
133. A. E. MORGAN, ibid., pp. 89-90.
134. May MORRIS, II, p. 504.
137. Ibid., ch. XII, p. 44.
139. Ibid., ch. XXV, pp. 91-3.
140. Ibid., ch. XII, p. 46.
141. Ibid., ch. XII, p. 45.
142. Ibid., ch. XXII, p. 86.
143. A. E. MORGAN, ibid., p. 41.
144. Ibid., p. 321.
147. May MORRIS, II, p. 504.
148. Ibid., p. 503; cf. C.W. XVI, p. XXVIII.
149. Looking Backward, ch. XVII, p. 65.
150. Ibid., ch. X.
151. After his setback at West Point, Bellamy had tried the Bar and rapidly left, disgusted by the unscrupulousness of the profession (cf. A. E. MORGAN, ibid., pp. 117-20).
152. Looking Backward, ch. XIX, p. 74.
154. Ibid., p. 505.
155. Ibid., p. 504.
156. Looking Backward, Preface, p. 2.
157. Ibid., p. 123.
158. My italics; in fact, this is the key word of Morris's criticism.
159. May MORRIS, II, p. 507.
160. Ibid., p. 502.
162. Ibid., ch. XI, p. 41.
163. Ibid., ch. XVIII, p. 69.
Notes to the Text: Part II; Chapter II

1. See The Beauty of Life, 1880, Nonesuch, pp. 545-6; The Gothic Revival, I, 1884, LE MIRE, p. 72; Pre-Raphaelism by Robert Streat, 1893; May MORRIS, I, p. 287; An Address delivered at the Distribution of Prizes to Students of the Birmingham Municipal School of Arts, 1894, C.W., XXII, p. 431.

2. The Beauty of Life, ibid.

3. It is on this very point that Morris's admiration for Scott plainly differs from that felt by Ruskin, who could not refrain from making certain reservations: "Nothing is more noble or more soulful in Scott's mind than its incapacity of steady belief in the gradual development of characters, Part IV, ch. XVI, § 31, Hours, V, p. 336.

4. In 1872 Morris confided to Cockerell: "Our claim was much influenced by Keats, who was a poet who represented semblances as opposed to Shelley who had no eyes, and whose admiration was not critical but conventional!" (C.W. XXII, p. XLI).

5. In his book on La Prisonnière anglaise (p. 240), M. J. J. Mayoux correctly points out that it is a misconception to confuse Rossetti with Pre-Raphaelitism.


7. In order to avoid long digressions which would overweight the analysis and break its unity, I refer the reader to chapters I and X of Part Three, where a study of these important themes will more naturally find a place.


9. I would add to the great deal of evidence already published on this point a curious find I made in the archives of the Socialist League, kept at the International Institute of Social History (I.L.S.H.) in Amsterdam. In a memo sent to the chief editor of the International Institute of Social History (I.L.S.H.) in Amsterdam, in a memo sent to the chief editor of the International, on 30 September 1885, Georgiana Burrow-Jones asks that the publication should be addressed to "Mrs. Burrow-Jones, not to Mr." (f. 981).


12. The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, ibid., pp. 239-40.

13. Graham HOGGH: The Last Romantics, p. 58; RUSKIN: Modern Painters, Part IV, ch. XIV, § 34. In fact, Ruskin's vision of Pre-Raphaelitism failed, and that Pre-Raphaelitism (1853) contained structures on artistic norms based upon Raphael's example.

William Morris: The Marxist Dreamer

17. Commonwealth, 5 February 1887, p. 43/II.
18. Ibid., 21 July 1888, p. 229/1.
19. Ibid., 17 November 1888, p. 365/II.
20. Ibid., 30 November 1889, p. 379/II.
21. Letters, p. 246. In any case, Morris was more understanding than his master Ruskin, who wrote: “Blake was sincere, but full of wild creeds, and somewhat diseased in brain” (Modern Painters, Part IV, ch. XVI, § 10, n., Works, V, p. 325).
22. THOMPSON, pp. 307 and 354.
25. To Jane Alice Morris, 4 September 1883, Letters, p. 183.
27. LE MIRE, p. 34 of typewritten edition.
29. I was surprised (relatively speaking, because this is a habit of Disraeli’s) to notice that chapter V of book II of Sybil, the one containing the famous definition of the “two nations”, was, in all its first part dealing with the rôle of monastic institutions before the Reformation, an almost literal transcription of various passages in Rural Rides. And it is not just a simple coincidence. Disraeli, in chapter XVI of the same book II, cites Cobbett, with Shakespear, as one of the masters of the English language. There is room for surprise that Morris, supposed to have known Cobbett’s book “by heart”, did not denounce this plagiarism, since he felt real hatred for Disraeli and for his imperialist policy (cf. May MORRIS, II, pp. 119 and 604). So it is probable that he had not read, or had only skimmed, Sybil (a book to which he never referred), and that it should be excluded from our quest for his mediaevalist inspirations.
30. Advice to Young Men (COBBETT, Selections, ed. Hughes, p. 147).
31. Cottage Economy, passim.
32. Rural Rides, pp. 125 and 127.
33. See particularly Rural Rides, pp. 190-1.
34. Ibid., p. 254.
37. Ibid., p. 324.
38. Ibid., (COBBETT: Selections, p. 110; the Penguin edition reproduces the original 1830 edition and takes no account of the second edition, completed in 1853 by John Paul Cobbett). Cf.: “...along with William Cobbett, contrast the dungeon-like propriety of St. Paul’s...with the free imagination and delicate beauty of the people-built Gothic churches...” (“Artist and Artisan”, Communeval, 10 September 1887; p. 291/II; May MORRIS, II, p. 495).
39. See, for example, Rural Rides, pp. 264-5. Cf.: “That is an old and hackneyed password of Cobbett’s, but is always good and necessarily true: ‘House of Commons – den of thieves’.” (“Notes on News”, Communeval, 13 April 1889, p. 281/II).
40. Ibid., p. 479.
41. Ibid., p. 161.
42. Ibid., p. 305.
43. Ibid., p. 327.
44. Ibid., p. 401.
45. Ibid., p. 284.
Notes to the Text: Part II, Chapter II

46 Ibid., p. 382.
47 Ibid., pp. 50-1, 128, 135, 188.
48 Ibid., p. 90.
49 Ibid., pp. 41-2.
50 Ibid., p. 68.
52 Ibid., pp. 317, 319.
53 Ibid., p. 161.
54 Political Register, XXXIV, column 1019.
55 Rural Rides, p. 320.
56 Ibid., p. 350.
57 Political Register, XLV, column 480.
58 Ibid., XLVII, column 91.
59 Cottage Economy, passim and particularly § 77.
60 Cf. "I recommend you to read William Cobbett's Cottage Economy, both because it is a very charming and amusing little book, and because it gives us in its contrast between now and then a good measure of the rapid advance of makeshift in this detail of life" (Makeshift, 1894, May Morris, II, p. 470).
61 Rural Rides, p. 173.
62 Ibid., p. 292.
64 Political Register, XXXII, column 1076.
65 Cottage Economy, § 11 and 12.
66 Political Register, XI, column 36.
67 Ibid., XXXII, column 1076.
68 Advice to Young Men (Cobbett, Selections, pp. 145-6).
69 Political Register, XXXII, column 1076.
70 Advice to Young Men, ibid., p. 63.
71 Ibid., pp. 146-7.
72 Ibid., p. 63.
73 Cf. Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, p. 37.
74 Cf. Rural Rides, pp. 120, 200-1.
75 Political Register, XXX, column 433.
76 Rural Rides, pp. 171, 183.
77 Ibid., p. 497.
78 Ibid., pp. 74-5.
79 Cottage Economy, § 16.
80 Rural Rides, p. 45.
81 "William Cobbett asks this pertinent question: 'What is a slave?' and answers it thus, 'a slave is a man without property'. (Communism, i.e. Property, 1892, May Morris, II, p. 347): 'A good man will be contented fast enough if he be fed and clothed sufficiently, but if a man be not well fed and clad, he is a base wretch to be contented.' So says William Cobbett, and certainly the strikers might have one more banner with this inscription written on it" ("The Lesson of the Hour", Communist, 7 September 1889, p. 281/II).
82 A History of the Protestant Reformation (Cobbett, Selections, p. 165).
83 Rural Rides, p. 38.
84 Political Register, XXXIV, column 1019.
85 Ibid., XXX, column 433.
86 This is precisely Marx's complaint about Cobbett (Capital, p. 829), although he refers to him more than once and readily adopts his expressions.
87 Political Register, LXXXII, column 624.
88 Ibid., XXX, column 433.
89 Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 175-6.

91. To Andrew Scheu, 5 September 1883, Letters, p. 185.


93. B.M. Add. Mss. 52 772, f. 23.

94. Address at the 12th Annual Meeting of the SPAB, 1889, May MORRIS, I, p. 188.


96. The Letters Arts, 1877, Nonesuch, p. 498.


98. “Why We Celebrate the Commune of Paris”, Commemorial, 19 March 1887, p. 89/11.

99. The Political Outlook, 1886, May MORRIS, II, p. 282. Cf.: “...the dull and not too veracious accounts of kings and nobles, that used to do for history”. (To the Editor, Daily Chronicle, 4 October 1895, Letters, pp. 376-7); “...what so-called history has left us of the tale of those days – the stupid languor and the evil deeds of kings and scoundrels” (The Art of the People, 1879, Nonesuch, p. 520); “The written history of ‘Kings and Scoundrels’ is made up of the deeds of the greedy few ruling arbitrarily; while the history of art is made up of the deeds of the patient many living naturally” (Art and the People, 1883, May MORRIS, II, p. 385).

100. Paper Read at the 7th Annual Meeting of the SPAB, 1884, May MORRIS, I, p. 125.

101. Cf. C.W., XXII, p. XXVI.

102. Art and the Beauty of the Earth, 1881, JACKSON, p. 158.

103. Of the Popular or Decorative Arts, 1880, May MORRIS, II, p. 67.

104. Art and Labour, 1884, LE MIRE, p. 108.

105. On this subject I have made good use of the studies of G. P. GOOCH, History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century, and of J. R. Hale, The Evolution of British Historiography. See also Le Mire, pp. 34-7 (of the typewritten edition) and passim.

106. To the Editor, The Athenaeum, 5 March 1877, Letters, p. 85.

107. To the Editor, The Daily Chronicle, 4 October 1895, ibid., p. 376.


112. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 76.

113. G. P. GOOCH, ibid., p. 323.


118. K. MARX: Capital, pp. 740 n. 1; 745 and n. 3, 794, n. 1.


121. Dr. ROGERS: Six Centuries of Work and Wages, pp. 183-4.


123. To Andrew Scheu, 5 September 1883, Letters, p. 185.

124. C.W., XXII, p. XXVI.

125. ibid., p. XXXII.

126. Letters, pp. 173 and 175. A detail of which it is difficult to assess the interest: C. E. Maurice was the author of a book entitled English Popular Leaders, one chapter of which was devoted to John Ball.
129. See Letters, pp. 87, 121-2; May Morris, I, pp. 81, 117; MACKAIL, I, p. 346. I found a completely different version of this episode in the papers of A. H. Mackmurdo (Walthamstow Mss, J. 361), who writes: "I was requested to ask him (Carlyle) to join the 'anti-scrape' society as the S.P.A.B. was called when first started. I asked him to join it. He knew my admiration of Wren's work. 'I suppose you want to preserve those cold naked city churches of Wren. I'll have nothing to do with it.' I got him however to join it and be became the first President". This strange account, which cannot be checked, seems very suspect to me, because there is no doubt that Carlyle had a great admiration for Wren; see, for example, Past and Present, pp. 129 and 191. In any event, this evidence poses a problem.
131. MACKAIL, I, p. 38.
132. To Mrs. Burne-Jones, 1881, Letters, p. 149. However, May Morris writes: "...Carlyle, the humours of whose great Frederick afforded our poet such constant entertainment" (C.W., XXII, p. XXVI). The contradiction is bizarre. All in all, it is better to rely upon Morris's own evidence.
134. "The law of maximum was now passed...so that, as Carlyle remarks, the workman was at least better off under the Terror than he had ever been before" (Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 154).
138. Past and Present, p. 164. In the case of this work, to which I shall refer most frequently, I have thought it more suitable to refer to the Everyman edition rather than the complete works.
139. Ibid., p. 1.
141. Past and Present, p. 143.
142. Ibid., p. 148.
143. Ibid., p. 203.
144. Of the Popular or Decorative Arts, 1880, May Morris, II, p. 69.
146. "The utterly base doctrine, as Carlyle has it, that this world is a cockney nightmare, would be known no more" (The Society of the Future, 1888, May Morris, II, p. 467).
147. Past and Present, p. 264.
148. Ibid., p. 65. Cf.: "It (the bourgeoisie) has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors', and has left no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment'" (Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, p. 16).
149. Ibid., pp. 235-6.
150. Ibid., p. 239.
151. Ibid., pp. 46-7.
152. Ibid., p. 51.
153. Ibid., p. 82.
154. Ibid., pp. 110-1.
155. Ibid., p. 114.
156. Ibid., p. 203.
157. Ibid., p. 58. Cf. p. 64.
158. Ibid., p. 37.
159. Ibid., p. 230.
160. Ibid., p. 231.
162. Past and Present, p. 23.
163. Ibid., p. 33.
164. Ibid., p. 240.
165. Ibid., pp. 254-8.
166. "Reviews and Notices", Commonweal, May 1885, p. 33/I.
167. "Notes on Passing Events", Commonweal, 5 June 1886, p. 73/I.
169. Ibid., p. 42.
170. Ibid., p. 45.
172. Ibid., p. 237.
173. "Notes on Passing Events", Commonweal, 8 May 1886, p. 41/I. In his diary, Cobden-Sanderson relates a conversation on 1st April 1884: "We then got on to hero-worship, which Morris denounced..." (Journals of T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, vol. 1, p. 180).
174. "Fancy a Carlylean aristocracy of talent, the country under the benevolent rule of Senior Wranglers and LL.D.'s! (J. Bruce GLASIER: William Morris and the Early Days of The Socialist Movement, p. 101).
175. Past and Present, p. 156.
176. Ibid., p. 168.
177. Ibid., p. 170.
178. Ibid., p. 135.
179. Ibid., pp. 171-2.
180. Ibid., p. 159.
181. Ibid., p. 174.
182. Ibid., pp. 232-3.
183. Ibid., p. 241.
184. Works, vol. XXIX, ch. VIII.
186. Ibid., p. 264.
187. Ibid., p. 261.
188. Ibid., p. 241.
189. Ibid., pp. 261, 263. Morris takes up the expression, but only to write "I say further that the worst tyrants of the days of violence were but feeble tyrants compared with those Captains of Industry who have taken the pleasure of work away from the workmen" (The Revival of Handicraft, 1888 JACKSON, p. 22).
190. Ibid., p. 171.
191. Ibid., p. 201.
192. Ibid., p. 265.
193. Ibid., p. 269.
194. Ibid., p. 271.
195. Latter-day Pamphlets, Works, vol. XX, pp. 36, 166.
197. MARX AND ENGELS: The Communist Manifesto, pp. 36-7.
198. Past and Present, p. 147.
199. Ibid., p. 194.
200. Ibid., p. 196.
203. The Communist Manifesto, p. 36.
Notes to the Text: Part II, Chapter II

204. To Mrs. William Morris, 10 February 1881, Letters, p. 143.
205. To Mrs. Burne-Jones, 23 August 1882, ibid., p. 160.
206. Id., 1881, ibid., p. 148.
207. Margaret Greenman notes a typical fact in connection with Carlyle’s use of sources in Past and Present: “Art is hardly mentioned, and it is significant that Carlyle ignores in his source a detail that Morris would have eagerly grasped: Abbot Samson himself designs the murals and texts for St. Edmund’s shrine” (William Morris, Medievalist and Revolutionary, p. 15).
213. In particular, see Appendix XII of Book I, entitled Romanist Modern Art.
214. “It is also often said that I borrow from Pugin. I glanced at Pugin’s Contrasts once, in the Oxford architectural reading room, during an idle forenoon. I never read a word of any other of his works, not feeling, from the style of his architecture, the smallest interest in his opinions”, “I certainly owe nothing to Pugin...” (Modern Painters, Works, vol VI, pp. 428-9).
216. The Revival of Architecture, C.W., XXII, p. 328; Letters, p. 76 (“...a gimmerack palace of Pugin’s, Alton Towers...”)
217. See, in particular, Graham HOUGH: The Last Romantics, pp. 88-92.
219. MACKAIL, I, p. 89.
222. C.W., II, p. XVII.
224. See, for example, a letter written by Morris in 1875 to Fairfax C. Murray (C.W., XI, p. XXVI).
225. The Letter Art, 1877, Nonesuch, p. 496.
228. Address at the 12th Annual Meeting of the SPAB, May MORRIS, I, p. 149.
229. C.W., XVI, p. XVIII. Alfred Noyes (William Morris, p. 129), confusing another incident having nothing in common, dates this letter 1881.
231. “... What I remember of it is that Ruskin, no doubt with his usual exasperated tact, quietly insisted that Morris was entirely right”, wrote Henry W. Nevinson in the review of a book on Morris by P. Bloomfield (The New Statesman and Nation, 10 March 1934, p. 536/II).
233. Cf. May Morris’s evidence: “My father’s affection for Ruskin never altered as the years passed” (May MORRIS, I, p. 89).
234. Ibid.
238. MACKAIL, I, pp. 38 and 46.
239. Ibid., p. 47.
241. The Last Art, 1877, Nonesuch, p. 496.
244. May MORRIS, I, pp. 292-5.
245. C. W., XVI, p. XVII.
246. Sydney Cockrell’s Diaries. B.M. Add. Mss. 52 772 (28); C.W., XIV, pp. XVI-XVII.
247. MACKAIL, II, p. 201.
249. Sydney Cockrell’s Diaries, ibid., (34).
250. Fors Clavigera figures in Sotheby’s sale catalogue of Morris’s library in December 1898.
252. The Seven Lamps of Architecture, III, § 2; IV, § 2.
254. Ibid., II, V, § 14.
255. Ibid., I, XX, § 19.
257. The Stones of Venice, I, XX, § 33; II, VI, § 64.
258. Ibid., II, VI, § 78.
259. Ibid., I, XXX, § 1.
261. The Elements of Drawing, III, § 182.
262. The Stones of Venice, II, V, § 30-2; VI, § 37, 54.
265. MACKAIL, I, p. 220.
266. II, VI, § 56, 57.
268. Ibid., ch. XVII, § 32.
273. Ibid., § 13.
274. Ibid., § 26.
278. Ibid., Letter 44, § 4, 5.
279. The Seven Lamps of Architecture, IV, § 21.
284. The Stones of Venice, I, App. 17.
285. The Political Economy of Art, pp. 3-4. For convenience of reference, I refer, rather than to the 39 volumes of the Works, to the Everyman edition of this work, which also contains Unto this Last; the same naturally applies to that work also.
Thus, the "I don't know that I can do better than quote John Ruskin on this point, he says, is something which is good in itself, which you have acquired justly, and which you can use rightly." (The End and the Means, 1886, May MORRIS, II, p. 422).
May MORRIS, I, p. 294. Similarly, note that when he cites the works of Ruskin among his favourite reading in reply to the Pall Mall Gazette enquiry, he feels it necessary to add in parentheses: "especially the ethical and politico-economical parts of them" (Letters, p. 247).

382. The Stones of Venice, II, VI, § 3.
383. Ibid., § 8.
384. Ibid., § 75.
385. Ibid., § 76.
386. Ibid., § 7.
387. Ibid., § 40. Earlier, in Modern Painters, Pt. IV, IX, § 6, he had written: "God alone can finish".
Notes to the Text: Part II, Chapter II

388. Ibid., § 10.
389. Ibid., § 11.
390. Ibid., § 10.
391. Ibid., I, XXI, § 13.
392. Ibid., § 11 and 14.
393. Ibid., II, VI, § 11-14.
394. Ibid., § 16.
395. Ibid., § 21.
396. Ibid., § 12.
397. Ibid., § 26.
398. Ibid., § 29.
399. Ibid., § 15.
400. Pre-Raphaelitism, § 1.
402. The Lesser Arts, 1877, Nonesuch, p. 496.
403. Art under Plutocracy, 1883, JACKSON, pp. 139-40.
407. Val d’Arno, VI, § 146.
408. The Stones of Venice, II, VI, § 38.
409. Ibid., I, II, § 1.
410. Ibid., § 17. It equally occurs to Ruskin to advocate a careful balance between beauty and usefulness, while completely dissociating the two concepts: see, for example, The Political Economy of Art, pp. 5-6.
411. Ibid., II, VI, § 16.
412. The Political Economy of Art, Preface, p. XX.
413. Unto this Last, Preface, p. 113.
417. Ibid., II, § 28.
418. Ibid., I, II, § 17.
421. Commonweal, 15 May 1886, p. 50/II; Cf. C.W., XIX, p. XXXVI.
424. E. R. PEASE: The History of the Fabian Society, p. 27.
425. Ibid., Appendix I, p. 278.
427. Commonweal, 20 April 1889, p. 125/II.
428. Dona TORR: Tom Mann and His Times, pp. 80-3.
431. Unto this Last, p. 187.
432. Cf. E. M. Forster’s comment; “For it was the voice of one who had never been dirty or hungry, and had not guessed successfully what dirt and hunger are’’ (Howards End, Penguin Books, p. 48).
433. The Stones of Venice, II, VI, § 15.
435. Cf.: “But note further; there is another relation between us than of idler and labourer; the much more direct one of Master and Servant (Fors Clavigera, Letter
28, § 10).
439. Commonweal, 15 May 1886, p. 50/II.
441. *Unto this Last*, p. 163.
443. *Ibid.*.
449. *Unto this Last*, p. 149.
452. *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 29, § 3.
454. *The Political Economy of Art*, p. 3.
478. *Unto this Last*, p. 135.
480. *Unto this Last*, pp. 118-122.
484. *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 7, § 2. On 26 March 1886, he wrote to Sydney Cockerell, whose close links with Morris are well known, “Of course I am a Socialist – of the most stern sort – but I am also a Tory of the sternest sort” (Cockerell Papers R.M. Add. Mss. 52751; cf. V. MEYNELL’s *Friends of a Life-Time*, p. 26).
485. A serious and interesting study of the Guild of St. George can be found in W. H.
Notes to the Text: Part II, Chapter III

488. *Unto this Last*, p. 152.
490. *Unto this Last*, p. 147.
500. Works, XXXIV, p. 533.
501. To an unidentified correspondent, 4 September 1882, May MORRIS, II, p. 584.
502. MACKAIL, I, p. 220.
504. May MORRIS, II, p. XXXII.
505. *Commonweal*, 15 May 1886, p. 50/II; C.W., XIX, p. XXXVI.
508. *How Shall We Live Then?* 1889, pp. 9-10.
509. "Honesty is the Best Policy, or The Inconvenience of Stealing – a Dialogue", *Commonweal*, 5 November 1887, p. 357/11.
512. Cf. THOMPSON, p. 312.
514. To Robert Thompson, 24 July 1884, Letters, p. 204.

Part II Chapter III

1. Cf. Lenin’s judgment: “Marx was the genius who continued and consummated the three main ideological currents of the nineteenth century, as represented by the three most advanced countries of mankind: classical German philosophy, classical English political economy, and French socialism combined with French revolutionary doctrines in general” (Works, vol. XXI, p. 50).
2. *Commonweal*, 12 June 1886, p. 88/II.
10. Ibid., p. 163.
11. Ibid., p. 160.
12. Ibid., pp. 214-5, n.
13. Ibid., p. 167.
15. Ibid., p. 159.
16. Ibid., pp. 171-5.
17. Ibid., p. 197.
18. Ibid., p. 160.
19. Ibid., p. 213, n.
21. SAINT-SIMON: Textes Choisis, ed. Dautry, pp. 94 and 99. Rather than refer the reader to the 47 volumes of the Oeuvres de Saint-Simon et d’Enfantin (1865-78), I thought it preferable, in view of the abundant repetitions in Saint-Simon’s writings, to make use of this excellent collection which includes the essential texts as well as the edition of selected works published by G. Gurvitch under the title La Physiologie sociale.
22. He would have appreciated much less still Saint-Simon’s opinions upon work. “Man is naturally lazy; a man who works is only driven to overcome his laziness by the need to supply his wants or by the desire to procure pleasures for himself” (Ed. G. Gurvitch, p. 71).
23. Socialism, Utopian and Scientific., p. 15; Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 212-3
24. This allusion to the fight in the International against Bakunin and his supporters ties up with Morris’s own preoccupations after his tussles with the anarchists in the Socialist League.
26. Although our conclusions are not identical, I am indebted to some extent to the work of investigation carried out by Gustav Fritzsch in his very debatable but serious book, William Morris’s Sozialismus und anarchistischer Kommunismus (1927).
27. How I Became a Socialist, 1894, Nonesuch, p. 656.
31. Far from being hostile to Socialism, Stuart Mill had written in The Principles of Political Economy: “If the choice were to be made between Communism with all its chances, and the present state of society with all its sufferings and injustices, if this or Communism were the alternative, all the difficulties, great or small, of Communism would be but as dust in the balance. We are too ignorant, either of what individual agency in its best form or Socialism in its best form can accomplish, to be qualified to decide which of the two will be the ultimate form of human society” (Bk. II, ch. I, sec. 3). Now Morris had perhaps read the Principles, since in 1883 he wrote, in Art under Plutocracy, “you must agree with John Stuart Mill in his doubt whether all the machinery of modern times has lightened the daily work of one labourer” (JACKSON, p. 145), and he repeated, the following year, in Art and Socialism, “In the opinion of John Stuart Mill, it is doubtful if all the mechanical inventions of modern times had done anything to lighten the toil of labour” (Nonesuch, p. 637). It is, in fact, in the Principles that we read “It is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the daily toil of any human being” (Bk. IV, ch. VI, sec. 2). It is perhaps true that Morris had only picked up this quotation in Capital, where it is the subject of critical comment by Marx (p. 405).
32. “A passage in Considérant’s ‘Destinée Sociale’ was often quoted with glee and emphasis – where the author talks of certain modern habits and adjacents of life
that should be modified or dismissed, and speaks of "the ferocious, the inevitable, the untameable piano." (C.W., XII, pp. IX-X).

33. Since successive editions of Fourier are variably available for different works, and since repetitions are abundant from one book to another, I considered it advisable to restrict references to three sources. The first is the excellent *Fourier* by F. Armand and R. Maublanc (1937); it has a remarkable introduction and provides an anthology of selected texts which brings out all aspects of his ideology. This edition, which has become rare, has been re-issued in an abridged form by F. Armand in his *Textes Choisis* (1953), and, as it is readily available, I refer to it whenever possible. My third source will be *La Destinée sociale*, by V. Considérant, when it gives us precise formulations which dispense with long quotations.

35. Ibid., p. 58.
37. Ibid., p. 61.
38. Ibid., p. 129, n. 1.
39. Ibid., p. 149.
40. Ibid., pp. 69-70.
41. Ibid., p. 30.
42. Ibid., p. 90.
46. Ibid., p. 91.
48. Ibid., I, p. 290.
50. Ibid., pp. 151-2.
53. See below, p. 459.
57. Ibid., p. 538.
58. Ibid., p. 382.
60. MACKAIL, II, pp. 243-4.
63. Ibid., p. 302.
66. Ibid., p. 67.
67. See below, Part III, chapter I.
69. *Destinée sociale*, II, pp. XVII-XVIII.
74. Ibid., pp. 305-6.
75. Ed. Armand, p. 143.
76. Ibid., pp. 95-6.
77. Ibid., p. 141.
79. Destinée sociale, II, p. 50.
83. Ibid., II, p. 54.
84. Ibid., I, p. 248.
87. Ibid., pp. 160-1.
88. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 215. In fact, Fourier wrote: “the love of dirt is a necessary incentive for enrolling children into the Little Hordes, for helping them to endure happily the disgust attaching to filthy work, and to create for themselves, in the career of muckiness, a vast field of industrial glory and unvarying philanthropy” (Ed. Armand-Maublanc, II, pp. 233-4).
90. Ibid., pp. 142-3.
94. Ibid., p. 43.
95. Ed. GUYOT: L’Idée socialiste chez William Morris, p. 56.
98. Note, in passing, that this desire does not appear at all in the work of Considerant.
100. Walthamstow Mss, J. 193.
103. Ibid., pp. 15-6.
104. Ibid., p. 21.
105. Ibid., pp. 104-5.
106. Ibid., p. 172.
107. Ibid., pp. 212-3.
108. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 227.
110. Ibid., p. 103.
111. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 226.
113. Ibid., p. 142.
114. MACKAIL, II, p. 97. According to Thompson (p. 307), Morris read Owen’s writings from 1882, but no source is quoted to justify the assertion. What is curious is that Morris does not mention Owen in his lectures or articles before 1885.
116. Walthamstow Mss, J. 193; a letter from May Morris to Scheu, 25 August 1885. I.L.S.G., Amsterdam (Scheu Correspondence).
119. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 208 and 278.
Notes to the Text: Part II, Chapter IV

121. The Hopes of Civilization, Ibid.
122. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 209.
123. Ibid.
127. "Communism and Anarchism", Correspondence, Commonweal, 17 August 1889, p. 281/I.
130. "Answers to Previous Inquiries", Commonweal, September 1885 (Supplement), p. 87/II.
131. The Political Outlook, 1886, May MORRIS, II, p. 279.
132. Commercial War, 1885, Ibid., p. 311.
133. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 178, n. 1.
134. Ibid., p. 278.
135. The Hopes of Civilization, 1885, Signs, pp. 102-3.
136. "Review", Commonweal, 10 July 1886, p. 117/II.
137. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 217.
139. On this subject, one cannot too strongly recommend the reading of Elwood P. LAWRENCE's study, Henry George in the British Isles.
141. Ibid., pp. 289 and 308.
142. H. M. HYNDMAN: The Record of an Adventurous Life, pp. 281-2; see also pp. 290-3.
143. MARX and ENGELS: Letters to Americans, pp. 127-9.
144. MARX and ENGELS: On Britain, p. 517.
145. This preface is not included in the English edition of the book.
148. "Henry George", Justice, 5 April 1884, p. 4/1-II.
149. "Notes" Commonweal, 15 October 1887, p. 329/I.
150. "Notes on News", Commonweal, 12 November 1887, p. 361/II.
151. "Notes on News", Commonweal, 8 June 1889, p. 177/II.
152. THOMPSON, pp. 852 and 856.
154. Ibid., p. 329.
155. Ibid., pp. 330-1.
156. Ibid., pp. 344-5.
157. Ibid., p. 381.
158. Ibid., p. 382.
159. Ibid., p. 384.
160. Ibid., p. 385.
162. See below: Part III, chapter V.
163. How I Became a Socialist, 1894, Nonesuch, p. 656.
164. A detailed bibliography is to be found in the above-mentioned study of Morris by Gustav Fritzche (pp. 127-8).
166. See Kropotkin's letters to Morris, B.M. Add. Mss. 45 345.
168. To Bruce Glasier, 1st December 1886, Letters, p. 263.
Here is an extract from a letter from Morris to Joynes, written on 3 February 1885, when the newly-founded League was becoming organised. It seems to me to show very clearly his ideological position and his behaviour as a man: "I have made Kitz's acquaintance lately; like most of our East-Enders he is certainly somewhat tinged with anarchism or perhaps one may say destructivism; but I liked him very much. I called on the poor chap at the place where he lived, and fairly gave me the horrors to see how wretchedly off he was; so it isn't much to wonder at that he takes the line he does" (B.M. Add. Mss. 45345).

C.W., XX, p. XXI.

May MORRIS, II, p. XVI.

Paroles d'un révolté, p. 314.


Ibid., p. 2-3.

Ibid., p. 104.

Ibid., p. 117.


Ibid., p. 241 and 244.


The chronology of these articles is to be found in Mutual Aid, p. 10.

Mutual Aid, p. 147.

Paroles d'un révolté, pp. 204-5.

The Conquest of Bread, p. 38.

Ibid., p. 112.

Ibid., p. 92.

Ibid., pp. 110-2.

Ibid., p. 140.

Ibid., pp. 176-9.

Ibid., pp. 97 and 107.

Ibid., p. 108.

Ibid., pp. 85 and 190.

This trait of Kropotkin's is brought out by Hyndman: "At first I tried to argue with him about his Anarchist opinions... I found this was quite hopeless. You could pin him to nothing, and his capacity for genial misrepresentation of Social-Democratic thought and principle and argument transcended belief" (op. cit., p. 262).


Memoirs of a Revolutionist, pp. 359-62; Paroles d'un révolté, p. 121.

Paroles d'un révolté, pp. 138-9.

The Conquest of Bread, p. 28.

Bruce GLASIER, op. cit., p. 63.

Part II, Chapter IV

1. "When he undertook to write his own romance of the future - "News from Nowhere" - he produced perhaps the most thoroughly and deeply anarchist conception of the future society that has ever been written" ("In Memory of William Morris", Freedom, November 1896, p. 109/II).

2. See, in particular, Guy A. ALDRED: Pioneers of Anti-Parliamentarianism, pp. 11-21.

3. May MORRIS, II, p. XVIII. In truth, Morris said to Sydney Webb, on 13 October 1895, after a lecture by the latter at Kelmscott House: "The world is going your way at present, Webb, but it is not the right way in the end" (R. Page ARNOT: William Morris, the Man and the Myth, p. 108). And Page Arnot had this
The remark recounted to him by Webb himself. It is clear that Bernard Shaw was not lacking in nerve.

4 The Daily Chronicle, 6 October 1896, p. 9/IV; The Clarion, 10 October 1896, p. 325/III.

5 Mrs. TOWNSEND: “William Morris and the Communist Ideal”, Fabian Tract n° 167 (1912), p. 17.


7 H. V. WILES (William Morris of Walthamstow, p. 97) quotes passages from a speech of Attlee’s, on 21 October 1950: “I think he would rejoice at the great social changes, the greater fellowship, and the sweeping away of injustices. He would see that we are striving at something.”

8 “Steeped in the lore of the Viking peoples, and himself something of a Viking. Morris recreates in the romances the corporate life which has been the strength down the centuries of the Nordic races. Had he been alive today, Morris would have seen in the Fascist Corporations the modern equivalent of the Guilds whose working he describes so lovingly” (Adam NEIL: “William Morris, Pioneer of Fascism. The Impossibility of Socialism”, Fascist Weekly, 30 March 1934, p. 7/1-II).


10 Esther MEYNELL: Portrait of William Morris, p. 163.


12 M. GRENNAN: William Morris, Mediævalist and Revolutionary, pp. 57 and 154.


14 Max NORDAU: Dégénérescence, I, pp. 176-7. (Quotation translated from French text, not from original German.)


16 V. DUPONT: L’Utopie et le roman utopique dans la littérature anglaise, p. 506.


18 “... He was in no mood for half-measures: his programme was the marxist one, its motive was the class-war, its culmination was to be a violent revolution” (The Lost Romantics, p. 102).


20 MACKAIL, I, p. 80.

21 Ibid., II, p. 89

22 How I Became a Socialist, 1894, Nonesuch, p. 656; MACKAIL, II, p. 80.

23 MACKAIL, I, p. 79.

24 Ibid., II, p. 94.


26 The Observer, 6 November 1949, p. 7/VI. This article of Shaw’s drew a letter of protest to The Observer from Sydney Cockerell, whose political competence was certainly open to question (ibid., 20 November 1949, p. 5/1).

27 Cf E. R. PEASE: History of the Fabian Society, Appendix III, p. 287. We learn from the same source that her husband, H. Halliday Sparling, occupied the same position from 1892 to 1894.


29 William GALLACHER, Last Memoirs, pp. 81, 114-5.

30 C. Desmond GREAVES: The Life and Times of James Comyns, p. 96.

31 Lenin on Britain, p. 93.


33 Ibid., pp. 9-7.

34 Ibid., p. 170.

35 Ibid., p. 32.
36. 18 October 1890, p. 81/I-II-III.
37. Ibid., p. 142.
38. THOMPSON, p. 891.
39. GLASIER, ibid., p. 143.
40. This word is in italics in the text.
41. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. VI.
42. THOMPSON, p. 891.
43. J. W. Mackail to S. Cockerrell, 10 July 1940, B.M. Add. Ms. 52374 (19)
45. Ibid., pp. 217-8.
46. Ibid., p. 334.
47. Ibid., p. 218.
48. Ibid., p. 322.
49. Ibid., p. 226.
50. Ibid., p. 362.
51. Ibid., p. 254.
52. Ibid., pp. 175-6.
54. E. P. Thompson had already denounced the imposture of Lloyd Eric Grey in an article published in Arena, April-May 1951, under the title: "The Murder of William Morris".
55. See, for example, Philip HENDERSON: William Morris, his Life, Work and Friends, 1967, passim.
58. T. B. SHAW, "Morris as Actor and Dramatist", Saturday Reuen, 10 October 1899, p. 386/1.
63. May MORRIS, II, p. XII.
64. How I Became a Socialist, 1894, Nonesuch, p. 656. On 24 August 1899, G. Ward wrote to S. Cockerrell. "I do not think he had any distinctively socialist ideas before he joined Hyndman. He would have been sure to speak of it." (May MORRIS, II, p. 603).
65. C.W., XXII, p. XX.
66. C.W., XIX, p. XVI.
67. May MORRIS, II, p. 74, n.
69. MACKAIL, p. 97.
70. I point out for the record (for as I have said, I doubt whether responsibility for it can be attributed to Morris) that the "list of books for Socialists" published in Communism on 12 June 1886, mentions German and French editions of Capital.
71. F. R. PEASE, ibid., pp. 24-5; May MORRIS, II, p. XI.
72. Communism, 20 November 1886, p. 272/III.
74. RAMSAY MACDONALD and W. MORRIS: A Summary of the Principles of Socialism, p. 62.
75. THOMPSON, p. 836. Among the titles of books to read in English, the "books for Socialists" list includes The Communist Manifesto of 1847.

Notes to the Text: Part II, Chapter IV

66. C.W., XIX, p. XXV.
67. Communism, 18 June 1887, pp. 197/II.
68. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 190, 231 and 278.
69. Ibid., pp. 212-4.
71. Engels to F. K. Wissnenowsky, 22 February 1888, MEW, vol. 37, p. 27.
73. Socialism, its Growth andOutcome, pp. 219 and 232.
74. True and False Society, 1886, JACKSON, p. 300.
75. Ibid., 8 November 1884, p. 3/1.
76. See below, Part III, Chapter I.
77. C.W., XIV, p. XXV.
78. To the Editor, The Pall Mall Gazette, 2 February 1886, Letters, p. 346.
79. 18 October 1890, p. 101.
80. To Jane Alice Morris, 1885, Letters, p. 170.
81. To Andreas Scheu, 20 August 1884, ibid., p. 212.
82. "Mr. E. Magnussen, of whom I learned to read the language of the North, and with whom I studied most of the works of that literature" (To Andreas Scheu, 3 September 1883, ibid., p. 186).
83. "...We all talk nothing but Icelandic together" (To Mrs. Coronio, 11 February 1873, ibid., p. 54).
85. Ibid., The Education, The Pall Mall Gazette, 1886.
86. May MORRIS, II, p. XXIII.
89. I.S.G., Amsterdam, Scheu Correspondence.
90. May MORRIS, II, p. IX.
91. To Mrs. W. Morris, 18 March 1884, Letters, p. 195. The account of this march to Highgate Cemetery is to be found in a letter from Eleanor Marx to Laura Lafargue, dated 17 March 1884. The beginning of this letter is in the E. Buxtehude Collection in Paris, the last letter is in the Institute of Social History at Amsterdam (G. J. W.
92. Pedestrians and History, C.W., XXII, p. 311; May MORRIS, I, p. 139.
94. "Futuristic Essays on Socialism", Communism, 25 January 1890, p. 28/II.
95. The Hope of Civilization, 1885, Sign, p. 107.
96. "I have canvassed the footnote about Marx and the 'prolet and pedagog' for the reprint of the articles on Socialism" (Annie Besant to W. Morris, 9 March 1886, B.M. Add. Ms. 51434).
97. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 230-47.
98. "Fabian",付予, XI April 1889, p. 120.
100. May MORRIS, II, pp. 75-6.
104. To Mrs. Burne-Jones, September 1883, Letters, p. 182.
B.M. Add. Miss. 45 335.

It is a curious and perhaps significant fact that May Morris (II, p. 173) quotes only the first entry and Mackail (II, p. 177) only the second, neither of them quotes the third.

Frank FAIRMAN: The Principles of Socialism made Plain, p. II.

The most serious study of Hyndman, despite the debatable character of its political analysis, is that of Chusichi Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism. See also E. P. Thompson’s book, which abounds in interesting details, and Hyndman’s own memoirs, The Record of an Adventurous Life and Further Reminiscences. Lenin’s judgment of Hyndman is included in the collection Lenin on Britain.

Engels to Sorge, 7 December 1889, Letters to Americans, p. 220.

In particular, I found in the Marx-Engels Archives of the I.L.S.G. in Amsterdam (L. 2476) a letter from Hyndman to Engels, dated 30 October 1884, in which he asks him to write for Justice an article upon the recent electoral victory of the German social democratic party. Either Engels never replied or the terms of his reply were such that Hyndman preferred to suppress it, as he did Marx’s letter of 2 July 1881.

See the article by Emile Bottigelli: “La Rupture Marx-Hyndman” in the Ammali dell’Istituto Giorgiacomo Feltrinelli, 1960, pp. 621-9, and my commentary on this article, printed under the same title, in La Peneté, n° 101, January-February 1962, pp. 133-5. See also H. M. HYNDMAN: The Record of an Adventurous Life, pp. 251-2, and E. Belfort BAX: Reminiscences and Reflections of a Mid-and-Late Victorian, pp. 52-3.

This letter is published after that of Marx in the above-mentioned article by E. Bottigelli.

MARX and ENGELS: Letters to Americans, p. 130.

H. M. HYNDMAN: The Record of an Adventurous Life, pp. 271, 272, 288.

H. M. HYNDMAN: “William Morris”, Justice, 10 October 1896, p. 4/II. In 1911, he referred to having renewed the contact in January 1882 (The Record, p. 349).


May MORRIS, II, p. XIII.

Ibid., p. 602.

To C. E. Maurice, 1st July 1883, Letters, p. 176.

To Mrs. Burne-Jones, August 1883, ibid., p. 181.

To Jane Alice Morris, 28 August 1883, ibid., p. 180.

How I Became a Socialist, 1894, Nonesuch, p. 656.

The Record of an Adventurous Life, p. 357.

May Morris writes: “My father never rejoined the Social Democratic Federation, nor had he any intention of doing so, though friendly relations were resumed with Mr. Hyndman, and he wrote a few articles occasionally for Justice when pressed to do so” (C.W., XIX, p. XXIV).

Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 185.

Art and the People, 1883, May MORRIS, II, p. 404.

May MORRIS, II, p. 178.

Ibid., pp. 78-9.

To Jane Alice Morris, 1883, Letters, p. 170.

Ibid., p. 183.


Eleanor Marx to Laura Lafargue, 17 March 1884, E. Bottigelli Collection, Paris.

Commonwealth, March 1885, p. 16/1.

Archives of the Socialist League, 123, I.L.S.G., Amsterdam. Cl. H. COLLINS and
Chimen ABRAMSKY Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement, p. 301.


147. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 196-7.

148. 24 February 1885, Correspondence of the Socialist League, I I S G., Amsterdam.

149. To date, the best documentation of the Aveling couple is to be found in another book by Ch. TSUZUKI: The Life of Eleanor Marx.

150. Commonweal, February 1885, p. 5/II.

151. B.M. Add. Mss. 46 345.

152. "...they are well worth attending on all grounds" (To J. W. Browne, 10 March 1885, Hammersmith Central Reference Department, SSR 22). See Appendix II, p. 586.

153. In the same issue (p. 23/1) is also a paragraph with his initials commemorating the anniversary of the death of Marx, "our greatest teacher". In the issue of August 1885, Aveling inserted another paragraph announcing the publication in Germany of Book II of Capital (p. 72/1).


156. MARX and ENGELS: Letters to Americans, p. 131.


158. Ibid., pp. 45-7.


161. "I was afraid to say all I thought to him lest he should blab," Morris wrote to Andreas Scheu, 9 July 1884, Letters, p. 202.


164. F. Engels to Laura Lafargue, 9 August 1887 (Engels-Lafargue Correspondence, II, p. 57).

165. To Andreas Scheu, 4 January 1885, Letters, p. 299; E. B. BAX, ibid., p. 81.


168. The Early Literature of the North, 1887, p. 450.

169. The Tables Turned; or Napkins Awakened, May MORRIS, II, p. 546.

170. To Joynes, 4 August 1889, May MORRIS, II, p. 600.

171. How I Became a Socialist, 1894, Nonesuch, p. 656.


174. To J. L. Mahon, 14 October 1887; to John Glasse, 23 September 1887 (R. P. ARNOT, ibid., pp. 74 and 86).

175. For example: "I will consult with him next Wednesday" (To Bruce Glasier, 24 April 1886, Letters, p. 253).

176. THOMPSON, p. 605.


178. "Notes on News", ibid., p. 233/II.


181. The Arts and Crafts of To-day, 1889, JACKSON, p. 241.

182. See below, Part III, chapter X.

183. Cf. "Bax, à la recherche, by means of half-digested Hegelian dialectic, of extreme and paradoxical propositions ..." (F. Engels to Laura Lafargue, 28 April 1886, Bottigelli Collection, Paris); "Bax ... has concocted his own form of socialism which he takes for true marxist thought, and so does a great deal of harm" (F. Engels to Bebel, 18 August 1886, MEW vol. 36, p. 510).
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189. Ed. BERNSTEIN, My Years of Exile, p. 206. Note the difference of tone between the two accounts. Bernstein, who seems had any time to pick with Marx, espewed views on “good-hearted abolitionism” out of “regret”.

190. Warde to S. Cockcroft, 24 August 1879, May MORRIS, II, p. 88. The Marxes in concert with publishing the letter in an appendix, but to same extent in his postscript. In this text were revealed by Warde.


195. 18 July 1884, ibid., p. 128.

196. In October 1884, ibid., p. 151.

197. These was the pre name of Emma Marx.

198. 8 November 1884, ibid., p. 155.

199. Engels-Lafargue Correspondence, I, p. 245.


201. Engels-Lafargue Correspondence, 31 December 1884, Bonneville Collection, Paris. See Appendix II, p. 284.


204. TROUSSELMAN, p. 414, n. 3.

205. In fact, the writer to Schurr on 4 January 1885: “I intend, as far as I go, to turn into a weekly if possible” (Letter, p. 229).

206. Lafargue to F. Engels, 3 February 1885, Engels-Lafargue Correspondence, I, p. 20.

207. Engels to Lafargue, 1 January 1885, Marx, vol. 30, p. 266.

208. Engels Marx to Laura Lafargue, 12 April 1885, Bonneville Collection, Paris.

209. Thus was Marx’s daughters’ name for Engels.


211. 2nd Congres, March 1885, pp. 12/13, 13/14, 14/1.

212. TROUSSELMAN, p. 436.

213. “New smashers are getting scarce every day, so much so that even the negroes of the United States have been forced to use Manchester, Staffordshire pottery, and Birmingham hardware” (THOMPSON, p. 473, n. 2).

214. Thé Dépôtment de Pois, 1885, LE MIÈRE, p. 129.


216. See in Propaganda, ibid., p. 16.

217. To One Receiver’s” Ceremony, October 1885, pp. 88/11.


254. On this point, it is appropriate to add the following to the references given in the preceding note: *Architecture and History*, 1884, C.W., XXII, p. 313; *Muses and the Way Out*, 1884, May MORRIS, II, p. 153; *Art and Socialism*, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 638; *What Socialists Want*, 1884, LE MIRE, p. 219-23; *Art and its Producers*, 1888, JACKSON, p. 213-5; *Art and Crafts of To-Day*, 1889, ibid., p. 257; *Address at the 12th Annual Meeting of the SPAL*, 1889, May MORRIS, I, p. 155; *Nesos from Nowhere*, 1890, Nonesuch, pp. 87, 90.


257. I cite particularly: *Useful Work versus Useless Toil*, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 613; *How We Live and How We Might Live*, 1884, ibid., p. 572; *True and False Society*, 1886, JACKSON, pp. 303-16; *The End and the Means*, 1886, May MORRIS, II, p. 420; *The Tables Turned*, 1887, ibid., pp. 529-30; *Monopoly*, ibid., p. 853; *The Hopes of Civilization*, 1885, Signs, pp. 89-96, etc.

258. It is relevant to remark, moreover, that in *The Origin of the Family*, Engels, when discussing the succession of Western social structures, completely omitted the problem.


266. *Capital*, p. 837.


Part III, Chapter I

1. See above, pp. 68-73.
2. Letters, p. 236.
3. 13 May, 1883, ibid.
4. “I am in low spirits about the prospects of our ‘party.’” (Ibid.)
5. In 1890, in his last contribution to Communist, Morris, referring to the first years of struggle, well described this initial uncertainty: “When we first began to work together, there was little said about anything save the great ideals of Socialism, and so far off did we seem from the realisation of these, that we could hardly think of any means for their realisation, save great dramatic events which would make our lives tragic indeed, but would take us out of the sordidness of the so-called ‘peace’ of civilisation. With the great extension of Socialism, this also is changed” (“Where Are We Now?”. Communist, 15 November 1890, p. 361/II, May MORAIS, II, p. 5151).
6. “But as it is, the best thing one can wish for this country at least is, for some great and tragical circumstances, so that if they cannot have pleasant life, they may at least have a history and something to think of...” (To Mrs. Alfred Baldwin, 26 March 1874, Letters, p. 62).
7. Ibid., p. 64.
8. “...I fear that I must say that if it does not come about, it will be owing to some turn of events which we cannot at present foresee...” (The Last Arts of Life, Nonesuch, p. 501).
So with the same resolute admiration, I will write in all these words, and the Ms. of the "Descent of man", for Morris was not as a sister: they must needs wish with the-huntings or the Wolfing men at all; they might not wish the women of their own House: to the Wolfing men all the Wolfing women were as sisters: they must needs wish with the Hunttings of the Wolfings or the Wolfings Hunttings of the Wolfings. All the Wolfing men all the Wolfing women were as sisters: they must needs wish with the Hunttings of the Wolfings or the Wolfings Hunttings of the Wolfings.

27. The Development of Modern Society, cited.; Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 25. ENGELS, op. cit., p. 119. See also: "The House of the Wolfings", p. 5 ("...the men of the House should not wish the women of their own House: to the Wolfing men all the Wolfing women were as sisters: they must needs wish with the Hunttings of the Wolfings or the Wolfings Hunttings of the Wolfings.

28. The Development of Modern Society, cited.; Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 25-6. ENGELS, op. cit., p. 94. That until the publication of Morgan's book Ancient Society (1877), there was total confusion between the men and the tribe that esquezy and endogamy had given rise to ludicrous interpretations. Now Morris appears to have known of Morgan, and, as he was dealing with these matters in 1886, it seems difficult to imagine that he could have drawn his knowledge from anyone other than Engels, either directly or indirectly. However, it must be noticed that his exposition of gentile society was less complete than that of Engels, who established the sexes (p.r. — phraternity) — the tribe — confederation of tribes — people. (Op. cit., particularly pp. 97-104).


31. According as such authors (which they called Things) were of the House or of the Midmark or of the whole Folk, they were held at the due Thing-Steads in the Wood also from either acre or meadow (as was the custom of our forefathers for long after); and as such Things would all the men of the House: when the Midmark or the Folk be present man by man." (The House of the Wolfings, C.W., XIV, p. 7).

32. "As to a meeting-place, were there any small matters between man and man, these would the Alderman or one of the Wardens deal with, sitting in Court with the neighbours in the wide space just outside the Gate: but more of greater matters, such as mainlaysings and blood-sweats or the making of war or the ending of it, as the choosing of the Alderman and Wardens, such matters must be put off to the Folkmore, which could not be held in the place aforesaid where was the Donia-ring and the Alar of the Gods; and at that Folkmore both the Shepheard-Folk and the Woodland-Caries foregathered with the Dalesmen, and duly had their say." (The Roots of the Mountain, C.W., XVL, p. 9).


35. "I am reminded here, by the by, of the German professor who, after the Wolfings came out, wrote and asked learned questions about the Mark: expecting, I fear, equally learned answers from our Poet who sometimes dreamed realities without having documentary evidence of them." (C.W., XIV, XXVI).

36. "Dissatisfied and unwelcome homage was paid to the book from another point of view. It was of course, as it had appeared, a friend found Morris in one of his explosive moments after a letter he had received from a "fool of a German". The writer, a distinguished archaeologist, said that he had bidden regard himself as being acquainted with all the maces in existence, from which knowledge might be drawn with regard to Teutonic life in its later tribal stage, when the Romans held Gaul, but that he now found himself in the presence of higher learning that reduced him to humility. He therefore begged his honoured, illustrious and most erudite correspondent to give him the newly found国资rel to which alone by his miraculous and never-to-be-overplus fulness and accuracy of the documentation before him. ‘Doesn’t the fool realize,’ demanded Morris at the top of his voice, ‘that it is a romance, a work of fiction — that it is all LIES! Hasn’t the popular age..." (C.W., XXVI).
ever heard of creative imagination, or known as artist of any kind... Ex pate Her- 
rodem, don’t you know?... Just as old Owen could fill out an extinct bird with only 
a bone or two to go upon, an artist who knows his business can fill out an epoch on 
the strength of half a dozen details... Well, more than half a dozen, but all the 
same...” (H. Halliday SPARLING: The Reluctant Press and William Morris, 
Master-Craftsman, p. 50).

37. “Yet this much I will say; if our civilization is to carry us no further, to 
nothing better, I for one wish we had never gone so far, and there must be many of 
the same mind; rather than we should never be older than we are, I would we had 
altogether been shepherds or what not among the hills and valleys; men with lit- 
tle knowledge, but desiring much, rough men if you please but not brutal; with 
some sort of art among them, genuine at least and spontaneous; men who could 
be moved by poetry and story; working hard yet not without leisure; getting 
drunk sometimes, quarrelling sometimes, even to dry blows; may if the times were 
heroic enough sometimes with point and edge; neither malicious nor over 
soft-hearted; well pleased to live and ready to die - in short, men, free and equal” 
(Of the Popular or Decorative Arts, 1880-81, May MORRIS, II, 70-1).

38. Art and Socialism, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 635.
40. Cf. ENGELS, op. cit., pp. 177-8; for example: “Their individual ability and 
courage, their sense of freedom, their democratic instinct which in everything of 
public concern felt itself concerned... what else were they than the characteristics 
of the barbarian of the upper stage - fruits of his gentile constitution?” (p. 177).

41. The House of the Wolfings, C.W., XIV, p. 145.
42. 17 November 1888, Letters, p. 302.
43. The House of the Wolfings, ibid., pp. 45-6.
44. “... I must, at least, try to make you understand that the whole of the duties of a 
freeman in this society had reference to the community of which he formed a part, 
and that he had no interests but the interest of the community; the assertion of 
any such private interests would have been looked upon as a crime, or rather a 
monstrosity, hardly possible to understand” (The Development of Modern Society, 
ibid.).

45. “In this early period the individual is so far from feeling no responsibility to the 
community, that all his responsibilities have relation to the community” (ibid.)
46. “... Every freeman had to take his share of responsibility for carrying on the 
business of the community” (Early England, 1886, LE MIRE, p. 166).
47. “Since an Eagle could not marry an Eagle, the Eagles must either get their wives 
by violent robbery... or have some other society at hand into which they could 
marry, and who could marry into their society. It used to be thought that the 
vilolent robbery was the method, but I believe that the second was the one used” 
(The Development of Modern Society, ibid.).
49. Socialism, the Growth and Outcome, p. 21.
50. The Roots of the Mountains, C.W., XIV, p. 11.
52. “...the healthy barbarism out of which our present society has grown...” (The 
Hope of Civilization, 1885, Signs, p. 85).
53. “Unheard of peoples thrusting on into Europe; nation mingling with nation, and 
blood with blood; the old classical exclusiveness is gone for ever” (The History of 
Possum-Drumming, 1879, MACMILLAN, p. 133).
54. “... The chief element of life that is given expression to was freedom - the freedom 
of the many - in the realm of art at least” (ibid., p. 165).
55. “The period of barbarism or disorder was long doubtless, but the new order rose 
out of it at last bright and clear” (Architecture and History, 1884, May MORRIS, I,
Notes to the Text: Part III, Chapter II

56. "Did the world go back... when the remnants of the ancient civilizations were overwhelmed by the barbarism which was the foundation of modern Europe? We can all see that it did not" (The Arts and Crafts of To-day, 1889, JACKSON, p. 241).

57. It is to the point to observe in passing that the same idea is expressed by Engels (op. cit., pp. 171 and 178): "Only barbarians," he writes, "are able to rejuvenate a world in the throes of collapsing civilization." (p. 178).


59. Of the Popular or Decorative Arts, 1880 or '81, May MORRIS, II, p. 68.

60. Art and Socialism, ibid., p. 635.


63. Art and Socialism, ibid., p. 636.

64. The Development of Modern Society, ibid.

65. Of the Popular or Decorative Arts, ibid., p. 68.

66. Individualism at the Royal Academy, May MORRIS, II, p. 142.

67. Clearly we are not taking into account here the anti-religious aspect of the myth of the "noble savage" and, in particular, its implicit criticism of the dogma of the Fall. I readily accept that this rationalist content, of undeniable significance, is of great importance, but my approach is on a different level.

68. The History of Pattern-Designing, 1879, MACMILLAN, p. 165.


70. One can well imagine what William Morris's reaction would have been in the face of atomic or thermonuclear terrorism!


75. See below, chap. X.

76. ENGELS, op. cit., p. 178.

77. Ibid., p. 124.

78. Ibid., p. 204.

79. The Arts and Crafts of To-day, 1889, JACKSON, pp. 241-2.

Part III, Chapter II


2. The Aims of Art, 1886, Nonesuch, p. 588.

3. The Depression of Trade, 1885, LE MIRE, p. 134.

4. "Ease and happiness, which, believe me, is the birthright of every man..." (ibid., p. 135).

5. "What is the object of Revolution? Surely to make people happy. Revolution having brought its foredoomed change about, how can you prevent the counter-revolution from setting in except by making people happy?" (News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 86).


7. I shall be content, as is my unfailling habit, to refer to Morris's own evidence. On 9 January 1896, only nine months before his death, the poet replied to an American correspondent who had asked whether he had changed his mind about Socialism: "I have not changed my mind on Socialism". The italics are Morris's (MACKAIL, II, p. 292).
8. George Duveen notes that "Plato, like More, was a disappointed man, but his disappointment came from inability to act, whereas More was disillusioned with action" (Sociologie de l'Utopie, p. 6). If this assertion is true of Plato and More, it could not be so of Morris, who lived in a period when the prospect of a transformation of society had become historically possible.

9. See below, p. 315.


12. "Surely one day making will be thought more honourable, more worthy the majesty of a great nation than destruction" (The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization, 1881, JACkSON, p. 260).

13. "I will never accept the counsels of despair, but will believe that the good time is on the road" (Speech at a Meeting of the Kyre Society, 1881, May MORRIS, I, p. 197).

14. "I think those days will come, wild as the prophecy seems" (Mr. Morris on Art Matters, The Manchester Guardian, 21 October 1882, reprinted by The William Morris Society, p. 7).

15. "We who once were fools and dreamers then shall be the brave and wise" (All for the Cause, Chants for Socialists, p. 9). Similarly, he wrote: "...true it is a dream; but dreams have before now come about of things so good and necessary to us, that we scarcely think of them more than of the daylight, though once people had to live without them, without even the hope of them" (The Lesser Arts, 1877, Nonesuch, p. 516).


17. "Indeed for my part though I find much stupidity and more ignorance in the world, I find but little malice" (Letter to the Rev. Oswald Birchall, 7 November 1887, B.M. Add. Mss. 45 374).

18. W. Scawen BLUNT: *My Diaries*, p. 229. Which is why one can only regard with scepticism the entry of 2 June 1891: "With Morris too, whom I again saw much of, I found the same political despondency. He had just published his "News from Nowhere". The picture he draws in it of social communism is pretty, but he, too, is not very hopeful of its ever coming true" (ibid., pp. 52-3).

19. Letter to W. Manson, 23 January 1881, Walthamstow Mss, J. 532. Mackall, who quotes fragments of this letter (II, pp. 92-3) dates it 1883, despite the evidence of the original, and this would seem more probable, Rossetti having died on 9 April 1882.


21. "Mrs. Morris too was a great dreamer, and they used to compare notes together" (Memorials of G. B. J., II, p. 6); see also Oswald DOUGHTY: *A Victorian Romanti-...*, p. 355.

22. To Mrs. Coronio, Summer 1876 (Letters, p. 78). May Morris dates this letter during the month of March (C.W., XII, p. VII).

23. To Jane Alice Morris, 21 May 1886, *ibid.*, p. 254. Philip Henderson, who has little sympathy for Morris's political ideas, solemnly explains in a note that this dream meant that Morris feared that socialism might become a reality in his lifetime:


26. "Yes, surely! and if others can see it as I have seen, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream" (*News from Nowhere, ibid.*, p. 197).

27. But suddenly I saw as it were a black cloud rolling along to meet me, like a nightmare of my childish days; and for a while I was conscious of nothing else than being in the dark, and whether I was waking, or sitting, or lying down, I could not tell" (ibid.).
28. John Ball says to his visitor: "Thou hast been a dream to me as I to thee" (A Dream of John Ball, Nonesuch, p. 263).

29. Letters, p. 328

30. C.W., II, p. XVII.


34. "Sometimes when I am idle and doing nothing, pleasant visions go past me of the things that may be," he wrote in 1891 in a letter to his mother (Letters, p. 16).

35. Journals of Travel in Ireland, 1874-1873, C.W., VIII, p. 168.


37. To Mrs. Alfred Baldwin, 22 October 1873, ibid., p. 59.


39. "I do so hate... everything vague in politics as well as in art" (MACKAIL, II, p. 8). This need for precision has been neatly summarised by Francis Meynell: "Morris believed in design. He wanted society to be designed, he wanted economies to be designed, just as he wanted chairs, curtains, books to be designed - not to be left to haphazard competition and greed" (Appreciations, p. 27).


41. News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 4.

42. The Beauty of Life, 1880, Nonesuch, p. 564.


44. "And o'er the weltering tangle a glimmering light is shed" (The Day is Coming, Chants for Socialists, 1885, p. 5; C.W., IX, p. 181).

45. "When once we see the light of life / Gleam through the tangle of to-day" (Drawing near the Light, 1888, C.W., IX, p. 188).

46. "...And the knowledge of their progress cannot fail to rouse our imaginations into picturing for ourselves that life at once happy and manly which we know social revolution will put within the reach of all men" (A Factory as it Might Be, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 646).

47. "When happy dreams have just gone by,
   And left us without remedy
   Within the un pitying hands of life." (The Earthly Paradise, p. 217).


49. "I walked along with the others musing as if I did not belong to them" (A Dream of John Ball, Nonesuch, p. 237).

50. "I stammered as I yea-said him; for John Ball was looking strangely at me with a half-smile, and my heart beat anxiously and fearfully..." (Ibid., p. 241).

51. "I felt anxious to speak to my companion, and withal I felt that I must hasten, or for some reason or other I should be too late" (Ibid., p. 263).

52. "...They asked me a great many questions about the country I came from and the manners of life there, which I found rather puzzling to answer; and doubtless what answers I did give were puzzling enough to them" (News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 160).

53. "...I should like to have gone on talking with the older man, who could understand something at least of my wonted ways of looking at life, whereas, with the younger people, in spite of all their kindness, I really was a being from another planet" (Ibid., p. 126).

54. "...I rather felt as if the old man, with his knowledge of past times, and even a kind of inverted sympathy for them caused by his active hatred of them, was as it were a blanket for me against the cold of this very new world, where I was, so to say, stripped bare of every habitual thought and way of acting" (Ibid., p. 96).

55. Ibid., p. 127.

56. Ibid., p. 194.
"The only weight I had upon my heart was a vague fear as it does toward bed-time concerning the place where I should wake in the morning."

"If we must lose you, I want you to see all that you can see first before you go back again.

"Love me? I said, 'You back again? Am I not to go up to the house with you? What do you mean?' She smiled somewhat slyly, and said, 'Not yet— we will not talk of that yet ...'

"...and with one look at Ellen I turned and went with Dick, desiring if I must say the truth, whether I should see her again."

"...and we could arrange for her to have work of art that the labourer will love — and that is all"

All the same, let me quote the opinion of Edouard Gugot: "...it is as poet and artist much more than as a politician and sociologist that Morris sees the future. Suppress all that is bad and ugly in modern society and replace it with things that delight both heart and mind, that, according to him, is what is needed. The earth must be given back its charm and freshness, all labour must become a work of art that the labourer will love — and that is all."

"News from Nowhere is already printed in America, and I am going to print it here for a shilling" (To Bruce Glassier, 3 December 1890, Letters, p. 330). Morris does not appear ever to have been put out or worried by the fact that this American edition was a pirate one.

"News from Nowhere, yes, I did authorize it to someone recommended by the party: Bebel, I think. As to John Ball I do not think I have, and you are welcome to it, and I should be glad if you would do so" (To Andreas Scheu, 18 September 1893, Letters, p. 355). — In fact, it was Liebknecht's wife who translated News from Nowhere into German. On 27 March 1896, Liebknecht, hearing of Morris's failing health, wrote him a warm and friendly letter which ended with the words: "Au revoir, dear Morris! My wife, who translated your splendid 'News from Nowhere' sends her love." (B.M. Add. Mss. 45 345).

"He was immensely pleased when I told him that I had read his News from Nowhere, and that Ann also had read it" (W. Seawn BLUNT: My Diaries, p. 55).

"He read us out several of his poems... He did it as if he were throwing a bone to a dog, at the end of each piece breaking off with 'There, that's it', as much as to say, 'You may take it or leave it as you please'." (Ibid., p. 57)

"...we then adjourned to the Socialist meeting, where he read the conversational chapters in News from Nowhere."

"Yet, slight and fantastic as it is, it has been translated into three European languages, and has probably spread the knowledge of Morris as a Socialist more
Notes to the Text: Part III, Chapter II

widely than all his other writings.” (J. W. MACKAIL. An Address., n.p.) – See also MACKAIL, II, p. 243.

79. “Socialism and Millthorpe, I used hardly say, swept me out of these academic and semi-political surroundings into a different world – the world of a new society which was arising and forming within the structure of the old. William Morris represented this new society more effectively and vitally then anyone else of that period; because away and beyond the scientific forecast he gave expression to the emotional presentment and ideal of a sensible free human brotherhood – as in John Ball, or News from Nowhere.” (Edward CARPENTER. My Days and Dreams, p. 216).

80. “News from Nowhere made me a Socialist; and I have never had cause to regret either the fact or the manner of my conversion.” (G. D. H. COLE. Revaluation, p. 133). See also his lecture, William Morris as a Socialist, p. 1.


82. C. Desmond GREAVES: The Life and Times of James Connolly, p. 37.

83. Dona TORR: Tom Mann and his Times, pp. 186-93.

84. Of the Popular or Decorative Arts, May MORRIS, II, p. 63.

85. “...a reflection from that peace of the future will illumine the turmoil and trouble of our lives, whether the trouble be seemingly petty, or obviously tragic; and we shall, in our hopes at least, live the lives of men...” (Useful Work versus Useless Toil, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 623.) – Bruce Glasier recounts this saying of Morris: “Were it not for my work and the hope of Socialism, I believe life would be positively undurable to me.” (Op. cit., p. 91).

86. “Every age has had its hopes, hopes that look to something beyond the life of the age itself, hopes that try to pierce into the future; and, strange to say, I believe that those hopes have been stronger not in the heyday of the epoch which has given them birth, but rather in its decadence and times of corruption...” (The Hopes of Civilization, 1885, Signs, p. 84).

87. “...if in these days there were no great ideal ahead of us, no hope for a life on earth better than the earth has yet seen,...then all the promises and hopes for progress are mere delusions and lies.” (Misery and the Way Out, 1884, May MORRIS, II, p. 163).

88. “...the economical changes which are in progress must be accompanied by corresponding developments of men’s aspirations.” (A Factory as it Might Be, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 646)

89. “...the ideal; which, after all, we must all of us more or less form in our minds when we have once fixed our belief in the regeneration of the world.” (The Society of the Future, 1888, May MORRIS, II, p. 460).

90. Monopoly, or How Labour is Robbed, 1887, JACKSON, p. 200.

91. “‘ideals’. are mostly attempts by persons of strong hope to embody their discontent with the present.” (The Socialist Ideal, C.W., XXIII, p. 258).


94. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, 1893, p. 321.


97. Art and Labour, 1884, LE MIRE, p. 113.

98. “Correspondence”, Commonwealth, 25 February 1888, p. 61/II

99. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 278.

100. A Factory as it Might Be, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 646.


102. “No amount of preaching, or enthusiasm, or of devotion even, will induce the workers, with whom the world’s future lies, to accept and to act upon mere abstract propositions of what they have a right to aspire to; necessity must push
Part III, Chapter III

2. To C. E. Maurice, 22 June 1883, ibid., p. 175.
5. How I Became a Socialist, 1894, Nonesuch, p. 659. Walter Crane relates this remark of Morris. "Settle the economic question and you settle all other questions. It is the Aaron's rod which swallows up the rest" (Walter CRANE: William Morris is Whistler, p. 12).
7. To Robert Thompson, 24 July 1884, ibid., p. 207.
10. "...the means of production, to be owned by no individual but used by all as occasion called for its use" (How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 583).
11. I shall be content with a brief selection, the interest of which lies in the diversity of publications and dates. "The intelligent determination of the workers to put an end to wage-slavery and capitalism by nationalizing all the means of production and exchange is the one thing necessary for carrying on a realized revolution" (Socialism in England, 1884), Justice, 9 August 1884, p. 4/II; May MORRIS II, p. 148). "All Socialists who can be considered to have any claim in that surety agree in putting forward the necessity of transforming the means of production from individual into common property." (The Policy of Abstinence, 1887, May MORRIS II, p. 434); "...handing over the management of the whole natural resources of the country, together with the machinery for using them, into the power of the Combined Workers..." (Notes from Nonsense, 1890, Nonesuch, pp. 102-3); "The resources of nature therefore, and the wealth used for the produc-
tion of further wealth, the plant and stock in short, should be commensurized" (Communism, 1893, ibid., p. 667); "... the assumption by the community of all the means of production and exchange, to wit, the land, the mines, the railways, the factories, etc., and the credit establishments of the country" (Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, 1893, p. 280).

13. Monopoly, or How Labour is Robbed, 1887, JACKSON, p. 207.
14. The Day is Coming, Chants for Socialists, p. 4.
16. A Dream of John Ball, ibid., p. 219, Cf.: "Nor shall half be reaped for nothing by him that sowed no seed" (The Day is Coming, Chants for Socialists, p. 4).
17. "If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, or organise itself as a class; if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and as such sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class" (MARX and ENGELS: The Communist Manifesto, p. 35).
19. Art under Plutocracy, 1883, JACKSON, p. 139.
22. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 173.
27. MARX and ENGELS: The Communist Manifesto, p. 32.
30. How We Live and How We Might Live, 1894, Nonesuch, p. 574.
31. News from Nowhere, ibid., p. 75.
32. Architecture and History, 1884, C.W., XXII, p. 316.
33. "... The furthering of the class struggle till all classes are abolished" (The Hopes of Civilization, 1885, Signs, p. 103).
34. "Notes on News", Commonweal, 28 September 1889, p. 305/II.
35. Dawn of a New Epoch, 1885, Signs, pp. 184-5.
36. Useful Work versus Useless Toil, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 610.
37. Art and Labour, 1884, LE MIRE, p. 117.
38. At a Picture Show, 1884, May MORRIS, II, p. 418.
43. Communism, 1893, Nonesuch, p. 669. Similarly he writes: "... those who developed the greatest share of certain qualities not necessarily the most useful to the community, would gain a superior position from which they would be able to force the less gifted to serve them" (The Policy of Abstention, ibid.).
44. Communism, ibid.
45. C.W., XX, p. XX.
46. Fabian Essays, p. 186.
47. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 280.
49. True and False Society, 1886, JACKSON, p. 316.
50. THOMPSON, p. 800.

51. Although the passage is well known and easily available, I feel it essential for the clarification of the development of my argument to reproduce it here. One cannot fail to be struck by the similarity of the ideas expressed by Marx and by Morris not only in the estimate made of the first stage, but also in the vision of communist society in its higher stage, as we shall discover in later chapters. Here, then, a Marx's text:

"What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as if it had developed on a basis of its own, but on the contrary as it emerges from capitalist society, which is thus in every respect tainted economically, morally and intellectually with the hereditary diseases of the old society from whose womb it is emerging. In this way the individual producer receives back again from society, with deductions, exactly what he gives. What he has given to society is his individual amount of labour. For example, the social working-day consists of the sum of the individuals' hours of work. The individual working-time of the individual producer is that part of the social working-day contributed by him, his part thereof. He receives from society a voucher that he has contributed such and such a quantity of work (after deductions from his work for the common fund) and draws through this voucher on the social storehouse as much of the means of consumption as the same quantity of work costs. The same amount of work which he has given to society in one form, he receives back in another.

Here obviously the same principle prevails as that which regulates the exchange of commodities so far as this exchange is of equal values. Content and form are changed because under the changed conditions no one can contribute anything except his labour and, on the other hand, nothing can pass into the possession of individuals except individual objects of consumption. But, so far as the distribution of the latter among individual producers is concerned, the same principle prevails as in the exchange of commodity-equivalents, i.e. equal quantities of labour in one form are exchanged for equal quantities of labour in another form.

The equal right is here still based on the same principle as bourgeois right, though principle and practice are no longer at daggers drawn, while the exchange of equivalents in commodity exchange only exists for the average and not for the individual case.

In spite of this advance, this equal right is still continually handicapped by bourgeois limitations. The right of the producers is proportional to the amount of labour they contribute; the equality consists in the fact that everything is measured by an equal measure, labour.

But one man will excel another physically or intellectually and so contributes in the same time more labour, or can labour for a longer time, and labour, to serve as a measure, must be defined by its duration or intensity, otherwise it ceases to be a standard measure. This equal right is an unequal right for unequal work. It recognises no class differences because every worker ranks as a worker like his fellows, but it tacitly recognises unequal individual endowment, and thus capacities for production, as natural privileges. It is therefore a right of inequality in its content, as in general is every right. Right can by its very nature only consist in the application of an equal standard; but unequal individuals (and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal), are only measurable by an equal standard in so far as they can be brought under an equal observation, can be regarded from one definite aspect only, e.g. in the case under review, they must be considered only as workers and nothing more be seen in them, everything else being ignored. Further, one worker is married, another single, one has more children than another and so on. Given an equal capacity for labour and thence an equal share in the funds for social consumption, the one will in practice receive more than the other, the one will be richer than the other and so forth. To avoid all
these inconveniences, rights must be unequal instead of being equal.

But these deficiencies are unavoidable in the first phase of communist society when it is just emerging after prolonged birth-pangs from capitalist society. Right can never be higher than the economic structure and the cultural development of society conditioned by it.

In a higher phase of communist society, after the tyrannical subordination of individuals according to the distribution of labour, and thereby also the distinction between manual and intellectual work, have disappeared, after labour has become not merely a means to live but is in itself the first necessity of living, after the powers of production have also increased and all the springs of co-operative wealth are gushing more freely together with the all-round development of the individual, then and then only can the narrow bourgeois horizon of rights be left far behind and society will inscribe on its banner: 'From each according to his capacity, to each according to his need.'” (Karl MARX: *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, pp. 29-31).

52. “The first phase of Communism, therefore, still cannot produce justice and equality; differences, and unjust differences, in wealth will still exist, but the exploitation by one man of many will have become impossible, because it will be impossible to seize, as private property, the means of production, the factories, machines, land, and so on. And so, in the first phase of Communist society (generally called Socialism) “bourgeois justice” is not abolished in its entirety, but only in part, only in proportion to the economic transformation so far attained, that is, only in respect of the means of production” (LENIN: *The State and Revolution*, p. 67).

53. It is not only the theoretical content of the fragment of *The Critique of the Gotha Programme* which we find in Morris, but even certain images. Is it not tempting to put side by side “after prolonged birth-pangs” and “the new order which the old has long carried in its womb”? (*The End and the Means*, May MORRIS, II, p. 421).


55. *True and False Society*, 1886, JACKSON, p. 315.

56. MARX and ENGELS: *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 11.


58. “I am speaking for those who are complete Socialists, or let us call them Communists!” (“Where Are We Now?”, *Commonweal*, 15 November 1890, p. 361/I; May MORRIS, II, p. 517).

59. See below, Chapter V.


63. Ibid., p. 666.

64. JACKSON, pp. 312-5.


66. THOMPSON, pp. 854-5.


69. “It will only be when the first stage which recognizes the principle at least is complete that our present inequalities can be, I won’t say abolished, but even much palliated” (To the Rev. George Bainton, 10 April 1888, *Letters*, p. 288).

70. *Communism*, 1893, Nonesuch, p. 668.


72. *Socialism, its Growth and Outcome*, 1893, p. 286.


74. *How We Live and How We Might Live*, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 580.
Here are a few typical examples: "He will do effectively what work is required of him according to his capacity, and of the produce of that work he will have what he needs" (How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, Notesuch, p. 377). "All must work according to their ability, and so produce what they consume - that is, each man should work as well as he can for his own livelihood, and his livelihood should be assured to himself; that is to say, all the advantages which society would provide for each and all of its members" (Useful Work versus Useless Toil, 1884, Notesuch, p. 611). "...As all must consume wealth so all shall produce wealth" (The Depression of Trade, 1885, LE MIRE, p. 132). "...the due exercise of one's energies for the common good and capacity for personal use we say form the only claims for the possession of wealth..." (The Policy of Abstinence, 1887, May MORRIS, II, p. 436). "In short, the maxim which true Socialism would carry out is "From each what he can do; to each what he needs"." (Socialism, 1885, May MORRIS, II, p. 195). "...a condition of society in which every one is able to satisfy his needs in return for the due exercise of his capacities for the benefit of the race" (Letters, 1888, p. 282). "...The aim of true society, which I must now again assert to be the satisfaction of the wants of everybody in the community in return for the exercise of their faculties for the benefit of the community. Or as the formula of the Communists has it: To every one according to his needs, from every one according to his capacities" (Equality, 1888, May MORRIS, II, p. 201).
WILLIAM MORRIS
THE MARXIST DREAMER

PAUL MEIER
VOLUME TWO

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CHAPTER FOUR

The First Stage

The first lines of News from Nowhere describe a lively and colourful argument which took place one evening at the rooms of the Socialist League. Beginning with vigorous assertions about what would happen "on the Morrow of the Revolution", the conversation finally shaded off into picturing what might be "the future of the fully developed new society".¹ Right from the beginning, then, Morris's utopia suggests the successive stages of post-revolutionary history. If William Morris's friends were incapable of the same long-sighted anticipatory vision (and who can blame them?) they were, on the other hand, very eloquent and sometimes very proxim in their guesses about "the morrows of the revolution". An acute phase in this debate occurred in 1887, after the publication by E. B. Bax in Commonweal of an article entitled "The Morrow of the Revolution".² In his capacity of editor of the weekly, Morris contented himself with participating very briefly in the discussion, but so significantly that we must take note of it, because he has in this indirect way given us his personal ideas on the point: our attention to it is the more necessary because Morris, usually possessed by the utopian vision of much longer term, laid very little stress upon what the days after the seizure of power might be like.

It must be admitted that Bax's article was somewhat thin and betrayed an astonishing ideological confusion. After a short introduction in which he expressed the very reasonable opinion that it is better not to be caught unprepared, he envisaged the nationalisation of the means of production and distribution as a mid-term measure, with, meanwhile, the establishment of municipal workshops to eliminate the competition of capitalist production. Immediate measures would be the introduction of the eight-hour day and the application of a law fixing maximum prices and minimum wages. These were the only two definite measures he foresaw. But he gave as much importance to a third measure which he developed in an argument as long as it was woolly: the abrogation of current civil rights and the return to Roman law and the Code Napoléon! One can easily imagine the consternation felt over such lucubrations by Friedrich Engels who had occasion, during the following summer, to give him a dressing down on the subject; but not unkindly, because he considered that Bax, when he was hauled down from his lofty speculations, was capable of a rare "breadth of vision".³

On 9 July 1887 there appeared in Commonweal⁴ the first part of an article by Paul Lafargue in reply to Bax. It does not seem impossible that Engels suggested that he should write it, but that is only a hypothesis and I know of nothing in the correspondence to support it. However, what the correspondence does tell us is that Lafargue sent his article to Bax, who sent it on
to Morris, who was so pleased with it that he translated it himself and published it. Much more, he gave the article the following editorial comment:

“Our friend, Citizen Paul Lafargue, has communicated the following interesting article to us, which is surely well worth our attention; it is probable that his view of the question will be nearer to that taken by most of us in the League than that of our comrade Bax.”

This comment, signed “Ed.”, constitutes the clearest possible expression of position. Lafargue’s article must have made a deep impression upon Morris and gained his unqualified support, for, three weeks later, he referred to it publicly in his lecture The Policy of Abstention:

“... our friend Paul Lafargue’s late article in Commonweal points out clearly enough the direction of the steps to be taken in the re-organization of society.”

Note, in passing, that at that moment Morris was in open struggle with Aveling’s “parliamentary faction”, which had the support of Engels, and that he was perfectly aware of the intimate bonds which existed between the latter and the Lafargues. Certainly during this period his own relations with Engels and his group must have been at their least cordial. But sectarianism and pettiness were not faults with which Morris could be reproached.

His total approval of the revolutionary measures recommended by Paul Lafargue encourages me to reprint here the essential passages of the article:

“... In the industrial towns the working-class will be master; they will become so many revolutionary centres, which will have to federate in order to gain the country for the revolution, and to overcome the resistance which may spring up in the commercial and maritime towns.

In the industrial towns the Socialists will have to get hold of the local governments, to arm and give military organisation to the workmen... to open the prisons to let out the petty thieves, and put under lock and key the big ones, such as bankers, financiers, big manufacturers, landowners, etc... Not that one would do them any harm, but to treat them as hostages responsible for the good behaviour of their class... all ex-capitalists are disenfranchised until the revolutionary party is absolutely victorious...

... The revolutionary government would in each city have to house, clothe and feed all its inhabitants. To that end it would decree all house-property national and would undertake the arrangement of housing. It would drive the idle rich from their mansions to install the workers in them, reserving those best situated for families having many children... The unwholesome hutchés of the poor would be demolished and their sites cleansed by fire...

The revolutionary government would nationalise the big shops... Commissions would be organised by streets and quarters to distribute the contents among the workers, who for the first time in their lives would be clad in the good and handsome stuffs which they themselves have made.

... The revolutionary government would set up great common
restaurants in the various quarters, where a minimum of substantial nourishment would be given to the inhabitants every day. The cooking would be done in common, and those who wished to eat their meals at home could take away their food but it would be good to encourage meals in common, so as to develop fraternity and equality.

In order to feed the population, the revolutionary government would take over the provision-stores, wine vaults, breweries, etc., and would at once organise a municipal catering service, which would put itself into communication with the market-gardeners and small peasants of the suburban countryside. This service, which would suppress the middlemen between the producer and the consumer, would allow the peasant to obtain a better price for his products. To gain the peasant over to the revolutionary cause is one of the first duties of the Socialist party, and for that purpose, besides general measures (such as abolition of interest, of debts of all kinds, of taxes and the conscription, etc.) we must not hesitate to increase his gains, and make his labour easier by advancing to him seed and manure of the best quality and the most improved agricultural machines."

The continuation of Lafargue's article appeared a week later. It was of more general nature and we find far fewer definite suggestions in it. The point against Bax is clearly made, and he accuses him, together with English socialists (thus provoking a note of protest from Morris), of having as his ideal "the capitalist public service (post office, telegraphs, police, etcetera) brought to perfection": Lafargue's sin here was probably bad faith rather than ignorance, for one could scarcely impute Fabianism or opportunism to poor Bax; it is also possible that this aggressiveness was inspired by the links which Bax, in all innocence as usual, had established with that great manoeuvrer, Champion, on the editorial staff of the magazine To-day. It is true that the measures advocated by Bax in his article in Commonweal were very mild and hardly revolutionary, and it is natural enough that Lafargue should have declared fiercely in his reply:

"The very day of the revolution the first decree of the revolutionary government will be the confiscation of capitalist property (mines, spinning-mills, foundries, railways, etc.) and its transformation into social property."

The system which Lafargue envisaged combines, without there being necessarily any inconsequence or contradiction on his part, central authority and local power, not only that of the municipalities, but also of the workers in each factory:

"... it will be the workers themselves who will become their own employers and their own directors."

He even goes much further and advocates a system of self-management, in terms which reveal the extent to which French socialist thought, even Marxist, was still tinged with Proudhonism:

"... the workmen will come to an understanding among themselves as to
choosing their engineers and foremen, and on the sharing of the gains of their business."

Of course, one must avoid attaching more doctrinal importance to these declarations of principle than they possessed at the time. In our day, the solid reality of socialist experience in various countries makes them very serious. It could not have been the same at a time when revolutionary programming was still in the realm of speculation, where the extent of divergencies on essential points of organisation was not apparent, because their material consequences could not be suspected, and when, in consequence, theoretical responsibility was less heavy and less painful than it is today.

In the measures proposed by Lafargue, there was nothing which could displease William Morris. No doubt the latter must have smiled, or have been a little irritated, on reading that “the end of the social revolution is to work as little as possible and to enjoy as much as possible”. On this point, his conception of work, socialism and life itself was in complete disagreement with that claimed by the author of *Droit à la paresse*. But should one not see the fact that he disdained to contradict an assertion so contrary to his dearest convictions as an additional indication of his acceptance of the whole?

How many of the ideas of Lafargue are to be found again in *News from Nowhere*! However, there is one missing, of which Morris did not grasp the scope, that of the alliance needed between the urban proletariat and the peasantry. Lafargue, a leader of the French workers’ party, living in a country of small rural properties, conscious of the reasons for the failure of the nineteenth-century revolutions in France, having assimilated the lessons which his father-in-law Karl Marx had drawn from them, knew that, through this alliance, “the proletarian revolution obtains that chorus without which its solo song in all peasant nations becomes a swan song”. No doubt William Morris also dreamed of resolving the contradiction between town and country, but the solution he foresaw was not a political act and was not directly written into his revolutionary strategy. He lived in a country where the problem of the little rural plot had no relevance, and neither he nor the other English socialists could be obsessed by this worry in the same way as the continental socialists.

But how many other of Lafargue’s suggestions were taken up by Morris: the federative system, revolutionary food supplies, the re-housing of workers, “the great clearing”, communal eating, the elimination of middlemen between producer and consumer! The methods proposed by Lafargue for implementing these measures were those of force and authority and, although he does not use the term, they define “the dictatorship of the proletariat”. Morris does not use this expression either, and if, as we shall see, it happens on a number of occasions that he speaks of the need for compulsion, he perhaps does so with less insistence and emphasis. The reason for this is very simple: it is that this first stage of the revolution, while he sees it as inevitable and accepts all the obligations it brings, is a transitional period which he hopes, without too many illusions, will be as brief as possible and which claims his attention far less than the second stage. He does not for a moment think to conjure it away, but he is quite satisfied to underwrite Lafargue’s forecasts without reserve, for they free him from the need of lingering over them himself. However, we must bear
In mind that, in Morris's clearly expressed thinking, as I analysed it in the last chapter, the new revolutionary power is, as it is for Lafargue, workers' power, with the working class identified with the State.

The following week, the essence of the debate reached its climax with the publication in Communist of a very confused reply from Bax. 11 He declared himself to be in agreement with Lafargue, but tried to justify himself by means of a really absurd argument:

"My subject," he declares, "was the marrow of the revolution, not the next generation, or even for that matter the next decade."

But to what else had Lafargue referred? The rest of his letter contains little of interest, but, in its conclusions Box starts another hare:

"The result of the social revolution will of course be the disappearance of the State, but as I believe, this result will be brought about by the turning of it and its machinery against itself rather than by a policy of mere destruction."

One fact emerges from this somewhat woolly sentence, and it is that Bax, despite all his theoretical knowledge, is completely contradicting the teaching many times reiterated by Marx, namely that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes,"12 Now, observed Marx, "all the revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it up," 13 and he concluded: "The state centralisation that modern society requires arises only on the ruins of the military-bureaucratic governmental machinery which was forged in opposition to feudalism." 14 Morris's position, in this respect, conforms with Marx's. In the same year 1887, he declared at the end of one of his lectures:

"... the anti-monopolists will find themselves in a position in which they will be forced to try to get hold of the executive, in order to destroy it and thus metamorphose society, not in order to govern by it and as they are now governed."

In truth, this position was to become less dogmatic later. When in 1893 he and Bax wrote the theoretical handbook Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, he admitted a sort of compromise which was not, it appears, altogether due to the influence of his collaborator. On the one hand, the destruction, pure and simple, of the bourgeois State apparatus seemed not only a difficult task, but perilous: he feared a sudden collapse of society and thought that the continuation of this apparatus, with a different content, would perhaps enable this risk to be avoided during the transition period. But above all, he envisaged a rapid growth of the executive powers of local groupings, which would quite naturally make the old centralised bureaucracy out of date. 15 One feels very strongly that, during these last years, his ideas about the specific characteristics of the first stage became weaker. His over-confident utopianism tended to outweigh his realism and led him to underestimate, to a much greater extent than formerly, the obstacles, difficulties and struggles that the revolution would find in its path after the seizure of power.

Morris's support for Lafargue's theses has its indicative value increased by the fact that the only other two occasions when he expressed his opinion were,
one before 1887 and the other during this last period, with its tendency that we have just pointed out.

In 1885, in Note J, the last of those accompanying the pamphlet publication of the Manifesto of the League and carrying the joint signatures of Bax and Morris, we find purely and simply the ideas which Bax was to develop two years later in his *Communal* article: "We venture to suggest that the first step in the state of transition into Communism might probably be the enactment of a law of a minimum of wages and a maximum of price applied to all industrial production, including the distribution of goods; its seems to us that this, coupled with the immediate abolition of all laws enforcing contract, would at once destroy the possibility of profit-making, and would give us opportunity for getting into working order the decentralised voluntary organisation of production which we hope to see take the place of the present Hierarchy of Compulsion." 17

Certainly, five years later, when Morris wrote *News from Nowhere*, he accepted these laws of maximum and minimum as being among the first applied by the revolutionaries. He considered them "necessary", but only gave them secondary importance and let it be understood that one would not get very far by ranking them higher. 18 But in 1885, clearly, he had not yet grasped the importance of the problem and had bowed to the wisdom of Bax, whose style is recognisable.

The ideas which we find expressed in 1892, in the lecture *Communism, i.e. Property*, are obviously more personal, and they are of some interest. According to him then, the first measures to be adopted would be: "the recognition of the citizenship of the great working class", which would be demonstrated by an appreciable rise in its standard of living; "their organization as the controllers of production and the markets" and "the abolition of the private monopoly in the raw material and tools necessary for the production of utilities". 19 These first measures are in the spirit of the *Manifesto* of Marx and Engels:

"... the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class, to win the battle for democracy". 20

And one observes that, far from sharing the impetuosity of Lafargue, he tends to show the same prudent patience as Marx, since he declares that these advantages will be gained "after a lapse of time, as makes it no dream today". Then, he concludes, "we shall be in the first stage of socialism." 21 This last phrase, perfectly precise, is in striking contrast to the phrasing of Note J of 1885, in which the measures envisaged would be "the first step in the state of transition into Communism", which clearly bears the mark of Bax, whose writings, in general, scarcely show a clear assimilation of the theory of two stages.

** * * *

This theory is formulated so explicitly and so frequently in Morris's works that one is astonished to discover such a lack of comprehension of it, such blindness about it, among the majority of his interpreters, even the most eminent. According to G. D. H. Cole,
"...The break to which he looked forward was even sharper than the Revolution as envisaged by Marx, and was unaccompanied by any transitional stage of proletarian dictatorship during which the workers, organised as a class, would exercise supreme authority for the purpose of bringing a fully Socialist society gradually into being... Morris envisaged the Revolution, as he described it in the early chapters of *News from Nowhere*, as leading straight to the institution of a classless society set free from governmental coercion and able to shape its course directly in accordance with the needs of the free spirit of man."  

Margaret Gеннан is no less categorical:

"...With the founding of the Socialist League he took his stand on the possibility of immediate communism on the break up of the old system."  

All that we have seen so far and all that we are about to see obviously disputes the validity of such interpretations.

As for Monsieur Ruyer, he delivers himself of a broad generalisation:

"It is essential... for a man passing from social state A to social state B to find some way of assuring his livelihood at all intermediate stages. The utopian confines himself to extolling stage B. He suppresses the most difficult part of the programme: ensuring social life in the intermediate stages."  

A very true remark, if only he had exempted William Morris from accusation under this head, which, unfortunately, he omits to do. While it is true that the majority of utopists contented themselves with describing an ideal society without bothering for a moment over ways of reaching it or stages to pass through. William Morris is an outstanding exception to the rule, which is one of the reasons why A. L. Morton was able to say that his utopia "was the first which was not utopian".  

In the previous chapter we studied the general characteristics which, for Morris, distinguish the first stage from the second, and we have just seen that revolutionary measures are needed, immediately after the revolution, to attain it. While it does not occupy an important place in his work, a brief description of certain aspects of this first period is nevertheless sketched in. He does not cease stressing the fact that it is a "transitional period... which will divide the present from the ideal", "a transitional condition, during which we must waive the complete realization of our ideal". Its economic basis will be "the means of production communized but the resulting wealth still private property". But henceforth it will be "impossible for any man to make his private profit from the compulsion of any man's labour". Everyone will reap "the full results of his labour". There will still, no doubt, be a system of wages and prices, there will still be buying and selling, but "the limit of price would be the cost of production, so that buying and selling would be simply the exchange of equivalent values".  

The victory of the revolution will consist of setting up, not a communist system, "which would be absurd", but "a revolutionary administration whose definite and conscious aim will be to prepare and further, in all available ways,
human life for such a system — of an administration whose every act will be of set purpose with a view to Socialism". All the material measures then taken will have an educative bearing, tending towards the transformation of human nature. It will, he writes, be:

"a period of transition, during which people would be getting rid of the habits of mind bred by the long ages of tyranny and commercial competition, and be learning that it is to the interest of each that all should thrive".

Despite all its imperfections, this new epoch will mark an immense advance on the capitalist era: in those days "we shall no longer be hurried and driven by the fear of starvation, which at present presses no less on the greater part of men in civilized communities than it does on mere savages. The first and most obvious necessities will be so easily provided for us in a community in which there is no waste of labour, that we shall have time to look round and consider what we really do want". Certainly it will not yet be the reign of plenty, and "there would be no place for the production of luxuries". Here Morris introduces a very characteristic exactitude:

"When the wares were of such kind as required very exquisite skill and long training to produce, or when the material was far fetched and dearly bought, they would not cease to be produced, even though private citizens could not acquire them: they would be produced for public use, and their real value be enormously increased thereby, and the natural and honest pride of the workman duly satisfied."

An observation typical of a thinker whose economic preoccupations never make him lose sight of what for him is always the essential: man himself.

If the balance sheet of the first stage cannot but be a credit one, since it wipes out the consequences of a blighted past and opens the way to a dazzling future, nevertheless the picture Morris suggests is sometimes a gloomy one. It will be a period bristling with difficulties and dangers, and he cannot look forward to it without some apprehension. It is a strange fact that this apprehension worried him for some years before he became a socialist and utopia had taken definite shape in his mind. In the course of a lecture given in 1880 he thought aloud before his listeners:

"... necessary changes may make life poorer for the rich, rougher for the refined, and, it may be, duller for the gifted — for a while; ... it may even take such forms that not the best or wisest of us shall always be able to know it for a friend, but may at times fight against it as a foe."

And that was the bourgeois consciousness of William Morris talking, expressing forebodings very natural in a rich artist, whose heart and reason turned him to socialism. How many others were able to go beyond such forebodings! Morris had the merit of going beyond, but they remained as a latent survival, behind his most solid and most complex analyses. We saw earlier, when considering the "parable" of 1884, that he saw the possibility of a return, during the post-revolutionary period, to a healthy and fertile barbarism. He greeted it joyously, for it brought a hope that the aged
"civilization" did not justify any longer; but his personal reaction remained mixed, and he only accepted the transitional period by keeping his eyes sub-
bornly fixed upon the days to come:

"True it is that I have for long got to think that in the early days of that freedom art will have a rough time of it, and for long perhaps will have to live a spartan life, foregoing many delicacies which I the weak child of a poorer and less manly time than that which is to come cannot help craving after. But what matter so long as art is alive and healthy? from that spare and spartan life she will rise to greater glories than she has ever attained as yet." 37

However, he managed to silence his last personal apprehensions, and while he describes the first stage without any illusions, it is from a desire to be objective in his analysis, and while expressing his certainty that the obstacles will be overcome. "You must not forget," he wrote to Rev. George Bainton, that

"the Socialism of today being like every vital movement a political one, that is to say one that embraces the daily life of the whole people, is forced to look to the transitional period as a practical business. Doubtless there will be much trouble and blundering over the carrying of society into this stage. We want the dying old system to make the experimental blunders for us so that the new order may set them right, which it can do because its action is based on its principles" 38

The new order, indubitably, will have many difficulties to overcome, and many among them will be the heritage of the old society, of which it will bear the "stigmata" as Marx put it. Men will first need to be taught the taste for work, and Morris is sure that work can become attractive to them:

"But work under such conditions as I have been trying to sketch out would, I am sure, be attractive to all except the exceptions, the monsters of vagabondage and loafing who are now bred by the excessive overwork which is the general lot of the workers or by the privileged idleness of the rich, and whose descendants might last through a few generations, but would soon melt into the general body of people living in the happy exercise of energy." 39

"Whatever difficulties you may have in organizing work in the earlier days of Socialism will not be with the specialists, but with those who do the more ordinary work." 40 "There would indeed be a natural compulsion which would prevent any man from doing what he was not fitted for, because he could not do it usefully; and I need not say that in order to arrive at the wealth I have been speaking of we must all work usefully." 41 "You will see that I admit the necessity for a transitional stage of progress. During that stage, before the habit of working for the whole was formed, some compulsion would have to be exercised. That compulsion would be found in the very remains of competition which would render the state imperfect; only it would be comparatively a fair competition: the means of labour no longer being engrossed by a privileged monopoly, every one would have free access to them, and be able to exercise his capacity to the utmost." 42 "Such a life, it is clear, will be pretty much the reverse of that which some opponents of the new order, scientists as well as meaner personages, profess to see in the advancing 'tyranny of Socialism'. But we are convinced that this life will be forced on the world. Yet that world
will not be wholly conscious of gradual and natural compulsion which it will have to yield to, and which it will find by its results to have been wholly beneficent." 41

In truth, in his inner heart William Morris was deeply worried. He strove to minimise the forms of the compulsion he knew to be necessary, he addressed himself to justifying it, but he feared nevertheless

"the danger of the community falling into bureaucracy, the multiplication of boards and offices, and all the paraphernalia of official authority, which is, after all, a burden, even when it is exercised by the delegation of the whole people and in accordance with their wishes." 42

So it is certain that the reproach of complacent optimism which is often made against Morris is unjustified and has its origin in an ignorance or a lack of understanding of the theory of two stages. The vision of a happy society, as depicted in News from Nowhere, is not an immediate perspective, but is located in a fairly distant future. The optimism which William Morris evinces about this distant epoch is not complacent, but reasoned, and no existing data permit us to say whether or not it is justified. But it would be going too far to say that his vision of the first stage is a pessimistic one, precisely because it leads into this higher stage and especially because it abolishes all traces of capitalist exploitation. Morris expresses it very well:

"We are prepared to face whatever drawbacks may accompany this new development with equanimity, being convinced that it will at any rate be a great gain to have got rid of a system which has at last become nearly all drawbacks." 43

... 

How long will this first stage last? Morris's replies to this question are varied and uncertain, and such uncertainty is very understandable: does it not still exist in our day? Moreover, he only made very few forecasts, and their nature varies according to their period. In 1888, after the shock of Bloody Sunday the previous year, he was generally inclined to caution and did not hesitate to say it would take "many generations" to carry out the transformation. 44 However, later, as we have seen, he became less aware of the size of the obstacles, and more inclined to confidence. In 1892, he said "from that stage to equality of condition, I believe, will not be a long journey ... and we shall find ourselves insensibly lapsing into it". 45 A year later, "truth to tell, I think that such a state of things could only embrace a very short period of transition to complete communism". 46 It would seem appropriate to find an intermediate moment in this evolution, between the two extremes: 1890 appears to me to be a date which is all the more interesting because it was just when News from Nowhere was written. In fact, so far we have only considered the lectures and articles. We might, it seems, find more definite data when William Morris passes, if I may use the expression, from theoretical utopism to utopian practice.

Now Morris's narrative contains a chronology, which so far no critic has thought about and which is really simple to trace. The revolution, the "great change", broke out in 1952 47 and the civil war ended two years later. 48 This
date should not cause a smile: it was a very cautious forecast, compared with the impetuous prophecies of contemporary socialists, and the very recent memory of Bloody Sunday was the cause of this caution. Several identical indications allow us to place the narrative at least two hundred years later, that is, in the second half of the twenty-second century, and not in the twenty-first century as is generally asserted. In the course of his conversation with the visitor, old Hammond says: “We have been living for a hundred and fifty years, at least, more or less in our present manner”, which would mean that the first stage lasted some fifty years. In fact, one may wonder whether Morris wrote “more or less” with the intention of keeping his freedom during the telling, because at times this estimate is contradicted. We must not forget that News from Nowhere was written from week to week as instalments in Commonweal and that the author never made the slightest revision. May Morris recalls this practice (which was, as is well known, usual in the nineteenth century) to excuse the few inconsistencies which crept in.

Other calculations we could make from chronological indications occurring in the text, would give us an appreciably longer period for the first stage. Old Hammond, in fact, is “over a hundred and five”. Now, at the beginning of his long account, he recalls memories from his early days, “when we were not so assured of peace and continuous plenty as we are now”, and he adds: “We were almost beginning again in those days: and they were brisk, hot-headed times.” In the course of his narrative, he returns to this point: “Much was left for the men of my earlier life to deal with.” So one would have to conclude that the stage of socialist reconstruction lasted more than a century. It is very difficult to say whether Morris noticed the contradiction which existed between these statements and the earlier one. And there is even the question of deciding whether a contradiction really does exist. When old Hammond says that life is “more or less” as it has been for a hundred and fifty years, that might mean that the essential fundamental tasks of socialism had been accomplished in the first half-century, but that there still remained a need for great efforts to reach “peace and continuous plenty”. But these are purely interpretations and it would be as pointless as pedantic to try to twist the text and extract by force details which the author did not put in. The only reasonable conclusion from this examination, it seems to me, is to observe that in 1890, as in 1888, the first stage in Morris’s eyes, is a long and exacting affair of several generations. In this connection, it is not running any risk to think that this extended duration constitutes Morris’s reaction, probably conscious, to Bellamy’s utopia which describes a collectivist society allegedly at its highest stage in the year 2000.

The fascinating description of communist England in the twenty-second century should not lead us to neglect the references to the first stage of socialism which the narrative contains. These scattered indications are not lacking in interest. In Morris’s eyes, the dominant characteristic of this period is the dogged persistence of the outlook inherited from the capitalist world, the slowness of consciousness in overtaking being, the inability to achieve peace and joy:

“...The crude ideas of the first half of the twentieth century, when men were still oppressed by the fear of poverty, and did not look enough to the
The First Stage

present pleasure of ordinary daily life, spoilt a good deal of what the commercial age had left us of external beauty: and I admit that it was but slowly that men recovered from the injuries they had inflicted on themselves even after they became free.”

The weight of earlier poverty was such that it acted as a kind of brake upon men’s consciousness and actions:

“The great difficulty was that the once-poor had such a feeble conception of the real pleasure of life: so to say, they did not ask enough, did not know how to ask enough, from the new state of things.”

Many such failures of comprehension were encountered, which explains the number of “grumblers” who, at that time, were “quite a nuisance”; we are presented with a lingering survivor in the person of Ellen’s father (or grand-father), who is nostalgic for competition and free enterprise.

It was a difficult period, bristling with mistakes, and with fumblings. It was, particularly, very difficult to decide which products were “really wanted” and “this knowledge we reached slowly and painfully”. Coercion was needed, too, to oblige former idlers from the well-to-do classes to work, and Morris explains, with a touch of humour, “… at one time they were actually compelled to do some such work, because they, especially the women, got so ugly and produced such ugly children if their disease was not treated sharply, that the neighbours couldn’t stand it”. In the beginning, after the destruction caused by the civil war, men had to work “almost as hard as they had been used to before the revolution”.

* * *

One of the most difficult problems posed by the construction of socialism on the morrow of the revolution is that of cadres and of the administration of the new society. In the nineteenth century such a problem appeared insoluble to advanced minds, on account of the state of ignorance and unpreparedness of the working class, and it offered pabulum to the hostile pessimism of the enemies of socialism. Mill or Bright, the radicals of the preceding generation, denied that the working class possessed any political capacity, and were reluctant even to grant it the vote. Mill had no hesitation over denouncing “the extreme unfitness (of) the labouring classes … for any order of things which would make any considerable demand on either their intellect or their virtue”. The socialists of the ’eighties were divided on the point. Hyndman, as we have seen, was convinced that “a slave-class cannot be freed by the slaves themselves”, and that it must accept the leadership of men “born into a different position”. Bax held a different opinion, and the example of the Commune had convinced him that it was not necessary to be born of the official bureaucracy to fill a post of responsibility. Bernard Shaw’s position was vacillating and temporising. On the one hand he observed that “not one labourer in a million succeeds in raising himself on the shoulders of his fellows by extraordinary gifts, or extraordinary luck, or both,” and concludes from this, like Hyndman, that, “the managers must be drawn from the classes which enjoy education and social culture … The tendency of private proper-
ty," he asserts, "is to keep the masses mere beasts of burden," while, on the other hand, "the tendency of Social Democracy is to educate them— to make them men. Social Democracy would not long be saddled with the rents of ability which have during the last century made our born captains of industry our masters and tyrants instead of our servants and leaders."48 Such an attitude, while less crude than Hyndman's, is none the less paternalistic and denies the working class all opportunity of succeeding directly to the administration of its own affairs.

William Morris's attitude was fundamentally different. We know the confidence he felt in the working class, despite the embarrassments and disappointments he experienced in his own contacts with it. He makes no attempt to hide the seriousness of the problem, but he rejects any pessimism and explains his reasons for hopefulness to us. The first of these is founded on the trade-union experience accumulated by the leadership before the revolution:

"The long experience they would have had of a labour organisation, of administering the affairs of the real producers, and still more the experience of administration they would have spread during that period would make the Morrow of the Revolution a much easier time to them than it would be to a party that had not already learned to help itself."49

It is remarkable that Morris should have formed such an opinion in 1887, when his strict anti-parliamentarianism had made him particularly hostile to the union movement. And his last reservations were to melt away two years later, at the time of the great dockers' strike, from which he was able to learn a number of lessons. One major fact then struck him, namely that the dockers, who constituted the most under-privileged sector of the proletariat, these unlettered men, these wrecks, had managed to "organize themselves at least as well, and be at least as true to their class, as the aristocracy of labour."50 That was a reassuring phenomenon which could only strengthen his optimism.

Socialist education was another factor to add to union experience. The mass working-class party whose advent Morris was always hoping for would give its militants qualities of organisation both through its militant action and its theoretical training:

"The action such an organization would be compelled to take would educate its members on administration, so that on the morrow of the revolution, they would be able, from a thorough knowledge of the wants and capabilities of the workers, to carry on affairs with the least possible amount of blunders, and would do almost nothing that would have to be undone, and thereby offer no opportunity to the counter revolution ... and if Socialism militant cannot reckon on enlisting persons who are somewhat above the average, and on staving off others who are a good deal below it, there is nothing to be done but to sit still and see what will happen."51

This deep faith of Morris's in the educative power of socialism became still stronger when, after his sectarian phase, he saw in the party he so devoutly desired not only the teacher of the masses but also their guide in the day-to-day action intended to make social advances, to undermine the power of the ruling class and to open the way to revolution. It was in this spirit that in 1891,
having finally abandoned the Socialist League to the anarchists, he founded the Hammersmith Socialist Society and drafted its manifesto:

"Such a society would be able to ameliorate the lot of the workers by wringing concessions from the masters, while it was sapping the stronghold of privilege, the individual ownership of the means of production, and developing capacity for administration in its members, so that when the present system is overthrown, they might be able to carry on the business of the community without waste or disaster." 72

Union development, working-class struggle, socialist education and action: these are already formidable trump-cards which justify optimism about the future. But it is through revolutionary action itself that the new leaders will most effectively be developed. Not, of course, through riots, which must inevitably lack any morrow and which as a rule neither train nor develop true cadres, 73 but through a revolution coming at the right moment, on a national scale and involving the whole nation. In the very course of its development the revolutionary leaders would have two tasks to assume: "the maintenance of its people while things are advancing to the final struggle, and resistance to the constitutional authority." 74 It is precisely these tasks which we see carried out with increasing efficiency by the Committee of Public Safety directing the insurrection described by old Hammond in News from Nowhere. When famine threatens, it immediately institutes measures to combat looting, taking possession of the big stores, after issuing their owners with notes promising payment, and distributing the foodstuffs contained in them. 75 It is plain that Morris has not forgotten Lafargue's advice. Then workers' committees are set up in the various districts of London, and these go further and themselves organise the production of the necessary food, 76 and there can be no doubt that it will be the same cadres formed in the struggle and by the struggle who, after the final victory, will undertake the general administration of the country. But above all it will be the sacrifices imposed by the civil war which will reveal human resources and talents. When the visitor asks old Hammond to detail the factors leading to success, the latter replies:

"Well, they did not lack organisers; for the very conflict itself, in days when, as I told you, men of any strength of mind cast away all consideration for the ordinary business of life, developed the necessary talent amongst them. Indeed, from all I have read and heard, I much doubt whether, without this seemingly dreadful civil war, the due talent for administration would have been developed amongst the working men." 77

Everything, he adds, then turned to hope: "the rebels" at least felt themselves strong enough to build up the world again from its dry bones, -- and they did it, too!" 78

So it is men already steeled and prepared for their tasks who take over the reins of power on the morrow of the revolution. Morris did not pretend that they would not make mistakes, and he foresees many difficulties, but the leaders would already have the training needed to correct the former and overcome the latter. For him, the problem of the cadres was an unreal problem, or a problem already presented. His reply, dictated not only by confidence and
enthusiasm but also by reason, does not seem to have been belied by the events of the twentieth century.

However, this first stage, despite its auspicious auguries, did not arouse any enthusiasm in the poet. A letter which he wrote to Georgiana Burne-Jones in 1888 is very revealing. It was, in fact, the very moment when he was beginning to have doubts about the effectiveness of, and even the justification for, his anti-parliamentarianism, and when he was trying to define its motives he wrote: "I have always thought it was a matter of temperament rather than principle"; and he added that

"some transition period was of course inevitable, I mean a transition involving State Socialism and pretty stiff at that... which when realized seems to me but a dull goal." 88

This expression, "State Socialism", which more than once comes from Morris's pen, is very bothersome, because, for once, his thinking is not always very clear. He sometimes uses it to describe petty-bourgeois reformism, and the Manifesto of the League, in 1885, defines it as having as its aim "to make concessions to the working class while leaving the present system of capital and wages still in operation". 89 But it is very clear that in this letter Morris is using the same term to express something very different. Here it is a question of all the measures characterising the first stage of socialism, authoritarian measures, implying the existence of a State apparatus, and purely economic and utilitarian in character. In other words, for Morris, State Socialism represents a sort of "welfare state", located, according to the moment of his thinking, sometimes in a capitalist context, sometimes in the first stage of socialism, without the distinction always being plain. Clearly it is the second of these usages which is of interest to us at the moment.

He admits without hesitation that "State Socialism will have to intervene between our present breakdown and communism". 90 He includes among the measures which will bring it about the laws of maximum and minimum, the need for which he accepts. 91 State authority will be essential, and may entail abuse of power, but that is just a possibility, whereas today it is the rule. 92 Clearly, Morris looks forward to this first phase with no pleasure, admitting that it will be necessary to put up with it.

"I neither believe in State Socialism as desirable in itself, or, indeed, as a complete scheme do I think it possible. Nevertheless, some approach to it is sure to be tried, and to my mind will precede any complete enlightenment in the new order of things." 93

What Morris fears above all is that State Socialism may become an end in itself, and old Hammond declares that "the late Roman Poor-rates... and the doling out of bread to the proletariat" are "the slough [which] awaits State Socialism in the end, if it gets to the end, which as you know it did not with us". 94 The most serious and most widely spread error is precisely to confuse socialism itself with this system, which can only be temporary.

"I mean that the great mass of what most non-socialists at least consider at present to be socialism, seems to me to be nothing more than a machinery of socialism, which I think it probable that socialism must use in
its militant condition; and which I think it may use for some time after it is practically established, but it does not seem to me to be of its essence. 88

Unfortunately, this confusion also exists in the minds of some socialists, who "take the very beginning of the means as an end in itself". 89 They do the greatest harm to the cause which they support, and if they restrict their propaganda to describing aspects of the first phase, they will turn away from socialism those they wish to influence:

"Most people who can be said to think at all are now beginning to see that the realization of Socialism is certain, although many can see no further than a crude and incomplete State Socialism, which very naturally repels many from Socialism altogether." 90

What reasons lie behind this aversion? Contrary to what one might be inclined to believe, Morris was by no means driven by an impatience to realise the communist ideal as quickly as possible. Quite the reverse! He denounces both anarchism and the tendency to be satisfied with state socialism as "methods of impatience", both of which refuse, either before or after, to pass through the essential phases. 91 His worry is very different, and derives, as he says himself, from temperament even more than from doctrine. On the one hand, he fears eventual excess of power and the bureaucracy of a highly centralised, authoritarian State. But even more his humanism is apprehensive of a form of socialism preoccupied exclusively with administrative and economic questions, producing a dreary atmosphere of purely material satisfaction, such as today we would call a "consumer society". Old Hammond makes a very precise reference to this stage when he says to his visitor:

"I can at least hint at one of the chief difficulties which had to be met. and that was, that when men began to settle down after the war, and their labour had pretty much filled up the gap in wealth caused by the destruction of that war, a kind of disappointment seemed coming over us, and the prophecies of some of the reactionists of past times seemed as if they would come true, and a dull level of utilitarian comfort be the end for a while of our aspirations and success." 92

Such a situation is easily understandable and has its origins in the capitalist heritage: it would not be possible, from one day to the next, to abolish the spectre of centuries of poverty:

"... the reflex of the terror of starvation, which so oppresses us now, would drive us into excesses of utilitarianism." 93

There is a great risk of achieving a society in which the former wage-earners would have no other ambition than that of "hoisting them up into the life of the present 'refined' middle classes ... the latter will remain pretty much as they are now, minus the power of living on the labour of others"; which would certainly be "a dull level of mediocrity." 94 In another eventuality, scarcely less unattractive, we shall see "times in which it will be easier for the labourer to live as a labourer and not as a man" and it would indeed be "a kind of utilitarian sham Socialism which would be satisfied by such an outcome in
times of prosperity." What is in question here is not the legitimate right to enjoy the good things of this world, but the form and quality of the enjoyment, which, in the beginning, will be stunted by all the hangovers of the life of other times. What Morris fears is not that the worker should want a happy life, but that, on the contrary, his needs and desires should lack scope and ambition.

"At the risk of being considered as dreamers, therefore it is important for us to try to raise our ideals of the pleasure of life; because one of the dangers which the social revolution runs is that the generation which sees the fall of Capitalism, educated as it will have been to bear the thousand miseries of our present system, will have far too low a standard of refinement and real pleasure." 26

What would be the meaning of such a utilitarian outlook but "the reckless waste of life in the pursuit of the means of life"? 25 To use a striking phrase borrowed from the title of a great Soviet novel (and the conjunction seems to me to be particularly appropriate) man does not live by bread alone. William Morris’s deep-seated reaction relative to this first period of socialism is that of the artist who feels that the demands of a world in construction will involve an eclipse of the arts, and we must appreciate that for him the word does not imply privileged aesthetic research, but describes the essential quality of all true work and of life itself. This he accepts, because he knows that this road must be trodden before his cherished social and human ideal can be attained, and he does not make any attempt to conceal the fact:

"I should be a hypocrite if I were to say...that the change in the basis of society...would lead us by a short road to the splendid new birth of art." 26

There is not even any bitterness in his acceptance, for this passing deprivation, however painfully he feels it, seems to him of little weight beside the immense human regeneration which will be its certain consequence. With what emotion and what faith he strives to make his listeners share this understanding of the destiny of humanity!

"The experiment of a civilized community living wholly without art or literature has not yet been tried. The past degradation and corruption of civilization may force this denial of pleasure upon the society which will arise from its ashes. If that must be, we will accept the passing phase of militarism as a foundation for the art which is to be. If the cripple and the starveling disappear from our streets, if the earth nourish us all alike, if the sun shine for us all alike, if to one and all of us the glorious drama of the earth – day and night, summer and winter – can be presented as a thing to understand and love, we can afford to wait awhile till we are purified from the shame of past corruption, and till art arises again amongst people freed from the terror of the slave and the shame of the robber." 27

In the light of the experience of the twentieth century, William Morris’s fears on this point seem to have been exaggerated, while others have proved justified. It is to the good that they should have been expressed so frankly and honestly, for they can still constitute useful warnings. Whatever judgment
may be made in this respect, our place is simply to record the sincerity and
gravity of Morris's apprehensions, and to understand that looking forward to
this stage was not the most pleasant task of his utopian thinking. He does not
willingly linger over it; at times he prefers to put it deliberately in parentheses
and project his prophetic vision towards the later days after the revolution:

"... In speaking of the Society of the Future, I am taking the in-
dulgence of passing over the transitional period — whatever that may be —
that will divide the present from the ideal."
CHAPTER FIVE

The Second Stage – The Withering Away of the State

In his important 1887 lecture, The Policy of Abstention, to which I have frequently referred, William Morris said to his listeners:

"We cannot help speculating on what would be the consequence of the change, and how it would affect what would be left of our civilization, not only as to the production of wealth, but also as to the religion, morals, the relations between the sexes, the methods of government or administration, and in short the whole of social life." 1

This programme of utopian research contains nothing surprising, but the formulation of it is not insignificant, because of its implicit revelation of Morris's greater interest in transformations of superstructures. Not that he does not grant fundamental importance to those taking place in the productive forces and relationships: I have more than once pointed this out in earlier chapters; but this new basis, established on the morrow of the revolution and continuing to be built throughout the first stage, has outlines that are well defined and more easily foreseeable: it is summarised in the socialisation of the means of production and exchange. On the other hand, the development of human institutions and relationships leaves a much more open field for utopian imagination, and it is understandable that Morris, for whom the focus of all thinking is man, should tend, without for a moment abandoning his materialistic faith in the primacy of economics, to allow his imagination to wander more freely and more widely over what is to happen to the superstructures. For that reason I have no scruples over presenting Morris's vision of the second stage of socialist society by somewhat upsetting the the traditional schematic pattern. In first considering the aspects of public life in twenty-second-century England, it seems to me that we shall more directly evoke the climate of Morris's utopia, and throw a brighter light upon matters of social wealth and work: these matters, which we shall take up in succeeding chapters, are too deeply steeped in care for mankind for us not to consider looking at them from this viewpoint. Since, for Morris, man is the product of his material and social circumstances at the same time as he influences and transforms them, this approach involves no concession to idealism.

* * *

During the first stage of the new society the needs of compulsion and organisation had given rise to a centralised power, to State socialism, which Morris regarded with disfavour although he considered it inevitable. As these needs
disappeared this power becomes unnecessary and the State itself withers little by little. The characteristic of the second stage is its complete disappearance. Such a state of affairs can only come about very slowly, and the poet foresees it with a clarity of vision that is the more astonishing since in his day he did not suspect the greatest obstacle standing in its path: the persistence and hostility of the capitalist environment. In formulating this vision, Morris faithfully follows the logical exposition of Marx and Engels:

"There will be no more political power properly so-called," said Marx, "since political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society."  

It was, in fact, Engels who first formulated the Marxist theory of the withering-away of the State in precise terms, and it is not without point to quote it briefly here, since Morris read the French text of Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, that educational pamphlet which reproduced extracts from Anti-Dühring:  

"The proletariat seizes the state power, and transforms the means of production in the first instance into state property. But in doing this, it puts an end to itself as the proletariat, it puts an end to all class differences and class antagonisms, it puts an end also to the state as the state... The state was the official representative of society as a whole, its embodiment in a visible corporation; but it was this only in so far as it was the state of that class which itself, in its epoch, represented society as a whole; in ancient times, the state of the slave-owning citizens; in the Middle Ages, of the feudal nobility; in our epoch, of the bourgeoisie. When ultimately it becomes really representative of society as a whole, it makes itself superfluous. As soon as there is no longer any class of society to be held in subjection; as soon as, along with class domination and the struggle for individual existence based on the former anarchy of production, the collisions and excesses arising from these have also been abolished, there is nothing more to be repressed which would make a special repressive force, a state, necessary. The first act in which the state really comes forward as the representative of society as a whole – the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society – is at the same time its last independent act as a state. The interference of the state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then ceases of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. The state is not "abolished", it withers away."  

And in The Origin of the Family, Engels asserted even more strongly:  

"The society which organises production anew on the basis of free and equal association of the producers will put the whole state machinery where it will then belong – into the museum of antiquities, next the spinning wheel and the bronze axe."  

So, in News from Nowhere, Morris is describing a world from which all State authority will have disappeared, and this fact constitutes one of the most strik-
ing and original aspects of the book. Raymond Ruyer aptly remarks that "utopia without institutions is unusual and aberrant. Utopias, on the whole, are "institutionalist"; they greatly exaggerate the intrinsic value of institutions." But is aberrant the word in the case of Morris? In most utopian narratives, the State, which watches over the general good, is only an abstract and ideal principle, a pure projection of the more or less arbitrary reforming zeal of the writer. Morris, reframing from such self-indulgence, describes a logical conclusion of history itself, within the perspective defined by Marxist analysis.

He can be reproached (and Jessie Kocmanova has put her finger upon this gap) with not having made any effort to determine the stages of the withering-away of the State. The fact is true, but is such a demand logical in his case, any more, moreover, than in that of Marx and Engels? Can we, nearly a century later, say that our own knowledge (or foreknowledge) is much further advanced? Above all I must stress that it is not Morris's purpose to finger over the vagaries of the first stage. He has the great merit of understanding the need for it, its importance and duration, but his impatient imagination takes wing towards the full achievement of communist society.

At that moment, he says, "when the habit of social life is established, nothing of the kind of authoritative central government will be needed or endured." That is a point of doctrine which he stresses in his letters to the Rev. George Bainton, and, throughout a long chapter of News from Nowhere old Hammond tries to make his baffled visitor understand that all government has disappeared, that it would be of no conceivable use since all class tyranny has become impossible. The result of this is a totally new social climate, "...a society which has no consciousness of being governed." Any dictatorship is clearly unimaginable, and the cult of the hero, dear to Carlyle and inherent in any bourgeois democracy, is totally foreign to communist society; men then have "mainly independence of thought", their actions are harmonious and no longer dictated by a State apparatus. Even any parliament is henceforth superfluous "the whole people is our parliament", explains old Hammond. This implies the personal responsibility of citizens and also their deep unity: "individual men cannot shuffle off the business of life on to the shoulders of an abstraction called the State, but must deal with it in conscious association with each other".

No more State, no more State apparatus.

"A man no more needs an elaborate system of government," says old Hammond, "with its army, navy, and police, to force him to give way to the will of the majority of his equals, than he wants a similar machinery to make him understand that his head and the stone wall cannot occupy the same space at the same moment." There are, wrote Morris, occupations which would have no place in a reasonable condition of society as, e.g., "lawyers, judges, jailers, and soldiers of the highest grades, and most Government officials." And, as a sly dig, Morris adds to them gamekeepers who would obviously no longer have aristocratic domains to protect. Finally, all property having
disappeared, and, with it, all the quarrels which it occasioned, lawcourts will no longer have any reason to exist.

No more State apparatus, hence no more coercion: "artificial compulsion would come to an end, for the Community cannot compel the Community".18 Penal repression had always caused Morris profound indignation, rooted in memories of childhood. In 1888 he relates, in a letter to his elder daughter:

"When we lived at Woodford there were stocks there on a little bit of wayside green in the middle of the village; beside them stood the cage, a small shanty some 12 ft sq; and it was built of brown brick roofed with blue slate. I suppose that it had been quite recently in use since its style was not earlier than the days of fat George. I remember that I used to look at the two threats of law [and] order with considerable terror, and decidedly preferred to walk on the opposite side of the road . . . ."20

He always felt a profound horror for the repressive system of bourgeois society, and one can hardly be surprised that the last trace of it has disappeared from the society described in News from Nowhere. When the visitor tells his new friends of the convictions and imprisonments which followed Bloody Sunday, they refuse to believe him: such barbarity has become totally incomprehensible to the people of the new society.21 When he asks a question about the existence of prions, Dick replies with equal anger and astonishment:

"Man alive! how can you ask such a question? Have I not told you that we know what a prison means by the undoubted evidence of really trustworthy books, helped out by our own imaginations? And haven't you specially called me to notice that the people about the roads and streets look happy? and how could they look happy if they knew that their neighbours were shut up in prison, while they bore such things quietly? And if there were people in prison, you couldn't hide it from folk, like you may an occasional man-slaying; because that isn't done of set purpose, with a lot of people backing up the slayer in cold blood, as this prison business is. Prison indeed! O no, no, no!"22

In The Tables Turned; or Nupkins Awakened, that curious comedy that he produced in 1887 and in which he himself played the part of the Archbishop of Canterbury for the greater delight of his socialist audience, Morris puts on the stage, in the epilogue, the ridiculous, ferocious and partial Judge Nupkins, unemployed as a result of the revolution and wondering what punishment the liberated people hold in store for him. But Jack Freeman, his former victim, declares to him:

"As to prison, we can't send you to prison, because we haven't got one. How could we have one? Who would be jailer? No, no; we can't be bothered with you in prison. You must learn to behave decently . . . Punish you? how can we punish you? who do you think is going to do such work as that! People punish others because they like to; and we don't like to. Once more, learn to live decently."23

One may observe, in passing, that this epilogue takes place on the morrow of the revolution and that Jack Freeman's language is that of a man living in the second stage, that of communist society. This anachronism, arising from
necessities of subject and plot development, is absolutely unique in Morris's work, for he was always careful over the timing of his utopia. The withering-away of all oppressive institutions could obviously only happen in a society of complete "equality." 28

No more coercion, therefore no more law. The visitor asks the Sage of Bloomsbury whether men have abolished civil legislation. In words which faithfully echo those of Engels, old Hammond replies:

"It abolished itself, my friend. As I said before, the civil law courts were upheld for the defence of private property, for nobody ever pretended that it was possible to make people act fairly to each other by means of brute force. Well, private property being abolished, all the laws and all the legal 'crimes' which it had manufactured of course came to an end. Thou shalt not steal, had to be translated into, Thou shalt work in order to live happily. Is there any need to enforce that commandment by violence?" 29

The old man explains that criminal law has similarly vanished:

"In your sense of the word we have no criminal law either. Let us look at the matter closer, and see whence crimes of violence spring. By far the greater part of these in past days were the result of the laws of private property, which forbade the satisfaction of their natural desires to all but a privileged few, and of the general visible coercion which came of these laws. All that cause of violent crime is gone." 30

He adds that crime should to a great extent be regarded as an accidental sickness and, "since ... we are a healthy people generally, so we are not likely to be much troubled with this disease." 31

Later Morris expressed the same ideas in Socialism, its Growth and Outcome:

"Civil law ... which is an institution essentially based on private property, would cease to exist, and criminal law, which would tend to become obsolete, would, while it existed, concern itself solely with the protection of the person." 32

In a still more general way, all legislation will fall into disuse: "In such a society," wrote Morris to the Rev. George Bainton, "laws of repression would be minimized, and the whole body of law which now deals with things and their domination over persons would cease to exist." 33 From the moment when private property no longer gives rise to the exploitation of the work of others, and when abundance is general, who could be tempted to abuse what he possesses, "Probably no laws would be necessary to prevent it." 34 Perhaps it would be appropriate to retain certain laws? Morris readily admits this, but by then they would be "much fewer, very simple, and easily understood by all; they would mostly concern the protection of the person." 35 The fundamental tendency in all public life would be the evolution of a purely customary legal system and the abolition of "all regulations that were not merely habitual." 36

In fact, there would grow up a dialectical process which it is difficult for us to imagine today, but the logic of which is it difficult to dispute. From the moment when the material conditions of life in society become such that no man needs to harm his fellow in order to live happily, there will be
hardly any more misdemeanours or crimes to suppress and, on the other hand, the habit of this innocent life will create a social conscience which will take the place of the State apparatus and make it superfluous. When Iron-face makes a vow "to set right above law and mercy above custom", 33 he does so in a society which is still primitive, it is true, but as a purely individual effort which runs a great risk of remaining so. On the contrary, in communist society, we are dealing with a collective and fundamental transformation of the whole of human psychology:

"The time may come, and I hope it will, when the social conscience will be so highly developed that coercion will be impossible, even on the part of the community; but then in those days the community will be composed of them who so thoroughly realize Communism that there will be no chance of any of them attacking his neighbour in any way." 34

The time will even come when "the habit of Socialism will be thoroughly formed, and no one will have to use the word any more, as it will embrace the whole of human life". 35 In fact, in News from Nowhere, the twenty-second-century English no longer use the word.

* * *

While it is true that William Morris did not care to foretell the successive transformations which would mark the withering-away of the State, he did formulate a hypothesis which could serve as a general indication. In one of his letters to Rev. George Bainton, after referring to the need for a régime of State socialism during the first phase, he considers that this might rapidly be modified and adopt "the municipal rather than the imperial form". 36 A singularly more optimistic notion than those so far quoted, but worthy of our attention: first, of course, because it figures in a deeply-considered correspondence, and, yet more, because it is intimately linked with Morris's conception of public life during the second stage.

Morris's bête noire was, in fact, the centralised State to which he objected because it tried "to administer the affairs of the people living a long way off, whose conditions and surroundings they cannot thoroughly understand". 37 With his constant delight in the concrete example, he poured out invective, both oral during his trips on the Thames, and written, throughout his work, against the Thames Conservancy Board, which he accused of making hideous the river and its banks: "We met some Conservancy men going up the water in a big punt this morning: which makes me uneasy, as I fear they are bedevilling the river: they are a crying example of the evils of bureaucratic civilisation." 38 All this central administration will have disappeared along with the State itself in a society which has reached the stage of communism and will have been replaced by direct democracy operating on a purely local basis.

There is nothing personal and original in this idea. As we have had the opportunity of observing many times while studying the source of Morris's utopia, communalistic democracy is inseparable from the socialist ideology of the nineteenth century. From Godwin's communes to those of Kropotkin, by the way of Owen's parallelograms, Fourier's phalansteries and Proudhon's federalism, it represents the normal reaction against the excessive and plundering centralism of the triumphant bourgeois State. The example of the
Paris Commune had endowed it with the shining prestige of revolutionary glory. Marx himself who had, on the one hand, carefully avoided any utopian predictions about the institutions of communist society and who was, on the other hand, and within the political conditions of his times, concerned with the maintenance of national unity, considered that:

"the unity of the nation was not to be broken; but, on the contrary, to be organized by the Communal constitution, and to become a reality by the destruction of the State power which claimed to be the embodiment of that unity independent of, and superior to, the nation itself, from which it was but a parasitic excrescence". 30

The constitution voted by the Paris Commune, he added, "would have restored to the social body all the forces hitherto absorbed by the State parasite feeding upon, and clogging the free movement of, society", 40 and, in a first draft of his famous Address, he denounced "the centralised State power, which with its ubiquitous and complex military, bureaucratic, clerical and judicial organs enfolds ... the living body of the civilian society like a boa-constrictor". 41 There was nothing in Morris's Marxist readings to deflect him from a communalistic vision of society, and we have been able to see, reading Lafargue's polemical article published in *Commonwealth*, the local nature of the revolutionary measures which were envisaged by him. 42 At the other end of the political spectrum, the Fabians preached a municipal socialism which Morris never criticised, other than for its reformist aspects.

He looked with a very favourable eye upon the newly created county councils, which he regarded as a beginning of decentralisation, and in 1886, at the height of his purist period, he called for the creation of provincial councils which were to point the people the way towards "the free federation of free communes, which is the only solution of politics". 43 Finally, we must not overlook, among contemporary influences, that of his friend John Carruthers, whose excellent book, *Communal and Commercial Economy*, was an apologia for communalistic socialism. 44

While the ideological climate of the time favoured such an orientation, it is none the less a fact that with Morris it was determined even more by historical inspirations, tinged with reason and feeling. The first of these inspirations was the mediaeval movement of communes and guilds, and in due course we shall have occasion to observe Morris's eagerness to discover in the life of the Middle Ages currents of communist tendency which he strove to work into his utopia. 45 The other inspiration, which I regard as much more relevant to the point under discussion at the moment, is the public life of barbarian societies. In an earlier chapter, 46 I referred to Morris's enthusiasm for the direct democracy which obtained among the Germanic tribes. He analysed it in his articles and lectures and celebrated its impressive simplicity in his epic romances, particularly *The House of the Wolfings* and *The Roots of the Mountains*. In the manner of these people's assemblies of other days, those of the inhabitants of Hammersmith in *News from Nowhere* take place in the open air, opposite to Barn Elms on the banks of the Thames, and to describe them Morris retained the same Germanic word *Mote* used by the Wolfings and the Burgdalers. 47 These "direct assemblies 'in more magorem' " 48 are not, said he, a new idea: they are themselves "the ancient constitution of the land" 49 and it is
in this forgotten tradition that is to be sought “an Englishman’s wholesome horror of government interference and centralisation”.

So, in Morris’s utopia, the “units of management” will be small and local, and he designates them by extremely varied names: communes, municipalities, wards, parishes, districts, etc. Each one of them will be of modest dimensions, “small enough to manage its own affairs directly”. “It will be necessary,” he says again, “for the unit of administration to be small enough for every citizen to feel himself responsible for its details and be interested in them” and “the direct expression of opinion would suffice for carrying on the administration”. But the expression of one’s opinion is not enough: what is equally necessary is the participation of each in carrying out the decisions made: “it is always and everywhere good that people should do their own business, and in order that they may do it well, every citizen should have some share of it, and take on his own shoulders some part of the responsibility”. It will not be just a moral duty, but an obligation laid upon each according to his ability and the general division of the tasks of management and administration will eliminate any full-time function or delegation: each citizen will continue to carry on his own work at the same time as he carries on his communal duties, which it will be his duty to learn and to understand.

Alongside this political, or, rather, administrative organisation will be developed an economic organisation: “The trades also will have councils which will organize each the labour which they understand and these again will meet when necessary to discuss matters common to all the trades”. In this way there will be a very flexible system, with two branches not altogether separated from each other:

“This principle would work in a twofold way. First, locally as determined by geographical and topographical position, race and language. Second, industrially, as determined by occupations. Topographically, we conceive of the township as the lowest unit; industrially, of the trade or occupation organized somewhat on the lines of a craft-guild. In many instances the local branch of the guild would be within the limits of the township.”

There will be a good deal of variation between all these little communities: they will each have their own ethnic peculiarities and their own way of life, but all will live with a good understanding of one another “without rivalry between each other, looking with abhorrence at the idea of a holy race”. In this sense they would be greatly superior to ancient cities and mediaeval communes, which were always at odds with each other and, on account of their disunity, at the mercy of noble or bureaucratic tyranny.

None the less, it is clear that in order to ensure this good understanding between the communes and their cooperation towards many ends, there could be no question for them of isolation or autarchy. Co-ordination would be very necessary, and so “the village, municipal, and county councils will send delegates to meetings for dealing with matters common to all”. So, on a national scale, there will be established a “Federation of Independent Communities”. The communes will live “in harmonious federation with each other, managing their own affairs by the free consent of their members,
yet acknowledging some kind of centre”. The powers of the latter will be strictly limited and will in no way resemble those of the bourgeois State nor even those of the proletarian dictatorship of the first stage. Its fundamental rôle will be, in the first place, to ensure respect for the federal institution “whose practice the communities should carry out”. In a more general way, “... some central body whose function would be almost entirely the guardianship of the principles of society, and would when necessary enforce their practice; e.g. it would not allow slavery in any form to be practised in any community. It would in fact be chiefly needed as a safeguard against the heredity of bad habits, and the atavism which would give us bad specimens now and again.”

Its task would be

“to guard against any country, or place, or occupation reverting to methods or practices which would be destructive or harmful to the socialistic order, such as any form of exploitation of labour, if that were possible, or the establishment of any vindictive criminal law.”

In addition to this task of safeguarding socialist democracy there would be important and clearly defined administrative functions “of the organization of livelihood and exchange”.

“The great federal organising power, whatever form it took, would have the function of the administration of production in its wider sense. It would have to see to, for instance, the collection and distribution of all information as to the wants of population and the possibilities of supplying them, leaving all details to subordinate bodies, local or industrial.”

So what we have is a system of planning, centralised with respect to information and decentralised on the executive level. It appears that, at this level, Morris did not envisage the possibility of authoritarian action such as he seems prepared to envisage for the merely necessary safeguarding of the socialist system. It is just a question of “ascertaining the real demand for commodities and so avoiding waste”. The Council of the Federation would also organise the “distribution of goods, the migration of persons – in short, the friendly intercommunication of people whose interests are common, although the circumstances of their natural surroundings made necessary differences of life and manners between them”.

Furthermore, it goes without saying that certain public services would need to be administered at a fairly high level.

“I admit the necessity,” writes Morris, “of a certain amount of mechanical centralization, such as the central administration of railways in such and such a geographical district, which after all would not be centralization but the direct outcome of Federation.”

The system which Morris sets out is by no means rigid and above all is not rigidly vertical. Between the “two poles”, that is, the commune and the federal council, there might be various federations which would arise and disappear “as convenience of place, climate, language, etc. dictated – public intercourse
between the members of the federation would have to be carried on by means of delegation". 73

Morris is careful to avoid being dogmatic on the point:

"I also admit that the form which the decentralization or Federation will take is bound to be a matter of experiment and growth: what the unit of administration is to be, what the groups of Federation are to be, whether or not there will be any cross-Federation, as e.g. Craftguilds and Cooperative Societies going side by side with the geographical division of wards, communes and the like - all this is a matter for speculation and I don't pretend to prophecy about it." 76

Finally, there would no more be national autarchy than communal autarchy and the same federal links would exist between the various nationalities. 77 At the top of the structure, "the highest unit would be the great council of the socialised world", 78 the functions and characteristics of which would be of the same kind as those of the councils of each federation.

One may wonder whether all these institutions do not involve the risk of restoring, albeit in reduced form, an authoritarian bureaucracy. It is very apparent that this worry is not altogether absent from Morris's thoughts, and this is surely the fundamental reason for his so strongly emphasising direct democracy at the communal level. But federal organisms are indispensable to the life of any community, and it is apparent that direct democracy is impossible at the regional, national and international levels, or indeed, simply at the intra-federal level. Even in this last case, "public intercourse between the members of the federation would have to be carried on by means of delegation", but, he adds, "the delegates would not pretend to represent anyone or anything but the business with which they are delegated". 79 Whatever regrets he may feel, Morris admits that "we cannot see any other means than delegation for doing the work of the higher circles". 80 Nevertheless it is obvious that "no one would receive any special dignity" 81 for the part he played in communal affairs, and that "no set of delegates would venture to consider itself the master of the public, it would be its servant rather". 82

In fact, all these reservations and limitations express Morris's underlying worries that this federative system, however little centralised, however little authoritarian, however flexible and relaxed in its structure, might not be entirely satisfactory. He cannot help pushing the limits of his prediction yet further into the future as far as the day when the principles of communism "would be recognized by everyone always and intuitively, when the last vestiges of centralization would die out". 83 A day will come in fact, when "the heredity of bad habits - the atavism" will not longer exert a baleful influence upon human behaviour, and "even this shadow of centralization would disappear at last when men gained the habit of looking reasonably at these matters". 84

One last remark is necessary, and it is an important one, because it shows the depth of William Morris's thinking and his very firm determination not to confuse form and content, nor ends and means. In the course of the controversy which brought him up against the anarchists in the League in 1889, he found himself having to decide what differentiated his position from theirs, concerning utopian experiments in isolation and the tendency to believe that
life in small egalitarian communities provided a panacea.

"You could not live communistically," he wrote to them, "until the present society of capitalism or contract is at an end. Equally, of course, the living in small communities is not in theory an essential of this great change, though I have little doubt that it would bring about such a way of living and abolish big cities, which, equally with comrade Davis, I think much to be desired." 86

What matters is socialism, the revolutionary transformation of the basis, the relations of production. Political organisation is only a superstructure. The direct democracy of the communes seemed to Morris to be the most logical and the best, but it made sense and was of value only in so far as it rested upon this basis. Several years later he was to come back to this idea in completely different circumstances, but in a quite significant way. In 1893, pursuing his vain efforts to found a single socialist organisation, he invited together at his home representatives of the Social Democratic Federation and the Fabian Society, and, with himself as representative of the Hammersmith Socialist Society, he drafted a joint manifesto which, after bitter contention with his colleagues, ended up devoid of any substance and consisting only of generalisations. Nevertheless he succeeded, in the teeth of the Fabians, in retaining the following passage which is no different in spirit from the reply to the anarchists:

"Municipalisation ... can only be accepted as Socialism on the condition of its forming a part of national and at last of international Socialism, in which the workers of all nations ... can federate upon a common basis of the collective ownership of the great means and instruments of the creation and distribution of wealth ..." 86

* * *

The withering-away of the State has as its corollary another qualitative change. Reproducing literally the Saint-Simonian style which Engels had taken as his own in Anti-Dühring and Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, 87 William Morris considered that "our 'government' of the future ... would be rather an administration of things than a government of persons"; 88 so he prefers to speak of organisation "rather than State or government, both of which suggest a class distinct from the people". 89 As old Hammond explains in News from Nowhere, instead of having a complicated authoritarian system, they are content "to make some arrangements about our affairs". 89 And so, he says, "of course there are regulations of the markets, varying according to the circumstances and guided by general custom. But as these are matters of general assent, which nobody dreams of objecting to, so also we have made no provision for enforcing them; therefore I don't call them laws". 81

The consequence of such a state of affairs is that, "properly speaking, in a condition of equality politics would no longer exist", 82 and the very word would lose all meaning: to the visitor, enquiring about this point, old Hammond replies slyly:

"I am glad that it is of me that you ask the question: I do believe that
anybody else would make you explain yourself, or try to do so, till you were sickened of asking questions. Indeed, I believe I am the only man in England who would know what you mean; and since I know, I will answer your question briefly by saying that we are very well off as to politics, — because we have none.”

In fact, in a communist world political antagonism would be inconceivable.

“It must be remembered that whereas in our present state of society, in every assembly there are struggles between opposing interests for the mastery, in the assemblies of a Communal Society there would be no opposition of interests, but only divergencies of opinion, as to the best way of doing what all were agreed to do.”

Once these clashes of personal interests had been abolished, since the only possible differences would refer to the application of decisions taken in common, it would be “the practical march of events” which would resolve them.

So one cannot imagine the existence at that time of factions, “making party questions out of matters of universal public convenience”.

“There will be no political parties,” writes Morris, “squabbling incessantly as to who shall govern the country and doing nothing else; for the country will govern itself.”

These new habits would, it seems, develop very early, because, in News from Nowhere, we see the curator of a museum of labour showing the visitor minutes of the meeting of a village council held during the first days of socialism to discuss questions relating to communal washing and catering organisation, “all this, joined to the utter absence of anything like party feeling, which even in a village assembly would certainly have made its appearance in an earlier epoch”. The reason is simple, and again it is old Hammond who provides it for us:

“Amongst us, our differences concern matters of business, and passing events as to them, and could not divide men permanently. As a rule, the immediate outcome shows which opinion on a given subject is the right one; it is a matter of fact, not of speculation. For instance, it is clearly not easy to knock up a political party on the question as to whether haymaking in such and such a countryside shall begin this week or next, when all men agree that it must at the latest begin the week after next, and when any man can go down into the fields himself and see whether the seeds are ripe enough for cutting.”

With the old quarrels no longer current, having disapproved along with private property, the sole consideration henceforth is the use value of common property and not its market value. Competition and rapacious rivalry are finished forever. Henceforth, the only problems facing men are those of “the administration of things”, and they are no longer disguised and poisoned by partisan propaganda sustained by this limited company or that group of the squirearchy. They are revealed starkly and are there to be solved, in the light of good sense, for the obvious advantage of the community: “absolute facts and information would be the main business of public assemblies”.

In one of his letters
to the Rev. George Bainton, William Morris gives several examples of the questions that will arise then:

"Shall we (the public) work this coal mine or shut it up? Is it necessary for us to lay down this park in wheat, or can we afford to keep it as a place of recreation? Will it be desirable to improve this shoemaking machine, or can we go on with it as it is? Will it be necessary to call for special volunteers to cultivate yonder fen, or will the action of the law of compensation be inducement enough for its cultivation?" 101

In the same way, when one commune sends a delegation to another commune, they will have no mission other than to ask such questions as: "We are a shoemaking community chiefly, you cotton spinners, are we making too many shoes? Shall we turn some of us to gardening for a month or two, or shall we go on?" 102 These problems, expressed now in all their simplicity, are of interest to all the inhabitants and become the subject of careful thought; an effort will always be made to resolve them by combining agreeableness and usefulness. The visitor in News from Nowhere is surprised that so many forests are permitted to remain in this England that has been transformed into a garden: is this not wasteful? No, replies old Hammond,

"we like these pieces of wild nature, and can afford them, so we have them; let alone that as to the forests we need a great deal of timber, and suppose that our sons and sons' sons will do the like." 103

In this society, where variation of occupation has become the custom, everyone has a sense of responsibility and does not leave the useful function that he is quitting without somebody to carry on. When Dick decides to go off to the haymaking he only does so after finding someone to replace him in his task as boatman.

Everything goes on without friction, not in a spontaneous way, but on the basis of collective as well as individual thought and of a general feeling of working no longer for the profit of a few but for the greatest good of each and all. To which naturally is to be added the existence pretty well everywhere of men and women with a sense and liking for good organisation:

"Although there are so many, indeed by far the greater number amongst us, who would be unhappy if they were not engaged in actually making things, and things which turn out beautiful under their hands, there are many, like the housekeepers I was speaking of, whose delight is in administration and organization, to use long-tailed words; I mean people who like keeping things together, avoiding waste, seeing that nothing sticks fast uselessly. Such people are thoroughly happy in their business, all the more as they are dealing with actual facts, and not merely passing counters round to see what share they shall have in the privileged taxation of useful people, which was the business of the commercial folk in past days." 104

On the subject of these "arrangements" which "have taken the place of government", old Hammond makes one very interesting declaration:

"... although we have simplified our lives a great deal from what they
were, and have got rid of many conventionalities and many sham wants, which used to give our forefathers much trouble, yet our life is too complex for me to tell you in detail by means of words how it is arranged 108.

It seems to me that this apparently contradictory statement admirably illuminates the thinking of William Morris. It is simply a matter, in fact, of simplicity within complexity. There are no longer any planned and authoritarian rules or legislation laying down a rigid and arbitrary pattern, uniform for all aspects of public life. The customary rules and usages operate quite naturally in every situation and circumstance, quite different between one part of a territory and another, but meeting no difficulty in application because they arise from the tacit or publicly determined agreement of the citizens as a whole. These feel completely at ease and never feel any need to regulate their behaviour by means of a legislative code imposed from above and in no way reflecting their way of life. In fact, all that is very simple and only appears complex in the eyes of a “man come from another planet”. In fact, “gradually all public business would be so much simplified that it would come to little more than a correspondence”. 107 This empirical version of communism is, after all, well in line with English tradition. It is also in line with the humanistic solicitude of William Morris, who declared

“but this business of administration they would as sensible people reduce as much as possible, that they might be freer to use their lives in the pleasure of living, and creating, and knowing, and resting”. 108

* * *

Does that imply that the society described in News from Nowhere is an anarchist society? It is certainly true that William Morris’s tale is utterly different from the majority of other utopias. From More’s book to the imaginings of Wells or Huxley we see authority reign infallibly and the city of the future display that impeccable symmetry so well described by Raymond Ruyer:

“Almost all utopian worlds are symmetrical, regularly arranged, like an Italian or French garden. This symmetry and regular organisation often touch upon mania and seem to betray the tendency of many utopists to schizophrenia and its geometrical patterns. In utopian towns, everything is as straight as a bow-string. Classes, institutions, professions, all are regular.” 109

Morris’s fertile imagination is certainly far removed from this picture, and his rejection of all centralised authoritarian power is no less characteristic. So it is not surprising that his utopia is the only one “that has ever appealed generally to anarchists”. 110 They have long declared him to be one of them, and many critics, themselves a long way from sharing those beliefs, have not hesitated to class him decisively among the followers of the libertarian faith. For his part, all his life Morris declared his hostility towards anarchism. Who is in the right?

There seems to me to be growing evidence that in this long-drawn-out debate total confusion reigns, sustained as much by the theoretical ignorance
of most commentators (for it is not enough to be a literary critic in order to tackle the work of such a writer) as by the partial misconceptions of Morris himself as to the exact nature of anarchism.

In the first place it is necessary to clarify this last point. In fact there are two kinds of anarchism: on the one hand, anarchism founded upon the cult of the individual, as defined by Stirner, and, on the other, social anarchism, represented by the rationalist system of Godwin, by Proudhon's federalist mutualism or by Kropotkin's "mutual aid". Among these latter (I purposely refrain from quoting Bakunin, whose influence in England was quite negligible), it appears that Morris did not read Godwin and his knowledge of Proudhon was entirely second-hand. However, he was friendly with Kropotkin, and it would be astonishing if he had not read some of his books. He never expressed any detailed criticism of his doctrines, but contented himself with flatly displaying his disagreement. We have seen at what points they make contact and also the impassable barriers which separated them. On the other hand, Morris was in almost daily contact with anarchists in the leadership of the Socialist League. He respected their convictions and their devotion, but deprecated their methods and the forms of action which they preached, and the final break between them came upon this point. As for their vision of the future, it was somewhat hazy and he classed them generally as "destructivists". If one tries to extract the substance of the very confused articles and verbose correspondence to be found in Commonweal beneath their signatures, one gets the feeling that they are above all enemies of society and worshippers of the sovereign rights of the individual. One finds no reference to Stirner, of whom they seem to be unaware, just as Morris was himself, moreover. In any case, it is clear that the conception of anarchism which the latter developed was imposed by his contact with people like Kitz, Lane, Blackwell and Nicholl, much more than by his contacts with Kropotkin. So it is not surprising that Morris should have been led, as is pertinently remarked by G. Woodcock, a specialist in this field, to "considering anarchism in the narrow sense of individualism". Bruce Glasier tells us that

"their denial of social authority and discipline, their strong assertion of individual rather than social rights, their emphasis of the sovereignty or autonomy of the individual, and their constant tendency to view society as the enemy instead of the friend of man, and, while declaring men to be on the whole individually good and trustworthy, at the same time ceaselessly to rail against organised society as inherently wicked and tyrannical, were notions alien alike his temperament and his reason." 113

What is even more illuminating is Glasier's account of remarks made by Morris during a private meeting of members of the Glasgow section of the Socialist League on 25 March 1888:

"Anarchism means, as I understand it, the doing away with, and doing without, laws and rules of all kinds, and in each person being allowed to do just as he pleases. I don't want people to do just as they please; I want them to consider and act for the good of their fellows - for the commonweal in fact." 114

It is probable that Kropotkin, had he known of it, would have disowned any
such definition of anarchism, but regard must be paid to it as indicating the sense and exact degree of Morris’s anti-anarchism. For this reason one cannot fail to be somewhat surprised at the assessment made by Monsieur Victor Dupont in the introduction to his bilingual edition of *Nouvelles de nulle part*. He sees Morris’s ideology as a “concept much more anarchist than collectivist” and he adds: “Does Morris imply that State Collectivism carries within itself, ‘as a cloud carries the storm’ the individualism which is destined to destroy it in its turn? He does not tell us so.” 115 It is not easy to understand how he was able to make such a remark, because, in Morris’s thinking, the anarchism he opposed was intimately mixed with individualism and he no more wanted that than he did capitalism, which he similarly dubbed “individualist anarchy”. 116

The only plausible question is whether Kropotkin was justified in annexing Morris and whether, in a more general way, successive commentators have been right in classing him, without any reservation, among the anarchists. I shall not linger over such opinions as that of Chesterton, who asserts in his usual off-hand way that “he was not a Socialist” but “a sort of Dickensian anarchist”, 117 which does not really convey very much, either about Dickens or about Morris. I pass on to more substantial folk. Edouard Guyot observes perplexedly that “he, who all his life was a sturdy opponent of anarchism, was constrained to finish up with a régime that greatly resembled it”. 118 Yeats thinks that Morris was perhaps “an anarchist without knowing it”. 119 The historian Kirkup, arguing *a priori*, asserts that “William Morris in *News from Nowhere*, his delightful utopia of virtual Anarchism, had to turn England into a nation of haymakers, because simple small-scale agriculture is almost the only industry which is intellectually conceivable under Anarchism”. 120 G. D. H. Cole writes that “he fell foul of the Anarchists . . . not because he held their ideal to be wrong, but because he disapproved of their methods and tactics”. 121 A similar opinion is expressed by G. Woodcock for whom this rupture depended on “matters of personality rather than ideology” (which is much less certain, for Morris retained his esteem for his former comrades) 122 and who sees in *News from Nowhere* “a thoroughly anarchist world”. 123

I break off this short anthology, the monotony of which could only too easily be prolonged. It appears to me that all these judgments have one characteristic in common, that of posing a false problem and of conveying the absolute ignorance, on the part of those who expressed them, however eminent they may be, of the Marxist theory of two stages and of the withering away of the state in the second stage. I have sufficiently indicated Morris’s sources and demonstrated his care to remain faithful to them, so that it is pointless to return to it here. His utopian dream was not one of an anarchist world: it is, following the logic of theory, what a socialist world could be like after abundance had been achieved, and the tasks of consolidating and building fulfilled. Even so well-informed a specialist on Morris as Mr. Le Mire gets into the same rut: after quoting an important passage of the lecture *The Policy of Abstention*, in which the writer explains the difference between socialism and communism, 124 Mr. Le Mire exclaims that it is such as “not a few thorough anarchists might approve of”. 125 And what is one to say about the incredible ignorance (not to talk of political bias) of Mr. Philip Henderson, who, in his recent voluminous work, demonstrates that *News from Nowhere* cannot be regarded as a communist utopia because it has “very little relation to anything
we know as communism"? He adds that "it would be an insult to Morris's intelligence to suppose that he really believed in the possibility of such a society." The only critic (apart, of course, from E. P. Thompson) who has even glimpsed the true shape of the problem is the German Gustav Fritzsche who puts forward the supposition that Morris, in order to avoid throwing Marxism overboard, decided to consider anarcho-communism as the ultimate outcome of socialism. If Fritzsche had read the Critique of the Gotha Programme and Anti-Dühring he would not have needed to indulge in conjectures of this kind, or to foist this anarcho-communism on to Morris.

* * *

After this quick look at the most widespread interpretation, which has allowed us to give a new direction to the question, it seems to me to be opportune to examine how Morris answered it himself.

There is no doubt that some formulations scattered through his earlier political writings can spread doubt and support the idea of a libertarian inspiration. Among his lyrical effusions we do not find the slogan 'Neither God nor master' (Morris steadfastly avoids any religious references), but the cry of 'No master!' echoes more than once, and is even the title of one of his Chants for Socialists. The hero of Pilgrims of Hope dreams of a world in which man shall no longer have any master. The theme running through the first socialist lectures is: "Why have masters at all? let us be fellows...", "no man is good enough to be the master over others". However, it is all the more important not to overestimate the importance of this sentimental rhetoric, for, as early as 1884, Morris gave it a perfectly defined content:

"The workman must learn to understand that he must have no master, no employer save himself - himself collectively, that is to say, the commonweal.

This is an important formulation because it conveys, from the very beginning, the adoption of an anti-individualist standpoint that was to be affirmed with growing vigour during his period of full political maturity, particularly during the long controversy with the anarchists. "Some persons..." he wrote to Rev. George Bainton, "try to conceive a condition of things in which every man is independent of every other, but that is not only impossible to be, but impossible even to conceive of," and in one of the most telling of the writings he published in Commonweal in reply to anarchist arguments, he repeats that "men without society is not only impossible, but inconceivable". When after the split he founded the Hammersmith Socialist Society and issued its manifesto, he returned doggedly to this point:

"Here we must say that it is not the dissolution of society for which we strive, but its reintegration. The idea put forward by some who attack present society, of the complete independence of every individual, is not merely impossible of realization, but, when looked into, turns out to be inconceivable."

The thinking of his last years did not cause him to change his mind: "As to its theory, I must say that I cannot recognise Anarchism (as it has been ex-
pounded to me) as a possible condition of Society, for it seems to me in its essence to be a negation of Society." In an interview by Justice in 1894, he repeated yet again:

"Anarchism, as a theory, negatives society, and puts man outside it. Now, man is unthinkable outside society. Men cannot live or move outside it. The negation of society is the position taken up by the logical Anarchists, and this leads to the spasmodic insurrectionary methods which they advocate." 137

So it is plain that, contrary to the claims of G. D. H. Cole, Morris not only fails to draw any distinction in his criticism between the theory and the tactics of the anarchists, but establishes a strict link between the two.

Morris accepted all the consequences stemming from this adoption of the anti-individualist position. The first is that all individual liberty must have limits. During the first part of his militant activity, before the direct clash with the anarchists in the League, he was measured in his language and inclined to optimism:

"the constitution of all society requires that each individual member of it should yield up part of his liberty in return for the advantages of mutual help and defence; yet at bottom that surrender should be part of the liberty itself; it should be voluntary in essence" 138

But once the crisis had broken, Morris's attitude hardened. This voluntary relinquishing of part of one's liberty no longer seemed enough, and he even reached the position of foreseeing compulsion:

"And here I join issue with our Anarchist-Communist friends, who are somewhat authoritative on the matter of authority, and not a little vague also. For if freedom from authority means the assertion of the advisability or possibility of an individual man doing what he pleases always and under all circumstances, this is an absolute negation of society, and makes Communism as the highest expression of society impossible; and when you begin to qualify this assertion of the right to do as you please by adding 'as long as you do not interfere with other people's rights to do the same', the exercise of some kind of authority becomes necessary. If individuals are not to coerce others, there must somewhere be an authority which is prepared to coerce them not to coerce; and that authority must clearly be collective." 139

An authority that was the more necessary in that Morris refused to share the illusions of his anarchist comrades about the fundamental goodness of man. He has often, somewhat superficially, been regarded as a follower of Rousseau. Apart from the fact that there is not a single reference to Rousseau in his works, it is plain that he did not in any way share the latter's idealism on this point. He certainly believed that man is formed by his social surroundings and that capitalist "civilization" has corrupted him, but communist society, despite its healthy way of life, is not a return to the state of nature, and the transformation which will take place in man at that time will not be the rediscovery of original perfection, but the free development of all that is best in him. So the existence of the best implies that of the worst:
“When we talk of the freedom of the individual man, we must not
forget that every man is a very complex animal, made up of many
different moods and impulses; no man is always wise, or wise in all
respects. Philip sober needs protection against Philip drunk, or he may
chance to wake up from his booze in a nice mess. Surely we all of us feel
that there is a rascal or two in each of our skins beside the other or two
who want to lead manly and honourable lives, and do we not want
something to appeal to on behalf of those better selves of ours?” 140

So some repressive machinery will be inevitable “and surely it will always be
so, as long as the individual acts unsocially”. 141

And so, however much stress Morris may lay upon the withering away of
the state, it does not seem right to him to abandon all kinds of authority,
although this may well take completely new forms. It is interesting to note the
limitation which old Hammond unfailingly puts upon his assertions about the
organisation of communist society: “we no longer have anything which you, a
native of another planet, would call a government” 142 “in your sense of the
word we have no government”, 143 “in your sense of the word, we have no
criminal law either”. 144 The significant thing is that authority, while different
in form and spirit, has not entirely disappeared. In so far as one can rely upon
the evidence of Bruce Glasier (and on this point I see no reason for showing
distrust), the remarks made by Morris during his discussion with the militant
core at Glasgow on 25 March 1888 are quite unambiguous:

“How constitutes the commonweal, or the common notion of what is
for the common good, will and always must be expressed in the form of
laws of some kind – either political laws, instituted by the citizens in
public assembly, as of old by folk-moot, or if you will by real councils or
parliaments of the people, or by social customs growing up from the ex-
perience of Society. The fact that at present many or the majority of laws
and customs are bad, does not mean that we can do without good laws or
good customs . . . In a word, then, I tell you that I am not an anarchist,
and I had as lief join the White Rose Society or the so-called Liberty and
Property Defence League as join an anarchist organisation”. 145

George Woodcock, who quotes these remarks in his admirable study, has to
admit in self-defence that “an anarchist . . . would object to Morris’s accep-
tance of laws voted by assemblies or popular councils”. 146

Morris considered that anarchy could not exist in the productive process. A
hierarchy is essential for the working of the factory, and it is essential to put in
positions of command those, whoever they may be, who have the proper
qualities:

“Those who are fit to superintend will do so, and will do it willingly as
it will be easy for them, since they are fit for it; the workmen whom they
direct will also follow that direction willingly, as they will find out that
doing so will make their work easier and more effective”,

but, adds Morris, the great difference will be that “on every workman will
rest a due share of responsibility, he will not be as he is now a mere irrespon-
sible machine”. 147 On a socialist ship there will be, just as there are today,
a captain and officers, and “there are plenty of enterprises which are
carried on then as they are now (and, to be successful, must probably re-
main) under the guidance of one man. The only difference between then
and now will be, that he will be chosen because he is fit for the work, and
not because he must have a job found for him; and that he will do his
work for the benefit of each and all, and not for the sake of making a
profit". In this connection, notice that in the egalitarian republic of
*News from Nowhere*, we several times meet team leaders and foremen,
either in respect of road-mending, building or haymaking and
that a young rascal, who is helping a group of "Obstinate Refusers" to
build a house, remarks that "my work is not superintending, like the
gaffer's yonder".  

Nor could anarchy reign in the sphere of distribution. Certainly, the
second stage will be the time of plenty. The elementary needs of
everyone, nearly enough the same, will be amply satisfied. It will be easy
to provide a surplus, thanks to the extreme diversity of temperament and
taste, but it will not be necessarily so for some excessive requirements
which could not be satisfied "without the individual clashing with collec-
tive society", and the latter will sometimes need to "determine on collec-
tive action which, without being in itself immoral or oppressive, would
give pain to some of its members".  

In fact, the most serious contention between Morris and the anarchists
was in regard to the functioning of public life, to the power of making
decisions, to the law of the majority and the rights of the minority. The
positions were clear-cut and irreconcilable. With a patience
praiseworthy in a man given to temper, but without making the smallest
concession, Morris takes the frequently very muddled arguments of his
opponents, sets them out more clearly and firmly refutes them:

"There will be differences of opinion as to what should be done. E.g., a
community may discuss the building of a bridge; some say Ay and some
No, and persist in that opinion after all possible arguments have been ex-
hausted; what is to be done? which party is to give way? Our Anarchist
friends say it must not be carried by a majority; in that case, then, it
must be carried by a minority. And why? Is there any divine right in a
minority? I fail to see it, although I admit that the opinion is held by the
absolutists.

Or again, passing to matters of principle again. Supposing that a com-
mune decides to re-introduce wage-slavery within its bounds. Is that to
be allowed by the majority of the communies? Are we not to deliver slaves
from their masters? If not, why are we revolutionary Socialists today?

Comrade Blackwell suggests that since the majority is no more likely
to be right than the minority (which I admit) they might as well toss a
copper for it. I don't object; but then there might be a difference of op-
ion on that method also, and how are we to settle that? It is curious that
comrade Blackwell, in suggesting that the larger of the two differing par-
ties in a matter of administration should throw the matter over, cannot
see that this would mean victory for the noes; or, in other words, that in
any question which must be answered aye or nay, anyone obstructive
could always prevent any business being done, and could in such matters
thereby establish the most complete minority rule conceivable.”

Morris does not in the least mean that the rights of the minority should not be safeguarded. Old Hammond explains at great length to his visitor how things work out in fact. A citizen makes a proposal to the Mote of his commune. If everyone agrees, the discussion is soon over. If nobody supports the proposal, the matter remains in abeyance. If opinions are divided, no vote is taken on that occasion and the discussion is deferred to the next meeting. Meanwhile, arguments are put forward orally and through the press. At the next assembly, discussion takes place and voting is by show of hands. If the majority is small, there is further debate at the following meeting. If it is large, the minority generally give way, but has the right to demand further discussion. If still no stronger, it always gives in. If it should happen that there is a continued small difference in the voting, the minority can insist that no decision be taken until further notice, but it is a right that is rarely invoked. As one can see, there are very generous provisions, and old Hammond is quite justified in ridiculing the idea of a “tyranny of a majority”.

On a closer scrutiny it is evident that, while Morris’s attitude stiffens when he is dealing with anarchist criticism, he none the less retains an absolute confidence in the ultimate disappearance of the State. This criticism enabled him to clarify his thinking. The State will die and authority will live on, but a qualitative change in the latter will provide a dialectical resolution of the contradiction. With men all becoming responsible for their own affairs and managing them directly, their common interest will provide their common inspiration. Differences of opinion over the ways to work towards the common end will not possibly give rise to deep bitterness, for nobody will have any privileges to defend and cannot in the outcome be harmed. A fraternal habit of give and take will operate as a bond between them, “and what is this bond but authority—that is, the conscience of the association voluntarily accepted in the first instance”. In the end, social conscience will forbid harming ones neighbour, and it will only resort to force “if other means fail”.

“Now I don’t want to be misunderstood,” wrote Morris to Blackwell. “I am not pleading for any form of arbitrary or unreasonable authority, but for a public conscience as a rule of action.”

So it is not Morris who indulges in authoritarian schematics, but rather, it would appear, his anarchist opponents. The polemic does not appear openly in News from Nowhere, but it is underlying all the time. At the time when the tale was published by instalments in the columns of Commonweal, the split, though still not official, was already a reality. The anarchists were in control of the weekly and Morris moved cautiously, which confirms my conviction expressed earlier that he attached considerable importance to this message. However, at one point, during discussion between old Hammond and the visitor, he could not resist renewing his attack in strangely allusive terms. The old man declares that the only alternative to their régime of direct, majority democracy would be the creation of an all-powerful aristocracy of administrators and a return to capitalism:

“Well,” said I, “there is a third possibility — to wit, that every man
should be quite independent of every other, and that thus the tyranny of society should be abolished."

He looked hard at me for a second or two, and then burst out laughing very heartily; and I confess that I joined him. When he recovered himself he nodded at me and said:

“Yes, yes, I quite agree with you – and so we all do.” 159

It is plainly another knock by Morris at individualist anarchism. It is to be regretted that he never stated his reasons for his avowed disagreement with Kropotkin’s anarchism, for this would perhaps have led to the dispersion of the double misunderstanding to which I referred earlier and which underlies the whole of this dispute. It is plain that Kropotkin would not have accepted the forms of authority, albeit much weakened and qualitatively new, which persisted in Morris’s utopia. But in the two of them one finds the same ideal of communal and direct democracy. However, one fundamental difference divided them; it is that, with Morris and in the words of Engels, “the State is not abolished it withers away”. Morris, no more than Engels, could admit “the demand of the so-called anarchists that the State should be abolished overnight”. 160 The whole of Morris’s utopian thinking is based upon the Marxist theory of two stages. While there is an ultimate relationship between these two conceptions of the society of the future, there is complete opposition regarding the historical perspective, and, therefore, the means. Morris would assuredly have subscribed to Lenin’s estimate:

“We do not at all disagree with the Anarchists on the question of the abolition of the State as a final aim. But we affirm that, for the attainment of this aim we must make temporary use of the weapons and methods of the State against the exploiters, just as the temporary dictatorship of the oppressed class is necessary for the annihilation of all classes.” 161

As for the label anarcho-communist, applied to Morris by G. Fritzsche and many others since him, Morris himself rejected it emphatically and unequivocally at the beginning of his polemic with the anarchists in the Socialist League:

“I will begin by saying that I call myself a Communist, and have no wish to qualify that word by joining any other to it.” 162
CHAPTER SIX

The Productive Forces

Morris said repeatedly that the basis of socialism is economic. While it constitutes a radical change in production relationships, which, in its turn allows a profound revolution in institutional superstructures, all this is only made possible by the freeing of the productive forces. Under the domination of the bourgeoisie, man was hampered in his mastery over nature. Science and technology were not in his service, but in the service of capital. The supreme law was the accumulation of profit for a minority and man was only an appendage to the machine. The new life alone, bringing beauty and joy, will deliver him, along with nature herself, from these artificial bonds and will allow him to become her true master: “Man has gained mechanical victory over nature, which in time to come he may be able to enjoy, instead of starving amidst of it. In those days science also may be happy; yet not before the second birth of Art, accompanied by the happiness of labour, has given her rest from the toil of dragging the car of Commerce.” 1 In that moment, men “themselves can regulate labour, and by being absolute masters of their materials, tools and time they can win for themselves all that is possible to be won from nature without deduction or taxation paid to classes that have no purpose or reason for existence”. 2 In fact, man is now crushed by a two-fold struggle, the one against nature to snatch his subsistence, the other against the oppressors who warp his life. This second kind of struggle, exhausting, harmful and unnecessary, must be brought to a conclusion. The first will be amply sufficient to absorb all energy and it will become joyous and fruitful, because it will unite instead of dividing: “In order that his labour may be organized properly he must only have one enemy to contend with – Nature to wit, who as it were eggs him on to the conflict against herself, and is grateful to him for overcoming her; a friend in the guise of an enemy. There must be no contention of man with man, but association instead; so only can labour be really organized, harmoniously organized.” 3 A friend disguised as an enemy, vigilantly subdued by men’s united will:

“We like everything trim and clean, and orderly and bright ...” says old Hammond, “and they won’t stand any nonsense from Nature in their dealings with her.” 4

If human science is delivered henceforth from all fetters and can be freely applied to the world, does that mean it is capable of new leaps forward? It is an odd fact that Morris’s thinking, at least in his theoretical writings, is somewhat uncertain on this point. “To our eyes,” he writes, “since we cannot see into the future, that struggle with Nature seems nearly over, and the victory of the
human race over her nearly complete." His attitude is ambiguous: he gives the impression of being overcome by the triumphant certainty of the Victorian age which considered its civilisation as a zenith, and, at the same time, to be inclined to fear the consequences of further technical progress. He was dazzled by the victory over nature, the progress of which "has been far swifter and more startling within the last two hundred years than ever before." He admired the undoubted achievements of the bourgeoisie:

"The freedom which the richer classes had won blessed the world with wonderful discoveries and inventions: on all sides nature was conquered and had to yield her treasures to men without stint; so that where one man once lived hardly, a thousand may now live well, or might do if they would."

So for Morris the problem was not to know whether this fantastic progress will grow still more, but to make rational use of what will be inherited by the new society. Though man, he says,

"has indeed conquered Nature and has her forces under his control to do what he will with, he still has himself to conquer, he still has to think how he will best use those forces which he has mastered... The conquest of Nature is complete, may we not say? and now our business is... the organization of man, who wields the forces of Nature."

The way old Hammond talks allows this same uncertainty to hover over the eventual progress of this material mastery. Referring to the widespread fear that one day there might not be enough work to be done, he points out to the visitor that vast perspectives will still be open in all directions: "If art be inexhaustible, so is science also," he says, adding: "there are, and I suppose will be, many people who are excited by its conquest of difficulties, and care for it more than for anything else." Are these purely theoretical difficulties to exercise the intelligence or problems of a practical nature to forward man's mastery over matter? We well know that the two streams of research are inextricably mingled, and that each is dependent upon the other, but the old man's remarks are too vague to allow us to grasp exactly what Morris intended.

Once humanity has been liberated, what will it make of this scientific and technical power amassed by a bourgeoisie which "has won the treasure but... cannot use it". Well, even if humanity does not develop it, it will try to make good use of it: "The power over nature which we have gained we now want to use for our enjoyment." Which means what? Morris is not very eloquent on this point, and the only suggestion he offers us is that the rôle of science in his world reborn would be to deliver men from the evils with which misuse of it had previously burdened them:

"Science duly applied would enable them to get rid of refuse, to minimize, if not wholly to destroy, all the inconveniences which at present attend the use of elaborate machinery, such as smoke, stench and noise."

Thanks to science, nature would no longer be polluted, and would recover all her charm:
Then we should have nature beautiful around us again, for surely then no disgrace of foulness in air or water would be suffered, nor would it in any wise need to be, with science set free from the huckster's fetters."

At the time when Morris was writing, electrical energy was still in its early stages. He was unaware of the possibilities which it opened for man's creative energy and he saw it only as a way of avoiding the pollution and filth inflicted upon both town and country:

"It seems probable that the development of electricity as a motive power will make it easier to undo the evils brought upon us by capitalist tyranny when we regain our senses and determine to live like human beings; but even if it turns out that we must still be dependent on coal and steam for force, much could still be done towards making life pleasant if universal co-operation in manufacture and distribution were to take the place of our present competitive anarchy." 14

Coal was always his nightmare: "For myself, I should be glad if we could do without coal.... In olden days the people did without coal, and were, I believe rather more happy than we are to-day.... But without saying we can do without coal, I will say that we could do with less than half of what we use now, if we lived properly and produced really useful, good and beautiful things. We could get plenty of timber for our domestic fires if we cultivated and cared for our forests as we might do; and with the water and with power we now allow to go to waste, so to say, and with or without electricity, we could perhaps obtain the bulk of the motive power which might be required for the essential mechanical industries." 15 "All along the Thames," he wrote in News from Nowhere, "there were abundance of mills used for various purposes; none of which were in any degree unsightly, and many strikingly beautiful; and the gardens about them marvels of loveliness." 16

They are interesting perspectives, no doubt, but very narrow. Morris cannot be reproached with the excesses of science fiction. However, if we like to repeat a manoeuvre I have already employed, by moving from the theoretical utopism of articles and lectures to the practical utopism expressed in the dream of News from Nowhere, we shall be surprised by discreet sidelights, which are so very significant! Once he was at grips with a reality that was imagined rather than imaginary, certainly shaped to his desires, but also inexorably shaped to the historical needs whose laws and internal logic he understood, this dreamer about a new society of happiness and plenty could not fail to tackle the basic problem of any social structure, that of the level of resources of energy. He did so with cautious brevity, but the hints scattered through his narrative are all the more striking. One fundamental assertion must be made at once. Morris was fully aware, and said so explicitly, that a qualitative revolutionary leap had taken place in the field of energy. When he speaks of "the great change in the use of mechanical force", we should not forget that this expression "great change" is one he also uses to describe the socialist revolution, and its use in this connection is clearly in no way an accident. This technical metamorphosis is even of such scope that it has permitted the final elimination of the monstrous, hideous industrial concentrations of the nineteenth century. 17
There is a very simple explanation for this: this new energy is distributed widely across the whole country and is at the disposal of the inhabitants anywhere; so the dispersal of industry becomes easy and normal. Together with this upsurge in power goes a considerable improvement in the machines themselves so that soon they "had been so much improved that almost all necessary work might have been done by them". A perfectly normal and understandable progress "when it was no longer a question as to whether their improvement would 'pay' the individual, but rather whether it would benefit the community". Men's initiative, now that they worked for themselves and no longer in order to increase the profits of the bosses, would be another factor for progress, and the visitor, during his journey on the Thames, remarks in passing on their "ingenuity in dealing with the difficulties of water-engineering". On several occasions he is intrigued by technical novelties beyond his comprehension. There is reference to a train "worked in some way, the explanation of which I could not understand". There are "banded workshops" making glass and pottery, and whose ovens do not produce any smoke. Finally and most important of all, the episode of the barge lays claim to our attention.

"But every now and then we came on barges, laden with hay or other country produce, or carrying bricks, lime, timber, and the like, and these were going on their way without any means of propulsion visible to me - just a man at the tiller, with often a friend or two laughing and talking with him. Dick, seeing on one occasion this day that I was looking rather hard on one of these, said: 'That is one of our force-barges; it is quite as easy to work vehicles by force by water as by land.'

I understood pretty well that these 'force vehicles' had taken the place of our old steam-power carrying; but I took good care not to ask any more questions about them, as I knew well enough both that I should never be able to understand how they worked, and that in attempting to do so I should betray myself, or get into some complication impossible to explain, so I merely said, 'Yes, of course, I understand.'"

This is the longest indication given us in the whole book of the rising of the level of the productive forces. Why such reticence? Are we to conclude that Morris was indifferent? That is most improbable, because it would have been easier in that case to say nothing at all, and Morris was not a man to force himself: these brief glimpses are intentional and are part of the logic of his utopia. Should one assume ignorance of things technical on his part? The reputation of being a gentle dreamer that has commonly been given to him makes such an assumption tempting, and I myself fell victim to it in the introduction to my French edition of "Nouvelles de mille part". But it needs looking at twice. Of course, Morris himself invites us to believe in his total incompetence: "I know well enough that I should never be able to understand how they worked". But we know just how suspicious we should be of any declarations of this kind that he might make, whether about political economy, theology, music or even painting. If one were to believe him, he knew nothing and understood nothing: it was a form of modesty and, even more, a defensive reaction against pompous fools. First, let us consider just how improbable it is that the driving force of the Morris Firm should be afflicted by total technical ig-
norance, for its products were not exclusively artisanal and included a mechanised sector which was not negligible. Bruce Glasier tells us that "he was continually surprising his friends with an unexpected acquaintance with modern science and industrial processes which he sometimes affected to despise," and Compton-Rickett recounts that he was "most keenly alive to minutest points of railway organisation". Such evidence from contemporaries calls for caution on our part.

It seems to me that the reason for this reticence was simply that Morris was not only an unpretentious man, but also, above all, a thinker and artist. He did not have the smallest wish to impress his readers and achieve facile effects by a knowledgeable exposition of extraordinary machines. In fact, to do so would have been to turn away from his purpose, which was to talk about man and his future. As Page Arnot shrewdly comments, if he had had his world buzzing with mysterious mechanisms, he would not have been describing the productive forces in the future communist society (and we must never forget that his utopia is put in the twenty-second century): at the most he could have foreseen the inventions of 1900 or 1910. It suffices to see how quickly some of Wells's anticipations have dated, and sometimes even become ridiculous. We owe it to the wisdom of Morris that his utopia, unencumbered by pseudo-scientific bric-à-brac, is ageless and, for this reason and many other reasons also, maintains a lasting youthfulness. With impressive economy and consummate art, Morris made the barge of days to come into a symbol and a landmark. Through it we know, without its having to be underlined, that plenty rests upon solid material bases: the reader is simply invited to observe and reflect. Moreover, the fact that such was the writer's deepest intention is confirmed for us by the way in which his daughter recounts his hilarity when told of the criticisms made by certain Fabians of the inadequacy of his explanations.

* * *

When one tests the average opinion, or skims through the innumerable articles in the daily or weekly press that make some reference to Morris, one is astonished at the unanimity with which our poet is unequivocally relegated to the machine-haters and the apostles of the return to primitive living. It is a ready-made concept, a lazy prejudice, sanctified, it seems, by long repetition. It is even more astonishing to see eminent critics making the same banal assessment in an even more assertive way than does the man in the street. "He puts machinism and capitalism together in the same stocks," writes Monsieur Victor Dupont, "he allows himself to be swayed by instinctive antipathies that might have been corrected by some serious thought; here we find him carried away by sentiment towards the most elementary over-simplification." Nikolaus Pevsner, in a very well-known work of accepted authority, considers that Morris, "looking forward to barbarism ... certainly hoped for machine-breaking ...", and he refers to the evidence of Charles R. Ashbee, who, after being a disciple of Morris, finished up reproaching him for "intellectual Ludditism". More recently still, another specialist, Robert Furneaux Jordan, has repeated this accusation in identical terms: "this intellectual Ludditism".

Let us rest content with these few extreme judgments, and ask ourselves the
reason for so widespread an opinion. While that of the critics I have quoted, from whom one might have expected a deeper understanding of Morris's work, must be considered strange, the average public reaction is perhaps more explicable. On the one hand, a reading of News from Nowhere in isolation (and this is most often the case) can leave an impression of a world from which machines are completely banished, whereas in reality they are just hidden and have ceased to dominate daily life. On the other hand, a real conspiracy of silence has been maintained about the theoretical writings of Morris's maturity. It is known, of course, that he was a socialist, but people are satisfied to repeat that his socialism was idyllic and pastoral. He is readily ranked with the Pre-Raphaelites, the aesthetes, even the decadents. It appears to be believed that, despite his becoming a socialist, his way of thought remained exactly as it had been before 1884, and he is seen as just a pure disciple and emulator of Ruskin.

Almost all the passages quoted in support of this interpretation date from the presocialist period, and it must be admitted that they sustain it. With bitter lyricism Morris deplores the fact that a utilitarian mastery of nature blinds man to the beauty of the earth and condemns him to unhappiness and despair:

"Time enough there may be for many things: for peopling the desert; for breaking down the walls between nation and nation; for learning the innermost secrets of the fashion of our souls and bodies, the air we breathe, and the earth we tread: time enough for subduing all the forces of nature to our material wants: but no time to spare before we turn our eyes and our longing to the fairness of the earth; lest the wave of human need sweep over it and make it not a hopeful desert as it once was, but a hopeless prison; lest man should find at last that he has toiled and striven, and conquered, and set all things on the earth under his feet, that he might live thereon himself unhappy." 34

In these tones one can hear the direct inspiration of The Stones of Venice, which is surely, from the beginning, a component of that lasting hatred of "civilization" which Morris retained all his life, but we know, too, the very special meaning he attached to the word. Moreover, this passage is an exceptionally extreme expression of Morris's thought at this time, and to some extent the exaggeration conceals the essence: what he is condemning is not the mastery over nature, but the use of it made by nineteenth-century "civilization".

That is still not the fundamental issue. What must be borne in mind, when studying Morris's thinking at the beginning of the 'eighties, is that he was, before everything, an artist and decorator. All problems, even social problems, appeared to him from this viewpoint, and art was the main yardstick to which he referred them all. Another thing for us to bear in mind, and it is an idea which we tend to forget, is that there was then a complete divorce between art and technique, notably between architecture and mechanical building: the former could lay claim to beauty, the latter was devoted to usefulness and ugliness; it would have been heresy to graft on to the one the materials and methods belonging to the other. The Gothic revival stressed this compartmentalisation even more. A mind as convinced of the pre-eminence of architecture
as was William Morris's could not fail to extend this duality to all branches of artistic production. 35

When quoting the declarations he made at that time condemning the use of machines, one does not take sufficiently into account that his criticism is solely based upon that consideration. "I myself have boundless faith," he writes, "in their capacity. I believe machines can do everything - except make works of art". 36 It is the leit-motif of all the lectures of this period, and he is particularly violent in his denunciation of machine-made objets d'art, "that pretence of art . . . which is done with machines". 37

"It is full surely one of the curses of modern life, that if people have not time and eyes to discern or money to buy the real object of their desire, they must needs have its mechanical substitute." 38

This artistic impotence of the machine is reflected in that of the worker who becomes its extension. Their joint efforts can only lead to frustration:

"Now the machines some of which will be of steel and brass and some of flesh and bone will not turn out art, for a machine cannot do it, but they will turn out a substitute for it, which will be sold very cheap, but will not be worth the money it costs, for it will be worth nothing." 39

Morris had only contempt for that "perfectly useless luxury: machine lace". 40 Or again, what is a piece of pottery that has no merit apart from "mechanical finish"? The true finish, even if it is imperfect, that which gives an object artistic quality, is workmanlike and expresses the thought and care of the maker. So it is with glass: "moulded and cut glass may have commercial, but can't have artistic value". In contrast he suggests the example, as Ruskin had done earlier, of the ancient art of the Venetian glass-makers. 41

Morris continued to be convinced for the remainder of his life of the incompatibility between art and mechanical production, and even in News from Nowhere we find the idea that "machines could not produce works of art". 42 If one knows that ornament cannot be truly beautiful when obtained through industrial processes, and if one lacks the time to devote oneself adequately to it, why go on? Do without ornament. 43 So Morris's condemnation of the use of machines cannot be denied and it even continues after 1884, but it is never all-embracing: it is directed only against the mechanical production of works of art.

But even within these defined limits, Morris avoids being dogmatic. Even during his presocialist period he did not systematically condemn all use of machinery. His demand was that it should not stifle man's free expression. When dealing, for example, with houses, clothes, furniture, "if any of these things make any claim to be considered works of art, they must show obvious traces of the hand of man guided directly by his brain, without more interposition of machines than is absolutely necessary to the nature of the work done". 44 The limitation is important and worth keeping in mind.

Even more so because it very accurately defines Morris's practice in the management of his own enterprise. Despite the legends, the Morris Firm was never exclusively craft-based, and, as the years passed, the mechanised sector occupied a growing place. All work that it was tedious to do by hand was given to machines, as is proved by photographs we have of the workshops at Merton
Abbey. 44 Shaw relates that, during a visit he made there, he noticed that certain manual tasks were dull and unrewarding; no doubt being a victim himself of the legends of the craftsman’s intransigence, he summoned up all his courage to say to Morris: “You should get a machine to do that” ; to which the latter at once replied: “I’ve ordered one.” 45

It is even probable that he would have ordered many more if his resources had allowed. He complains incidentally, in an article in Commonweal of having to “refrain from doing certain kinds of weaving I should like to do because my capital can’t compass a power-loom”. 46 In fact, mechanical weaving seemed to him to be a very legitimate activity, and he admits, in an essay published in 1888, that it can, in its decoration, be “effective and worth the doing”. 47 The same holds true, he adds, of fabric-printing. 48 Sometimes he is even more positive and declares that such weaving, “though mechanical, ... produces very beautiful things” which can bring “great satisfaction” 49 to the weaver. His son-in-law Sparling tells us that, in his workshops, while patterned fabrics were made on a hand-loom, allowing the worker “to enjoy his work”, plain cloths were made on a machine, which was more efficient and eliminated boring work: “... give that to a machine,” said Morris, “... and be damned to it”. 50 Moreover, not all jobs were done at Merton Abbey and Morris entrusted many to outside firms. This was so in the case of all muslins and even with a great many chintzes. 51 As for wallpapers, he wrote that it was necessary “to accept their mechanical nature frankly, to avoid falling into the trap of trying to make your paper look as if it were painted by hand”. 52 They also were made off the premises, 53 and the printing of them was given entirely to the firm of Jeffery and Co. 54 Cabinet-making and wood-carving were mechanised in the seventies. 55 Morris made many carpet designs for industrial manufacturers, in particular for Wilton, Kidderminster and Axminster carpets. 55 He himself had a machine-woven carpet in the big drawing-room at Kelmscott House. 56 Tapestry itself, a great art to which he gave a new lease of life, was not sacrosanct from such dealings, and famous pieces such as Vine and Pomegranate and Tulip and Rose were machine-woven. 57 On the other hand, the Kelmscott Press has often been regarded as an attempt to restore craft printing, and to a great extent this is so. As Frank Coblebrook recalled in a lecture delivered shortly after Morris’s death under the title of “William Morris, Master Printer”, it must be noted that “Morris had no hatred of printing-machines, so long as they do not convert the ‘minders’ into being also printing machines”. 58 The three type-faces with which he experimented (Troy, Golden and Chaucer) were machine-cast, since Morris considered the work too onerous to be done by hand, and for ornaments and initials he resorted to photography and electrotyping. 59 Bookbinding was never one of the Firm’s activities, since Morris did not want to enter into competition with his old friend Cobden-Sanderson, and the latter was horrified one day when he “went so far as to suggest that some machinery should be invented to bind books”. 60

It is plain that we are a long way from the “intellectual Luddism” that some have held against Morris, and Peter Floud, the author of a long essay on the “Inconsistencies of William Morris” seems unrealistic in his references to the problem of repeating patterns, found so often in the artist’s work. “Even after the revolution, in the utopian commonwealth of News from Nowhere, Morris would probably still have been compelled by the internal pressure of
his own gifts to pour out his wonderful repeating patterns, and the same problem would still arise: how to produce this sort of repeating design except by machine or by forcing people to use their hands as precisely and repetitiously as if they were machines. You cannot escape the fact that, revolution or no revolution, the essence of a repeating pattern is that it repeats exactly and endlessly, leaving no room for spontaneous variation or individual initiative. Either it must be produced by a machine or else by a man imitating a machine – and surely common sense must prefer the former.” 60 Practical experience, as well as the writings of Morris himself, could have given him a simple and precise answer and enabled him to avoid posing an unreal problem. What is more, he might have observed that machine-weaving is not proscribed anywhere in News from Nowhere, any more, incidentally, than are mechanical type-setting and printing.

So, on the level of aesthetic creativity itself, William Morris’s aversion to the use of machinery is accompanied by very important reservations, and one would be indiscreet to push the argument beyond certain limits. His position is very plain, and it determines his whole utopia: all the work which allows man to express his joy in living should come from his hands and his brain; all burdensome or boring work should be left to the machines.

However, when Morris pillories bourgeois civilisation his diatribes against industrial mechanism are violent. In the nineteenth century, the machine had not shortened the working day. It had allowed the capitalist to speed-up and intensify the rhythm of production, to reduce the worker’s wages by the threat of the scourge of unemployment and to achieve monstrous profits for capital. It had extended the harmful division of labour and made the worker nothing but an extension of the machine. It had degraded him, robbed him of his joy in beauty, his joy in creation, his manual skill. It had corrupted existence by the manufacture of useless articles, luxury for the rich, shoddy for the poor, armaments for war. All which is true, but is that to say that the machine, because it has been an instrument of exploitation and oppression in the hands of large-scale capital, cannot be of use in socialist society? Morris does not think so, and says as much very plainly:

“Surely there is nothing in the machines themselves and the invention of man which created them, that they should forbid the true use of them, the lightening the burden of human labour. That is what we Socialists under the machine and factory system are striving for at present, leaving the consideration of what is to be done to the machines and factories to future ages. who will be free to consider it, as we are not.” 65

After all, “there are some things which a machine can do as well as a man’s hand. plan a tool, can do them”, 66 and, “if the necessary reasonable work be of a mechanical kind, I must be helped to do it by a machine”. 65

Aside from these obvious truths, which William Morris, with his sturdy good sense, did not for a moment dream of questioning, there are specific aspects of the rôle of the machine after the revolution which he is to be credited with having glimpsed. In the first stage, this rôle is of great human and social
importance, for the levelling-out in conditions of work, by means of the machine, ameliorates the rigours of "unequal right". This idea finds expression in the curious Notes which accompany the Manifesto of the Socialist League:

"It should... be remembered that the tendency of modern production is to equalize the capacities of labour by means of machinery, so that the unskilled, the weak man, the woman, or even the child, are reduced to something like an equality of capacity." 68

As we know, these Notes carry the joint signatures of Morris and Bax, but it does seem that this idea, too, derived from Morris alone, since it had been clearly expressed in a lecture which he gave on 12 July 1885, whereas the edition of the Manifesto complete with Notes only appeared in October. In this lecture, entitled The Depression of Trade, Morris declares that

"almost automatic machines... though they are now wasted on the grinding of profits for individuals, will when the worker-class, the proletariat, is fully grown be the instrument which will make Socialism possible by making possible the equalization of labour as applied to the necessities of life". 69

On the other hand, it is plain that mechanism will play a capital rôle in socialist society, in creating the plenty which will make it possible to pass to the higher stage of communism. In the same lecture, Morris notes that

"the labour of every man properly directed and helped by the inventions of centuries will more than supply him and his family not yet come to working age, or past it with all the necessaries of life". 70

He repeated a few years later that "a man working in civilization with co-operation and by means of machinery and workshop organization can produce more than enough to keep himself in mere necessaries". 71 Mechanism, he said again, "as an instrument for forcing on us better conditions of life it has been, and for some time yet will be, indispensable". 72

Its essential purpose, in Morris's eyes, would be to relieve men of their burdens and allow them to achieve joy in work. Sir Thomas More, influenced by a similar desire, and lacking machines, was obliged to revert to slavery. Fourier curiously passed the dirty jobs over to the children, alleging that they would enjoy them. Morris, as a revolutionary utopist, sees a succession of liberating breakaways. Men will be delivered from the exploitation of capital and become masters of the machines which had enslaved them to the production of surplus-value. They will dominate them in their turn and so free themselves from the bonds of necessity:

"Our epoch has invented machines which would have appeared wild dreams to the men of past ages, and of those machines we have as yet made no use... In a true society these miracles of ingenuity would be for the first time used for minimizing the amount of time spent in unattractive labour, which by their means might be so reduced as to be but a very light burden on each individual." 73

Giving men back time for living, reducing their effort, these are un-
achievable aims in a society based on profit, but they would become a reality in socialist society: to achieve this, "machines of the most ingenious and best-approved kinds will be used". They will exist "simply for saving labour, with the result of a vast amount of leisure gained for the community".

However, leisure is not Morris's chief concern. As we shall see in the next chapter, the old contrast between work and leisure will have disappeared and the basis of communist society will be joy in work. But for that man must no longer have to perform laborious or repulsive jobs: the rôle of the machine will be to release him from them to an ever greater degree. "All work which would be irksome to do by hand," says old Hammond, "is done by immensely improved machinery". It "might even now be speedily extinguishing all irksome and unintelligent labour". That is unthinkably today "because it does not pay"; on the contrary, in a socialist community, the use of the machine "will be relegated almost entirely to such work, because in a society of equality everything will be thought to pay which dispenses the citizen from drudgery". So one of the principles of the new society will be "due use of machinery, i.e. the use of it in labour which is essentially oppressive if done by the hand". Then all unnecessary work will have been abolished and "whatever of irksome work is left should be done by machines used not as now to grind out profit, but to save labour really". I am well aware, adds Morris, that this

"involves what to some will seem the monstrous proposition that machines should be our servants and not our masters; nevertheless I make it without blushing".

Even during his pre-socialist period of purely aesthetic revolt against industrial civilisation, he never hesitated to advocate machine work "where the nature of the thing made compels it, or where the machine does what mere human suffering would otherwise have to do". The thing that aroused his indignation even then was that the only uses of science and technology were the invention of "ersatz" mediocrities and murderous armaments. He hoped that, to make up for it, their inexhaustible resources would be brought to bear so as to relieve men of degrading tasks:

"I want modern science, which I believe to be capable of overcoming all material difficulties, to turn from such preposterous follies as the invention of anthracine colours and monster cannon to the invention of machines for performing such labour as is revolting and destructive of self-respect to the men who now have to do it by hand."

What is remarkable in Morris's attitude is not only the absence of dogmatism but also his complete confidence in the potentials of science and his unreserved approval of any technical progress likely to lighten men's burdens. Truly, a strange "Ludditism"! As well as "plenty of unnecessary work which is merely painful", he frankly recognised, says Sparling, that there was even "some necessary labour which is not pleasant in itself"; and there, he affirmed, lay the true realm of mechanism: "If machinery had been used for minimizing such labour, the utmost ingenuity would not have been wasted on it". Certainly, he did not like machines and did not hide the fact: "The most
obvious way of using machinery . . . would seem to be to use it for the prevention of drudgery and not otherwise". 83

But his first concern was with man, and he was prepared to accept machines without hesitation and advocate their use if they could bring some relief to man’s tasks. On the other hand, the criterion would be their efficiency in carrying out this function, and where they proved inefficient it would be necessary not only to cease using them but also to dispense with the tasks for which they had been used. Speaking of daily chores, he went so far as to say:

“... that in cases where it was impossible either so to elevate them and make them interesting, or to lighten them by the use of machinery, so as to make the labour of them trifling, that should be taken as a token that the supposed advantages gained by them were not worth the trouble and had better be given up”. 84

In a still more general way:

“all work in which art, or pleasure, is impossible should be done without as far as may be, . . . it should be looked upon as a nuisance to be abated, a sickness of Society; as far as possible it should be done by machines: and machines should never be used for doing work in which men can take pleasure: whereas at present, as we all know too well, men do the work of machines, and machines of men – both disastrously”. 85

In an effort to make his point of view clear, he took the course of strenuously refuting the accusations of anti-mechanism made against him:

“To meet possible objections once more, I do not mean . . . that we should aim at abolishing all machinery: I would do some things by machinery that are now done by hand, and many other things by hand which are now done by machinery: in short, we should be the masters of our machines and not their slaves, as we are now. It is not this or that tangible steel and brass machine which we want to get rid of, but the great intangible machine of commercial tyranny, which oppresses the lives of all of us.” 86

So what needs to be tackled is a general rearrangement of methods of work. Neither manual work nor mechanical work is to be despised. Each has its function and its place, to be determined in terms of man’s development. He is to be master of his own work and of that performed by machines, and he will relegate to them all the jobs which displease him. “There will be no fear then of our doing nothing but dry utilitarian work. Have we not our wonderful machines to do that for us, to save us from drudgery?” 87 Man, liberated in this way, will see “open . . . the higher field of intellectual effort full of opportunities for individual excellence and generous emulation”. 88

So there is “no sentimental prejudice or fanciful idealization of the past” in his attitude to machines. 89 His thinking is directed towards the future and his aspiration is both humanist and practical. Far more, with lucid determination, he is careful to keep at arm’s length all decadent and negative aestheticism, for he knows its reactionary nature.

“I know,” he says, “that to some cultivated people, people of the ar-
tistic turn of mind, machinery is particularly distasteful, and they will be apt to say you will never get your surroundings pleasant so long as you are surrounded by machinery. I don't quite admit that; it is the allowing machines to be our masters and not our servants that so injures the beauty of life nowadays. In other words, it is the token of the terrible crime we have fallen into of using our control of the powers of Nature for the purpose of enslaving people, we careless meantime of how much happiness we rob their lives of."

His socialism, then, dictates his responsibilities. "The consciousness of revolution staring amidst our hateful modern society prevented me," he wrote at the end of his life, "luckier than many others of artistic perceptions, from crystallizing into a mere caller against 'progress'."

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The most striking aspect of Morris's utopia, distinguishing it completely from all other utopias, is its diachronic character. In this sense, it is specifically Marxist. Marxism being the scientific theory of movement. This aspect is too essential for me not to stress it in passing, while reserving my more serious analysis for later in our study. The dialectical process from the morrows of the revolution until the second stage is a succession of qualitative changes both on the level of institutions and on that of production. Men, passing from the reign of necessity to the reign of freedom, make their own history upon the basis of material data and the laws of evolution which govern these, but the way of life and the consciousness of men are continually interacting. Marx and Engels kept aloof from any too-detailed predictions, remaining content with very general theoretical indications. Morris was drawn by the practice of utopia into forming a bold hypothesis which he strives to present, not as an assumption, in the usual manner of utopists, but as a logical development of future history.

The basic datum of this hypothesis, a perfectly legitimate one, supported by experience, is the extraordinary leap in mechanism on the morrow of the revolution. Two hundred years later, in News from Nowhere, old Henry Morson, keeper of a museum of labour, recalled exactly that:

"The machines had been so much improved that almost all necessary work might have been done by them; and indeed many people at that time, and before it, used to think that machinery would entirely supersede handicraft, which certainly, on the face of it, seemed more than likely."

Morris had reached that certainty long since.

"I believed indeed," he wrote in 1884, "that a state of social order would probably lead at first to a great development of machinery for really useful purposes, because people will still be anxious about getting through the work necessary to holding society together."

In a way, this contains a kind of reflex caused by the consequences of centuries of social oppression, when humanity lived with worries for the morrow.
With this impulse, mechanical progress would be so rapid that almost all the chores of material life would quickly be taken over by machines. Without doubt, Morris sins here through excessive optimism. He could not foresee the growing complexity of modern life nor the heavy burdens imposed by the destruction of war, by the needs of equipment and defence, by the errors and fumblings with totally new experiments. The justification for his confidence was that he placed his utopia in what was then the most advanced industrial country in the world. Perhaps also he credited mankind prematurely with marvellous wisdom in being able to sift out their needs and voluntarily eliminate all the superfluous ones; for one thing, such a selection is a matter of debate and can only result from lengthy adaptation to the practices of a new civilisation, and, for another, Morris tended to overlook Marx's teaching about the "historical and moral element" which enters into the determination of the value of labour. More exactly, without denying the historical fact of the growth in human needs, he believed (and this is perhaps the subjective weakness in his looking forward) that this tendency would be reversed with the arrival of communism, once man was master of the choice of his way of life. If it were not so, it would be vain to hope that the development of mechanism could liberate man. Just the opposite would happen:

"This ideal of the great reduction of the hours of labour by the mere means of machinery is a futility. The human race has always put forth about as much energy as it could in given conditions of climate... and the development of men's resources, which has given him greater power over nature, has driven him also into fresh desires and fresh demands on nature, and thus made his expenditure of energy much what it was before. I believe that this will be always so, and the multiplication of machines will just - multiply machinery."

It cannot be otherwise, unless we accept that "much of our so-called 'refinement', our luxury - in short, our civilization - will have to be sacrificed". Only then will mechanism become a force for liberation.

What will be the result of this enormous progress in mechanical force, accompanied, as it will be, by a wise and clear-sighted clarification of real needs? Logically it will be a growing abundance of leisure and a tendency for men to work less and less:

"I suppose that this is what is likely to happen; that machinery will go on developing, with the purpose of saving men labour, till the mass of the people attain real leisure enough to be able to appreciate the pleasure of life; till, in fact, they have attained such mastery over Nature that they no longer fear starvation as a penalty for not working more than enough. When they get to that point they will doubtless turn themselves and begin to find out what it is that they really want to do. They would soon find out that the less work they did (the less work unaccompanied by art, I mean), the more desirable a dwelling-place the earth would be; they would accordingly do less and less work..."

They will be surprised, says Morris elsewhere, to "find that there is not so much work to do as they expected, and that then they will have leisure to reconsider the whole subject"
In fact, a completely new situation will thus have been created, and then other realisations and other problems will arise. An era of contradictions will open and will lead to another qualitative leap.

One fact attracted Morris's notice very early, that the indefinite development of mechanism in no way removes the need for a work-force. Writing in 1881, at a period when aestheticism was dominant in his mind over all other considerations, and when his ignorance about economic problems still gave a certain sentimental bombast to his tone, he exclaimed:

"Supposing we shall be able to get martyrs enough (or say slaves) to make all the machines that will still be needed, and to work them, shall we still be able to get rid of all labour, of all that we have found out is an unmitigated curse? And what will our consciences be like (since I started by supposing us all to be conscientious people), when we think we have done all that we can do, and must still be waited upon by groaning discontented wretches?"

His thinking had not yet resolved the problem of sharing chores, and his bourgeois conscience, subtly backing the moral conscience he is displaying here, leads him quite naturally to include himself among the beneficiaries of the mechanical labour of these "discontented wretches". But the irony is unnecessarily harsh: it is to Morris's credit that he foresaw continuing inequality of work which, as we well know, is inherent in the first stage. This intuition is found again at a higher level in News from Nowhere, because then the bourgeois conscience ceases to be a subjective phenomenon and becomes an objective one. Old Henry Morsom continues his discourse on the early years of the revolutionary era, which had seen the exuberant flourishing of mechanism:

"But there was another opinion, far less logical, prevalent amongst the rich people before the days of freedom, which did not die out at once after that epoch had begun. This opinion, which from all I can learn seemed as natural then, as it seems absurd now, was, that while the ordinary daily work of the world would be done entirely by automatic machinery, the energies of the more intelligent part of mankind would be set free to follow the higher forms of the arts, as well as science and the study of history. It was strange, was it not, that they should thus ignore that aspiration after complete equality, which we now recognise as the bond of all happy human society?"

So there is a first contradiction, not at all a negligible one. But there is another, much more serious, because it touches upon the very meaning of life. If the machine succeeds in eliminating all human activity, what will remain for man? Morris rebels at the idea that "machine-production will develop into mere infinity of machinery, or life wholly lapse into a disregard of life as it passes". He does not believe that the new society can for long "endure a vicarious life by means of machinery". We will surely want to be "the masters of our machines and not their slaves". The immense leisure to which humanity will be reduced frightens Morris:

"What on earth are we going to do with our time when we have brought the art of vicarious life to perfection? ... Are all of us ... going
to turn philosophers, poets, essayists - men of genius, in a word, when we have come to look down on the ordinary functions of life with the same kind of contempt wherewith persons of good breeding look down upon a good dinner, eating it sedulously however? I shudder when I think of how we shall bore each other when we have reached that perfection." 109

In News from Nowhere, Henry Morsom tells the visitor how the men of the first revolutionary generation, deadened by excessive mechanisation, had lost all knowledge of the "arts of life". It had become "impossible to find a carpenter or a smith". The villagers did not know how to bake bread, which came from London by train. No-one knew how to fix a handle to a rake, "so that it would take a machine worth a thousand pounds, a group of workmen, and half a day's travelling, to do five shillings' worth of work". They had not the slightest notion of laundering or cooking. 101 Morris assured Bruce Glasier that "he did not in the least rejoice at the prospect of supplanting generally the energies of the mind and the skill of the hands by universal ingenuities of mechanism. That way led, he felt, to the eventual decay, not only of our physical faculties, but of our imagination and our moral powers". 102 In other words, this indiscriminate mechanisation constituted the infrastructure of that "level of dull utilitarian comfort" which we have seen Morris fearing and deploring in his expectations of the first stage.

* * *

Then came a "new revolution". Man, having tasted the new pleasure of enjoyment of material comforts, finished up debarred by the machines from the satisfaction of his vital need to expend his energy. He felt himself the victim of a new form of deprivation. The old worry about the morrow had gone, and there were goods in abundance. He was condemned to the passive enjoyment of consumption, and his growing leisure, which had possessed the charm of being dearly won, began to irk him: in the long run, "machinery having been perfected, mankind will turn its attention to something else". 104

There will be no sudden explosion. Things move darkly in the consciousness of man and at first they show themselves imperceptibly. "They were puzzled as to what to do," explains Henry Morsom, "till they found the feeling against a mechanical life which had begun before the Great Change amongst people who had leisure to think of such things, was spreading insensibly; till at last under the guise of pleasure that was not supposed to be work, work that was pleasure began to push out the mechanical toil, which they had once hoped at the best to reduce to narrow limits indeed, but never to get rid of; and which, moreover, they found they could not limit as they had hoped to do." 106 Moreover, Morris was sure that this tendency would become apparent after half a century, which is clearly only conceivable in a country that had achieved a very high level of technical progress. However, there is not any doubt that he never envisaged the possibility of a gadget-minded civilisation, and that for him the limit beyond which all generalised mechanisation became superfluous was set by the satisfaction of man's basic needs: the use of the machine, he writes,
“would probably, after a time, be somewhat restricted when men found out that there was no need for anxiety as to mere subsistence, and learned to take an interest and pleasure in handiwork which, done deliberately and thoughtfully, could be made more attractive than machine work.”

The fact upon which Morris insists is that at that time men will come to their decisions with complete liberty. They will not be working to order, nor spurred on by “artificial famine” engendered by the laws of profit: “they would be free to do as they chose, and they would set aside their machines in all cases where the work seemed pleasant or desirable for handiwork”; it would be “the mood of energy” which “urged them on afresh”. Their attitude towards machines will ever vary with the mood of the moment: “people will be able to use them or not as they feel inclined”. Morris considers that “possibly the few more important machines will be very much improved, and the host of unimportant ones fall into disuse.”

It is not out of the question for excessive reactions to appear, so that “people will rather overdo their hatred of machinery”. Henry Morsom’s anecdotes about the beginning of the craft era do not lack picturesque touches. For example, in order to rediscover “those arts of life which they had each lost”, people set to in the fields to watch complicated agricultural machinery “used quite unintelligently” to see “the way in which the machines worked, gathering an idea of handicraft from machinery”. Morsom showed the visitor the minutes of a village council which recorded long discussions to determine “the due proportions of alkali and oil for soap-making for the village wash, or the exact heat of the water into which a leg of mutton should be plunged for boiling”.

Thus, mechanisation “in the long run ... will work out its own contradiction”, and this contradiction will be resolved in a dialectical manner. In the nineteenth century, the machine had destroyed the artisans, but, explains Morris:

“I have a kind of hope that the very elaboration of machinery in a society whose purpose is not the multiplication of labour, as it now is, but the carrying on of a pleasant life, as it would be under social order – that the elaboration of machinery, I say, will lead to the simplification of life, and so once more to the limitation of machinery.”

It is what Marx termed “the negation of the negation”.

* * *

So gradually men gave up some of their machines; they preferred to make with their own hands the objects which filled their daily lives, and they wanted these objects to be both useful and beautiful. This search for beauty was bound to turn them away from mechanical production, because “machines cannot produce works of art”. Their first efforts were clumsy. Henry Morsom showed the visitor samples on display in his museum: “rough and unskilful in handiwork, but solid and showing some sense of pleasure in the making”. While they do not resemble the work of savages or barbarians, the visitor remarks significantly, “yet with what would once have been called a hatred of civiliza-
tion impressed upon them.” Morson replies that “you must not look for delicacy there: in that period you could only have got that from a man who was practically a slave”. As one can see, at this stage of utopia the influence of Ruskin claims its due. Morris thinks, like Ruskin, that perfect work can only be imitation or repetition and that the greatness of man is only revealed in imperfection. He differs from his erstwhile master in the sense that this praise of imperfect work is not, for him, evidence and aesthetic justification for the dogma of the Fall, but, on the contrary, an affirmation of his respect for man, a creative animal and not a divine creature. So any human work, clumsy as it may be, is worthy of understanding:

“We ought to get to understand the value of intelligent work, the work of men’s hands guided by their brains, and to take that, though it be rough, rather than the unintelligent work of machines or slaves, though it be delicate.”

In 1882, replying to questions from a Royal Commission enquiring into technical teaching, he expressed indignation that the candidates should be assessed in their examinations only upon the finish of the work submitted (“finish for its own sake”). This much-praised “finish” of industrial products had “the shop counter look” and “has no sign of humanity on it”. The most precious thing is man himself, and he must be encouraged to express the best of himself. Not all are equally gifted, but what matter! If the world becomes such that co-operation and brotherhood rule human relationships, the work of the least gifted will be harmoniously associated with that of great artists:

“Absolute perfection in art is a vain hope; the day will never come when the hand of man can thoroughly express the best of the thoughts of man. Why then should we deprive ourselves therefore of all the fancy and imagination that lies in the aim of so many men of lesser capacity than that of the great masters? Is it not better to say to all who have any genuine gifts however small, ‘courage! it is enough for a work of art if it show real skill of hand, genuine instinct for beauty, and some touch of originality; co-operation will show you how your smaller gifts may be used along with the greater ones.’”

That is probably what happened in one of the Banded-workshops which Dick and the traveller came across on their journey through London, where people gathered “to do hand-work in which working together is necessary or convenient”. In this workshop, with roomy kilns, where pottery was thrown and fired, and glass blown, the workers followed their inspiration and found joy in their mastery over their materials. During the lunch which the visitor had in the hall of the Bloomsbury Market, he had the opportunity of appreciating the work of these craftsmen:

“The glass, crockery, and plate were very beautiful to my eyes, used to the study of mediaeval art; but a nineteenth-century club-haunter would, I daresay, have found them rough and lacking in finish: the crockery being lead-glazed pot-ware, though beautifully ornamented, the only porcelain being here and there a piece of old oriental ware. The
glass, again, though elegant and quaint, and very varied in form, was somewhat bubbled and hornier in texture than the commercial articles of the nineteenth century. The furniture and general fittings of the hall were much of a piece with the table-gear, beautiful in form and highly ornamented, but without the commercial 'finish' of the joiners and cabinet-makers of our time.  

So, after a hundred and fifty years, the product continues to carry the mark of human imperfection, but this imperfection stresses all the more emphatically the imagination and artistic creativity that have been given free rein, the joy of the craftsman in his work, echoed by the joy of the user. Surely, times have changed; we are far from those early days when men "began rudely and awkwardly to ornament the wares which they made", the striving towards beauty has not ceased to grow ever since. Now, says old Morson, "we have added the utmost refinement of workmanship to the freedom of fancy and imagination." Manual clumsiness has become something uncommon, and a little shameful. Bob the weaver confides to the visitor that Dick has a poor opinion of him. "he . . . despises me for not being very deft with my hands, that's the way nowadays", and he adds that it is probably "a kind of revenge for the stupidity of that day" (the nineteenth century) "which despised everybody who could use his hands". This ability is expressed less in the finish of the material than in its development, its richness of form and decoration. As well as glassware, crockery, silverware and furniture, various things catch the visitor's attention during this narrative, and they too take on the quality of symbol or reference-point. There is Dick's belt-buckle "of damascened steel beautifully wrought". There are the great doors of the Hammersmith theatre, "of damascened bronze". But above all, because of the psychological shock which their free acquisition caused the visitor, are the tobacco pouch of "red morocco . . . , gaily embroidered" and the sumptuous "big-bowed pipe . . . carved out of some hard wood very elaborately, and mounted in gold sprinkled with little gems", which was "a very pretty thing, with the little people under the trees all cut so clean and sweet".

At first glance, the descriptions of the means of lighting and transport are more disconcerting. We learn, as we go along, that the house where Ellen lives at Runnymede is candle-lit. This is the only indication of the kind in the book, and we do not know whether it is the same in the guest-houses and the other places where the visitor spends a night. Doubtless the Runnymede dwelling is a humble country cottage, but, after having been told that the mysterious "force" is to hand everywhere, we cannot help feeling somewhat surprised. Electric light was still unknown in 1890, but gas was widespread: it is true that Morris was appalled by it and had magnificent copper candelabra at Kelmscott House. And what are we to think about means of locomotion? The Thames and the canals are furrowed with craft, including, let us not forget, the famous "force-barges". But on land we only see Dick's carriage, and some of the visitor's remarks lead us to suppose that railways have disappeared. One scarcely knows how Ellen is to get to the north of England with her father (or grandfather) on the journey due to take place after the end of the story. Is there any justification for leaving us unsatisfied on these obscure points? An answer is difficult, and must take several factors into ac-
count. First, Morris never intended to make his utopia a complete and detailed plan of the society of the future. We are warned by one of the book’s sub-titles: “Being some chapters from a Utopian romance.” The other sub-title (An Epoch of Red) is no less important. The world to be built by our descendants will be freed from the vain and baseful restlessness created by competition and the race for profit. It will be a world of affable serenity and happy wisdom. Abundance will be assured and, as Morris tells us explicitly, it will be thanks to progress in motive power and machinery. But these will no longer impinge upon daily life. The rhythm of existence will be relaxed and the return to handicraft will be an element in this relaxation. Men will be harassed no longer, and will exert their energies in peace and joy. They will no longer feel the need for escape which has become the psychosis of our time. Their occupations will be healthful and varied, the context of their lives will be beautiful and soothing, they will have no reason to hate or envy one another, and will feel little temptation to break away from the natural human bonds which make the fabric of their collective existence in the places where they dwell and work. So they will not travel much. “Of course people are free to move about,” Ellen explains to the visitor, “but except for pleasure-parties, especially in harvest and haytime, like this of ours, I don’t think they do so much.” 158 And when they do, it is a leisurely communion with countryside and with people, and no longer with the sole object of eating up the miles. Do the carriage and the boat not satisfy this desire to enjoy the good things of the world? And when one is going up the Thames, are the old locks so displeasing? To the visitor who is surprised that nobody has “invented something which would get rid of this clumsy business of going upstairs by means of these rude contrivances”, Walter, one of his travelling companions, replies:

“You see, guest, this is not an age of inventions. The last epoch did all that for us, and we are now content to use such of its inventions as we find handy, and leaving those alone which we don’t want. I believe, as a matter of fact, that some time ago (I can’t give you a date) some elaborate machinery was used for locks, though people did not go so far as to try to make the water run uphill. However, it was troublesome, I suppose, and the simple hatches, and the gates, with a big counterpoising beam, were found to answer every purpose, and were easily mended when wanted with material always to hand: so here they are, as you see.”

“Besides,” said Dick, “this kind of lock is pretty, as you can see; and I can’t help thinking that your machine-lock, winding up like a watch, would have been ugly and would have spoiled the look of the river; and that is surely reason enough for keeping such locks as these. Good-bye, old fellow!” said he to the lock, as he pushed us out through the now open gates by a vigorous stroke of his boat-hook. “May you live long, and have your green old age renewed for ever!” 159

As we tear ourselves regretfully from the poetry of this episode, let us notice that these Englishmen of the twenty-second century do not utter an angry and all-embracing condemnation of machines. They are content, as Walter says “to use those we find handy, and leaving those alone which we don’t want”. Craftsmanship and mechanism co-exist harmoniously, and choice remains
quite free. Let us also remember that when Dick tried to explain the "fore
barges" to the visitor, he told him that "it is quite as easy to work vehicles by
force in water as by land," which implies that there must be other means of
transport as well as the carriage. Morris refrained from describing them. I
have already mentioned reasons for this cautious reserve, which is the act of a
consummate and conscious artist. There is perhaps another: in describing this
world of the far-distant future, was he not naturally tempted to show what
most distinguishes it from ours, and, while machines exist in the background,
is it not more striking to see this simplicity of handicraft giving new life to
man's existence? Nevertheless, this freedom to choose, to make a reasonable
selection, is an important element of the utopia. Who can even say whether
Morris, despite all his aversion for their ugliness in the countryside, really in-
tended to abolish railways? After declaring in a lecture that people will use
machines or not, according to their inclination, he gave this example:

"If we want to go on a journey we shall not be compelled to go by
railway as we are now, in the interests of property, but may indulge our
personal inclinations and travel in a tilted waggon or on the hindquarters
of a donkey." 12

There is another aspect of this return to the handicraft way of life upon
which Morris insists with enthusiasm, and that is muscular effort, whenever it
promotes man's health and happiness. Not sport, which he never practised
and to which he never refers, but physical work combining pleasure and
usefulness, just like art as he conceives it. The English of the future have in-
vented an expression to describe it, "easy-hard work", and Dick explains it
thus to the visitor:

"I mean work that tires the muscles and hardens them and sends you
pleasantly weary to bed, but which isn't trying in other ways; doesn't
harass you, in short. Such work is always pleasant if you don't overdo it." 13

Morris himself, with his bubbling energy, was rather inclined to overdo it,
and it is quite amusing to see, through reading his letters, the state into which
he worked himself at the time when he was occupied with his great ex-
periments in dyeing. We see him busying himself about the vat, "working in
sabot and blouse in the dye-house ... taking in dyeing at every pore", and
working frantically "pretty much all day long": 14 he was so dirty that he
learned he might be refused admission to the theatre in the evening. 15 His
hands, he says, "are a useful spectacle" and he felt "as if I wanted pegs to
keep my fingers one from the other": his hand trembled as he wrote the letter,
but he was delighted; it was "delightful work, hard for the body and easy for
the mind"; 16 the phrase of the future was already half invented. Eight years
later, his enthusiasm for dyeing was as lively as ever. 17 Gardening was
another way in which he relaxed his mind, and he had opportunities both at
Hammersmith and at Kelmscott Manor, but he does not seem to have been
much of a gardener; looking after paths and clipping hedges seems to have
been enough for him. 18 The other jobs were left to the paid gardeners.
The importance which Morris gives to heavy manual tasks in his utopia
does not stem exclusively from his personal tastes. It also expresses a reaction
against the prejudices so widespread among his own class and against the injustice of the treatment meted out to the workers who performed these tasks. With other social and human conditions, they might become a source of joy.

"Nor do I think (I were crazy or dreaming else) that the work of the world can be carried on without rough labour; but I have seen enough of that to know that it need not be by any means degrading. To plough the earth, to cast the net, to fold the flock—these, and such as these, which are rough occupations enough, and which carry with them many hardships, are good enough for the best of us, certain conditions of leisure, freedom, and due wages being granted. As to the bricklayer, the mason, and the like—these would be artists, and doing not only necessary, but beautiful and therefore happy work, if art were anything like it should be."

In the conditions of the new life it would be unthinkable that anyone should revolt at healthy manual activity:

"I should think very little of the manhood of a stout and healthy man who did not feel a pleasure in doing rough work; always supposing him to work under the conditions I have been speaking of—namely, feeling that it was useful (and consequently honoured), and that it was not continuous or hopeless, and that he was really doing it of his own free will."

Such work, Morris considered, is indispensable to the harmonious development of the body, and everybody should be practised at "walking, running, swimming, riding, sailing", and, he insists, "getting in the harvest by hand". "Such things are not arts, they are merely bodily exercises, and should become habitual in the race, and also one or two elementary arts of life, as carpentry or smithy; and most should know how to shoe a horse and shear a sheep and reap a field and plough it". These are all tasks which the characters of News from Nowhere do not deny themselves, and they even complain at times that there are not enough of them for everybody and that they are "getting somewhat scarce for these last fifty years". They need "good work for hardening the muscles," and Bob the weaver, who has given too much time to mathematics and political economy, is told that "really, it is about time for you to take some open-air work, so that you may clear away the cobwebs from your brain". The women are no less eager than the men in this respect. "I work hard when I like it," says Ellen, "because I like it, and think it does me good, and knits up my muscles, and makes me prettier to look at, and healthier and happier." A typical incident, and, no doubt, intentionally typical, is that of the road repairs on the way to Bloomsbury. All the details of the scene appear to be carefully chosen to illustrate the joy of these young folk in handling a pick-axe: their clothes, embroidered with gold and silk, lying at the roadside by a large hamper of cold pies and wine, the admiration of the women and children surrounding them, the laughter and conversation. Dick's look of envy, their kindness in the help they give the occupants of the carriage. Had Morris recalled Ruskin bringing his students from Oxford to metal a road? Is it an echo of Sir Thomas More's Utopia?
Clearly it is the work in the fields which gives the inhabitants their bes-lawed physical occupations. The story takes place at the moment of haymaking, and "haymaking is a regular festival", attracting almost the whole population into the meadows. "unless you had worked in the hay-field in fine weather, you couldn't tell what pleasant work it is." Naturally, the work went on, Morris writes, "in the simple fashion of the days when I was a boy". No tractors, no mechanical rakes or binders. Men and women, clad in gay colours, noisy happy, handled fork and rake amid the swathes, and "the meadow looked like a gigantic tulip-bed because of them". Morris is convinced that "we should soon drop machinery ... when we were free". Once again, it would be the result of free choice, determined solely by the pleasure of living:

"There would be many occupations ... as the processes of agriculture, in which the voluntary exercise of energy would be thought so delightful, that people would not dream of handing over its pleasure to the jaws of a machine." 132

It is quite true that this return to handicraft agriculture leaves us thoughtful and sceptical, and we cannot help thinking of the difficulties faced by the new socialist countries of our time in achieving adequate agricultural production. This reservation is all the more justified by the fact that Morris's assumptions include one conjecture as ill-founded as unnecessary, namely, that in the twenty-second century "the population is pretty much the same as it was at the end of the nineteenth century". 133 The demographic development which we are witnessing leaves little room for such a probability. It is necessary, however, to bear in mind that Morris's utopia predicts the disappearance of large urban concentrations, the harmonious fusion of town and country and, consequently, a work-force more readily available because the main industrial problems would have been solved. Perhaps, in the long run, these prospects are less ridiculous or improbable than at first glance, and only the distant descendants of the builders of socialism will be able to say whether they were well-founded.

Moreover, William Morris was quite well aware that the solution he envisaged did not resolve all difficulties and was not free from all inconvenience. Humanity would gain much, but would also lose certain advantages. But the choice will have to be made, and the protection of fundamental human values will largely compensate for the loss of some material comforts. Future society, he wrote, will be

"a society conscious of a wish to keep life simple, to forgo some of the power over nature won by past ages in order to be more human and less mechanical, and willing to sacrifice something to this end." 134

While his utopian option is quite clearly in favour of a very marked renunciation of mechanised civilisation, he always leaves the choice open, and is content to suppose that the people of communist society will share his preferences. His message is an invitation to mankind to preserve the fullness of its being. Socialism will allow him to safeguard it, communism to expand it. As master
of his destiny, he will be able to determine freely the way of life and of production most suited to his deepest nature. His fundamental need is work. Capitalist oppression has made him forget this, by transforming his activity into torment and degradation. Socialism will satisfy his material needs and restore dignity to labour, but the needs of the first stage will only partially remove the adverse pressures. The plenty and the leisure of communism will finally provide man with the chance to give free rein to his creative needs. While relying upon science, technology and machines to relieve him of all the chores he finds distasteful, he will still retain a wide sector of activity in which his creativity will have all the scope he desires. During the socialist era, he will have achieved comfort. During the communist era, Morris believed, he will want to achieve joy and beauty. He will only be able to reach this goal by the free use of all his physical and mental faculties, and creative handicraft, made possible through the surge ahead of productive forces, will assure his success. It would represent "in all crafts where production of beauty was required, the most direct communication between a man's hand and his brain". His thought is best expressed through direct material effort.

"The moment you make the executive part of the work too easy," he assured Sparrling, "the less thought there is in the result. And you can't have art without resistance in the material." 136

But there again, Morris is not dogmatic and to him the most important thing seems to be the creative will of the worker, once it has been liberated, whatever the method of production: "in the making of wares there should be some of the spirit of the handicraftsman, whether the goods be made by hand, or by a machine that helps the hand, or by one that supersedes it." 137

Among all the legends which travesty Morris's thinking, one seems particularly tenacious. Not only is he accused of "ludditism", but it is generally held that he preached an immediate return to handicraft. In fact, nothing was further from his view of things. He was convinced that the development of mechanism was not only in line with the development of capitalism, but indispensable to the building of socialism, and that it would be necessary until all human needs were satisfied. As for handicraft, there could be no question of it until then. Old Henry Morsom insists upon the fact that "the handicraft was not the result of what used to be called material necessity". He recalls the progress of mechanisation before and after the revolution and the fact that "many people... used to think that machinery would entirely supersed handicraft; which certainly, on the face of it, seemed more likely". 138

There appears to be some ignorance of the hesitations which marked Morris's attitude towards contemporary movements aimed at a revival in handicraft, particularly when, in the latter months of 1887, a project was put forward for a great Arts and Crafts Exhibition. Not only, contrary to general belief, did he have no part in the conception and promotion of this demonstration 139 but, while regretting that he was a wet blanket, he pointed out to the organisers the financial risks they were running and told them flatly that "the general public don't care one damn about the arts and crafts". The objects displayed, he added, could only be "of an amateurish nature". 140 Who, in fact, then discussed a return to handicraft? They were, replied Morris "people interested, or who suppose they are interested, in the details of the arts
of life". Developing this thought, he observed that handicraft had virtually disappeared "among the wage-earning classes" and that today it is "now all but extinct, except among the professional classes, who claim the position of gentlemen". William Morris was clearly not prepared to rely upon fashionable whimsy, or regard the moon as being made of green cheese.

Which is not to say that he was hostile or even indifferent to such efforts. He gave his support, but expressed it in language which displays his clarity of understanding. He saw them as a "feeble protest ... against the vulgarization of all life" and "one token amongst others of the sickness of modern civilization", although such efforts are "contemptible on the surface in the face of the gigantic fabric of commercialism". However, they are "both noteworthy and encouraging". Morris thought, in fact, that they "may help to keep alive memories of the past which are necessary elements of the life of the future". The "intelligent handicraft" which had formerly made existence "tolerable amidst war and turmoil and uncertainty of life" might one day again be an element in happiness. This effort, he writes, "is something to do at least, for it means keeping alive the spark of life in these architectural arts for a better day".

In words which leave no doubt as to what he really thought, Morris considered that the question was to know "how far this is a mere reactionary sentiment incapable of realization, and how far it may foreshadow a real coming change in our habits of life ...". He courteously refrained from answering the first question and replied affirmatively to the second, but the conclusion he drew from the discussion was clear and unequivocal: "the realization of that Society of Equals ... will form the only conditions under which true craftsmanship can be the rule of production". A remark made four years earlier showed that his thinking was already mature and exact. Imagining what a factory might be like in times to come, he considered that the workers would then be inclined to decorate by hand the products they made, and, he said,

"nor ... would there be any danger of such ornamental work degenerating into mere amateur twaddle, such as is now being inflicted on the world by ladies and gentlemen in search for a refuge from boredom".

So it is plain that not for one moment could William Morris be regarded as a crusader for handicraft among his contemporaries or even for succeeding generations. For him, handicraft was no short-term policy, but a distant utopian expectation, and it could only change the human condition by being based firmly upon an infrastructure of power and mechanisation.
CHAPTER SEVEN

"From Every One According to his Abilities"

The need to work will remain the general unchanging law in the new society, during the communist régime as well as the socialist (only the method of distributing the wealth produced will distinguish the two stages): "... all shall produce who are able to do so", and anyone attempting to avoid this responsibility will be guilty of dishonesty and theft.

On the other hand, while work is a duty, it is also the accepted fundamental right of every individual. Everyone, wrote Morris, "shall always be free to work". There will be an end forever to this absurd and iniquitous world, in which there is "overwork and weariness for the worker one month, and the next no work and terror of starvation". His lot in the future will be "steady work and plenty of leisure every month". He will have the guarantee not only of regular work, but also of "useful employment, and the duly resulting livelihood", and he will never have to "fear want of employment as would earn for him all the necessaries of mind and body".

In Morris's concept of work, it certainly appears that the notion of right greatly overshadows that of duty. That is the impression which comes across clearly in News from Nowhere, and it is not belied by other writings. There is nothing surprising in that, for work, in Morris's vision, is profoundly different from what it is in capitalist society, by its very conditions and even in its very essence.

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During 1884, Morris's utopian imagination was taxed by the visualisation of what the factory of the future might be like. We find him at that moment in a curious phase of his evolution. His conversion to Marxist socialism had freed him from purely sentimental effusions and vague Ruskinian generalisations about the ugliness of industrial civilisation. It had brought him to a closer and more realistic understanding of the working conditions of his time: rarely a direct understanding, admittedly, but one nourished by daily contact with workers active in the Social Democratic Federation and, probably even more, by his reading (that of Capital must have been particularly enlightening). At that time, his imagination had not ranged into the distant future when the big industrial concentrations would have been abolished and when mechanisation would be wiped out. When he dreamed of the future, it was on the basis of the material facts of the nineteenth century, and his purpose was to replace its negative characteristics by new and directly opposed ones. So his utopia of this period has not achieved full maturity, but it holds an undeniable interest for us.
on account of its definite and more immediate character, which throws into relief the picture of the experiments undertaken in the socialist countries during our century.

Morris’s first demand was for space and air. It will no longer be necessary for factories to have, as today, “scarcely room to turn round in”. The demand for profit which dictates this economy will have been abolished, and there will be “ample room in them, abundant air, a minimum of noise”. The workers, “being the masters of their own lives, would not allow any hurry or want of foresight to force them into enduring dirt, disorder, or want of room”, and science, brought into the service of men, would deliver them from the present drawbacks of mechanism, “such as smoke, stench and noise”. Moreover, the factory would cease to poison, not only its own workers, but also the surrounding population; it would “make no sordid litter, befoul no water, nor poison the air with smoke”.

Also, the factories would cease to be repulsive buildings, “ugly blots on the fair face of the earth”. Nor would the workers tolerate it:

“Beginning by making their factories, buildings, and sheds decent and convenient like their homes, they would infallibly go on to make them not merely negatively good, inoffensive merely, but even beautiful, so that the glorious art of architecture, now for some time slain by commercial greed, would be born again and flourish”.

Not without irony, Morris observes that this architectural luxury would not entail excessive expense.

“Every great factory,” he writes, “does today sustain a palace (often more than one) . . . but . . . this palace, stuffed as it is with all sorts of costly things is for one member of the factory only, the sleeping partner—useful creature.”

He adds ferociously that this palace is usually “beastly ugly”, and that it cannot be otherwise in a world “which refuses cultivation and refinement to the workers, and, therefore, can have no art, not even for all its money”. In contrast, the factory-palace of the future “does not injure the beauty of the world, but adds to it rather”. This will be easy, since it will be “built generously as regards material, and . . . built with pleasure by the builders and designers”. This architectural beauty will in no way be a kind of falsely artistic camouflage. Its appearance will not disguise, but rather will clearly express, the purpose of the building: “reasonable and light work, cheered at every step by hope and pleasure”, and the workshops will have “their own beauty of simplicity as workshops”. This external grace will naturally be reflected in the internal decoration. Why should such premises resemble prisons or asylums? A certain simplicity is needed, by all means, and decoration must be adapted to particular conditions, but, writes Morris,

“nor can I see why the highest and most intellectual art, pictures, sculpture, and the like should not adorn a true palace of industry. People living a manly and reasonable life would have no difficulty in refraining from overdoing both these and other adornments, here then would be opportunities for using the special talents of the workers, especially in
cases where the daily necessary work affords scanty scope for artistic work...12

So it is necessary that "factories or workshops should be pleasant". While, in the utopia of "News from Nowhere", they are "scattered up and down the country", they are also "trim, neat and pretty", and the large factories which we note in passing, will still exist, will be equally attractive:

"For, indeed, we should be too much ashamed of ourselves if we allowed the making of goods, even on a large scale, to carry with it the appearance, even, of desolation and misery." 14

It is not enough that workplaces should be tastefully decorated and be "beautiful after their kind". It is no less important that they should be located in green and pleasantly arranged situations, "surrounded by trees and gardens; in many cases the very necessities of manufacture might be made use of for beautifying their surroundings; as for instance in textile printing works, which require large reservoirs of water". 15

This idea of the "beautiful surroundings" as the setting for the workers' activity was dear to Ruskin, 16 and Morris very naturally picks up his message here. He himself had long since put it into practice on his own account. One of the first things he had done when setting up his workshops at Merton Abbey had been to plant poplars, and the place was well-known for its rustic charm, many flowers were grown there and it was not uncommon for a customer to go away bearing a sheaf of them. 15

The theme recurs incessantly in the articles and lectures of 1884–85. "There is no reason," he writes, "why it (the factory) should not be beautiful in itself, and the country about it might well be a garden". 18 Nothing seemed too fine to him, and he drew for his listeners a somewhat idyllic picture of the ideal factory:

"Our factory stands amidst gardens as beautiful (climate apart) as those of Alcinoüs, since there is no need of stinking it of ground, profit rents being a thing of the past, and the labour on such gardens is like enough to be purely voluntary, as it is not easy to see the day when 75 out of 100 people will not take delight in the pleasantest and most innocent of all occupations, and our working people will assuredly want open-air relaxation from their factory work... One's imagination is inclined fairly to run riot over the picture of beauty and pleasure offered by the thought of skilful co-operative gardening for beauty's sake, which beauty would by no means exclude the raising of useful produce for the sake of livelihood."

The garden-factory is justified, from the expense point of view, in the same sly way as the factory-palace:

"Most factories sustain today large and handsome gardens, and not seldom parks and woods of many acres in extent, with due appurtenances of highly-paid Scotch professional gardeners, wood reeves, bailiffs, gamekeepers, and the like, the whole being managed in the most wasteful way conceivable, only the said gardens, etc., are, say, twenty
miles away from the factory, out of the smoke, and are kept up for one
member of the family only, the sleeping partner to wit.” 20

There is another thing, one where Morris’s expectation most plainly and
undoubtedly foreshadowed the experience of the new socialist countries: “The
factories might,” he writes, “be centres of intellectual activity also,” in which
would develop “the study and practice of art and science”. 21 Each of them
“should be itself a town . . . it should contain in itself all the resources for a
refined and well-occupied life – at once manly, restful and eager”. 22 The
workers could employ their leisure there “in perfecting themselves in the
niceties of their craft, or in research as to its principles” and some “others
would take to studying more general knowledge”. Education would go hand in
hand with cultural amusement.

“The factory, by co-operation with other industrial groups will both
provide an education for its own workers, and contribute its share to the
education of citizens outside, but, further, it will, as a matter of course,
find it easy to provide for mere restful amusements, as it will have ample
buildings for library, school-room, dining-hall, and the like; social
gatherings, musical or dramatic entertainments will obviously be easy to
manage under such conditions.” 23

These recreational and cultural buildings stimulated William Morris’s im-
agination to the utmost. He had wisely considered that the architecture and
decoration of the factory must be in tune with the function of the building,
keeping within the limits of sober simplicity; but these premises intended for
leisure and study are not subject to the same limitations, and “may carry orna-
ment much further”:

“Nor do I see why, if we have a mind for it, we should not emulate the
monks and craftsmen of the Middle Ages in our ornamentation of such
buildings.” 24

In this way the factory itself would develop a fraternal atmosphere among
the workers. The pleasantness of the situation, like that of the work, would be
such that “young men and women at the time of life when pleasure is most
sought after would go to their work as to a pleasure party”. They would come
to join in “communion with hopeful work; love, friendship, family affection,
might all be quickened by it; joy increased and grief lightened by it”. 25

It was probably pointed out to Morris that, within the capitalist system,
there were enlightened employers who had introduced reforms in this direc-
tion into their own undertakings and we know that, since then, many other im-
provements have occurred. Perhaps he also had in mind the isolated effort, ex-
traordinary in his day, made by Robert Owen at New Lanark. William Morris
replied to this objection in terms which carry weight:

“Those externals of a true palace of industry can be only realised
naturally and without affectation by the work which is to be done in
them being in all ways reasonable and fit for human beings; I mean no
mere whim of some one rich and philanthropic manufacturer will make
even one factory permanently pleasant and agreeable for the workers in
it; he will die or be sold up, his heir will be poorer or more single-hearted
in his devotion to profit, and all the beauty and order will vanish from the short-lived dream; even the external beauty in industrial concerns must be the work of society and not of individuals.”

Thus, the transformation of the conditions of work and the places where it is performed can only result from the transformation, not only of society itself, but also of the nature, the very essence of the work itself.

* * *

In the indictment which Morris draws up against capitalist “civilization”, his most vehement attacks are made upon the system of division of labour, which carves up, not only the work, but the man himself. He repeats on his own account both the moral condemnation uttered by Ruskin and the detailed analyses and historical considerations of Karl Marx. He therefore poses the principle that, in communist society, division of labour will have disappeared. Unfortunately, Morris does not give any indication, either in his theoretical writings, or in his utopian practice, that allow any definite form to be given to these generalisations. It is a difficult problem that he did not know how to tackle directly. In his case, the problem takes on two aspects which have to be considered separately: that of artistic creation and that of industrial production. Morris has not been very forthcoming on either.

His most important statements on the first point are his replies to the questions put to him by the members of the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, in 1882. We find there that in weaving “the man who actually goes through the technical work of counting the threads, and settles how the thing is to be woven, through and through, should do the greater part of the drawing”; that “I think it is desirable on the whole that the artist and designer should practically be one . . . I think it essential that a designer should learn the practical way of carrying out the work for which he designs; he ought to be able to weave himself”. We know that Morris had no hesitation over getting his own hands dirty, that he had acquired a practical knowledge of all the arts which made up the Firm’s activities, and that, for example, he had a tapestry loom in his bedroom and worked at it every morning. We know that he found the greatest pleasure in putting the most fiddling details into his own compositions. We know that he gave the young people employed at Merton Abbey the widest freedom in the making of the tapestries which they designed. But all that did not go so very far. One of the great merits of the study Paul Thompson has made of William Morris is in showing that, with very few exceptions, the motifs to be designed were to be carried out by others, and that division of labour was highly developed in the Firm. Peter Froud, in his violent diatribe against “The Inconsistencies of William Morris” had, some years earlier, brought the same charge. All of that is true, and it does not simplify the problem. Would the decorative work have been as rich and abundant, and would Morris have had the time to devote to his many other activities if he had been bound to the complete production process? Would the same difficulty cease to exist in communist society? Perhaps we should regard it as a significant pointer that Morris took the trouble to master the production techniques of all the arts he practised and
so was able the more efficiently to shape the conception of the work towards the desired result. Perhaps it is in exactly this way that his message is to be interpreted and may very well prove to be fruitful.

These considerations relative to art and design clearly leave untouched the problem of the division of labour in the factory itself, which is of quite another kind. On this point, Morris is very cautiously circumspect. "I want division of labour," he writes, "restricted within reasonable limits." 31 "Division of labour would be habitually limited," he writes again. 32 He never ventures any further and we cannot help noticing the reservations that accompany these general statements. Can we hold that against him? Were the techniques of industry conceivable at that time without the division of labour, in a period when automation was not yet able to provide an embryonic solution? Marx had restricted himself to recording the fact and assessing its disastrous consequences in many pages of Capital, but on this point it is relevant to clear up a very annoying misunderstanding. When Marx condemns the division of labour, he is by no means denying the need to break down an industrial operation into its most elementary components. What he declared to be inhuman and easily remediable was the enslavement of the worker to a single monotonous task which mutilated him physically and mentally. But the very simplicity of the separate operations makes a constant change of work practicable:

"The employment of machinery does away with the necessity of crystallizing this distribution after the manner of Manufacture by the constant annexation of a particular man to a particular function. Since the motion of the whole system does not proceed from the workman, but from the machinery, a change of persons can take place at any time without an interruption of the work... Lastly, the quickness with which machine work is learnt by young people does away with the necessity of bringing up, for exclusive employment by machinery, a special class of operatives." 35

So it is a question, not of recasting the work (only automation, then undreamed-of will achieve that), but of establishing a constant change of employment. Thus one will be able "to replace the detail-worker of today, crippled by lifelong repetition of one and the same trivial operation, and thus reduced to the mere fragment of a man, by the fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labours, ready to face any change of production, and to whom the different social functions he performs are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers." 36 This is language very similar to that of Engels, and which Morris himself would not have disavowed:

"The old mode of production must therefore be revolutionised from top to bottom, and in particular the former division of labour must disappear. Its place must be taken by an organisation of production in which... productive labour, instead of being a means to the subjection of men, will become a means to their emancipation, by giving each individual the opportunity to develop and exercise all his faculties, physical
and mental, in all directions; in which, therefore, productive labour will become a pleasure instead of a burden." 37

* * *

Diversity of occupation is one of the bases of the humanism of Morris, just as it is of the humanism of Marx and Engels: "that variety of life is as much an aim of true Communism as equality of condition", he writes. 38 He himself set the example all his life and the myriad activities to which he devoted himself are too legendary for it to be necessary to repeat them here. What is less generally known is the rhythm of his activity, and the account left us by his son-in-law H. Halliday Sparling is worth quoting:

He would be standing at an easel or sitting with a sketchblock in front of him, charcoal, brush or pencil in hand, and all the while would be grumbling Homer's Greek under his breath... the design coming through in clear unhesitating strokes. Then the note of the grumbling changed, for the turn of the English had come. He was translating the Odyssey at this time and would prowl about the room, filling and lighting his pipe, halting to add a touch or two at one or other easel, still grumbling, go to his writing table, snatch up his pen, and write furiously for a while—twenty, fifty, and one hundred or more lines, as the case might be... the speed of his hand would gradually slacken, his eye would wander to an easel, a sketchblock, or to some one of the manuscripts in progress, and that would have its turn. There was something well-nigh terrifying to a youthful onlooker in the deliberate ease with which he interchanged so many forms of creative work, taking up each one, never halting at the point at which he had laid it aside, and never halting to recapture the thread of his thought..." 39

He himself declared that he had "an artichoke mind... no sooner do I pull off a leaf than there's another waiting to be pulled", and he had little time for people he called the "nothing-buts", who devoted their whole lives to a single occupation. 40 He was sincerely sorry for them, even if they took pleasure in it, and he justified the need for change by the impossibility of prolonging pleasure in the same work.

"Any of you who have ever made anything, I don't care what," he said to students in Oxford, "will well remember the pleasure that went with the turning out of the first specimen. What would have become of that pleasure if you had been compelled to go on making it exactly the same for ever?" 41

This compulsion, which exists in fact in contemporary society, is all the more horrible if the task is uninviting and not really suited to the one who has to perform it:

"One of the things which we Socialists complain of in the present state of things [is] that a man having once grown into an occupation, he cannot change it, however unfit he may be for it: he is forced to stay where he is just as much as if he were chained up like a slave or a dog." 42
Beyond Marx and Engels, beyond Ruskin, beyond his own experience and natural inclination, Morris was haunted by the memory of times when man did not know such chains. The wonderful popular art of the Middle Ages had had its origins in "the necessity that the workman felt for variety in his work." The heroes of the Icelandic Sagas were at once warriors, smiths, navigators, husbandmen and builders. Socialism will link up again with this great human tradition after the unhealthy interruption caused by the pursuit of capitalist profit and the mutilation of man which it entailed.

As is natural in a writer of bourgeois origin and in an artist, Morris is impelled first to think of the development that the practice of a physical occupation in the open air will bring to an intellectual or a sedentary worker:

"Many, or most, men would be carrying on more than one occupation from day to day. Surely almost everyone would wish to take some share in field or garden work besides his indoor occupation, even if it were no more than helping to get in the harvest or save the hay; and such occasions would become really the joyous and triumphant festivals which the poets have dreamed of them as being, and of which pleasure there is still some hint or, it may be, survival in barbarous countries. But besides such obvious change in work as this, there could certainly be found useful outdoor occupation whereby a person could vary his or her indoor work; helping, for instance, in the work which has to do with the transit of foods...." 44

The quality of the work at which an artist excels would not be in any way diminished, quite the contrary: "A poet ... will write better poetry and not worse if he has an ordinary occupation to follow." 45 If there was one kind of man that Morris execrated, and whose disappearance he desired, it was the specialised "man of genius" who imagines that everything is due to him and who sets himself aside from common mortals:

"I do not see, and never could see, why a man of genius must needs be a man of genius every minute of his life ... The 'man of genius' ought to be able to earn his livelihood in an ordinary way independently of his speciality, and he will in that case be much happier himself and much less of a bore to his friends, let alone his extra usefulness to the community." 46

While Morris's tone is naturally sarcastic when he is speaking to members of his own class and circle, whose scornful prejudices against manual workers he had to combat, he uses more simple and more generous language when he refers to the liberation that diversity of occupation would represent for the workers. It would be the rule, he wrote "if the work is of its nature monotonous" Socialism implies, moreover, "the opportunity for every one to choose the occupation suitable to his capacity and idiosyncrasy." 47 We have already seen what relaxation gardening around the factory grounds would bring to the workers. Their activity would never be unvaried:

"The tending of the necessary machinery might to each individual be but a short part of the day's work. The other work might vary from rais-
ing food from the surrounding country to the study and practice of art and science." 49

As for production itself, "the necessary and in fact compulsory work", everything would contribute to breaking the monotony of it. We must remember that the decoration of the products manufactured would be a determining factor for joy in work.

"The machine-tending ought not to require a very long apprenticeship, therefore in no case should any one person be set to run up and down after a machine through all his working hours every day, even so shortened as we have seen; now the attractive work of our factory, that which was pleasant in itself to do, would be of the nature of art, therefore all slavery of work ceases under such a system for whatever is burdensome about the factory would be taken turn and turn about, and so distributed, would cease to be a burden - would be, in fact, a kind of rest from the more exciting and artistic work." 50

However, there are some necessary tasks which are, by their very nature, burdensome or repugnant, and are invariably so. What will be the solution in such cases? Morris does not evade the problem:

"It is not difficult to conceive of some arrangement whereby those who did the roughest work should work for the shortest spells. And again, what is said of the variety of work applies especially here. Once more I say, that for a man to be the whole of his life hopelessly engaged in performing one repulsive and never-ending task, is an arrangement fit enough for the hell imagined by the theologians, but scarcely fit for any other form of society. Lastly, if this rougher work were of any special kind, we may suppose that special volunteers would be called on to perform it, who would surely be forthcoming, unless men in a state of freedom should lose the sparks of manliness which they possessed as slaves." 51

So it is just that "we should have our fair share of troublesome work and no more than our fair share". 52 Morris insists more than once upon the idea of such sharing:

"If the work be specially rough or exhausting, you will, I am sure, agree with me in saying that I must take turns in doing it with other people; I mean I mustn't, for instance, be expected to spend my working hours always at the bottom of a coal-pit. I think such work as that ought to be largely volunteer work, and done, as I say, in spells. And what I say of very rough work I say also of nasty work." 53

During a public meeting held in Scotland, in the mining district of Coatbridge, Morris replied to a miner's questions as follows:

"Nobody ought to be compelled to work more than a few hours at a time underground, and nobody ought to be compelled to work all their lives, or even constantly week by week, at mining, or indeed any other disagreeable job. Everybody ought to have a variety of occupation so as
to give him a chance of developing his various powers, and of making his work a pleasure rather than a dreary burden."

This is the ideal which we see realised in *News from Nowhere*, that of pleasant, diversified work allowing everyone to become the "whole man" of whom Karl Marx dreamed. "We pass our lives," says old Hammond, "in reasonable strife with nature, exercising not one side of ourselves only, but all sides, taking the keenest pleasure in all the life of the world." Each of the characters appearing during the story has very different jobs. Bob the weaver is also a mathematician and, for relaxation, is eager to take Dick's place as ferryman; we learn, a few pages further on, that he is also a painter and is writing an historical study. Dick the boatman is a goldsmith and a carver, and he is also an outstanding hay-maker. Boffin, the "Golden Dustman," is a novelist. Dotted about the country are big houses where "some of the most studious men of our time" work, but they are also farmers. The "Obstinate Refusers" who will not take part in the hay-making because they want to finish a beautiful building, will relax at the wheat harvest. Finally, at the great hay-harvest gathering which marks the climax of the story, "there is room for a great many people who are not over-skilled in country matters: and there are many who lead sedentary lives, whom it would be unkind to deprive of their pleasure in the hay-field - scientific men and close students generally". To devote oneself to a single occupation has become unthinkable, and Dick naively tells the visitor that it was necessary, immediately after the revolution, to force the descendants of the former capitalists to work, and "these idleness-stricken people used to serve booths all their time, because they were fit for so little". This monotonity, as much as their sloth, made them incredibly physically ugly, he adds.

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Work diversified in this way, and soaked in handicraft, even within machine manufacture, ends up by merging into art, "an art made intelligently by the whole body of those who live by their labour: instinct with their thoughts and aspirations, moving whither they are moving, changing as they change, the genuine expression of their sense of the beauty and mystery of life: an art born of their joy and outliving their sorrow, though tinged by it." The products of human activity will no longer be anonymous, dehumanised articles, because their makers will find again "the opportunity of expressing their own thoughts to their fellows by means of that very labour, by means of that daily work which nature or long custom, a second nature, does indeed require of them, but without meaning that it should be an unrewarded and repulsive burden". If, in the England of *News from Nowhere*, architecture has become so flourishing and beautiful, it is because it is in the highest degree the achievement which provides the worker with the deepest joy, that of self-expression through work. Ellen speaks with emotion of "the beautiful buildings that we raise up all over the country (and I know there was nothing like them in past times) wherein a man can put forth whatever is in him, and make his hands set forth his mind and soul".

Self-expression, art, work, these have all become synonymous terms, ex-
pressing joy in the new life. The “freedom for every man to do what he can do best” engenders “the pleasure of creation, which is what excellence in work means.”

In a speech made at a prize-giving at Macclesfield School of Art and Science, fragments of which remain thanks to articles in the local press, Morris exclaimed:

“For, after all, what is an artist? It seems to me the man is an artist who finds out what sort of work he is fitted for, and who by dint of will, good luck, and a combination of various causes, manages to be employed upon the work he is fitted for, and when he is so employed upon it, does it conscientiously and with pleasure because he can do it well— that is an artist (Applause). And he is a happy man, and a happy man is an artist, and therefore there is no difference between these two phrases; they mean the same thing (Laughter).”

“The main pleasure in life,” he said in another lecture, “is the exercise of energy on the development of our special capacities.” Another element of this joy will come from the brotherliness which will dominate the new society: “Each is conscious during his work of making a thing to be used by a man of like needs to himself.” Even if the object is simple and crude, even if it has no decorative value, it will express “the interchange of interest in the occupations of life; the knowledge of human necessities and the consciousness of human good-will is a part of all such work.” That is why “labour, to be attractive, must be directed towards some obviously useful end”. Beauty and usefulness will be intimately linked, as they were in the mediaeval times that Morris echoes Ruskin in praising “when everybody that made any thing made a work of art besides a useful piece of goods, and it gave them pleasure to make it.”

Similarly, in the new society, two indissolubly linked questions will have to be put to every producer before he undertakes any task whatsoever: “first, will the thing produced be useful to the world? second, will the making of it give healthy and pleasurable occupation to the makers?” In this way a constant bond of good will and gratitude will be established between producer and consumer: the former’s pleasure in his work will be matched by the latter’s enjoyment of it, and labour will become “art made by the people and for the people as a joy both to the maker and the user.”

This glorification of pleasure has led Édouard Guyot, in his work on William Morris’s socialism, to make a judgment which, in the light of the examples I have just quoted, certainly goes too far: “Morris,” he writes, “bases his socialist society upon a clearly individualist principle, for he replaces the egoism of self-interest by the egoism of pleasure.” Can one speak of egoism of pleasure in a society where the joy of creation is so closely linked with that of doing work useful to ones fellows, who are equals and brothers?

Certainly Morris had a desire from youth on to find happiness in an occupation of his choice, and the expression of this desire forms the main theme of the important letter he wrote to his mother in 1855, announcing his decision not to enter holy orders. His bourgeois birth and his income allowed him to fulfil this wish rapidly and to have great joy in earning his living. But he was not long in appreciating his privileged position, and feeling shame and indignation about it. In this respect, his reading of Ruskin had a special and lasting effect. The fundamental thesis of The Stones of Venice is that the prime reason for the
workers’ discontent is not material, but moral. The “universal outcry” which
goes up from the factories is not born from the workers by famine or social op-
pression, but by the degrading nature of their work, by the fact that “they have
no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread”.* The discovery of
Marx rapidly led Morris to throw all the idealism and feudal implications of
such a conclusion. He understood very early on that “the basis of socialism is
economic,” that the whole fate of man is bound up with the production
relationships and that it can only be changed by the revolutionary overthrow
of these relationships. He never denied the generous content of Ruskin’s
humanism, but, as Marx did with Hegel’s dialectics, he “put it back on its
feet” and made it a materialist humanism. “It is not the consciousness of men
that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence
determines their consciousness.”**

Bearing this radical change in mind, what Morris retained of Ruskin’s
ideology was the idea that man’s happiness is rooted in his work. So the
human finality of socialism will lie in its creating the material conditions which
transform the character and nature of this happiness. “If the world cannot
hope to be happy in its work it must relinquish the hope of happiness
altogether,”*** declares Morris to his listeners. “What is the object of
Revolution?” demands old Hammond. “Surely to make people happy.
Revolution having brought its foredoomed change about, how can you prevent
the counter-revolution from setting in except by making people happy? What
shall we expect peace and stability from unhappiness? The gathering of grapes
from thorns and figs from thistles is a reasonable expectation compared with
that! And happiness without daily work is impossible.”**** It is not the
multiplicity and artificial complexity of consumer goods which will ensure this
happiness. There again, careful thinking about real needs will play an im-
portant role, because, explains the old man, “as we are not driven to make a vast
quantity of useless things, we have time and resources enough to consider our
pleasure in making them.”***** Morris insists on the pre-eminence of this
consideration, for the visitor declares that “this change from the older world
seems to me far greater and more important than all the other changes you
have told me about as to crime, politics, property, marriage.”****** The life of the
new society has in fact become a life “of work which is pleasure and pleasure
which is work.”******* It is noteworthy that, in his propaganda in working-class
circles, Morris never hesitated to stress this point and to explain at length that
work transformed into joy would be an essential achievement of socialism. It is
difficult for us to gauge to what extent this message was absorbed. Morris, for
his part, did not regard it as in any way premature.

“My experience so far is that the working man finds it easier to un-
derstand the doctrine of the claim of Labour to pleasure in the work itself
than the rich or well-to-do man does.”********

The originality of Morris’s conception lies in establishing a mutual causal
connection between work, pleasure, and art. Without work, “art could not
exist.”*****, art is “work-pleasure, as one ought to call it.”** the function of art
is to make labour pleasurable”. *** In the last analysis joy in life is the element
which completely identifies art and all kinds of work:
"You must understand that by art, I do not mean only pictures and sculpture, nor only those and architecture, that is beautiful buildings properly ornamented, these are only a portion of art, which comprises, as I understand the word, a great deal more; beauty produced by the labour of man both mental and bodily; the expression of the interest man takes in the life of man upon the earth with all its surroundings, in other words the human pleasure of life is what I mean by art."

And he crystallises his thought by adding, "all work done with pleasure and worthy of praise produces art, that is to say an essential part of the pleasure of life." In communist society it will become unthinkable to attempt to disassociate these elements: "art, using that word in its widest and due significatio, is not a mere adjunct of life which free and happy men can do without, but the necessary expression and indispensable instrument of human happiness." Most material tasks, in twenty-second century England, give rise to "conscious sensuous pleasure in the work itself; it is done, that is, by artists." The extreme (one might say, extremist) form of this creative joy, arousing the affectionate irony of their fellow citizens, is that of the Obstinate Refusers, whom nothing can tear from the building of their beautiful house, and of the woman carver, Mistress Philippa, who refuses to interrupt the "mere delight of every hour" which the embellishment of the house represents to her. The irony, as we have seen, is occasioned, not by the joy which the work inspires, but by the breaking of the socialist habit of diversifying it, a factor of pleasure just as important as its nature.

In a lecture dating from his pre-socialist period, Morris drew a distinction between mechanical work, intelligent work and imaginative work. The first, the purpose of which "is not the making of wares of any kind, but what on the one hand is called employment, on the other what is called money-making" will have finally disappeared. Between the other two kinds of work there exists a difference of degree only. Imaginative work will predominate in the new society, but, in fact, the two will intermingle, whereas today, "Mechanical Toil has swallowed Intelligent Work and all the lower part of Imaginative Work . . . what is left of art is rallied to its citadel of the highest intellectual art, and stands at bay there." Two years later, addressing himself to "All those who know what art means", he asks them to "consider if it is fair and just that only a few among the millions of civilization shall be partakers in a pleasure which is the surest and most constant of all pleasures . . . happy and honourable work." The natural corollary of this law of pleasant work for all is that "no work which cannot be done without pleasure in the doing is worth doing". It would be a burden and "would mar our life, even though the hours of labour were short". So what is to be done? We have already seen the remedies Morris suggests. The machine provides the usual solution, and so also, in large measure, does diversity of occupation.

"And yet if there be any work which cannot be made other than repulsive, either by the shortness of its duration or the intermittency of its recurrence, or by the sense of special and peculiar usefulness (and therefore honour) in the mind of the man who performs it freely, - if there be any work which cannot be but a torment to the worker, what
then. Well, then, let us see if the heavens will fall on us if we leave it undone, for it were better that they should. The produce of such work cannot be worth the price of it."  

This is exactly the situation described in *News from Nowhere*. *From time to time, when we have found not that some piece of work was too disagreeable or troublesome, we have given it up and done altogether without the thing produced by it.*  

In one of his lectures Morris gives the polishing of steel forks as an example. If, said he, the work shortens men’s lives the price of polishing is too high, and we ought to do without it".  

Certainly not a very impressive example, because there was no reason not to suppose or foresee the possibility of doing this job by machine. In another lecture, delivered much later, Morris lets himself be carried away into imposing a curious bloc veto not only on domestic service and shoe-shining, but also on cleaning out sewers, butchery, carrying mail and hairdressing. Admittedly he adds: “we shall either make all these occupations agreeable to ourselves in some mood or to some minds who will take them voluntarily, or we shall have to let them lapse altogether.”  

Despite this reservation, the prospect he suggests cannot but be rather disturbing. I hasten to add that such surprising aberrations are extremely rare in Morris’s work, which is normally characterised by robust good sense. On the other hand, Morris does not tell us how the Golden Dustman in *News from Nowhere* carries on his garbage collecting and whether he finds pleasure in his work. We only see him in his finery, during his leisure time.  

We just catch a glimpse of him, at the moment of departure for the trip up the Thames, in different rig: he “had now veiled his splendour in a duc-isuit of working clothes, crowned with a fantail hat.”  

We must recognise the fact that Morris had become less cut-and-dried in his doctrine and it is probable that variety of occupation seemed a good enough solution in such a case, as in that of extracting coal. In truth, he did not always show himself so assiduous, even in his first lectures, and he did not hesitate to make reservations.

*Any employment in which a thing can be done better or worse has some pleasure in it for all men more or less like doing what they can do well, even mechanical labour is pleasant to some people (to me amongst others) if it is not too mechanical.*  

As the years went on, it even happened sometimes that he gave the idea of pleasure in work a purely negative significance.

“I believe that the ideal of the future doesn’t point to the lessening of men’s energy by the reduction of labour to a minimum, but rather to the reduction of *pain in labour* to a minimum, so small that it will cease to be a pain.”  

Even in this cautious formulation, the most cautious that one can find penned by Morris, this expectation of pleasure in work is totally opposed to the biblical curse which was contained in Carlyle’s message and it differs profoundly from Ruskin’s moralising concepts.  

“No man,” writes Morris, “will any longer have an excuse for talking about the curse of labour, no man will any longer have an excuse for evading the blessing of labour.”  

—*William Morris: The Material Boonses*—
His thinking about the problem led him to pose another question— "What will people think dovelgry in those days, and what pleasant work? Again I don't know." It would be wrong to see signs of scepticism or disillusionment in this hesitation. On the contrary, it confirms his faith in the future reality of pleasure in work, but his thinking is going deeper, taking on tones that are both more subtle and more bold.

In fact, we are face to face with what, at first sight, seems to be a contradiction. We have just seen that, for Morris, "the idea of the future doesn't point to the lessening of men's energy by the reduction of labour to a minimum."

However, he insists upon the need for a very short working day and for ample leisure in many of his writings. So it is worth while giving some attention to the idea Morris expressed on the problem of leisure:

"What is it then that makes people happy? Free and full life and the consciousness of life. Or, if you will, the pleasurable exercise of our energies, and the enjoyment of the rest which that exercise or expenditure of energy makes necessary to us." 99

So the joy of rest is an indispensable complement of the joy in work. They both, equally, constitute a right for the workers, and "the leisure they have a right to claim, must be ample enough to allow them full rest of mind and body."99 In the future society, "mere rest, time for thought, or dreaming, even, would not be lacking to us, nor in any wise begrudged to us."100 Is it not just a simple question of organisation? "Ought not a really successful community so to arrange that labour that each person should do a fair share of it and no more?"101

It is quite plain that, in our present society, the number of idlers and people employed in unproductive work is such that the whole burden of providing for their needs falls upon a relatively small section of the population. But in a world "where all produced and no work was wasted, not only would every one work with the certain hope of gaining a due share of wealth by his work, but also he could not miss his due share of rest", and "the share of work which each would have to do would be small.111" There would no longer be unnecessary products; the machines would no longer be used "for mere profit-grinding", but "simply to save human labour", and we should be rid of all those who do nothing, as well as of the "busy-idle people".112

One cannot help noticing how close Morris's argument is to that of Engels in Anti-Dühring, even in its terminology.114

The working-day, then, would be short and it is certain that "much work which is now a torment, would be easily endurable if it were much shortened."115 At that time Morris fixed the duration as four hours a day,116 and the following year, when he drew up the Manifesto of the Socialist League, he estimated that two or three hours would suffice "to carry on the essential work of the world."117 It is true that later, when he and Bax wrote their theoretical handbook on socialism, they avoided any such definite (and, after all, quite arbitrary) details, and were content to refer to "shortness of hours in proportion to the stress of the work."118

In any case, this reduction is necessary, not only because socialism makes it materially possible, but because it derives from another right possessed by the workers: "the claim for education involves a claim for abundant leisure."119
which would give them "time for thought", and stimulate their enthusiasm.

The leisure which Socialism above all things aims at obtaining for the worker is also the very thing that breeds desire — desire for beauty, for knowledge, for more abundant life, in short.

In an article published near the end of his life, Morris wrote,

"we should have so much leisure from the production of what are called 'utilities', that any group of people would have leisure to satisfy its cravings for what are usually looked on as superfluities, such as works of art, research into facts, literature, the unspoiled beauty of nature; matters that to my mind are utilities also."

But Morris introduced one reservation early on: this necessary reduction in the length of the working day is not an end in itself, it cannot be achieved at the expense of the work itself, or, more exactly, of the quality and nature of the work, as he has defined and extolled it. Far more, in order that work may remain a joy, men will have to accept certain sacrifices:

"If we could be contented in a free community to work in the same hurried, dirty, disorderly, heartless way as we do now, we might shorten our day's labour very much more than I suppose we shall do... But if we did, it would mean that our new-won freedom of condition would leave us listless and wretched, if not anxious, as we are now, which I hold is simply impossible. We should be contented to make the sacrifices necessary for raising our condition to the standard called out for as desirable by the whole community. Not only so. We should individually, be emulous to sacrifice quite freely still more of our time and our care towards the raising of the standard of life. Persons, either by themselves or associated for such purposes, would freely, and for the love of the work and for its results — stimulated by the hope of the pleasure of creation — produce those ornaments of life for the service of all, which they are now hitherto to produce (or pretend to produce) for the service of a few rich men."

In other words, to make communist society a "civilisation of leisure", and make leisure the only aim of labour, would be equivalent to perpetuating the theological curse and renouncing the happiness of life, since this can only come from work itself. If we refrain from transforming the nature of the occupation itself, and think only of getting rid of it as quickly as possible, in order to enjoy for as long as possible what would not be occupation, what sort of life would we have?

"Shall all we can do with is to shorten the hours of that toil to the utmost, that the hours of leisure may be long beyond what men used to hope for? and what then shall we do with the leisure, if we say that all toil is arduous? Shall we sleep it all away? — Yes; and never wake up again, I should hope, in that case."

If we replace the fear of dying of hunger simply by a hope of acquiring more leisure, "the hell of theologians was but little needed". Such a vision of the future is only possible for people who cannot see beyond the present. In fact, manual work is so far degraded today "that a learned, thoughtful and humane
man can set forth as an axiom that no man will work except to earn leisure thereby."

Morris rejects this outlook and steadfastly sets against it his expectation of work that will be both joy and art. He attempts to resolve the difficulty by reference to his own experience.

"I tried to think what would happen to me if I were forbidden ordinary daily work, and I knew that I should die of despair and weariness, unless I could straightway take to something else which I could make my daily work: and it was clear to me that I worked not in the least in the world for the sake of earning leisure by it, but partly driven by the fear of starvation or disgrace, and partly, and even a very great deal, because I love the work itself. and as for my leisure: well I had to confess that part of it I do indeed spend as a dog does -- in contemplation, let us say, and like it well enough: but part of it also I spend in work which work gives me just as much pleasure as my bread-earning work -- neither more nor less; and therefore could be no bribe or hope for my work-a-day hours.

Then next I turned my thoughts to my friends: mere artists, and therefore, you know, lazy people by prescriptive right. I found that the one thing they enjoyed was their work, and that their only idea of happy leisure was other work, just as valuable to the world as their work-a-day work: they only differed from me in liking the dog-like leisure less and the man-like labour more than I do."

We know what to think about this last assertion! Sparling reports with awe that he "held that he was idling while doing that which would have exhausted any other man I have ever known." We must keep this phenomenal energy in mind if we are going to assess other remarks of Morris at their true value. "In good truth," he said, "the amusement which amuses me most is a quiet time without immediate anxiety, in which I can go on with my work free from disturbance."

Morris knew very well, and more than once said, that he enjoyed a privileged position and that very few men had his opportunities of devoting themselves to an occupation which would absorb them and satisfy them so totally. But he had no hesitation over quoting his own example, since work will one day become a joy and an art for everyone, and the age-old opposition between a joy and an art for everyone, and the age-old opposition between work and leisure will be finally abolished. Then men will no longer seek pleasure in "unproductive energy -- energy put forth in games and sports." Continually changing productive work, performed lovingly all the time, will more and more fill their leisure. Is not the existence described in *Notes from Nowhere* a life of leisure led by happy people who enjoy their many activities? Much more, "a great deal of the best work done would be done in the leisure time of men relieved from any anxiety as to their livelihood."

Morris underlines the psychological importance which the free choice of occupation, as much as its diversity, would then have. Even in present-day society, the distinction between work and leisure is often a false one; it is, in reality, a distinction between the work one is obliged to do and that which one freely undertakes. "The one aim of all people before our time," says Dick, "was to avoid work, or at least they thought it was, so of course the work which their
daily life forced them to do, seemed more like work than that which they seemed to choose for themselves." 131 Morris never tired of quoting the example of Tom Sawyer finding volunteers to paint the fence without any difficulty, and declared the ruse to be worthy of Odysseus. He regarded it as a "little lesson in economics" and the clearest demonstration of the fallacious character of arguments put forward against him. 132 The lesson was not forgotten in "From Nowhere," for "at last under the guise of pleasure that was not supposed to be work, work that was pleasure began to push out the mechanical toil." 133

** Morris's joy in work is of materialist inspiration. It is a natural form of energy, both of living matter and of inorganic matter, and for Morris nature is an objective fact and no longer the divine image dear to Ruskin. In one of his very earliest lectures, given in 1879, he exclaimed, in praise of the pleasure of activity:

A most kind gift is this of nature, since all men, nay, it seems all things too, must labour; . . . not only does the dog take pleasure in hunting, and the horse in running, and the bird in flying, but so natural does the idea seem to us, that we imagine to ourselves that the earth and the very elements rejoice in doing their appointed work; and the poets have told us of the spring meadows smiling, of the exultation of the fire, of the countless laughter of the sea." 134

Up to his very last years he uses the same language and repeats the same images in the serious pages of his handbook of socialism, adding that remains of primitive ornaments bear witness to the pleasure experienced by savage man in obtaining his food. 135 Certainly nature gives us nothing for nothing, and our subsistence demands a steady effort, but we may wonder "if she does not give us some compensation for this compulsion to labour, since certainly in other matters she takes care to make the acts necessary to the continuance of life in the individual and the race not only endurable, but even pleasurable." 136 This natural compensation does exist. Exploitation in class society has made us forget it, but some day we shall have to relearn how to enjoy our life's productive activities "just as Nature makes pleasant the exercise of the necessary functions of sentient beings." 137 All living creatures experience pleasure in exerting their energy, and, "even beasts rejoice in being lithe and swift and strong," 138 And for us, too, is not "that mysterious bodily pleasure which goes with the de£ exercise of the bodily powers" 139 an indispensible element of labour? This feeling, which Morris experienced intensely, had fundamental importance and value for him, for, in two lectures delivered in the same year, he expresses it in identical words, adding, in the second of them, this yet clearer expression of it:

"As to the unreasoning, sensuous pleasure in handiwork, I believe in good sooth that it has more power of getting rough and strenuous work out of men, even as things go, than most people imagine. At any rate it lies at the bottom of the production of all art, which cannot exist without it even in its feeblest and rudest form." 136
One recurrent objection that Morris came up against in the course of his militant life was the suggestion that socialism would encourage laziness. What incentive would there be to work in an egalitarian society? Would not compulsion be essential? Once again, these questions were put, even by those objecting in good faith, with a complete ignorance of the Marxist theory of two stages. As we have seen, Morris never denied that compulsion would be necessary in some cases during the first stage, and that a Scare apparatus, sometimes repressive, would be inevitable. For reasons which I have analysed, he did not dwell at great length upon these mid-way prospects, and his interest was wholly centred upon the second stage, that of communism. A chapter of prime importance in News from Nowhere is entitled "On the Lack of Incentive to Labour in a Communist Society." It is strange that Monsieur Victor Dupont, continuing the mistranslation of the first and disastrous translator into French, P. La Chesnais, should have rendered this title, in his bilingual edition, as "De l'Absence d'Incentive dans une société communiste." Admittedly, Morris considers that "emulation in working for the common good would supply the place of competition as an incentive". But emulation is only one of these incentives, and the writer does not appear to attach enormous importance to it. In fact, the phrase I have just quoted is the only definite reference of this nature that I have been able to find in all his writings. Morris's chief concern was to make his contradictionists understand what the real stimulus to work would be, the essential stimulus in the world of the future. Not only is this chapter a reply to this question, but the whole of the story and, one can say without exaggeration, the whole of his work, is the answer.

In the minds of most people, the problem is posed in a false perspective. "In fact, the ideas on the subject of the reward of labour in the future are based on its position in the present," and Morris explains:

"The often expressed fear of mere idleness falling upon us when the force supplied by the present hierarchy of compulsion is withdrawn, is a fear which is but generated by the burden of excessive and repulsive labour, which most of us have to bear at present."

The only incentive which exists today is, in fact, "the fear of ruin and starvation". Society says to the worker: "Do this work which blind chance has assigned to you, or else go to the workhouse or die." So he is obliged to accept monotonous, distasteful, exhausting work in order not to starve, and the only ideal for him to aspire to is "to succeed", that is, to be "placed in a position where he shall not have to exercise his energies to his reward will then be "the boredom of satiety".

In communist society, these cruel goads will have ceased to harass man. What will replace them? Truly, Morris does not fall into demagogy. Work will remain a natural and imperative necessity. "Nature wills all men either to work or starve. But this demand will no longer be irksome when men are no longer working for the profits of an exploiting class, but for themselves; no longer in order to avoid starvation, but continually to increase their well-being; no longer to expiate some original sin, but to derive satisfaction from the work itself. "to the incentive of necessity to labour should be added the incentives of pleasure and interest in the work itself". Then the incentive will be spontaneous and will not have to be accompanied by any pressure of compul-
sion or any pecuniary interest. Blackbirds do not have to be paid to sing at the
top of their voices in the softness of summer. In the Middle Ages, when work
had not yet become the torment it is in capitalist times, the pay of the best
workers was very little above average, "and did they do their work the worse
for this approach to equality? did they neglect it because they were not bribed
into excellence?" The artistic excellence of their work "was not venal"

"Those poor wretches who had skill and taste beyond their fellow-workmen, and who in consequence had pleasanter work than
they, had to put up with a very moderate additional wage, and in some
cases with nothing additional ... We can appeal to the witness of those
lovely works still left to us, whose unknown, unnamed creators were con-
tent to give them to the world, with little more extra wages than what
their pleasure in their work and their sense of usefulness in it might
bestow on them."

There can be no doubt that Morris's personal temperament and his passion
for work carried him a long way in this direction and he would perhaps have
found it difficult to understand the problems of involving people that currently
arise in various socialist countries, ready as he was to admit the inevitable
difficulties of the first stage. He himself was incapable of sparing effort, and
anyone working with him had a hard job to keep pace; his assistant experienc-
ed, says Sparling, "a strain he had never felt, and could therefore neither
realize nor fully sympathize with." Mackail's biography is an impressive
balance sheet of achievements, and it is easy to understand the diagnosis of the
doctors, who declared that when he died "the disease is simply being William
Morris, and having done more work than most ten men". It is true that, in
his own words, stopping work for him meant dying and on no account
would he have done so, even had he been able. Scawen Blunt goes so far as
to say that "he had no thought for anything or person, including himself, but
only for the work he had in hand" which is probably exaggerated (Blunt's
evidence is not, as a rule, very trustworthy), but it expresses an undeniable
tendency.

Idleness was intolerable to him: "work without endeavour is dull", he
declared in a lecture, and he used to say to his friends: "It is rest that kills men,
not work". Apostrophising his listeners during another lecture, he
exclaimed:

"No, I cannot suppose there is anybody here who would think it either
a good life, or an amusing one, to sit with one's hands before one doing
nothing - to live like a gentleman, as fools call it."

To his mind, there was a sort of curse involved in lack of effort. In this
respect, a curious episode in one of his last romantic stories, The Water of the
Wondrous Isles, is very revealing. The heroine Birdalone is travelling, in her
enchanted skiff, across a strange lake dotted with accursed islands, one of
which is called "the Isle of Increase Unsought". Three maidens are held cap-
tive there by a wicked witch and tell Birdalone that "here everything waxeth of
itself without tillage, or sowing, or reaping, or any kind of tending; and whatso
we need of other matters the mistress taketh it for us from out of her Wonder-
coffer, or suffereth us to take it for ourselves". Held under her spell, they live in
the island "in lazy sorrow and shameful ease". When Birdalone comes face to face with the witch, she declares that she can see that she has come into "the House of Death". Similarly, to the people of News from Nowhere idleness seems an incomprehensible phenomenon, a sickness which is, moreover, characterised by ugliness and is known by odd names. "Fancy people not liking to work!" exclaims Dick in astonishment, "- it's too ridiculous." The visitor laughs with him "for company's sake, but from the teeth outward only; for I saw nothing funny in people not liking to work, as you may well imagine." The coercive pressures of civilisation, adding to the distasteful nature of the work, are replaced by the spontaneous stimulus of the work itself, once more in keeping with man's deepest needs. So one can see how ridiculous it would be to have a system to recompense an outstanding worker in order to lighten the burden of his labour. The proposal would contain its own rebuttal, for "that will be the last thing he will thank you for". Not only would idleness then seem to be a sickness, but it would also be considered shameful: "shirking work would be felt to be as much of a disgrace then to an ordinary man as a cowardice in the face of the enemy is now to an officer in the army". Again, such a sentiment could only be current during the first stage (I believe that it is certainly to be understood in this sense in the context of the Manifesto of the Socialist League): in communist society, work will no longer even need to be considered a matter of honour. It is interesting to note that never for a moment did Morris imagine the possibility of there existing "antisocial beings" who avoid all labour and live parasitically upon the community.

The sentiment of honour, as a stimulus, is in fact very rarely invoked by Morris, and he only envisages relying upon it when there is a question of doing disagreeable, but necessary, tasks. He attaches great importance to the esteem in which the good worker will be held by public opinion.

"The pleasure which an artist, that is a free workman, feels in his labour, is made up of these three things, variety, hope of excellence and self-respect: and the feelings of those who receive his work with due sympathy may be expressed by the corresponding words, surprise, pleasure and gratitude; and, believe me, the knowledge that ones work will be so received is a reward which the greatest man cannot afford to fall short of, and which the humblest cannot be deprived of without suffering grievous wrong."

Another stimulus will be the sense of being useful to ones fellow, making only things that will be of use to him, both in their quality and their purpose: "it is a fact past discussion that as soon as things worth doing are made, the intellect, the skill, the artistic feeling of the makers are called out by their production". This love of efficiency will be closely intertwined with the feeling of brotherhood and solidarity, which will be the dominant characteristic of the new society.

This constant communion will show in the heart of the work-process itself, and will give it fresh impetus. The abolition of manufacturing secrets, diversity of occupation, an interested knowledge of all kinds of activity "would foster a general interest in work, and in the realities of life, which would surely tend to elevate labour and create a standard of excellence in manufacture, which in its
turn would breed a strong motive towards exertion in the workers."

But no external motive will really be needed: "the true incentive to useful and happy labour is and must be pleasure in the work itself." It will become a "faithful daily companion", that one will always look forward to encountering: "every worthy work done and delighted in by maker and user begets a longing for more". That is the central theme of *News from Nowhere*, and old Hammond explains it a length to the visitor: "all the work that we do is an exercise of the mind and body more or less pleasant to be done: so that instead of avoiding work everybody seeks it". Its reward, he exclaims, is "the reward of creation. The wages which God gets, as people might have said time agone", and, to mock the visitor's insistence in asking what possible stimulus to work there can be in communist society, he adds:

"If you are going to ask to be paid for the pleasure of creation, which is what excellence in work means, the next thing we shall hear of will be a bill sent in for the begetting of children."

We are in the presence, then, of a radical transformation both of work and of the worker. Engels provided a presentiment of this when he wrote that work "is the primary basic condition for all human existence, and this to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that labour created man himself". It is not time wasted to insist upon the fact that Morris's conception of work, despite all tendentious assertions to the contrary, is on all points in conformity with Marxist thinking, and in the famous passage from the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, (which I quoted earlier) and the contents of which were probably known to Morris. Marx referred to "a higher phase of communist society... after labour has become not merely a means to live but is itself the first necessity of living".

This thought saturates the whole of Morris's utopia. Much more, he favors a future famine of work:

"It is probable that in a community where all worked and where no work was wasted, the amount of necessary work would be so small for each person that people would rather seek for work in which to occupy their energies pleasantly than desire to shirk it."

This fear is repeatedly expressed by the people in *News from Nowhere*, sometimes taking the form of a real feeling of anxiety: "there is a kind of fear growing up amongst us that we shall one day be short of work". When Dick offers to act as guide for the visitor, and the latter hesitates to upset his work, he replies that he will have no trouble over finding a substitute; "It will give me an opportunity," he says, "of doing a good turn to a friend of mine, who wants to take up my work here". So he asks the young weaver, who is quite delighted, and he says slyly to him: "If you find it too much, there is George Brightling on the lookout for a stroke of work, and he lives close handy to you". As they are crossing London in their carriage, Dick is happy to see the children camping in Kensington wood. "Apart from the other pleasures of it, it gives them a little rough work, which I am sorry to say is getting somewhat scarce for these last fifty years." He is clearly obsessed by this worry. After acquiring his tobacco pouch and pipe, the visitor expresses surprise that so much care should have gone into the production of such articles,
"As work is somewhat scarce," explains Dick, "or we are afraid it may be, folk do not discourage this kind of petty work." The communal workshop where pottery and glass are made provokes similar remarks on his part. He observes with a smile that they will always be assured of pleasant work there, "for however much care you take of such goods, break they will, one day or another, so there is always plenty to do." That the British Museum building, regarded as very ugly, has not yet been demolished and rebuilt is on account of fear of damage to its precious collections, but, "if work really does get scarce we may yet do so." However, - and here we meet our Morris again - in the field of architecture and building the danger seems much less imminent. "Indeed I do think," says the young man, "that the energies of mankind are chiefly of use to them for such work; for in that direction I can see no end to the work, while in many others a limit does seem possible." Which does not prevent the girl who models for Mistress Philippa, who is feverishly sculpting the ornamentation on the new house being built by the Obstinate Refusers, from remonstrating with her in this way: "If you gobble up your work like that you will soon have none to do; and what will become of you then?"

Impressed by these fears, the visitor asks old Hammond whether he considers such pessimism justified. "No," replies the old man, "I do not, and I will tell you why; it is each man's business to make his own work pleasant and pleasanter, which of course tends towards raising the standards of excellence, as no man enjoys turning out work which is not a credit to him, and also to greater deliberation in turning it out; and there is such a vast number of things which can be treated as works of art, that this alone gives employment to a host of deft people." The preoccupation with quantity in production will be replaced, then, by a growing preoccupation with quality. Science, adds old Hammond, will, moreover, offer man possibilities as vast as those of art.

"Again," he adds, "as more and more of pleasure is imported into work, I think we shall take up kinds of work which produce desirable wares, but which we gave up because we could not carry them on pleasantly."

A point of some interest, because it indicates, on the one hand, that the question of pleasure in work is not settled once and for all in a dogmatic fashion, and, on the other, that Morris's utopia is not frozen in time, but opens upon further developments. The last thought expressed by the old man is no less interesting. "It is only in parts of Europe," he says, "which are more advanced than the rest of the world that you will hear this talk of a fear of a work-famine." It is striking to observe that Morris, twenty-five years ahead, gives a first expression to the Leninist idea of unequal development. Not without a degree of ferocity, he foresees that the United States will for a long time be a centre of mechanical "civilization", becoming "a stinking dust-heap", and that the Americans will have great difficulty in "gradually making a dwelling-place" after they have made their revolution. Old Hammond's opinion is that it will be Great Britain's mission to export beauty to them, and that is one of the solutions he puts forward to offset an eventual shortage of the labour which will have become the basic joy of existence and its own stimulus.
CHAPTER EIGHT

"... To Every One According to his Needs"

The aim of the new society will be "the satisfaction of the wants of everybody in the community in return for the exercise of their faculties for the benefit of the community. Or as the formula of us Communists has it: To every one according to his needs, from every one according to his capacities." 1 All will equally enjoy the fruits of collective labour, but it could by no means be equality in penury. Such a conception, possible in the days of Babeuf, has no further justification since the concentration of industry and the extraordinary development of the productive forces. In our days, the worker "working as he must, socially, ... can produce more than will keep him alive and in fair condition; ... his capacity of producing these extras has gone on increasing faster and faster, till today one man will weave, for instance, as much cloth in a week as will clothe a whole village for years." Right now, "in every civilized country at least there is plenty for all — is, or at any rate might be. Even with labour so misdirected as it is at present, an equitable distribution of the wealth we have would make all people comparatively comfortable; but that is nothing to the wealth we might have if labour were not misdirected." 2

For Morris as for Marx, one will only be able to speak of communism when "all the springs of co-operative wealth are gushing more freely". 3 Henceforth it is a question of an achievable dream, and no longer one of the fantastic utopias of a mediaeval world, haunted by famine, imagining a Land of Cockaigne, all upside-down (what A. L. Morton calls "topsy-turvydom"), with "little pigs running about with knives and forks stuck in their backs crying 'Who'll eat me?'" 4 The plenty of communist society will not be a figment of the mind, or a paradox of black humour, but a normal consequence, not only of a hitherto unforeseeable progress in the forces of production, which, in the end, shatters an outmoded way of production, 5 but also of the revolution liberating these forces, abolishing social classes, transforming the nature of labour and of man himself. This plenty is slow in establishing itself throughout the first phase, because socialist society must raise the level of life of all its citizens at the same time, and old Hammond, one hundred and five years old, recalls that in his youth "we were not so assured of peace and continuous plenty as we are now", 6 but little by little it turned into the triumphant reality which marked the arrival of the higher stage, which Morris describes in News from Nowhere.

It is apparent in the first words which the visitor hears from Dick's lips, when he carelessly remarks that "we don't want salmon every day of the season". 7 It is displayed in the procession of carts laden with foodstuffs being brought to the markets where everyone comes to take what he needs; again,
Dick remarks that "this is not one of our busy days." 8 The visitor is baffled by a hundred illuminating details. Why worry about having left something at home, someone says to him, when one can replace it in any market? He is terrified at the idea of losing the wonderful pipe, ornamented with gold and jewels, which has just been selected for him. "What will it matter if you do?" is the reply. "Somebody is sure to find it, and he will use it, and you can get another." And then, trying to explain why he thinks it too pretty for him to dare use it, he remarks that it is "too valuable for its use, perhaps", but the comment is totally incomprehensible to his companion. 9 He is further surprised when his new pouch is filled with an excellent latakia, with no fuss such as weighing it and obviously with no question of payment. 10 Similarly, during the carriage-ride which takes him to the British Museum, boys and girls with baskets several times offer fruit to the travellers. 11 But the most lasting astonishment comes from the restrained sumptuousness of the clothing. The visitor might have regarded the Golden Dustman as an isolated eccentric, but the sight of the strollers in the streets of London belies that first impression, and he wonders how they can afford such luxury, drawing Clara's tart reply:

"Of course we can afford it, or else we shouldn't do it. It would be easy enough to say, we will only spend our labour on making our clothes comfortable; but we don't choose to stop there. Why do you find fault with us? Does it seem to you as if we starved ourselves of food in order to make ourselves fine clothes?" 12

The phraseology of these tantalising descriptions sometimes recalls that of The Earthly Paradise, but what a distance has been travelled from poetic nostalgia to reasoned utopia! And how detailed utopia has become since the prophecies of John Ball in his sermon at the foot of the cross:

"What else shall ye lack when ye lack masters? Ye shall not lack for the fields ye have tilled, nor the houses ye have built, nor the cloth ye have woven; all these shall be yours, and whatso ye will of all the earth beareth . . .!" 13

The memory of the poverty of other times has been completely wiped away and the very word has lost all meaning. When the visitor is surprised at no longer finding any trace of rural hardship, and not finding any poor folk anywhere, Dick does not understand what the world "poor" means, and takes his companion to be speaking of those who feel "poorly", which gives rise to an exchange of remarks at cross-purposes. 14 Every year, on the first of May, there is a commemorative festival where the East End used to be, in which a girl garlanded with flowers recites old poems such as Thomas Hood's Song of the Shirt, and for old Hammond it is very moving "to hear the terrible words of threatening and lamentation coming from her sweet and beautiful lips, and she unconscious of their real meaning . . . and to think that all the time she does not understand what it is all about - a tragedy grown inconceivable to her and her listeners". 15

Similarly, in the comedy of socialist propaganda, The Tables Turned, or Napkins Awakened, the young heroine, Mary Pinch, exclaims after the revolution:
“Just to think that my last-born child will not know what to be poor
meant; and nobody will ever be able to make him understand it.” 18

William Morris never stopped reverting to this theme. I will be content with
this extract from one of his more important utopian lectures:

“The first of all my visions, and that which colours all my others, is of
a day... when the words poor and rich, though they will still be found in
our dictionaries, will have lost their old meaning; which will have to be
explained with care by great men of the analytical kind, spending much
time and many words over the job, and not succeeding in the end in mak-
ing people do more than pretend to understand them.” 19

In fact the contrast is too great between the abundance of future times and
the “artificial famine” maintained by the rule of profit, which today is regarded
as normal and which “would have long disappeared”. 20 Exploitation having
been abolished, “the worker will have all that he produces, and not be fleeced at all”. 21 And along with “artificial famine”, mutual suspicion
and fear will also have disappeared. Which is why the men of communist
society will consider that “the best way of avoiding the waste of labour
would be to allow every man to take what he needed from the common
store, since he would have no temptation or opportunity of doing anything
with a greater proportion than he really needed for his personal use”; and so, adds Morris, all danger of bureaucracy will be avoided. 22

For him, plenty is no abstraction, hazy in outline. He draws a clear distinc-
tion between men’s ordinary needs and their extraordinary needs. As far as the
former are concerned, there is no foreseeable difficulty:

“To say the least of it, men’s needs are much more equal than their
mental or bodily capacities are: their ordinary needs, granting similar
conditions of climate and the like, are pretty much the same, and could,
as said above, be easily satisfied.” 23

With a suitable employment of labour, in fact, “it would be easy to produce
enough of all ordinary objects of desire to satisfy the needs of all”. 24 Moreover, for Morris there is no question of making communist society a world of revelry
or a Land of Cockaigne, nor of having the inhabitants of that society living in
the way of today’s millionaires.

“There would be no very rich men,” he writes, “and all would be well
off: all would be far above the condition of satisfaction of their material
necessities.” 25

The problem of extraordinary needs would perhaps be more delicate, but
does not appear insoluble in a world where competition has given way to
fraternity. The answer lies in “the variety of capacity and gifts and to a certain
extent of desires”. That is why “the innate variety of disposition would prevent
competition when life was easy enough to allow each man to sacrifice
something he desired little for something he desired much without forcing
someone else to forgo his desire.” 26

The striking thing about all William Morris’s declarations is his realism, his
avoidance of any demagogy or dogmatism, his reasonableness and caution.
“Everyone’s reasonable needs must be satisfied,” 37 he declared in 1885, and repeated a year later: “there would be plenty of wealth in such a community to satisfy all reasonable needs.” 38 They can, in fact, only be satisfied “according to the measure of the common wealth” 39 There is nothing in this moderate tone at which to be surprised. Morris was not an armchair revolutionary or utopian. His predictions were an integral part of his socialist propaganda and were widely expressed at very many lectures. These were frequently followed by a debate, and one can well imagine that in those days his opponents lost no opportunity of hurling gibes and snide questions. Glazier has left us samples of such questions in an amusing article:

“If everybody is entitled to an equal opportunity of enjoying himself, how would you do when, say, Madame Patti or Henry Irving came to the city; would everybody have a front seat? What if everybody wanted to be a farmer, or have a house on the same spot? If social inequality were abolished, would pretty women marry handsome men only, and tall women marry tall men only? How many bonnets would you allow women to have in a year; and if every man wished to have a carriage and pair, would he get them?” 40

No doubt, Morris’s argument about the natural diversity of temperaments and tastes enabled him to sort out these unreal difficulties with ease. However, it is clear that these incongruous objections must have given him to think, and encouraged him to modify his opinion. As we have seen in studying his differences with the anarchists, 41 he did not hesitate to declare flatly that not everything was possible and that, if some individual desires clashed with the communal interest, then the latter had the right to take some action, even as far as compulsion. But he was convinced that, in a fraternal society, such instances would be very rare and that it would be possible to arrange everything in a spirit of mutual goodwill.

How will such abundance become possible? In studying the various aspects of communist society, as conceived by Morris, I have already picked out a number of determining factors. Industrial progress and the social contradictions deriving from it have made popular revolution and the seizure of power both achievable and necessary. This will in turn free technical progress from its ancient fetters and give it a fresh impulse allowing it to bring about the communist stage of abundance for all, and we must not forget that Morris’s dreams of handicraft rest upon a first premise of a vigorous mechanised infrastructure which is at once unobtrusive and marvellously efficient. Such handicraft activity would be unthinkable otherwise. But it will itself, if Morris is to be believed, have reached such a level of development that it will have become a factor in the abundance. We must not forget the weaver in *News from Nowhere* who is afraid of being looked down on for his lack of manual dexterity and who adds with a touch of bitterness: “that’s the way nowadays”. 42 Dexterity has, in fact, developed enormously since the crude products which Morris displays in his museum of labour, and he is able to assert: “We have learned the trick of handicraft and have added the utmost refinement of workmanship to
"Since people have got defter in doing the work generation after generation," he says, "it has become so easy to do, that it seems as if there were less done, though probably more is produced." 34

Nor should we forget that Morris (and this is a weak point in his arguing, albeit, after all, a minor one) adopts the improbable hypothesis of demographic stability, limiting the amount of needs to satisfy and the total time required for their total and final satisfaction. But this is only a secondary consideration. The essential fact is that upon this new basis arise a new superstructure and a transformation of man, which, in return, stimulate production and increase abundance. The fraternal sense of the worker's social responsibility, the fact that such work has become a joy and a necessity, the resolution of the contradiction between work and leisure, all these are factors tending in the same direction.

Morris brings in yet others. As well as the obligation to work resting upon everyone, and the abolition of the right to idleness for the former ruling class, "a class which does not even pretend to work", he envisages the elimination of all parasites and useless middlemen, "a class which pretends to work but which produces nothing". 35 First, the parasites, that is to say, all those who cause a waste of labour-power by having as their sole function "the watching over the individual interests of the plundering classes". 36 In this category he includes the whole former State apparatus. No more will we

"keep a queen, a landed aristocracy, a house of lords and commons, an army and navy, annual piratical wars against harmless people capable of being robbed, an Irish constabulary, a Parnell Commission, a great population, in short, of harmful or useless persons, a mass of corruption, luxury, waste and confusion such as the world has never seen before." 37

To whom should be added all those who "are the parasites of property, sometimes, as in the case of the lawyers, undisguisedly so", and, as well as the army in the military sense, the no less burdensome army of domestic servants 38 (and we know what an enormous proportion of the working population was represented by domestic service at the time when Morris was writing).

The objection to middlemen comes from two sources. In his first lectures, while he was still wholly under the moral and aesthetic influence of Ruskin, Morris wished "to have as little as possible to do with middlemen, but to bring together the makers and the buyers of goods as closely as possible". 39 Later, expressing his ideas in more detail, he said:

"I also want the wasteful system of middlemen restricted, so that workmen may be brought into contact with the public, who will thus learn something about their work, and so be able to give them due reward of praise for excellence." 40

This desire to bring together the worker and the user of his products, a desire inspired by his enthusiasm for the Middle Ages, remained a factor in Morris's ideology, and can be seen in News from Nowhere. The widespread lik-
William Morris goes further. He does not regard it as enough to eliminate parasitic employments, which are obviously all non-productive. It is equally necessary to eliminate useless products. In this category he includes luxury articles intended for the rich and the rubbish meant for the poor. "Nothing should be made by man's labour," he declares, "that is not worth making." That will become possible when man is master of his own destiny. "We can now deal with things reasonably," says old Hammond, "and refuse to be saddled with what we do not want." Men will change their way of life and, again in the words of the old man, will get rid of "many sham wants".

Socialism, as Engels had already predicted,

"sets free for society as a whole a mass of means of production and products by putting an end to the senseless luxury and extravagance of the present ruling class . . ." 47

Morris provides many examples in this vein. Throughout the first stage, such products are naturally excluded: "It would be a matter of course that until everybody had his absolute necessities and his reasonable comforts satisfied, there would be no place for the production of luxuries". 48 The worker, Morris writes,

"will not suffer the caprice of a few rich people driving them to crave for useless and harmful luxuries to impose a tax on all usefully industrious persons." 49

There will, for example, be an end to being "led by the nose by fashion into having things you don't want". 50 The workers themselves will "refuse to make
With the disappearance of class society and the profit motive, "there will be no temptation to make more useless toys, since there will be no rich men engorging their brains for means of spending superfluous money, and consequently no 'organisers of labour' pandering to degrading follies for the sake of profit, wasting their intelligence and energy in contriving snares for cash in the shape of trumpery which they themselves heartily despise." Nobody in the new society will have the slightest craving for "things which people leading a manly and uncorrupted life would not ask for or dream of," and this "mass of people employed in making all those articles of folly and luxury" will no longer be diverted from the production of a general abundance of necessary goods. Moreover, is it to be imagined that people for whom work and art are intimately linked could value this pretentious bourgeois luxury which is no more than a wretched substitute for art?

Rubbish will not be made for the poor, any more than luxury goods will be made for the rich. "there will be no millions of poor to make a market for wares which no one would choose to use if he were not driven to do so; everyone will be able to afford things good of their kind and ... will have knowledge of goods enough to reject what is not excellent; coarse and rough wares may be made for rough or temporary purposes, but they will openly proclaim themselves for what they are; adulteration will be unknown." Taking up the phrase made famous by Charles Kingsley - cheap and nasty - Morris declares that there will no longer be any "cheap and nasty wares which are the mainstay of competitive commerce and are indeed slave-wares, made by and for slaves." The workers would cease to make or to want them "when they ceased to be slaves." This is the reality described in Ainslie from Ainslie. "Nothing can be made," says old Hammond, "except for genuine use; therefore no inferior goods are made."

And Morris summarises his point of view very well in this passage:

"there would no longer be any need to cumber the world with mountains of useless wares; no need to weary ourselves with making either the idiotic toys of the rich, or the miserable rags of the poor, which form now by far the greater part of the baggage of commerce.

In communist society, declares Morris,

"all this would be altered; the demand for wares would be real and not fictitious; people would ask for what they really wanted, and not for futilities and makeshifts. Labour would be expended on things worth doing."

This society "will produce to live, and not live to produce, and production will be all the better for being the fruit of fraternal solidarity:

"The whole people can only be happy when it is working for the whole people, and is organized to that end. Then we have an end of makeshifts, for when we are working to supply our own wants why should we work worse than well? And then too everybody would have due sympathy with his neighbour besides due confidence."

There is a general tendency to exaggerate Morris's desire for the reduction of needs and the simplification of life. It is quite wrong to latch on to him the
"simple-life" movement which enlivened the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with its eccentricities. Such errors of interpretation are due (yet again) to the habit of quoting from the texts of Morris’s pre-socialist period, to the exclusion of all others, or at least, from those where the influence of Ruskin was still preponderant. It is true that, in 1883, he was still saying that "art will be used to determine what things are useful and what useless to be made." 67 A year earlier, when he made a plea for "abstaining from multiplying our material wants unnecessarily", declaring that we should be able "to distinguish slaves' work from free men's, and to decide what we may accept and what we must renounce of the wares that are offered to us as necessaries and comforts of life", the criteria of his choice were still those laid down by Ruskin in The Stones of Venice. It was from the same exclusively aesthetic viewpoint that he had declared, earlier still:

"Simplicity of life, even the barest, is not a misery, but the very foundation of refinement . . . Learn to do without: there is virtue in those words: a force that rightly used would choke both demand and supply of Mechanical Toil . . . And then from simplicity of life would rise up the longing for beauty . . ." 68

There is no doubt that Morris always felt a desire to have our lives ridded of "sham wants" 69 and that this desire is overwhelmingly expressed in News from Nowhere. It is also plain that his interest in barbarism for a long time exerted an influence that should not be overlooked. 70 His utopia is certainly the opposite of all those which preach an enormous extension of synthetic and disposable goods; 71 it is based on a return to a liking for real, natural objects. But let us make no mistake; there is not a shadow of destructive Luddite fervour about him. In the writings of his maturity he pays tribute to the "wonderful discoveries and inventions" of the capitalist age: "all that the Commercial Period has won for us, nor can what it has won be lost any more", but the bourgeoisie, he adds, "has won the treasure but it cannot use it". 72 And this is no chance remark. Two years later, in what was perhaps the most utopian of his lectures, he returns to the theme:

"The extinction of the disabilities of an effete system of production will not, we are convinced, destroy the gains which the world has already won, but will, on the contrary, make those gains available to the whole population instead of confining their enjoyment to a few." 73

So there is no question of making a clean sweep, but of making a rational choice, on the basis of real utility and not only that of the needs of art, bearing in mind all that phrase meant to Morris. He told an audience "to think for yourselves what you really desire". 74 The choice will certainly be difficult, and the writer makes no bones about it:

"I say that we might produce half or a quarter of what we do now, and yet be much wealthier, and consequently much happier, than we are now: and that by turning whatever labour we exercised into the production of useful things, things that we all want . . ." 75

We shall be a great deal richer, he says, because "we shall then be relieved of the tax of waste and consequently shall find that we have . . . a mass of
labour-power available which will enable us to live as we please within reasonable limits.” 7 That is one of the keys to plenty: “if all of the men who are doing nothing and all who are simply wasting their work were to work at making things which we want, which the whole community wants, and at distributing them in an unwasteful manner, we should as a community be abundantly wealthy”. 8 In a sensible organisation of labour, he says again, directed towards the manufacture of goods of genuine utility, “there would be enough wealth produced to enable everyone to live comfortably except those who were criminally idle.” 9 Morris’s imagination soars at the thought of the abundance thus achieved:

“What amount of wealth we should produce if we are working cheerfully at producing the things that we all genuinely want; if all the intelligence, all the inventive power, all the inherited skill of handicraft, all the keen wit and insight, all the healthy bodily strength were engaged in doing this and nothing else, what a pile of wealth we should have.” 10

So this abundance is based upon a profound transformation of human needs, which is only possible in communist society, upon the enrichment of the fundamental needs of the species and the elimination of all the false needs created by the profit system. It is worth pointing out that the cautious expectations of Marx and Engels look in the same direction:

“Communist organisation has a two-fold effect upon the desires produced in the individual by present-day conditions; some of these desires – namely those existing under all conditions, which only change their form and direction under different social conditions – are merely altered by the communist social system, for they are given the opportunity to develop normally; others however – namely those originating in a particular social system, under particular conditions of [production] and intercourse – are totally deprived of their conditions of existence.”

* * *

Morris by no means expected abundance to arrive spontaneously. He was no anarchist; on the contrary, it is to remedy what he more than once calls the anarchy of free competition that he considers the organisation of labour to be necessary. Engels did not speak with a different tongue: “Anarchy in social production is replaced by conscious organisation on a planned basis.” 11 Morris declared that such planning becomes possible from the moment when the workers, freed of their ancient fetters, become “absolute masters of their material, tools, and time”. 12 Their first task will be to assess the nature and exact extent of what is needed; “they . . will have freedom and leisure to see what they really do need”. 13 Writing a few years later, Morris had realised that this is no easy task, and old Hammond admits to his visitor “that this knowledge we reached slowly and painfully”, 14 which indicates the extent to which the writer’s appreciation of the difficulties of the first stage had hardened. The second task will be to “regulate their labour in accordance with their own real needs”:

“When the workers are society they will regulate their labour, so that
the supply and demand shall be genuine, not gambling, the two will then be commensurate for it is the same society which demands that also supplies."

More precisely still, it will be the needs of consumption that will set the limits for production and labour, for man "cannot use more than he needs—he can only waste it". Such is the state of affairs described by old Hammond in that England, transformed into "a garden, where nothing is wasted and nothing is spoilt", where the management of affairs resembles that of a good housewife, that England where, he says, "we have now found out what we want, so we make no more than we want". In this way it will be possible to supply "the real 'demands' of each and all—that is to say, work for livelihood, instead of working to supply the demand of the profit market". Alongside this, planning, or "the organisation of labour" will consist of "finding out what work such and such people are fittest for and leaving them free to do that". All these measures, designed to avoid wastage of labour, will "produce the greatest possible amount of wealth for the community and for every member of it".

The determination of needs, the adaptation of workers to their jobs and of production for consumption, which are indispensable factors for plenty, will be difficult, slow and laborious operations, as old Hammond recalled, and during the first stage they can only be effected by authoritarian means, under direct State control, "that is, the nation organized for unwasteful production and exchange of wealth".

"It would also take on itself the organization of labour in detail, arranging the bow, when and where for the benefit of the public, doing all this, one must hope, with as little centralization as possible; in short, the State, according to this view, would be the only employer of labour."

In the second stage, the State will have withered away, but planning is too complex a matter to be decided by direct democracy. "As to what goods are required by the community, that the community will settle for itself by means of any set of rational representatives whom it may select for this purpose."

Planning will be done at the level of "the Federation of Independent Communities" whose task will be "furthering the organization of labour, by ascertaining the real demand for commodities, and so avoiding waste... organizing the distribution of goods". This "great federal organizing power", Morris explained several years later, "would have to see to the collection and distribution of all information as to the wants of populations and the possibilities of supplying them, leaving all details to the subordinate bodies, local and industrial". Notice how searching his utopian thinking is on the theory of two stages: these detailed organisations for production and plenty derive directly from State power during the socialist period and are entrusted to local groupings in the age of communism, when the federal organisation will have functions limited to information and co-ordination.

* * *
We can see the same level of theoretical thinking relative to money. Its disappearance is a consequence of the achievement of plenty. Which is why, throughout the first stage, "currency will still be used as a medium of exchange, though of course it will not bear with it the impress of surplus value." In any event, thanks to Marxist analysis, it will have been stripped of all the myths and mysteries which hid its real nature during the capitalist era, and will genuinely become the expression of value, that is, the amount of socially necessary work:

"Money will be used if necessary, as it may be at first, but will only be used as counters representing so much labour." 82

In the communist stage of abundance, money becomes superfluous. Morris does not show any originality by this claim. Many utopists before him, from Sir Thomas More onwards, had described societies from which money had been banished. But for the humanist of the sixteenth century, it was a pious and hypothetical desire, based upon another hypothesis, equally unrealisable at the time, that of abundance: the conclusion of More's book shows clearly that he would wish for such a state of affairs without being able to hope for it. Morris, writing in the nineteenth century, knew that the development of the productive forces and the dialectical development of production relationships up to the revolutionary crisis bring this abundance within reach. His originality lay in bringing into utopia a scientific analysis of the material process which makes it possible, and thereby renders the use of money unnecessary.

The achievement of abundance and the disappearance of money form a rational, logical conclusion for Morris. In John Ball's predictions, the tone remains purely prophetic: "And at last shall all men labour and live and be happy and have the goods of the earth without money and without price." 83 However, this was a poetic rendering of a thought which had already been worked out, as is shown by the very precise language of a lecture delivered two years earlier.

"...all ordinary necessaries and comforts would be so abundant and so cheap that they would be free for everybody to take as he needed; of course we should pay for them, but in the lump: let me give you an illustration: when a family that is comfortably-off sit down to a leg of mutton how do they act? Do they bring in a pair of scales and weigh out to each one his share of the victuals? No, that is done in prison, but not in a family: in a family everybody has what he needs and no one grudges it. Mary has one slice, Jack has two, and Bill has four: but Mary and Jack don't feel wronged, since they have had as much as they wanted; and the reason for this is that enough has been provided, and that the members of the family trust one another." 84

A curious and interesting passage, because it appears to describe a transition period between socialism and communism: payment still exists, but it is vanishing. However, by the second stage, "there will be such an abundance of all ordinary necessaries that between private persons there will be no obvious and immediate exchange necessary". 85 English people of the twenty-second century were ignorant of the arts of buying and selling. Money was unknown to them and was only to be found in museums. When the visitor in-
nocently attempts to pay Dick for his ride in the boat, the young man is slow to understand, and finally says:

"I think I know what you mean. You think that I have done you a service; so you feel yourself bound to give me something which I am not to give to a neighbour, unless he has done something special for me. I have heard of this kind of thing: but pardon me for saying, that it seems to us a troublesome and roundabout custom; and we don't know how to manage it."

The visitor's successive questions: "How much?"; "But however am I to pay . . . ?"; "How can they afford . . . ?" meet with blank incomprehension and land him in embarrassing situations. As for goods, they are taken to the markets and the shops, where they are at the disposition of the public. One is a shade disappointed (though it is perhaps unreasonable to expect a man of the nineteenth century to think in terms of habits that have only sprung up in our day) to see that Morris never for a moment thought of a system of self-service. He certainly looked forward to the elimination of middlemen and parasites, and showed the lack of need for our many selling services, but, as we have seen, "the necessary distribution of goods is not included in this waste". In fact, he turns it over to children, considering that not only is such a job suited to their strength, but also that it is amusing and educational for them. Moreover, it seems very likely that our self-service shops would have deeply offended him, seeming cold, mechanical and inhuman. The children we see in the Piccadilly shop where the visitor obtains his pipe, pouch and tobacco, spread that human warmth and kindliness in their distribution of goods that was more important than any organisational efficiency in Morris's eyes.

This pipe which, as I have already indicated, constitutes a symbol and a reference in News from Nowhere, calls for a further remark. It is ornamented with gold and jewels, and we notice, in a more general way, that gold and other precious metals no longer have any monetary use. Such was the case in Sir Thomas More's Utopia, except as far as international trade was concerned, and this is irrelevant to Morris, for in the twenty-second century the revolution appears to have triumphed all over the planet. In the sixteenth century the influx of gold was a decisive factor in the upsurge of commerce and the appearance of those "new men" whose greed overturned the old economic relationships of the feudal order and undermined all the human values linked with it. Shakespeare, through the mouth of Timon of Athens, saw gold as the source of all evil, and More preceded his anathemas, denouncing "the folly of men"; in his utopia, gold was relegated to the "most vile uses" and served for making chamber-pots. Four hundred years later, immediately after a bloody war waged to satisfy imperialist interests, Lenin, in his turn, expressed his revolutionary indignation by suggesting that gold should one day be used to make public lavatories. William Morris, living in a period which, although disturbed, was in no way comparable with those ages of fundamental crisis, does not overflow with invective, and, although he abolishes currency, the artist in him sees gold and silver (we must not forget Dick's belt) as raw materials that, with others, increase the beauty of daily life.

I point out, in finishing with this point, that for him it was not a matter of a compulsory suppression of money, but of a disappearance as gradual and in
logical as that of the State. It was the result of the no less gradual and logical development of plenty. This distinguishes Morris sharply from a number of other utopists, with their tendency to organise distribution according to what Raymond Ruyer accurately describes as "a rigid diagram for the application of values and goods". For him there could be no direction of consumption, because, holding the theory of two stages, he could not conceive of a communism of poverty.

In William Morris's mind, this disappearance of money is ultimately linked with a semantic and ideological concept which penetrates all his humanism. Like Ruskin before him, in Unto This Last, he draws an absolute distinction between "wealth" and "riches", two words much too often confused in current practice, he considered. The two words, writes Morris, are not "tautologous".

"In truth, there are no real synonyms in our language ...; and in the early days of our own language no one would have thought of using the word rich as a synonym for wealthy. He would have understood a wealthy man to mean one who had plentiful livelihood, and a rich man one who had great dominion over his fellow-men ... Now, without being a stickler for etymological accuracy, I must say that I think there are cases where modern languages have lost power by confusing two words into one meaning, and that this is one of them. I shall ask your leave therefore to use the words wealth and riches somewhat in the way in which our forefathers did, and to understand wealth as signifying the means of living a decent life, and riches as the means for exercising dominion over other people."

Additional explanation is needed here. In old English, the word mce meant powerful, of high rank. The word mch, derived from it, implies that this power or dominance is exerted through the medium of money or fortune. To be still more accurate, the word "riches", when Morris uses it in a modern context, describes the privilege or power conferred by fortune, the power enjoyed by the man possessing it "to force other people to live for his advantage poorer lives than they should live." It describes the fundamental value of the capitalist system, characterised by "unjust and ill-managed distribution of the power of acquiring wealth, which we call shortly money."

Morris gives this same sense to the word "riches" when, in one of his socialist poems, he speaks of "riches that serve for nothing but to fetter a friend for a slave." Talking of the conquest of nature through the initiative and spirit of enterprise of the bourgeoisie, and examining the social consequences that have derived from it, he exclaims: "riches we have won without stint, but wealth is as far from us as ever."

What is real wealth? It is, says Morris:

"of two kinds; the first kind, food, raiment, shelter, and the like; the second, matters of art and knowledge; that is, things good and necessary for the body and things good and necessary for the mind."

In a lecture delivered a year later, and not without a certain lyrical quality, Morris was even more explicit:
"Wealth is what Nature gives us and what a reasonable man can make out of the gifts of Nature for his reasonable use. The sunlight, the fresh air, the unspoiled face of the earth, food, raiment, and housing necessary and decent; the storing up of knowledge of all kinds, and the power of disseminating it, means of free communication between man and man; works of art, the beauty which man creates when he is most a man, most aspiring and thoughtful— all things which serve the pleasure of people, free, manly and uncorrupted. This is wealth." 110

Morris’s inspiration is distinctly more materialist than Ruskin’s, and is free from all moralising paternalism. Although he could not have known the writings of the young Marx, one cannot help recalling the latter’s humanism when seeking to define “the rich human being and rich human need. The rich human being is simultaneously the human being in need of a totality of human life-activities.” 111

These two entities, then, “wealth” and “riches”, constitute an alternative and define two antagonistic ideals: the revolution will seal the victory of the first over the second. “These are the foundations of my Utopia, a city in which riches and poverty will have been conquered by wealth”, 112 and the visitor in *News from Nowhere* extols “this happy and lovely folk, who had cast away riches and attained to wealth.” 113 The fate of art itself is involved in this conflict and it must now be defined in the light of these terms: “Which shall art belong to, wealth or riches? Whose servant shall she be? or rather, Shall she be the slave of riches, or the friend and helpermate of wealth?” 114

The perspective revealed by socialism should not be disturbing to anybody. But a revision of values is needed. “The poor man . . . will have to give up his chance of becoming rich— a valuable possession truly— and he will find that he is not rich, but wealthy; that is, that he has whatever a man healthy in mind and body can wish for.” 115 As for the rich man, despite appearances, he has nothing to lose either: “society . . . will be far wealthier and infinitely happier than our present one; . . . the sum of its wealth will be so great that even the rich men of the present day would find it ample compensation for the loss of the riches which they cannot use now for their own happiness but which, whether they will it or not, must be used for the unhappiness of their fellows.” 116 Socialism and abundance will re-establish the exact meaning of “rich human need”. 117

In the same way, the problem of equality will be finally resolved by abundance. To tell the truth, on this point Morris does not appear to show as much patience and restraint as he does upon others, and the levelling out of wages appears necessary to him in the first stage. In reply to a political opponent’s question about the working of a ship under a socialist system he replies:

“How? Why, with a captain and mates and sailing master and engineer (if it be a steamer) and ABs and stokers and so on and so on. *Only* there will be no 1st, 2nd and 3rd class among the passengers; the sailors and stokers will be as well fed and lodged as the captain or passengers; and the Captain and the stoker will have the same pay.” 118

It is quite plain that the difficult problem of involvement and production
during the socialist stage did not enter Morris's mind, and probably at that
time the question could not be posed. He himself declared to an audience of
working men that he was ready to put his personal fortune into "the common
stock of the nation" and to carry on his profession for the same pay as any
worker, "dustman, blacksmith or bricklayer". It is probable that it was
precisely the deep embarrassment caused by his bourgeois status that drove
him to adopt so rigidly egalitarian an attitude. In any case, Morris stood
him on this principle and considered that if any worker felt exceptional needs, "he
would have to make personal sacrifices in order to satisfy them, he would have,
for instance, to work longer hours, or to forgo some luxury that he did not care
for in order to obtain something which he very much desired".

At the communist stage, the situation is naturally different, and abundance
 resolves such difficulties. But Morris remains resolutely opposed to exceptional
 rewards for special talents and aptitudes. Needs, he writes, "are not
 necessarily determined by the kind or amount of work which each man does,
 though of course, when they are, that must be taken into account", and they are,
 he adds, pretty well the same for everybody. One cannot "eat three
dinners a day or sleep in four beds". However well-qualified a worker may be,
"you cannot give him more than he can use, so he will not ask for more,
and will not take it". The only reward which can be given him is "opportunity
 for developing and exercising his excellent capacity". If this egalitarian
principle did need to be broken, it would rather be in the opposite direction to
that generally demanded: "nay, the man who does the rougher work may need
the more expensive livelihood, and if he does, he ought to have it".

No occupation merits special consideration, because all kinds of work "are
necessary to the commonweal". The work of some given individual "may
be more special than another's, but it is not more necessary if you have
organized labour properly; the ploughman and the fisherman are as necessary
to society as the scientist or the artist, I will not say more necessary". Nor can
any case be made on account of the greater difficulty of the specialist's work.
"the higher workman produces his work as easily perhaps as the lower does his
work", "nor is the difficulty and labour of exercising a specially excellent
capacity at all proportioned to its excellence". As for the man who looks
after the direction of labour in a socialist society, "the director of labour is in
his place because he is fit for it, not by a mere accident; being fit for it, he does
it easier than he would do other work, and needs no more compensation for
the wear and tear of life than another man does, and not needing it will not claim
it, since it would be no use to him; his special reward for his special labour is, I
repeat, that he can do it easily, and so does not feel it a burden; nay, since he
can do it well he likes doing it".

For the same reason, it would be absurd, thinks Morris, to give privileges to
the intellectual worker. "I cannot see that any extra reward should be given to
a man for following an 'intellectual' calling. If he does his work in it well, it is
more pleasurable to him than a 'non-intellectual' one and why should he be
paid twice over?" And Morris makes his point of view quite clear by means of
a definite example. A painter, he says, "should not be paid for the 'intellectual'
part of his work, but for the workman's part of it: finishing up everything
properly, doing everything as well as it can be done in all respects. This will
take something out of him. But the exercise of his 'intellect' will take nothing;
it is mere play". Even in the first stage, moreover, Morris is convinced that the new conditions would favour the spread of talent, and rapidly make any privileged position absurd. Talent, he writes, "would tend to become less rare as men were freer to choose the occupations most suitable for them... so that the aristocracy of talent, even if it appeared, would tend to disappear, even in this first state of incomplete Communism." 130

In addition, Morris sees every claim by the specialist to receive an enhanced salary as a threat and a danger: "a decent life, a share in the common life of all is the only 'reward' that any man can honestly take for his work, whatever it is... if he asks for more, that means that he intends to play the master over somebody". 130 Is it fair to grant him a dominant position over others? "Nay, if he be more excellent than they are in any art, he must influence them for his good and theirs if they are worth anything; but if you make him their arbitrary master, he will govern them but he will not influence them, he and they will be enemies, and harm each other mutually." 131

In all these attitudes on the problem of intellectuals, one can easily discern a more or less pro-worker attitude, a common enough phenomenon among revolutionaries of bourgeois origin, and a tendency greatly strengthened in Morris by the false situation in which he found himself socially. And it appears that, added to this tendency, was a reaction against Carlyle's cult of the hero, particularly the literary hero. This would explain the ferocity of some of his diatribes. The following lines are very suggestive in this respect, and, at the same time, they have the merit of very clearly describing Morris's ideal of equality in abundance:

"Our objectors dwell upon diverse aspects of their anxiety for the future of the brain workers. Some, for instance, seem most exercised on the question of what is to become of the men of genius when Socialism is realized; but I must beg them not to let this anxiety destroy their appetites or keep them awake at nights, for it is founded on a perhaps popular, but certainly erroneous, conception of that queer animal the man of genius, who is generally endowed with his full share of the predatory instincts of the human being, and can take remarkably good care of himself. Indeed, I can't help thinking that even under a Socialistic condition of things he will pull such long faces if he doesn't get everything that he wants, and will make matters so uncomfortable for those that he lives amongst if he falls short of his ideal of existence, that good-natured and quiet people will be weak enough to make up a purse (or its equivalent) for him from time to time to keep him in good temper and shut his mouth a little. I must further say, though, that they will be exceedingly weak if they do so, because they will be able to get out of him all the special work he can do without these extra treats. For the only claim he has to the title of a 'man of genius' is that his capacities are irrepressible; he finds the exercise of them so exceedingly pleasant to him that it will be only by main force that you will prevent him from exercising them." 132
One essential problem of sharing which appears to have more or less escaped the notice of Morris is that of the deduction necessary for the establishment of collective funds. It is not, wrote Engels,

"that each individual worker becomes the possessor of 'the full proceeds of his labour', but that the whole of society, consisting entirely of workers, becomes the possessor of the total proceeds of its labour, which it partly distributes among its members for consumption, partly uses for replacing and increasing the means of production, and partly stores up as a reserve fund for production and consumption".

This is particularly a problem of the first stage, which is probably why Morris did not linger over it; but it could carry over, in ways at present unforeseeable, into the communist stage of plenty, but our writer makes no reference to it. The only allusion of this kind which I have found in all his work refers only to the first stage, and is extremely confused:

"The State," he writes, "... would hold all the means of production and distribution of wealth in its hands, allowing the use of them to whomsoever it thought could use them, charging rent, perhaps, for their use, but which rent would be used again only for the benefit of the whole community, and therefore would return to the worker in another form."

The idea is expressed clearly enough, even though the formulation is far from clear. However, apart from this single reference, which shows that the problem was not entirely overlooked, it must be recorded that Morris's general formulations are very much like those of pre-Marxist thinkers, in particular, the Proudhon school. The worker, he repeats, should receive "the full results of his labour". He says elsewhere: "it is not wages they want, not the mere portion of the fruits of their labour which they can manage to wring out of the profits of their masters, but the fruits of their labours themselves." On the other hand, he is very clear about private ownership of consumable goods. This should be recognised: "No one ... could dispute with a man the possession of what he had acquired without injury to others, and what he could use without injuring them." But it is clearly understood that, in order to share in the collective wealth, "you must have worked towards its production or you will have injured the rest of the community by thrusting on them your share of the work."

Work alone confers "the right to the possession of wealth". It equally goes without saying that this right exists only in respect of "the fruits of labour", "the means of production to be owned by no individual", and that is something that he will never go back on: "It will be impossible for any man to make his private profit from the compulsion of other men's labour,". Every member of the community will be "absolutely free to use his share of wealth as he pleases, without interference from any, so long as he really uses it, that is, does not turn it into an instrument for the oppression of others." Moreover, it is a very small risk in a society from which class divisions will have disappeared.

"For this process of gaining possession of property by means of stealing, and then qualifying the glorious name of property by calling it private
property (an ingenious but I should hope now exposed fraud) has this disadvantage, that you must find some definite and unchanging body of men who will consent or submit to be stolen from." 143

In short, said Morris, "we fully admit the right of people to use property, we deny their right to abuse it." 144

In consequence, another preliminary to the legitimacy of private ownership is that it has no other purpose than use: "Socialism bases the right of the individual to possess wealth on his being able to use that wealth for his own personal needs", 145 or, in other words "what a man has and can use is his own". 146 Even during the first stage, those who, because of "unequal right", obtained, on account of their work, "extra goods would have to consume them themselves, otherwise they would be of no use to them". 147 That is why, at the stage of plenty, the free availability of goods involves no risk: nobody could "accumulate wealth, nor would he desire to; for he could do nothing with it except satisfy his personal needs". And "there would be no hoarding of money or other wealth": such an event, if it did occur, would be a rarity and would seem a morbid phenomenon. 148

So Morris faithfully reproduces the teaching of the Manifesto:

"Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labour of others by means of such appropriation." 149

However, Morris's utopia takes matters further, and his thinking about the two stages takes an original turn as it goes deeper. He regards the first stage as a period during which one finds "the means of production communized but the resulting wealth still private property". But, at the stage of communism, "when public institutions satisfy your craving for splendour and completeness; ... what advantage would there be in having more nominal wealth than your neighbour?" Which is why, to his way of thinking,

"the communization of the means of industry would speedily be followed by the communization of its product; ... which again does not mean that people would (all round) use their neighbours’ coats, or houses or tooth brushes, but that every one, whatever work he did, would have the opportunity of satisfying all his reasonable needs according to the admitted standard of the society in which he lived: i.e., without robbing any other citizen”. 150

In other words, the right to private property would, in this atmosphere of plenty, gradually cease being a strict juridical institution and would take the form of accepted usage: "No one will want to meddle with matters that have, as it were, grown to such and such an individual - which have become part of his habits, so to say." 151 But apart from this tolerant respect, any bitter contention will have gone. A brief episode in News from Nowhere is quite illuminating. After the crime of passion that the visitor hears tells of, Walter, a friend of the criminal lover, decides to persuade him to leave the village and move into a house further up the Thames:
"Is the house in question empty?" said I.

"No," said Walter, "but the man who lives there will go out of it, of course, when he hears that we want it." [185]

And let us give a thought (yes another!) to the precious pipe from the shop in Piccadilly. What does it matter if it is lost, says the girl to the valuer: "Somebody is sure to find it, and he will use it, and you can get another."

Why, in the midst of plenty, should he have an inalienable claim upon it? Inasmuch as "all now and all that shall be ours," and private property, slowly distilled, will become just an enjoyment accepted by the smiling goodwill of everybody." [184]
CHAPTER NINE

Beauty in Daily Life

In January 1891, the New Review published a series of three articles under the general title "The Socialist Ideal". The first of them, signed by William Morris, was devoted to art and began thus:

Some people will perhaps not be prepared to hear that Socialism has any ideal of art, for in the first place it is so obviously founded on the necessity for dealing with the bare economy of life that many, and even some Socialists, can see nothing save that economic basis; and moreover, many who might be disposed to admit the necessity of an economic change in the direction of Socialism believe quite sincerely that art is fostered by the inequalities of condition which it is the first business of Socialism to do away with, and indeed that it cannot exist without them. Nevertheless, in the teeth of these opinions I assert first that Socialism is an all-embracing theory of life, and that as it has an ethic and a religion of its own, so also it has an aesthetic; so that to everyone who wishes to study Socialism duly it is necessary to look on it from the aesthetic point of view. And, secondly, I assert that inequality of condition, whatever may have been the case in former ages of the world, has now become incompatible with the existence of a healthy art.

But before I go further I must explain that I use the word art in a wider sense than is commonly used amongst us to-day; for convenience' sake, indeed, I will exclude all appeals to the intellect and emotions that are not addressed to the eyesight, though properly speaking, music and all literature that deals with style should be considered as portions of art, but I can exclude from consideration as a possible vehicle of art no production of man which can be looked at. And here at once becomes obvious the sundering of the ways between the Socialist and the commercial view of art. To the Socialist a house, a knife, a cup, a steam engine, or what not, anything, I repeat, that is made by man and has form, must either be a work of art or destructive to art. The Commercialist, on the other hand, divides 'manufactured articles' into those which are prepensely works of art, and are offered for sale in the market as such, and those which have no pretence and could have no pretence to artistic qualities. The one side asserts indifference, the other denies it. The Commercialist sees that in the great mass of civilized human labour there is no pretence to art, and thinks that this is natural, inevitable, and on the whole desirable. The Socialist, on the contrary, sees in this obvious lack of art a disease peculiar to modern civilization and hurtful to
humanity, and furthermore believes it to be a disease which can be remedied."

A few pages further on, Morris added:

"The first point, therefore, in the Socialist ideal of art is that it should be common to the whole people, and this can only be the case if it comes to be recognized that art should be an integral part of all manufactured wares that have definite form and are intended for any endurance."

While this very broad conception of art is given clear and definite expression in this 1891 article, it was no new point of view for Morris. It had been the basis of his aesthetic message for a long time, and was already clearly expressed in his earliest lectures.

"I must ask you," he said in 1883, "to extend the word art beyond those matters which are consciously works of art, to take in not only painting and sculpture, and architecture, but the shapes and colours of all household goods, nay, even the arrangement of the fields for tillage and pasture, the management of towns and of our highways of all kinds; in a word, to extend it to the aspect of all the externals of our life." 2

What indicates the road travelled between these two declarations is the fact that Morris, having reached the fruition of his thinking, defines art in terms of production and the class struggle.

Art must become "an essential part of the humanity of man". So there must be an end to "that fatal schism between art and daily life". In our day, he says, "people talk about, and advertise art pottery, art furniture, art fire-grates, and the like, giving us clearly to understand by such words, that it is unusual for pottery, furniture and fire-grates to have anything to do with art, that there is a divorce between art and common life". 3 This divorce between the useful and the beautiful is such that "those things that are without art are so aggressively, they wound it by their existence". Everything happens as though those who fear the power of beauty "would, if they had had the making of the external world, have been afraid of making an ear of wheat beautiful lest it should not have been good to eat". 4 The word artist "means at present another thing than artisan". 5

Morris, who is so lightly classed among the fin de siècle aesthetes, emphatically rejects pure aestheticism and art for art's sake. The first quality of any object must be its utility: "no work should be done which is not useful when done", "labour, to be attractive, must be directed towards some obviously useful end", the greatest pleasure in work is "the self-respect which comes of a sense of usefulness". 6 But, says Morris, let there be no mistake! Labour must be "useful and not utilitarian; which word expresses as I think a quality pretty nearly the opposite of useful, and means something which is useful for nothing save squeezing money out of other people's necessities". 9

In the transformed England of the twenty-second century, old Hammond refers with contempt to the time when "the only admitted test of utility in wares was the finding of buyers for them - wise men or fools, as it might chance". Henceforth, "nothing can be made except for genuine use". 10

But things that are useful, as distinct from utilitarian, cannot be separated
from beauty. The production of necessities would be “dull work without art”. Art will become a “a help and solace to the daily life of all men”, the divine solace of human labour, the romance of each day’s hard practice of the difficult art of living. Men will take up once more the old traditions, for they “have at all times more or less striven to beautify the familiar matters of everyday life”. While, on the one hand, “nothing can be a work of art that is not useful”, it is also essential, on the other, that every object should be “a work of art besides a useful piece of goods”.

Raymond Ruyer, in picking out characteristics common to most utopias, indulges in generalisations which, in Morris’s case, tend to go rather too far: “The utopist does not like the profusion, waste and prodigality of life,” he writes. “He is a man with a system in which nothing is unnecessary. All trades which do not produce “necessary objects” are eliminated from Amoraute and Salente. Nothing shows more plainly how far removed the utopist is from the aesthete.” Morris’s originality comes out very clearly in his concern to link utility indissolubly with beauty. “Have nothing in your houses,” he exclaims, “that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.” In the communist stage, this unity is so complete that old Hammond can declare: “what used to be called art . . . has no name amongst us now, because it has become a necessary part of the labour of every man who produces”.

* * *

Before examining how this doctrine finds expression in the various manifestations of daily life, I feel it necessary to stress one essential aspect of Morris’s aesthetic thinking, an aspect rarely noticed by the critics and interpreters, because they are victims of a condescending assumption, and are convinced that they are simply dealing with a pleasant but unrealistic utopia. This aspect is precisely the seriousness and firmness of the approach. In his first lecture, in 1877, Morris expressed a demand for “a new art of conscious intelligence”. For him, art could never be a romantic outpouring, blind and irresponsible. Far more: he, with his enormous admiration for mediaeval beauty, only accepted its influence upon the basis of elaborate reflection which rejects all spontaneity:

“Of the art that is to come who may prophesy? But this at least seems to follow from comparing the past with the confusion in which we are now struggling and the light which glimmers through it: that that art will no longer be an art of instinct, of ignorance which is hopeful to learn and strives to see; since ignorance is now no longer hopeful.”

Art must be the product of a conscious, voluntary effort which leaves no room for lack of precision, and it is inseparable from theoretical thinking. “I do so hate . . . everything vague in politics as well as in art!” he wrote, when sending his resignation to the treasurer of the Liberal League in 1881. He continually came back to the point when addressing artists and art students.

“Be careful to eschew all vagueness,” he said to them about the same time. “It is better to be caught out in going wrong when you have had a definite purpose, than to shuffle and slur so that people can’t blame you
because they don’t know what you are at. Hold fast to distinct form in art.”

Eight years later, his language had not changed:

“Above all things in your work as you go on you should eschew vagueness; do not do anything vague; do not act on Mr. Micawber’s line, and do nothing in particular, in the hope that something will turn up... Find out that you have got a meaning to express; and then habituate your hand to express that meaning which your brain is demanding it to express.”

Do nothing in the hope that something will come out of it, put no reliance in inspiration. The word filled him with horror. “That talk of inspiration is sheer nonsense, I may tell you that flat... there is no such thing; it is a mere matter of craftsmanship.” Sparling relates similar utterances:

“Waiting for inspiration, rushing things in reliance upon inspiration, and all the rest of it, is a lazy man’s habit. Get the bones of the work well into your head, and the tools well into your hand, and get on with your job, and the inspiration will come to you — if you’re worth a tinker’s damn as an artist, that is.”

An even more interesting point is that he had no more faith in public than in artistic spontaneity. When he spoke about art made by the people for the people, he was not indulging in demagogy, and his sense of historical determination gave an edge to his lucidity:

“People sometimes talk, as though the ordinary man in the street (of all classes, I mean) is the proper person to apply to for a judgment on Works of Art. They say he is unsophisticated, and so on... Now, let us just look the facts in the face. It would be very agreeable if he were. But if he were, you would not need all these efforts for Art Education that you do need now. As a matter of fact he is not unsophisticated. On the contrary he is steeped in the mere dregs of all the Arts that are current in the time he lives. Is not that absolutely and positively the state of the case? I am quite sure it is. I perhaps have not much right to talk about another and kindred Art, because I don’t know much about it, but I am perfectly certain that in the Art of Music what the ‘unsophisticated’ person takes to is not the fine Works of Art, but the ordinary, commonplace, banal tunes which are drummed into his ears at every street corner. That is natural. In other words, there is a tendency for all people to fall under the domination of tradition of some sort; and the fine tradition, the higher tradition, having disappeared, men will certainly fall under the power of the lower and inferior tradition. Therefore let us once for all get rid of the idea of the mass of the people having an intuitive idea of Art, unless they are in immediate connection with the great traditions of times past, and unless they are every day meeting with things that are beautiful and fit.”

He concludes that an effort to educate is essential, that this effort will create new needs and that these new needs will create a new art. But this educative
effort will only take on its full meaning in a new society, which is why there could be no art without consciousness and responsibility.

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In Morris’s eyes, the art which, of all the arts, is of the greatest importance, and the one which provides a kind of basis for the whole of his utopian aesthetic, is architecture. He himself, after finally giving up all idea of a career in the Church, became apprenticed to the architect, G. E. Street of Oxford, and worked with him for nine months. 28 There he met Philip Webb, who remained a close lifelong friend and to whom he introduced the techniques of the Gothic revival. But while he was still at Exeter College he impressed his companions with the breadth of his knowledge, particularly of architecture, as Canon Dixon recalls in the memories he passed on to Mackail. 29 The influence of Ruskin was also overwhelming during these early years, and in some directions this influence lived on: we have seen the pre-eminent rôle which the author of The Stones of Venice accorded to architecture, and the terms used by Morris in expressing his ideas on this subject continued for a long time to resemble those used by his former mentor. One may well wonder whether Morris’s first calling was not decided by his admiration for Ruskin. One might further wonder whether his thoughts upon architecture, having developed in this atmosphere, did not provide the beginning of his growing leaning towards utopia, as the building of an ideal city. 30 Mackail is certainly using an inappropriate phrase when he says that, for Morris, the word “architecture” carried “transcendental meaning”, 31 but he is hardly exaggerating at all when he adds that “to him the House Beautiful represents the visible form of life itself”. 32

In fact, Morris expresses his utopian enthusiasm with far less hyperbole, and Mackail’s idealistic phraseology is quite lacking. "Architecture," he writes, “as a part of the life of people in general, will again become possible, and I believe that when it is possible, it will have a real new birth, and add so much to the pleasure of life that we shall wonder how people were ever able to live without it”; 13 “architecture and the kindred arts will again flourish amongst us as in the days before civilization”. 14 His style is often yet more simple; “nor do I see why,” he says, “we should be shabby in housing our rest and pleasure and our search for knowledge”. 15 He says again, “our houses must be well built, clean and healthy”, 36 and the first demand was for “simplicity and solidity”, 37 all qualities which Morris observed to be lacking in the nineteenth century. He was not yielding to any transcendental urge when he looked forward to a time when “every little chandler’s shop in our suburbs, every shed run up for mere convenience, is made without effort, fit for its purpose and beautiful at one and the same time”. 38

The year 1884 saw the foundation of the Art Workers’ Guild, of which William Morris was elected Master in 1892; its principle was “the Unity, the Interdependence, the Solidarity of all the Arts”. 39 This idea was dear to the writer, but he introduced a hierarchy into the unity. “Unless you are resolved,” he said, “to have good and rational architecture, it is, once again, useless your thinking about art at all”; and he added:
"I have spoken of the popular arts, but they might all be summed up in that one word Architecture; they are all parts of that great whole, and the art of housebuilding begins it all; if we did not know how to dye or to weave; if we had neither gold, nor silver, nor silk; and no pigments to paint with but half-a-dozen ochres and umbers, we might yet frame a worthy art that would lead to everything, if we had but timber, stone and lime, and a few cutting tools to make these common things not only shelter us from wind and weather, but also express the thoughts and aspirations that stir in us." 40

Nomadic, tent-dwelling peoples certainly possess decorative arts, but it very much appears that such peoples "seem to play with them rather than to try to put their souls into them". On the other hand, "among ourselves, the men of modern Europe, the existence of the other arts is bound up with that of Architecture". This, says Morris, is why the latter should not be regarded in the narrow sense of the art of construction: "its wider sense I consider to mean the art of creating a building with all the appliances fit for carrying on a dignified and happy life". 41 These accessory arts are, above all, the decorative arts, and they "are dependent on the master-art of architecture almost for their existence, and cannot be in a healthy condition if it is sick". 42 Whether it is a question of furniture, ornamentation, or even of sculpture or painting, "except as decorations of the nobler forms of such buildings, (they) cannot be produced at all". Morris's attitude towards the privileged arts of painting and sculpture is particularly significant:

"Painting is of little use, and sculpture of less, except where their works form a part of architecture. A person with any architectural sense really always looks at any picture or any piece of sculpture from this point of view; even with the most abstract picture he is sure to think, How shall I frame it, and where shall I put it? As for sculpture, it becomes a mere toy, a tour de force, when it is not definitely a part of a building, executed for a certain height from the eye, and to be seen in a certain light... In short, the complete work of applied art, the true unit of the art, is a building with all its due ornament and furniture; and I must say from experience that it is impossible to ornament duly an ugly or base building. And on the other hand I am forced to say that the glorious art of good building is so satisfying, that I have seen many a building that needed little ornament..." 44

Architecture, then, represents the union of all the arts, "mutually helpful and harmoniously subordinated one to another", and "it embraces the consideration of the whole surroundings of the life of man". Morris believes it to be "one of the most important things which man can turn his hand to, and the consideration of it to be worth the attention of serious people, not for an hour only, but for a good part of their lives, even though they may not have to do with it professionally". 45 And that is precisely why the English of the twenty-second century will be convinced "that the energies of mankind are chiefly of use to them for such work; for in that direction I can see no end to the work, while in many others a limit does seem possible". 46

In Morris's eyes, the importance of architecture does not derive only from its
"embracing ... all the arts which appeal to the eye", but perhaps even more from its being "above all an art of association": so it will be "the art of a society of co-operation, in which there will certainly be a tendency towards the absorption of small buildings into big". He sees it as "the true democratic art, the child of the man-inhabited earth, the expression of the life of man thereon", which is interesting, because, at the time when he expressed this opinion, he was still entirely under the influence of Ruskin, reproducing his ideas about architecture, the "work of the whole race", and he was by no means unaware of his detestation of democracy. But he was faithful to his teaching when he proclaimed it to be "the art which most depends on the taste of the people at large", and that it could not be the province of "a little group of learned men", but must be that of "each one of us, who must keep watch and ward over the fairness of the earth". Architecture, "of all the forms of art, is that which springs direct from popular impulse, from the partnership of all men, great and little, in worthy and exalting aspirations", the harmonious expression of the sense of beauty inherent in the whole people. It is collective not only in the sense of being an expression of the whole people, but also as an achievement: it is "that art which is above all others co-operative". No man, in fact, "can build a building with his own hands; every one of those men depends for the possibility of even beginning his work on some one else". On the one hand, the architect's work is the culmination of a tradition ("dead men guide his hand even when they forget that they ever existed"); and on the other, "men so working must be influenced in their work by their conditions of life ... The kind and quality of that work, the work of the ordinary handicraftsman, is determined by the social conditions under which he lives, which differ much from age to age". Socialism, by delivering mankind from the fetters created by the profit motive and from social and moral degradation, cannot fail to raise architecture to a higher level both in nature and in quality.

The first fetter to be shed will be that concerning the choice of materials. People will no longer be reduced to using substitutes lacking in both substance and beauty. This question of materials, writes Morris, "is clearly the foundation of architecture, and perhaps one would not go very far wrong if one defined architecture as the art of building suitably with suitable material". He establishes a rigid precedence among them. "Stone is definitely the most noble material, the most satisfactory material; wood is the next, and brick is a makeshift material." The choice is intentionally restrictive. Just like Ruskin, Morris, after the experience of the Crystal Palace, rejects the use of iron and glass with horror, and denounces "the horrible and restless nightmare of modern engineering".

He is no less precise and imperious in his recommendations about roof coverings. Lead seems best to him, followed by stone slates, thatch and "a good country-made tile". Elsewhere, he returns to this problem of roofing in extraordinary detail and draws up a specific list of what is acceptable and what is not. He disapproves of "milled lead" and "Broseley mechanically-made tiles", "thin Welsh blue slates (one of the greatest curses of the age)", and corrugated galvanized iron and zinc (now spreading like a pestilence over the country). He adds "oak shingles", "good hand-made well-baked plain tiles", "good pantiles", "stone slabs", "stone slates", "green Westmoreland..."
“grey and dark-grey slates” to his recommended materials. Finally, he advises straw thatch in preference to reed thatch, as being more durable. The inspiration of the Middle Ages is clear, and one cannot but recall the village described in *A Dream of John Ball*.

Morris deduces from the past a lesson for the future, and considers that the ideal for architecture is for it to blend without clashing into its natural setting. For a house to be beautiful, it must be “a piece of nature”; it should have “added to the natural beauty of the earth instead of marring it.” The disgraceful contrast “between the fields where the beasts live and the streets where men live” must be ended; then “it will be a pleasure and a rest, and not a weight upon the spirits to come from the open country into a town.” Houses, then, should be made solid and unpretentious “using good materials natural to their own country-side,” and then “it is little likely that you will have done any offence to the beauty of the country-side or the older houses in it.” “I have a hope”, adds Morris, “that it will be from such necessary, unpretentious buildings that the new and genuine architecture will spring, rather than from our experiments of conscious style more or less ambitious, or those for which the immortal Dickens has given us the never-to-be-forgotten adjective ‘architecturalsoidal.’” Architecture will be in harmony with nature and also with the needs of man: “every man’s house will be fair and decent, soothing to his mind and helpful to his work”, “so as to express the kind of life which the inmates live”.

* * *

The examples of domestic architecture which we are given in *News from Nowhere* are not many and they are very sketchily described. As we shall see in the next chapter, when we come to study Morris’s dialectics of art and history in the utopian setting, our writer shows great caution in avoiding all dogmatic anticipation of art forms in the future. He prefers to employ what we might describe as a system of references to the past to provide a setting which is possible, but by no means obligatory; he leaves the field open to human inventiveness, and suggests, by using the simple device of admiring adjectives, that this has had its effect.

When the visitor emerges into the new life, he observes that both banks of the Thames “had a line of very pretty houses, low and not large, standing back a little way from the river; they were mostly built of red brick and roofed with tiles, and looked, above all, comfortable, and as if they were, so to say, alive and sympathetic with the life of the dwellers in them.” When he leaves Hammersmith to go by coach to the British Museum with Dick, he goes through a fairly typical area where town and country are blended into each other.

“There were houses about, some on the road, some amongst the fields... They were all pretty in design, and as solid as might be, but crowned in appearance, like yeomen’s dwellings; some of them of red brick like those by the river, but more of timber and plaster, which were by the necessity of their construction so like mediaeval houses of the same materials that I fairly felt as if I were alive in the fourteenth century.”
While the style of these houses is suggested by the historical reference, it is only in a very general way, and that of the brick-built houses is not even hinted at. However, we observe the variations of shape and material, in contrast to the monotonous geometry of classic utopias. It is only towards the end of the tale, when the visitor goes to the upper reaches of the Thames, that we glean somewhat less vague indications. The house occupied by Dick’s friend, Walter Allen, is “low and built round a quadrangle big enough to get plenty of sunshine in it.” Similarly, further up stream, we are shown “a quite modern stone house—a wide quadrangle of one story, the buildings that made it being quite low...” and though there did not seem to be much ornament about it, it had a sort of natural elegance, like that of the trees themselves”. Nowhere do we find skyscrapers, but rather a style of architecture inspired by the nostalgia born of the quadrangles of Oxford. And above all, this constant theme of the adaptation of the dwelling to its natural setting, as in the group of five houses near Pangbourne, “very carefully designed so as not to hurt the character of the country”.

Another trait in common which can be drawn from these descriptions in the simple and unassuming nature of these dwelling-houses. So far, we are dealing only with isolated or semi-rural houses, which are certainly in the majority, since Morris abolishes all distinction between town and country. He admits, however, that some spots of dense urban concentration may remain, as in the case of the City, which “remains the most populous part of London, or perhaps of all these islands”, but this inconvenience is compensated by “the splendour of the architecture, which goes further than what you will see elsewhere.” But this is an exceptional case. On the other hand, nothing seems too fine to Morris when he is imagining the architecture and decoration of public and communal buildings in the society of the future. As Dick points out, “ornament... may easily be overdue in mere living houses, but can hardly be in mote-halls and markets, and so forth.”

While Morris is content with “reasonable” abundance for daily life in general, no richness seems excessive to him for such buildings:

“People... would undertake great works for public utility and pleasure as they might well do in a country where no labour was wasted: and probably having satisfied their ordinary wants on a generous scale, it would be to these public advantages that people would turn for whatever luxury or splendour they desired.”

When, in 1887, bourgeois philanthropists proposed the construction of the People’s Palace in the East End, William Morris, in his Commercial articles, stressed just how condescending and insulting such a project might be for the working class, and added:

“Surely when true society takes the place of false, we shall raise beautiful and magnificent halls with their surroundings for the use of all. But the contrast will not then be between splendour and sordidness, but between splendour and special beauty and the due simplicity of the dwelling of a private person which is quite consistent with beauty and convenience.”

One cannot help recalling Saint-Simon’s famous phrase: “Luxury will
become useful and moral when the whole nation has the enjoyment of it. 5 Morris had been intrigued for a long time by this vision of public places where art might be given free rein. Even before he became a socialist, and understood that such a dream could only find natural fulfilment, freed of all hypocrisy, in a classless society, he dreamed of seeing art triumphant and radiant "in that other kind of building, which I think, under some name or other, whether you call it Church or Hall of Reason, or what not, will always be needed; the building in which people meet to forget their own transient personal and family troubles in aspirations for their fellows and the days to come, and which to a certain extent make up to town-dwellers for their loss of field and river, and mountain". 6 In Morris’s view of the future, this need will no longer be explicable in terms of this loss or these troubles; it will find its natural justification in man’s complete development and in his joy in living. We may add that for Morris himself, torn as he was by the contradictions of his personal situation within the framework of bourgeois society, this vision compensated for a deep frustration. Sir Lowthian Bell relates how he found the poet one day pacing to and fro and muttering, in a state of great rage. When he was pressed for the reason, he burst out: "It is only that I spend my life in ministering to the swinish luxury of the rich." 7 Once again, utopia provided an outlet for his personal problems.

He refers enthusiastically to "the noble communal hall of the future, unsparing of materials, generous in worthy ornament, alive with the noblest thoughts of our time, and the past, embodied in the best art which a free and manly people could produce; such an abode of man as no private enterprise could come anywhere near for beauty and fitness, because only collective thought and collective life could cherish the aspirations which would give birth to its beauty, or have the skill and leisure to carry them out". 8 Five years later, his enthusiasm is as great as ever, and he refers again to the "noble and splendid public building, built to last for ages, and ... also duly ornamented so as to express the life and aspirations of the citizens; in itself a great piece of history of the efforts of the citizens to raise a house worthy of their noble lives, and its mere decoration an epic wrought for the pleasure and education, not of the present generation only, but of many generations to come. This is the true work of art - I was going to say of genuine civilization, but the word has been so misused that I will not use it - the true work of art, the true masterpiece, of reasonable and manly men conscious of the bond of true society that makes everything each man does of importance to everyone else.

This is, I say, the unit of the art, this house, this church, this town-hall, built and ornamented by the harmonious efforts of a free people ... Try to conceive, if you can, the mass of pleasure which the production of such a work of art would give to all concerned in making it, through years and years it may be (for such work cannot be hurried); and when made there it is for a perennial pleasure to the citizens, to look at, to use, to care for, from day to day and year to year." 9

Throughout his life Morris dreamed of the decoration of this palace of the days to come, this "stately public building, adorned with the handiwork of the greatest masters of expression which that real new birth and the dayspring of
hope come back will bring forth for us." 80 He talks of "all its splendours of arch and column, and vault and tracery", 81 and dreams of all the resources to be obtained from sculpture which "as in past days will be considered almost entirely a part of fine building", just as from painting which "will surely be mostly used for the decoration of buildings which are specially public". 82 Much more, he himself, as an artist, dreams of the uses to which the new society will put his own work. In 1893, for example, he assures a journalist: "Things like my big tapestry will of course be public property and will hang in town-halls and suchlike places." 83

The utopian practice of *News from Nowhere* gives definite shape to the enthusiasm of these ideas. The visitor's first discovery is the Hammersmith Guest House, built upon the very site of Kelmscott House, where Morris lived.

"It was a longish building with its gable ends turned away from the road, and long tracery windows coming rather low down set in the wall that faced us. It was very handsomely built of red brick with a lead roof; and high up above the windows there ran a frieze of figure subjects in baked clay, very well executed, and designed with a force and directness which I had never noticed in modern work before. The subjects I recognized at once, and indeed was very particularly familiar with them.

However, all this I took in in a minute; for we were presently within doors, and standing in a hall with a floor of marble mosaic and an open timber roof. There were no windows on the side opposite to the river, but arches below leading into chambers, one of which showed a glimpse of a garden beyond, and above them a long space of wall gaily painted (in fresco, I thought) with similar subjects to those of the frieze outside; everything about the place was handsome and generously solid as to material, and though it was not very large (somewhat smaller than Crosby Hall perhaps), one felt in it that exhilarating sense of space and freedom which satisfactory architecture always gives to an unanxious man who is in the habit of using his eyes." 84

Margaret Gennan has drawn attention to the resemblance between the Guest House and the house of the *Children of the Face*, in *The Roots of the Mountains*, and, more generally, between the communal palace of Morris's utopia and the house of the Wolfings, built "like a church of later days". 85 There can be no doubt that here again there is a reference back to barbarism for the prototype of the collective dwelling, which is itself a symbol of the human community; but on the material level of architecture and decoration, this description is also related to Morris's oldest poetic dreams, and it recalls in more than one detail that of the palace of Aetes in *The Life and Death of Jason*; 86 the same luxury of marble, of frescoes and of mosaics. There are also fountains, like those which beautify the Market at Bloomsbury, where the visitor is to lunch later. The architecture of this, a quadrangle surrounded by "a wide arcade or cloister", was "fanciful but strong". Inside this cloister, after passing through "a richly moulded and carved doorway", they "entered a hall much bigger than that of the Hammersmith Guest House, more elaborate in its architecture and perhaps more beautiful", and this room was decorated with magnificent mural paintings. 87

Such buildings appear before the visitor's eyes all over London. While going
through Hammersmith, he discovers "a range of buildings and courts, low, but very handsomely built and ornamented, and in that way forming a great contrast to the unpretentiousness of the houses round about"; it is the local market.

"Above this lower building rose the steep lead-covered roof and the buttresses and the higher part of the wall of a great hall, of a splendid and exuberant style of architecture, of which one can say little more than it seemed to me to embrace the best qualities of the Gothic of northern Europe with those of the Saracenic and Byzantine, though there was no copying any one of these styles. On the other, the south side, of the road was an octagonal building with a high roof, not unlike the Baptistry in Florence in outline, except that it was surrounded by a lean-to that clearly made an arcade or cloisters to it: it also was most delicately ornamented.

This whole mass of architecture which we had come upon so suddenly from amidst the pleasant fields was not only exquisitely beautiful in itself, but it bore upon it the expression of such generosity and abundance of life that I was exhilarated to a pitch that I had never yet reached. I fairly chuckled for pleasure." 88

The first of these buildings is the Mote-House, and the second the theatre. Dick is proud to announce that it was he himself who had sculpted its great doors of damascened bronze. Piccadilly presented a similar spectacle, lined with elegant arcades and dominated by an enormous and luxurious market, and the visitor is told that "the upper stories of these houses are used for guest-houses; for people from all about the country are apt to drift up hither from time to time". 89 We are given the impression of corresponding development in the countryside too. For example, the visitor is astonished, as he goes up the Thames, to pass a mill "as beautiful in its way as a Gothic cathedral". 90

* * *

And does this mean that the triumphant flowering of the new architecture has swept away all trace of ancient monuments? Morris is no nihilist nor iconoclast. Very much the reverse: he considers that the art of days to come will be the natural continuation of the masterpieces of the past (at least, of those of the pre-classical period). They will be lovingly preserved and will co-exist in complete harmony with the creations of the communist age.

"It is not so hard now to picture to oneself those grey masses of stone, which our forefathers raised in their hope, standing no longer lost and melancholy over the ghastly misery of the fields and the squalor of the towns, but smiling rather on their newborn sisters the houses and halls of the free citizens of the new Communes, and the garden-like fields about them where there will be labour still, but the labour of the happy people who have shaken off the curse of labour and kept its blessing only." 91

From 1877 until the end of his life, Morris devoted a considerable part of his
immense activity to supporting the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, which he himself founded and which is still in existence. The considerable industry he displayed in this direction has been recounted and studied at length by all his biographers, and I see no need to reproduce the record and analysis of it here. I shall rest content with that part which is strictly relevant to our purpose; and what we do need to take into account is that the fight which Morris waged against vandals, whether they were speculators, churchmen, architects or "restorers", had as its aim the preservation of those ancient monuments which are richest in art and history, not only from a desire to protect the past, but even more from one to prepare the future.

"The untouched surface of ancient architecture bears witness to the development of man's ideas, to the continuity of history, and, so doing, affords never-ceasing instruction, nay education, to the passing generations, not only telling us what were the aspirations of men passed away, but also what we may hope for in the time to come."  

The men of communist society will certainly not reject this "continuity of history". Freed from the profit motive and from the devouring utilitarianism that has debauched all architecture, they will rediscover the enthusiasm of the builders of pre-capitalist times, and their creative urge, consciously striving to achieve a higher plane, will find natural encouragement, both in inspiration and form, in the presence of ancient examples which "will be no offence to the beauty and majesty of their streets".

Those historians and biographers who have recounted Morris's activities at the S.P.A.B. have been too much inclined to view them simply as an expression of a sentimental conservationism. From the foundation of "Anti-Scrape", as the society was familiarly dubbed, the writer's concern was plain. Writing to Ruskin in 1877, he declared that "it might be of use for the future if we could make people ashamed of the damage they have done". It is worth mentioning, too, that in these first years Morris was depressed by the lack of response he met in cultivated circles and by the fact that he only found the "real love of the earth" necessary for this work of protection among "very simple people". The very conditions of the struggle he had undertaken quickly led him to the discovery that it is inseparable from the class struggle. "These monuments of our art and history," he wrote in 1880, "whatever the lawyers may say, belong not to a coterie, or to a rich man here and there, but to the nation at large", and he would have liked every one of them, as in France, "scheduled as a national monument".

Among all these historic buildings, Westminster Abbey was the one which was the object of his unceasing concern, the one whose protection inspired countless references in lectures, articles, letters to the press and personal correspondence, from the establishment of "Anti-Scrape" until the end of his life. In *News from Nowhere* it sets the standard, and elsewhere he describes it as "the most beautiful of English buildings, and unsurpassed in beauty by any building in the world... it upholds for us the standard of art or the pleasure of life... Such a building should surely be sacred to us." Morris was provoked to indignation, to rage even, at seeing it littered and disfigured by several centuries' accumulation of funerary monuments of incredible hideousness, "the ugliest and vilest undertakers' masonry that can anywhere be seen".
“In fact the monuments of Westminster Abbey, which to our country cousins (poor souls!) and travelled sight-seers almost rival the attractions of Madame Tussaud’s, the Fat Cattle, or the summer exhibition of the Royal Academy, may be divided broadly into two classes: those in which the original architecture of the building has been considered, and those in which it has been ignored.

The former stretch over a long series of years, and are of many styles, some of which are very inferior to the style of the original building, but, whatever their separate merits or demerits may be, they are all of them in harmony with the architecture, and are subordinated to it; and also they may be said to state facts and to be unboastful; there were various obvious commonplace reasons, of locality, official position, and the like, to account for the burial in the church of those whom they commemorate, and there is an end of it. The second class does not range over so long a period, though its works are far more numerous. Concerning these, it is stating the position very mildly to say that they do not harmonise with the architecture... Apart... from their qualities as art, these destruc-
tive monuments are meaningless and boastful...; they are a privileged
class of memorials for the privileged dead...; the time has come to put
an end to the strange experiments in ugliness under which the Abbey has
so long suffered.”

Morris proposes that all these monuments, “whose artistic qualities... vary
from absurdity which is a laughing stock of the world, to a dullness which
cannot stir even wrathful laughter”, should be transferred to St. Paul’s, whose
immense and glacial emptiness makes it eminently suited to the reception of
“this Valhalla.” Meanwhile, “between us and the mournful but beautiful
ruins of Westminster Abbey, once built by the hands of the people for the
hearts of the people, lies a gulf wide, deep, unbridgeable, at least at
present”. But it will not always be so, and one day, when the people have
regained their rights, the Abbey will, as Dick explains, be radiant “in its beaut-
y after the great clearance, which took place over a hundred years ago of the
beastly monuments to fools and knaves, which once blocked it up.”

Morris’s affection was not exclusively reserved for great historic buildings.
Nothing affected him more than humble country dwellings, even barns, when
their ancient structure seemed noteworthy to him and their protection essen-
tial; “buildings,” he wrote, “which, often unpretentious, are nevertheless real
architecture; and which are so beautiful and so fitted for their past uses at all
events, that they often make what would otherwise be a dull piece of coun-
tryside lively and interesting”. He even suggested that a society of painters
should, with the aid of “Anti-Scrape”, be set up with the purpose of depicting
old English houses in their canvases. In this way, the public would be led to
re-possess their lost treasures, lost because they had been unaware of them,
and because they had foolishly been allowed to be lost in the name of private
property. Morris readily quoted the tithe barn at Great Coxwell as an ex-
ample of these humble buildings, saying that it was “unapproachable in its
dignity, as beautiful as a cathedral, yet with no ostentation of the builder’s
art”. Of all the relics of the past due to survive into communist society, one oc-
cupied the place of honour in Morris's utopia. It was his own home, Kelmscott Manor, in Oxfordshire, on the upper reaches of the Thames. He fell in love with it when he first found it in 1871. It was "a heaven on earth", \(^{109}\) "a beautiful and strangely naïf house"; \(^{108}\) "though sweet and innocent enough, and though it has a sadness about it, which is not gloom but the melancholy love of beauty I suppose, it is very stimulating to the imagination". \(^{108}\) There he wrote "among the gables and rook-haunted trees, with a sense of the place being almost too beautiful to live in". \(^{110}\) It was the haven to which he returned throughout the last fifteen years of his life to refresh himself from the heartrending spectacles of London's "civilization" and from the bitter strife of political life. He regarded Kelmscott Manor as his true home to a far greater extent than he did Kelmscott House, his fine London home. \(^{111}\) The words worked on to the embroidery around his bed praised the calm of the "old house";

But kind and dear
Is the old house here. \(^{112}\)

His letters are filled with descriptions of it and reference to it "It has come to be to me," he wrote in 1882, "... the type of the pleasant places of the earth, and of the homes of harmless simple people not overloaded with the intricacies of life; and as others love the race of man through their lovers or their children, so do I love the earth through that small space of it." \(^{111}\) He loved this house "with a reasonable love I think", because it had "grown up out of the soil and the lives of those that lived on it". There he recovered "some thin thread of tradition, a half-anxious sense of the delight of meadow and acre and wood and river, a certain amount (not too much let us hope) of common sense, a liking for making materials serve one's turn, and perhaps at bottom some little grain of sentiment. This I think was what went to the making of the old house; might we not manage to find some sympathy for all that from henceforward, or must we but shrink before the Philistine with one, Alas that it must perish!" \(^{113}\)

The "old house" was not to die, and in the communist England of the twentieth century it was to become almost the central character of one of the last episodes, one of the most moving and richest in dramatic intensity in *News from Nowhere*. The arrival of the haymakers through the dusk at the Kelmscott bank, the end of their journey up the Thames, is an experience that Morris had lived. We find the same emotion as that expressed at this arrival (or return) in a long letter written by Morris in 1880, describing the same journey. \(^{114}\) And Morris extended that emotion across the centuries to link it with the happiness of the new life, just as, a few years later, he linked it with the faery of remote legendary times, when he wrote his long and lustrous romantic narrative, *The Well at the World's End*. \(^{115}\) The house is the objective of the journey - so much is self-evident and no explanation is needed - and the visitor feels no surprise when Ellen breaks away from the group of haymakers to greet the travellers, comes up to him, takes him by the hand and says softly; "Take me on to the house at once; we need not wait for the others, I had rather not." Almost without his will, his feet follow the familiar path and he finds himself "on a stone path which led up to the old house to which fate in the shape of Dick had so strangely brought me in this new world of men".

The
description of the garden "redolent of the June flowers" and of the swift wheeling around the gables is too famous for me to recall it here.

"And the house itself was a fit guardian for all the beauty of this heart of summer. Once again Ellen echoed my thoughts as she said: 'Yes, friend, this is what I came out for to see: this many-gabled old house built by the simple country-folk of the long-past times, regardless of all the turmoil that was going on in cities and courts, is lovely still amidst all the beauty which these latter days have created: and I do not wonder at our friends tending it carefully and making much of it. It seems to me as if it had waited for these happy days, and held in it the gathered crumbs of happiness of the confused and turbulent past." 117

This is the justification for the preservation of traces of yesteryear amid the architecture of the new society. Everything in this house has been lovingly preserved, and it is in the tapestry room, which Morris loved so dearly, that the poignant conversation took place between Ellen and the visitor, overshadowed by the threat of their coming separation. 118

But the house is not an empty museum. At the moment of the story it is occupied by a party of haymakers, with others camping in the meadows, because it "would not hold a tithe of the folk", and the garrets are a dormitory for children who have left innumerable toys around. 119 Morris's utopian practice is in line with the precepts expressed many times in his lectures for "Anti-Scrape". "We have always," he wrote, "tried to suggest some possible use that the buildings could be put to." 120 Not only is it necessary to link them closely with the new life in "the continuity of history", but it is also the best practical way of ensuring their protection and maintenance.

"The real, the essential purpose, in this day, of our old buildings is to be instructive relics of the past art and past manners of life. If you can do so, without altering them or making shams of them, use them for ecclesiastic, civic or domestic purposes... That is the best way of preserving them." 121

In another lecture, the text of which has been lost but which was reported in the press at the time, he expresses concern over the fate of ancient churches. Clearly, one would not contemplate putting them to commercial use, but there is a middle way between such use and pure and simple abandonment. Why should they not be made places of communal or educational activity? 122 In the England of News from Nowhere there is no longer any religion beyond that of humanity, and the village churches house parish meetings. 123 One in Dorchester "was still used for various purposes" 124 and the haymaking celebrations are held in the one at Kelmscott. 125

As for great historical monuments, they will not only be places of pilgrimage: they will be inhabited, lived-in. The visitor dines off tables set up in the great hall at Hampton Court and he tells how, "dinner over, we sauntered through the ancient rooms, where the pictures and tapestry were still preserved, and nothing was much changed, except that the people whom we met there had an indefinable kind of look of being at home and at ease... The beautiful old Tudor rooms, which I remembered had been the dwellings of the lesser fry of Court flunkies, were now much used by people coming and
going”. As well as these “birds of passage”, there were “a few regular dwellers in the place” and the meadows beyond the gardens were occupied by numerous campers. The old Eton College “is used now as a dwelling for people engaged in learning”, and a great number of people live in Windsor Castle, which, “with all its drawbacks, is a pleasant place”. It was much the same at Bisham Abbey and the Elizabethan house attached to it: they “yet remained, none the worse for many years of careful and appreciative habitation”.

While Morris is anxious to preserve the masterpieces of ancient art, whether renowned or humble, and to integrate them into the new society, he shows far less tender solicitude towards Victorian or classical architecture. The Houses of Parliament have become a secondary market, where one finds cabbages and turnips along with beer and cheap wine, but its main use is as a manure store, and Dick more or less innocently observes that “they are handy for that, being on the waterside”. Old Hammond remarks more spitefully to the surprised visitor that “dung is not the worst kind of corruption”, thus ensuring that the political implications of such use are brought home to us. I let Dick take up the story again, and a very curious story it is:

“I believe it was intended to pull them down quite at the beginning of our days; but there was, I am told, a queer antiquarian society, which had done some service in past times, and which straightway set up its pipe against their destruction, as it has done with many other buildings, which most people looked upon as worthless, and public nuisances, and it was so energetic, and had such good reasons to give, that it generally gained its point; and I must say that when all is said I am glad of it, because you know at the worst these silly old buildings serve as a kind of foil to the beautiful ones we build now.”

It is amusing to see “Anti-Scrape” surviving so pertinaciously across the centuries and playing this conservationist rôle in the face of all the efforts of “revolutionary vandalism”. In passing, this idea of a “foil” is very worthy of notice, because it expresses a worry that is latent throughout Morris’s narrative: that the people of communist society will not appreciate their good fortune, because they may lack historical knowledge and standards of comparison.

So London has preserved St. Paul’s Cathedral, which exasperated Morris by its cold classicism, the National Gallery, despite its “queer fantastic style not over beautiful”, the British Museum, a “rather dreary classical house”, which Dick considers downright ugly. It was intended, he tells us, to demolish and rebuild it, but the risk which this would have involved for the library and the collections caused second thoughts. “Besides,” he adds, no less significantly, “it is not a bad thing to have some record of what our forefathers thought a handsome building”.

Sometimes there are reasons other than mere usefulness for the survival of some building or other that was even more dubious. Such is the case with the London Docks, still in use although less crowded, “since,” as old Hammond explains, “we discourage centralisation all we can, and we have long ago dropped the pretension to be the market of the world”. All the same, the survival of such buildings is rather a surprise, and Morris offers no reason for
his attachment to them; would their rebuilding not have given magnificent scope to the hunger for art and labour felt by the communist generation? In truth, we are so much in the habit of finding logic and thought in Morris's utopia that the smallest departure from it seems astonishing.

* * *

And that is what is to survive of the great old-time architecture. What is to become of the rest? It goes without saying that everything both ugly and useless will disappear. We shall "pull down our prisons and workhouses and build fair halls and public buildings on their sites for the pleasure of the citizens".139 That, in fact, presents no problems. But what is to happen to the dwellings of the inhabitants? During his presocialist years, Morris propounded sweeping and devastating solutions. He wanted to preserve only simple homes and great historic buildings; together with, perhaps, "whatsoever out-houses, workshops, and the like, may be necessary. Surely the rest may quietly drop to pieces for aught we care — unless it should be thought good in the interest of history to keep one standing in each big town to show posterity what strange, ugly, uncomfortable houses men dwelt in once upon a time".140 From 1884 on, while his roaring hatred of modern cities remained as keen as ever, the solutions he proposed became less drastic. Capitalism will have had its day, but "we shall still be cumbered and hampered by its material results"; nevertheless, the day will come when "we shall be patiently getting rid of the blotches of filth and misery now called towns".141

As always, Morris gives us very few details in News from Nowhere of the town-planning operations undertaken during the first stage. They seem, however, to have been vigorous. In 1955, three years after the revolution, "the great clearing of houses" took place.142 The effort was concentrated on the hovels of the East End of London, and two centuries later "not an inch" of it remains. As we have seen, on the first of May each year a solemn feast takes place in "those easterly communes" in memory of what is called "the Clearing of Misery". They took care at the time not to demolish the City, redubbed "the Swindling Kens", for "these houses, though they stood hideously thick on the ground, were roomy and fairly solid in building, and clean, because they were not used for living in, but as mere gambling booths". All the poor from the slums of the East End were at first rehoused there, before being finally accommodated in fine dwellings worthy of human beings. Then the City, in its turn, was destroyed, and marvels of architecture put up in its place.

The effort was continued with even greater drive against the industrial concentrations:

"The big murky places ... have, like the brick and mortar desert of London, disappeared; only, since they were centres of nothing but 'manufacture', and served no purpose but that of the gambling market, they have left less signs of their existence than London."

"No sacrifice," adds old Hammond, "would have seemed too great a price to pay for getting rid of the 'manufacturing districts'." Of course, this was only made possible by "the great change in the use of mechanical force"; and towns like Manchester have completely disappeared in the twenty-second
century. How much time was needed to remove all traces of the former dwellings? Morris does not say, but a passing indication later in the narrative leads us to believe that it was not all done at once, and that utopia was not as systematic as it might seem at first glance. We learn, in fact, that the splendid house on which the Obstinate Refusers are toiling is to take the place of "a tumble-down of a nineteenth-century house" which had survived at that spot.

The demolition pickaxes struck primarily at the big towns. On the other hand, the villages of old England were carefully preserved. The only difference, old Hammond tells us, is that "there are no tokens of poverty about them: no tumble-down picturesque; which, to tell you the truth, the artist usually availed himself of to veil his incapacity for drawing architecture. Such things do not please us, even when they indicate no misery". Morris was horrified by complacent romanticism of this type and abjured it to the end of his life. "You must not suppose," he reiterated several years later to Birmingham students, "that I am an advocate of the tumble-down picturesque. Keep your village houses weather-tight, trim and useful, and where you must, build others beside them", provided, he added, that they are built of good materials, without pretension and in harmony with the setting in which they are placed. We should note in passing just how ridiculous it is to put William Morris into the last generation of Romantic writers, which is the time-hallowed practice of textbooks of literature. It is even debatable just how far Romanticism and utopism are compatible in attitude.

Nor have the small towns disappeared. There has been a certain amount of demolition, says Hammond, accompanied by a deal of reconstruction:

"Their suburbs, indeed, when they had any, have melted away into the general country, and space and elbow-room has been got into their centres; but there are the towns still with their streets and squares and market places."

Such is the case with Oxford, which "has the great interest of still preserving a great mass of precommercial building, and is a very beautiful place, yet there are many towns which have become scarcely less beautiful". As he goes up the Thames, the visitor observes the same respect and careful choice at Wallingford:

"Of course, all signs of squalor and poverty had disappeared from the streets of the ancient town, and many ugly houses had been taken down and many pretty new ones built, but I thought it curious, that the town still looked like the old place I remembered so well; for indeed it looked like that ought to have looked."

Further upstream still, Abingdon, "like Wallingford, was in a way both old and new to me, since it had been lifted out of its nineteenth-century degradation, and otherwise as little altered as might be."

So Morris's revolutionary thinking was turned mainly towards the great urban centres. Their elimination seemed to him to be highly desirable, and would be facilitated by the direct, or semi-direct, local democracy which was to be the
pattern of public life in the higher stage of the future society. Large urban concentrations, particularly industrial ones, had played their part "of giving people opportunities of intercommunication and of making the workers feel their solidarity", but once this function was fulfilled, there would be no further reason for their existence after the establishment of socialism.

The importance of this consideration should not be underrated. Morris's utopism had its roots in historical materialism and was much less vague and unrealistic than that of the Babouvists, for example; they proposed to abolish towns at a time when industrial concentration had scarcely begun to take shape, and without its enslavement of the wage-earners the forces of solidarity essential for their revolt would never have grown up. In a world from which class antagonisms will have vanished together with the centralised State, in which the development of the productive forces will have reduced the need for mechanised labour, and in which, in consequence, handicraft will have the opportunity of a fresh flowering, Morris feels that "another tyranny will be overthrown in our release from the compulsion of living in over-grown and over-crowded towns". There will no longer be any "reason why they should not follow their occupations in quiet country homes, in industrial colleges, in small towns, or, in short, where they find it happiest for them to live". In the England described in News from Nowhere, the dispersion of population is even greater.

"In fact, except in the wastes and forests and amongst the sand-hills (like Hindhead in Surrey), it is not easy to be out of sight of a house; and where the houses are thinly scattered they run large, and are more like the old colleges than ordinary houses as they used to be."

This dispersal of dwellings is the necessary condition for the development of beauty in daily life. Piling them together can only lead to ugliness and mediocrity. The charm of a house lies not only in its architecture but in its situation and the space around it. Everyone must be able to live in "a decent house with decent surroundings", and for popular art, whether individual or collective, to develop it must have a proper setting: "those who are to make beautiful things must live in beautiful places". Throughout his life Morris continued to integrate this idea, drawn from Ruskin, into his utopia, and it remained the central principle of his conception of town-planning.

His theoretical utopism was not without its hesitancies. No doubt Manchester will have gone, and all the other great industrial centres also, but even on this point his later thinking, in 1893, for example, is tentative and aware of the difficulties. He certainly continues to believe that "on no consideration will the dirt and squalor which now disgrace a manufactury or a railway-station be tolerated", but, given that these dreary drawbacks must be reduced to a minimum and that the necessary industries must continue, there appear to him to be two possible solutions:

"First, to have volunteers working temporarily in a strictly limited and comparatively small "black-country", which would have the advantage of leaving the rest of the country absolutely free from the disorder and dirt. And secondly, to spread the manufacture in small sections over a
territory so large that in each place the disadvantage would be little felt. This would have the gain of enabling those who worked at it to live amidst tolerably agreeable surroundings." 136

He clearly prefers the second alternative, but he does not venture to reject the first out of hand, though this does not prevent his (perhaps somewhat inconsequential) assertion that, under either system, "the manufacturing towns would be superfluous". 137

Very well, but what is to become of the other large towns? There, too, utopian theory suffers some vagaries. At the beginning of the 'eighties, the idea of dispersion was not yet clear and final in Morris's thinking, and he was content to predict that "this very London, which even many years ago Cobbett in his disgust called the *Wen, shall have become a delightful abode of men, full of beauty and guiltless of any spot of squalor". 138 Seven years later, however, in his major lecture on future society, his tone was quite different and very emphatic:

"Of course mere cheating and flunkey centres like the horrible muck-heap in which we dwell (London, to wit) could be got rid of and a few pleasant villages on the side of the Thames might mark the place of that preposterous piece of folly once called London." 139

The utopian practice of *News from Nowhere* quite naturally leads Morris to greater variation of detail in his looking ahead. For example, in what had been the London suburb of Hammersmith there is no longer any urban concentration, and town and country intermingle. Along the banks of the river, which are fringed with magnificent gardens, there are rows of houses with great plane-trees growing behind them. 140 Further inland fields and meadows dotted with houses set in gardens. The Creek has been "rescued from its culvert ... and we saw its waters ... covered with gay-boats". In the centre of the borough stands the splendid architectural mass of the theatre, the Mote-House and the market, supplied from local agriculture. 141 As we leave Hammersmith, we enter the new, great forest of Kensington, linking up with Epping Forest to the north; it is occupied by young campers and there are scattered houses. 142 But as we leave it, we come into the built-up area of Piccadilly with its luxurious shops. 143 Dick's carriage rolls on as far as the British Museum between elegant houses showing through the greenery. Trafalgar Square has been made into an orchard, 144 while in Long Acre Dick comments "how thick the houses stand! and they are still going on building, look you!" 145 The density diminishes as we approach the Museum, by way of Holborn and Oxford Street, which is once again Oxford Road. 146 One feels overwhelmingly that vindictive fury has led Morris to make a point of depopulating the capital's commercial thoroughfares, but their course is hardly changed:

"Amidst all these gardens and houses it was of course impossible to trace the sites of the old streets, but it seemed to me that the main roadways were the same as of old." 147

On the other hand, the City is very populous and the built-up area, for all its gardens and foliage, extends as far north as Hampstead. 148 Finally, when the
visitor returns to Hammersmith with Dick and Clara, Morris does not say whether they follow the same route, but instead of main roads they follow lanes planted with trees "that were sending floods of fragrance into the cool evening air". However, they "could hardly go but fast and softly all the way, so there were a great many people abroad in that cool hour" which suggests a certain density of population. And this impression is confirmed by old Hammond's telling the visitor that "there is a good deal of population between here and Hammersmith, not have you seen the most populous part of the town", probably referring to the City.

So Morris's theoretical assertions become considerably less dogmatic when he sets about resolving the problems of town-planning through the medium of precise fiction. London is transformed, London is marvellous, but London is still a great city, a capital and even "an intellectual centre". This pragmatic attitude is worthy of note, but there is another aspect which is even more so. Raymond Ruyer has rightly drawn attention to the passion for regularity and symmetry characteristic of the classic founders of utopian cities. His brief and detailed analysis is worth recalling here:

"Plato's Republic is symmetrical (with a symmetry like that of the human body); the capital of Atlantis is symmetrical and so is More's Utopia, in which all the towns are similar and the houses regularly aligned, all of the same style, all of three storeys; Campanella's City of the Sun is symmetrical, formed of seven great concentric circles bearing the names of the seven planets. Salem, the capital of the Land of Cessares, is a perfect square, watered by a river split into parallel channels. Many recent utopias are also symmetrical. In the capital of Cabet's Icarie the streets are not all the same, but each street consists of sixteen private houses, in the same style, with a public building at each end. Furniture is standard for all Icarie and an Act of Parliament is needed for a new design for an armchair. When the symmetry is not geometrical, it is arithmetical. The number ten is used extravagantly in the political system of Morell's. Perhaps numbers are not sovereign in the real world, but they are certainly so in the utopian world. One might even say that utopia consists of dealing with psychological and social problems as though they were problems of architecture and town-planning. It sometimes seems to regard living people as mere accessories to the stones they inhabit."

In this summary, Raymond Ruyer might have mentioned (indeed, it is surprising that he did not mention) Owen's and Fourier's cities, with their lay-outs strongly reminiscent of barracks. There is nothing to resemble this in the future London which we have just visited with Morris; there reigns the greatest diversity, together with a regard for history. It is true that this contrast arises from another difference between Morris and earlier utopists, a fundamental difference which we shall study at greater length later. While his predecessors built in the abstract or situated their ideal city upon imaginary islands, our poet starts out from a tangible national reality and deduces its future from its past and its present. His utopia possesses history and geography.

Is that to say that he never tried to draw the plans of his new town on paper?
No utopian ever resisted that temptation, not Morris any more than any other. But with him it was a belated and cautious attempt, a choice of suggestions without any hard and fast nature. In 1893, when he and Bax drafted their theoretical manual, Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, he set off from the principle that, in communist society, there would be no further need for "great capitals, which are essentially seats of centralized government, and of general financial operations, and incidentally and consequently of intellectual movement... In the future therefore towns and cities will be built and inhabited simply as convenient and pleasurable systems of dwelling-houses, which would include of course all desirable public buildings." Upon this basis, three hypotheses seem possible.

"The first would leave the great towns still existing, but would limit the population on any given space; it would insist on cleanliness and airiness, the surrounding and segregation of the houses by gardens; the erecting of noble public buildings; the maintenance of educational institutions of all kinds - of theatres, libraries, workshops, taverns, kitchens, etc. This kind of town might be of considerable magnitude, and the houses in it might not be very different in size and arrangement from what they are now, although the life lived in them would have been transformed...

The second method of dealing with the unorganized and anarchic towns of to-day proposes their practical abolition, and the supplanting of them in the main by combined dwellings built more or less on the plan of the colleges of our older English universities. As to the size of these, that would have to be determined by convenience in each case, but the tendency would be to make them so large as to be almost small towns of themselves, since they would have to include a large population in order to foster the necessary give and take of intellectual intercourse, and make them more or less independent for ordinary occupation and amusement.

It is to be understood that this system of dwellings would not necessarily preclude the existence of quite small groups, and houses suitable to them, although we think that these would tend to become mere eccentricities.

Yet another suggestion might be sketched as follows: - a centre of a community, which can be described as a very small town with big houses, including various public buildings, the whole probably grouped about an open space. Then a belt of houses gradually diminishing in number and more and more spaced out, till at last the open country should be reached, where the dwellings, which would include some of the above-mentioned colleges, should be sporadic.

Morris adds that one could devise other possibilities consisting of combinations of these three systems. This, moreover, is what he has done in News from Nowhere, where comparative conservatism goes hand in hand with the boldest innovation: he cannot be accused of dogmatism. Nevertheless, speaking a year later, Morris clearly indicated his own preference for the third solution. Here, according to him, is "what a city might be......the centre with its big public buildings, theatres, squares and gar-
dents, the zone round the centre with its lesser gildhalls grouping
together the houses of the citizens; again with its parks and gardens, the
outer zone again, still its district of public buildings, but with no definite
gardens to it because where whole of this outer zone would be a garden
thickly besprinkled with houses and other buildings. And at last the sub-
urb proper, mostly fields and front gardens with scanty houses dotted
about till you come to the open country with its occasional farm-steads.”171

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One thing which all these conceptions have in common with the description
of London in the twenty-second century is the presence, right inside the city, of
natural vegetation. Morris’s utopia holds nostalgia for the Walthamstow of his
childhood. “The house,” he says, “shall be like a natural growth of the
meadow, and the city a necessary fulfillment of the valley”. 174

A city without trees offends him. He begs the architects of his day not to
sweep them away before building:

“Do you understand what treasures they are in a town or suburb? or
what a relief they will be to the hideous dog-holes which (forgive me!) you
are probably going to build in their places? I ask this anxiously, and
with grief in my soul, for in London and its suburbs we always begin by
clearing a site till it is as bare as the pavement; I really think that almost
anybody would have been shocked, if I could have shown him some of
the trees that have been wantonly murdered in the suburb in which I live
(Hammersmith to wit), amongst them some of those magnificent cedars,
for which we along the river used to be famous once.” 175

When any such havoc has been purposefully avoided, his joy is unbounded:
“words fail me to express my gratitude to any man who has saved for us in
London so much as one tree or one plot of grass”. 176 It goes without saying
that such mistakes will never be made in the world of the future: “no builder
will cut down a tree until he has exhausted his ingenuity in planning his
houses so as to avoid it”.177 Remember the plane-trees along the houses in
Hammersmith, in News from Nowhere, and the trees flooding the evening air of
London with perfume!

We have observed the important place given to gardens in Morris’s
town-planning, as expressed in his latter years. His insistence upon this point
never failed and when reading News from Nowhere we are struck by the profu-
sion of flowers and trees amid the graceful, scattered buildings of replanned
London and idyllic England. In Hammersmith, there is one long garden,
stretching along the banks of the Thames, beside the riverside houses. Further
inland, we have the profusion of enclosures around semi-rural dwellings. From
the end of Piccadilly to the British Museum, “each house stood in a garden
carefully cultivated, and running over with flowers”. There are “beautiful
rose-gardens” on the site of Endell Street, and the street leading to the
Museum is bordered with more gardens. There is the apricot orchard in
Trafalgar Square, the fragrant flowering of Ellen’s little garden at Run-
nymede, and the charm of those surrounding the mills all along the Thames,
the whole banks of which form a veritable park. Finally, and supremely, there is the especial beauty of the June flowers at the "old house" at Kelmscott, the description of which figures in most anthologies. England must cease being "the grimy backyard of a workshop" and become one great garden, affirmed Morris in 1881, and that is just what it has become in the twenty-second century, as old Hammond points out to the visitor.

Whatever the type of home, it must fit into its natural setting. In 1874, Morris was dreaming of "little communities among gardens and green fields, so that you could be in the country in five minutes' walk". His critical attitude towards Owenism gradually led him to distrust these "small communities" and to allow a larger share to urban reality, but he cannot imagine towns without "abundant garden space" and, he adds, "our towns must not eat up the fields and natural features of the country". "In great towns, gardens both private and public, are positive necessities, if the citizens are to live reasonable and healthy lives in body and mind", nor should our home lack "the beauty which Nature would freely allow it, if our perversity did not turn Nature out of doors". And "every child should be able to play in a garden close to the place his parents live in". Morris dreams of garden-towns where one is no longer stifled by bricks and mortar, where everywhere there will be "clear sky above our heads and green grass beneath our feet", where one would leave one's home to find all around "the green trees and flowery meads and living waters outside". Every city would become "a garden with beautiful houses in it". If one accepted the idea of large communal dwellings, divided into apartments, they too would be provided with green spaces and playgrounds. This type of accommodation would even increase the possibility of finding the room needed for gardens, which would be made "far more beautiful, as they would certainly be far more cheerful, than the square gardens of the aristocratic quarters of the town now are". Factories too, as we have seen, would be placed in a verdant setting, and the workers would grow vegetables and flowers.

This idea of England transformed into a garden is no poetic dream. In its essence, it is firmly anti-Romantic. Morris's concept of a garden is consciously and directly set in opposition to the exaltation of wild nature dear to the literary generations of the beginning of the century. It is written into the general theory of socialism which is to make man master of his destiny and of nature. When Morris declares that the town should become "a garden with beautiful houses in it", the proposition is presented as a consequence of the one before it: "I want every homestead to be clean, orderly and tidy". We are talking, he says, of "the due heritage of the latter ages of the world, which have subdued nature, and can have for the asking". Old Hammond speaks the same language when he asserts that the people of the new society "know that they can have what they want, and they won't stand any nonsense from Nature in their dealings with her". There is certainly no question of cultivating the whole of England in a systematic and monotonous way, laid out with a marking-line. Moors and forests will have been allowed to remain and the visitor remarks to the old man that that "does not go with your word of 'garden' for the country ... Why do you keep such things in a garden? and isn't it very wasteful to do so?" No, replies Hammond, "we like these pieces of wild nature, and we can afford them, so we have them". Moreover, he hastens
to add, we have forests because "we need a great deal of timber"; and as for the moors, they are used for raising sheep "so that they are not so wasteful as you think". And we have also seen the forest to be another habitable place, with its little scattered houses. The concept of garden may be flexible, but all the same it meets a definite need; a dominating and impelling human need to draw from nature the means of existence as well as visual pleasure and healthy well-being. Is it not significant that Morris extends this concept to the description of the countryside itself? "The fields were everywhere trellis," he writes, "as a garden made for the pleasure as well as the livelihood of all." 151 For Morris, beauty and pleasure in life are inseparable from usefulness.

On this point, as on so many others, one finds his constant historical reference back to the Middle Ages. It seems to me to be worth while to extract the facets of this mediaeval inspiration where gardens are concerned and to see what he draws from the past to be projected into his vision of utopia. The first of these facets, too obvious for us to linger over it, is the memory of a time when town and country interpenetrated, when "every man was interested in agriculture, and lived with the green fields coming close to his own doors". 152

In the prologue to The Earthly Paradise, Morris describes "London, small, and white, and clean, the clear Thames bordered by its gardens green", 153 and the whole poem is a torrent of foliage and flowers among the palaces and dwelling places. 154

But Morris was enchanted by the individual appearance of those mediaeval gardens quite as much as he was by the existence of the towns themselves dotted with green spaces: a simple, orderly appearance that also had nothing Romantic about it, despite a certain charm. It was distinguished by two things: trellis-work and enclosed plots, where cultivated flowers were subject to human architecture and dominated the permitted invasion of wild flowers. Morris gives us a very illuminating picture of it in a story written in his youth and published in 1856 in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine. 155 Although he was very rarely to be found with a spade in his hand, he had a knowledge of gardening. Mackail tells us, of which he was justly proud, and a very detailed knowledge of flowers, vegetables and fruit-trees. 156 He introduced the same mediaeval order into the garden of each of his successive homes. At Red House, it was "spaced formally into four little square gardens making a big square together; each of the smaller squares had a walled fence round it, with an opening by which one entered, and all over the fence roses grew thickly." 157 At Kelmscott House, his Hammersmith home, Morris also divided the garden "into separate spaces, as he had done at Upton." 158 At Kelmscott Manor, he was delighted one day to discover that his gardener had trained raspberries along a trellis, "so that they look like a mediaeval garden". 159 "This garden," he wrote, "divided by old clipped yew hedges, is quite unaffected and very pleasant, and looks in fact as if it were a part of the house, yet at least the clothes of it; which I think ought to be the aim of the lay-out of a garden." 160 We know that he lavished the same care around the workshops at Merton Abbey. 161

So orderliness in lay-out ranks with regard for nature and care to establish harmony between house and garden. Morris was appalled by everything artificial, the landscaped garden, everything that he called "horticulture" between inverted commas, either Romantic or baroque, shrubberies and
He condemned undue sophistication in the choice of flowers, hating "plants which are curiosities only, which Nature means to be grotesque, not beautiful", as well as florists' creations with unattractive colours such as red geraniums or yellow calceolarias. But all that did not mean that nature should be left to her own devices. A garden, he writes,

"large or small, it should look both orderly and rich. It should be well fenced from the outside world. It should by no means imitate either the willfulness or the wildness of Nature, but should look like a thing never to be seen except near a house. It follows from this that no private pleasure-garden should be very big, and a public garden should be divided and made to look like so many flower-closet..."

This communion between garden and house is essential. "Many a good house both old and new is marred by the vulgarity and stupidity of its garden, so that one is tormented by having to abstract in one's mind the good building from the nightmare of 'horticulture' which surrounds it." All that demands great deal of taste; there is nothing more distressing than "that discomfiting sort of place that a new garden with no special gifts is apt to be..."

As well as these qualities demanded by Morris, the gardens in the cities of the future will present one new characteristic: they will no longer be enclosed. There again, the reference to the Middle Ages is clear. He refers with nostalgia to the days of "stretches of common tillage and common pasture quite unenclosed", He dwells at length upon this aspect of old England in his Dream of John Ball, and it will return, at a higher level, in socialist society, when private property will have disappeared and trust and friendship between citizens will be the rule: "the Square gardens will be both unenclosed and unhurt". At Hammersmith, "a continuous garden" will stretch beside the houses along the banks of the Thames. Before arriving at the British Museum, the visitor sees "a wide space of greenery, without any wall or fence of any kind", and as he reaches the Museum itself, he observes that "except that the railings were gone... nothing seemed changed". Morris's abomination of "cast-iron horrors of railings" and of barbed-wire is well-known.

It is difficult, with Morris, to separate his aesthetic thinking from his social thinking, and it would lose all its significance if I strove too hard to isolate it. The vision of England transformed into one mighty garden does not only arise from a desire to bring beauty into daily life at all points. It also represents the expectation of a fundamental change in the way of life for the entire population. These two aspects are bound indissolubly together, to the point where it is impossible to decide which is cause and which is effect, therefore I do not feel that we are digressing if we examine them simultaneously.

Today, observes Morris, "the factory hand, the townsman, is a different animal from the countryman". This reduction to the level of animals, limiting both and arising from their separation, must surely disappear. Cannot one believe that one day it will be possible "to make the town a part of the country and the country a part of the town"?
"I think I may assume that, on the one hand, there is nobody here so abnormally made as not to take a pleasure in green fields, and trees, and rivers, and mountains, the beings, human and otherwise, that inhabit those scenes, and in a word, the general beauty and incident of nature and that, on the other, we all of us find human intercourse necessary to us, and even the excitement of these forms of it which can only be had where large bodies of men live together."

This idea of the coming abolition of everything that separates these two ways of life is an important axiom of Marxist theory, and Morris, who had read the Communist Manifesto attentively, could not have failed to notice its reference to the "gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country." He may well have read in Capital that this distinction is the "foundation" of the division of labour, of which he equally deplored the consequences, and he may have been acquainted with the opinions expressed by Engels on the point in Anti-Dühring. We must take note of the fact that in 1893, after settling out in Socialism, its Growth and Outcome the different approaches to town-planning which I have mentioned, he justifies them in the very words of the Marxist analysis:

"One thing is all such schemes must take for granted as a matter of principle, to wit the doing away of all antagonism between town and country, and all tendency for the one to suck the life out of the other."

Morris certainly had no difficulty over subscribing to this principle. His origins and his temperament very naturally inclined him in this direction. H. V. Wiles justly points out that "in Morris's boyhood and formative years, Walthamstow was a semi-rural retreat with a character of its own, quite apart from the busy Metropolis which was eventually to swallow it up". It is the resurrection of this semi-rural Essex that he describes in News from Nowhere. He remained deeply attached to it, as is shown by the nostalgia of the various details of his childhood which are scattered through the narrative, and by means of which the visitor tries to comprehend the youthfulness of the new way of life. Nor is it by chance that Morris becomes "the man from Essex" in A Dream of John Ball. "Though my father and the small family lived ostensibly in London, we never really were town-birds; country-life was always to us the natural and happy thing." In The Pilgrims of Hope and in The Tables Turned, Morris contrasts this "natural happiness" with the despair of the Victorian city, and he demands it as the birthright out of which the workers have been cheated. However, that did not in any way prevent his being, in Mackail's words, "a typical Londoner of the middle class," and his utopian tale shows that his fervour for his native Essex was fully equalled by his attachment to London, but to a transformed, marvellously verdant London. So it is not fair to draw a contrast, as Compton-Rickett does, between the "town socialism" of Bellamy and "the rural socialism of Morris." What the latter wanted was simply to see "fair human building mingled with sweet and unspoiled country."

Sir Thomas More had made an attempt to solve this problem of the growing separation of towns from country, but he found no better solution than that of sending town-dwellers in turn to work in the fields. William Morris was much
more radical, and envisaged a complete fusion of habitats, populations and ways of life. With an impetuosity which, for once, looks rather unrealistic, he imagined that such rapprochement would be the first demand of the whole people after the revolution, and would take place at once.

"The change," said Hammond, "which in these matters took place very early in our epoch, was most strangely rapid. People flocked into the country villages, and, so to say, flung themselves upon the freed land like a wild beast upon his prey, and in a very little time the villages of England were more populous than they had been since the fourteenth century, and were still growing fast. Of course, this invasion of the country was awkward to deal with, and would have created much misery, if the folk had still been under the bondage of class monopoly. But as it was, things soon righted themselves. People found out what they were fit for, and gave up attempting to push themselves into occupations in which they must needs fail. The town invaded the country; but the invaders, like the warlike invaders of early days, yielded to the influence of their surroundings, and became country people; and in their turn, as they became more numerous than the townsmen, influenced them also, so that the difference between town and country grew less and less; and it was indeed this world of the country vivified by the thought and briskness of town-bred folk which has produced that happy and leisurely but eager life of which you have had a first taste." 227

We are quite ready to believe that such a situation would give rise to embarrassing problems and find it hard to see how such a sudden upheaval, on the morrow of a revolution, would not lead to the total stopping of already reduced production and to complete disruption. It is surprising that Morris, who is usually so cautious and so subtle, had no glimpse of the chaos which his expectation must entail. Doubtless it is ungracious on my part to take him to task, for we have the advantage of the experience of the socialist revolutions of the twentieth century and appreciate that the needs of post-revolutionary construction demand several generations of industrialisation, and, therefore, of increased urban growth, even in countries which are already industrialised. It is none the less true that, in the long run, what he expected is desirable and will take place as a gradual and smooth progression. It figures in the list of problems awaiting Marxist solution, and successive statements by socialist leaders plainly indicate that it is still an objective and a matter of concern. Disagreement exists only over timing and methods. It is probable that Marx would have envisaged the elimination of the gulf between town and country as characteristic of the second stage, just as he did, in The Critique of the Gotha Programme, the elimination of the clash between mental and manual labour. This spontaneous urge, this basic need on the part of the whole urban population for an abrupt general exodus, is not at all convincing. If it is true, as Morris himself has written, that "the only safe way to read a Utopia is to consider it as the expression of the temperament of its author", and while it is no less true that, despite the solid basis which scientific socialism gave him, his own likings were always given clear expression, it is also true that at no other point has he displayed such subjectivism. This illusory abrupt fusion of country-folk and industrial proletariat purely and simply enabled Morris to brush
aside the serious problems involved in the collectivisation of the land. No
doubt he assures us that peasant proprietorship is "a thing which in itself all
Socialists condemn", but he leaves blank the achievement of the common
ownership of the land in its various forms. And his utopian abandonment of all
agricultural machinery completes the confusion of the situation. He was cer-
tainly incapable of foreseeing the gigantic difficulties of such an undertaking
and his presumption of spontaneity made him a precocious victim of what
Stalin, in his famous article criticising rural collectivisation, called "the gidd-
diness of success".

But let us leave these strictures, which, after all, only arise because Morris is
usually so reasonable, and come back to the exodus and its consequences.
Thanks to this general coming together, he writes, there ensued "the gradual
recovery by the town-bred people on one side, and the country-bred people on
the other, of those arts of life which they had each lost", and there
developed a "leisurely, but not stupid, country-life". The whole people
recovered a feeling and love of nature and the visitor was surprised to discover
the extent to which all the people he encountered were "eager about all the
goings on in the fields and woods and downs". Diversity of occupation had
transformed everyone into urban producer, field labourer and intellectual. By
the twenty-second century, these distinctions had disappeared and even
become incomprehensible. The visitor expressed his surprise at the beautiful
expressions, the ease of manner and the pretty clothes of the women bringing
vegetables to market, and Dick replied:

"I don't understand... what kind of people you would expect to see;
nor quite what you mean by 'country' people. Those are the neighbours,
and that like they run in the Thames valley." 231

So a harmonious fusion had taken place between town and country oc-
cupations as well as between town and country landscapes, and it is wrong to
imagine that Morris accords an exaggerated rôle to the countryside. As we
have seen, this is just what some people do imagine when they speak of his
"rural socialism". Such a mistake is quite understandable. By the end of the
nineteenth century, England was already considerably urbanised, and in-
dustrial expansion before the coming of electricity, accompanied by clouds of
smoke and the filth of soot, was probably a greater shock than it is today. The
sordid poverty of the great towns, the lack of hygiene, the proliferation of
slums, had not yet been somewhat palliated by the slow success of industrial
struggle and the progress of science. For anyone who dreamed of abolishing
the clash between town and country it was normal to want to diminish the
monstrous importance of the city, to give its familiar, healing beauty back to
the British countryside, to re-establish it in all the places from which it had
been banished.

Alongside his tireless activity for the preservation of ancient monuments,
Morris, without waiting for the triumph of socialism, proclaimed that "the ex-
ternal aspect of the country belongs to the whole public, and that whoever
wilfully injures that property is a public enemy". "We ought to look upon it
as a crime . . . to mar the natural beauty which is the property of all men". 235
This other crusade became absorbed into his political propaganda at an early
stage:

"Also I want this, and, if men were living under the conditions I have
just claimed for them, I should get it, that these islands which make the
land we love should no longer be treated as here a cinder-heap, and there
a game preserve, but as the fair green garden of Northern Europe, which
no man on any pretence should be allowed to befoul or disfigure." 236

In socialist society, the pollution and destruction caused by the rule of the
profit motive will no longer be permissible:

"Order and beauty means . . . that the fields be not only left for
cultivation but also that they be not spoilt by it any more than a garden
is spoilt; no one for instance to be allowed to cut down, for mere profit,
trees whose loss would spoil a landscape: neither on any pretext should
people be allowed to darken the daylight with smoke, to befoul rivers, or
to degrade any spot of earth with squalid litter and brutal wasteful
disorder." 237

At a time when Morris was still influenced by Ruskin's idealism, he went so
far as to hope that a day might come "when the workmen of some manufac-
turing district will strike to compel their masters to consume their own
smoke". 238 Militant activity made him more realistic and, while he carried on
the immediate struggle which he knew to be both necessary and of little avail,
he placed his hopes above all in the socialism of times to come, when nature
would be able to "heal the horrible scars that men's heedless greed and stupid
terror have made". 239 Then alone would it be possible "to keep all we have left
us of fair and unspoiled country", 240 and also "to keep the air pure and the
rivers clean, to take some pains to keep the meadows and tillage as pleasant as
reasonable use will allow them to be; to allow peaceable citizens freedom to
wander where they will, so they do no hurt to garden or cornfield". 241

There is no doubt that reading News from Nowhere is more productive of ideas
than are these somewhat vague generalisations. The first surprise for the
visitor is the disappearance of the ugly iron bridge at Hammersmith, and then
that of all the riverside factories:

"The soap-works with their smoke-vomiting chimneys were gone; the
engineer's works gone; the lead-works gone; and no sound of riveting
and hammering came down the west wind from Thornycroft's."

The river banks had become a verdant garden fringed with elegant houses.
The water was now clear and a joy to bathe in; salmon were to be caught there
and the visitor wondered whether it really was the Thames he was seeing, with
"the reaches towards Putney almost as if they were a lake with a forest shore,
so thick were the big trees". 242 On the other side of London, beyond Aldgate,
stretched great meadows along the River Lea, as in the days of Izaak Walton,
and once the docks were passed, there were immense pastures down to the
sea. 243 Upstream, the river banks were a delight, and Morris's descriptions fill
the most striking pages of the book. All the metal bridges of the Victorian age
had been replaced by bridges of stone or oak. 244 There were no more
The appearance of the fields had changed:

"One change I noticed amid the quiet beauty of the fields – to wit, that they were planted with trees here and there, often fruit-trees, and that there was none of the niggardly begrudging of space to a handsome tree which I remembered too well; and though the willows were often polled (or shrowded, as they call it in that countryside), this was done with some regard to beauty: I mean that there was no polling of rows on rows so as to destroy the pleasantness of half a mile of country, but a thoughtful sequence in the cutting, that prevented a sudden barrenness anywhere. To be short, the fields were everywhere treated as a garden made for the pleasure as well as the livelihood of all." 246

The visitor admired the "carefulness in dealing with the river: the nursing pretty corners; the ingenuity in dealing with difficulties of water-engineering, so that the most obviously useful works looked beautiful and natural also." 247 Certainly, apart from the communal pottery and glass workshop seen in the streets of London, whose kilns gave off no smoke, 248 we find no industrial production anywhere along our way. The only mention is that "whatever coal or mineral we need is brought to grass and sent whither it is needed with as little as possible of dirt, confusion, and the distressing of quiet people's lives". 249

Let us rest content with this assurance, and share Morris's confidence: centres of manufacture, whether they be grouped or, preferably, dispersed, will be designed in such a way as not to detract from the beauty of the landscape.

* * *

There is one extremely striking aspect to the immense love of nature that permeates all Morris's work: it is, as Victor Dupont points out, that "the spirit of the countryside is revealed by contact and by a minute knowledge of detail, it does not suggest any metaphysical doctrine." 250 Other and earlier critics have also noted this trait and sometimes expressed it in a masterly way. "There was nothing transcendental about his affection," wrote Compton-Rickett. "It has little affinity with the worship of Wordsworth, or the ecstasy of Shelley. It was nearer to Scott's passion for the Highlands. It was a passion for places, especially the Thames Valley... It was almost an animal instinct... A yellow primrose to Morris was but a yellow primrose, and he loved it all the more because of this." 251 Stopford A. Brooke has made similar remarks: "Nature is described by him exactly as he saw her. No mystic veil is thrown over her. No philosophy of her appears in Morris... A cloud was only a cloud, a stream only a stream. It was enough for him that the cloud was lovely, and the stream. Nor did he make out of Nature texts for teaching lessons of any kind. He did not use her as the prophet or the moralist has done; nor did he make analogies between her doings and the doings of men in the fashion those poets and preachers do... Indifferent to us, she passes on her way, — the beautiful and changing back-ground only of our sorrow and joy." 252 But even more than with Wordsworth or with Shelley, whose poetry did not much appeal to Morris, the most obvious contrast is with his mentor Ruskin, for whom nature was "God's work, which He made for our delight and content-
ment in this world", and for whom the whole of creation was an unceasing artistic and moral sermon. It is remarkable that, even in Morris's earliest writings, when Ruskin's influence was still the only one to affect him deeply, love of nature was never impregnated with any kind of theology or idealism. The only feeling was for its material beauty.

However, Stopford A. Brooke's opinion seems to call for a reservation: is it fair to say that, for Morris, nature is indifferent to man, independent of him, just a background? His attitude is more complex, and he does in fact have a philosophy of nature: it is very different from Ruskin's, it is materialistic and is quite clearly expressed. It is a dual attitude. On the one hand, Morris believes in the primacy of man, a primacy which will not become less important as man, freed of his fetters by the victory of socialism, becomes the true master of the world: it is only by dominating nature that he will reveal "a friend in the guise of an enemy". The concept of the garden is an expression of this friendly supremacy. But, on the other hand, when man is freed from the artificial constraints of bourgeois "civilization", he will discover that he is himself part of this nature which he has subjected, and that he is inseparable from it. This feeling is most intensely expressed by Morris's female characters, who are the incarnation of all human sensibility and the privileged harbinger of utopian aspirations. In a very fine posthumous romance, no longer read these days - more is the pity -, The Water of the Wondrous Isle, the heroine, Birdalone, leaves her forests at the beginning of long-wanderings, and suddenly comes upon an immense plain, bounded by a high range of blue mountains. "Oh! but thou art beautiful, O earth, thou art beautiful!" she exclaims, and, as she makes to enter this completely new countryside, she adds: "But if I were only amidst it, and a part of it, as once I was of the woodland!" Birdalone is younger sister to the vibrant Ellen, of News from Nowhere, who clasps the old walls of Kelmscott Manor and exclaims: "O me! O me! How I love the earth, and the seasons, and weather, and all things that deal with it, and all that grows out of it". And yet it is not Ellen, but the down-to-earth Clara who most clearly expresses Morris's thinking, in a less often quoted passage. Speaking of the pre-revolutionary people, she refers to their "life which was always looking upon everything, except mankind, animate and inanimate - 'nature', as people used to call it - as one thing, and mankind as another. It was natural to people thinking in this way, that they should try to make 'nature' their slave, since they thought 'nature' was something outside them".

And after this negative definition of Clara's, here is the question resolved in positive terms by Dick. "If you look upon the year," says the visitor to him, "as a beautiful and interesting drama... you should be as much pleased and interested with the winter and its trouble and pain as with this wonderful summer luxury." To which Dick replies: "And am I not... only I can't look upon it as if I were sitting in a theatre seeing the play go on before me, myself taking no part in it. It is difficult," said he, smiling good-humouredly, "for a non-literary man like me to explain myself properly, like that dear girl Ellen would, but I mean that I am part of it all, and feel the pain as well as the pleasure in
my own person. It is not done for me by somebody else, merely that I
may eat and drink and sleep, but I myself do my share of it.”

These are particularly meaningful words: it is through his actions that man
expresses at one and the same time his mastery over nature and his oneness
with it. Mackail relates an anecdote of some interest. In 1894, during a
country walk near Kelmscott, Morris and his friends stopped for a rest, and
while they sat upon a gate, the poet sat down by the roadside, saying, “I shall
sit on the world.”

So nature is not, as Stopford Brooke thought, just a background for Morris.
It must again become the very substance of all aesthetic creation (and I shall
return to this point, by a road which appears roundabout but must be
followed). Man must rediscover “the greatest of all gifts to the world, the very
source of art, the natural beauty of the earth.” Architectue is “the fairness
of the earth amidst the habitations of men”, and we “are responsible to
posterity for what may befall the fairness of the earth in our own days, for what
we have done, in other words, towards the progress of Architecture.”
Socialism will liberate nature by liberating mankind, and the liberation of
nature will provide man with unlimited access to art.

... the first step towards the fresh new-birth of art must interfere with
the privilege of private persons to destroy the beauty of the earth for their
private advantage, and thereby to rob the community. The day when
some company of enemies of the community are forbidden, for example,
to turn the fields of Kent into another collection of cinder heaps in order
that they may extract wealth, unearned by them, from a mass of half-
paid labourers; the day when some hitherto all-powerful ‘pig-skin stuffed
with money’ is told that he shall not pull down some ancient building in
order that he may force his fellow citizens to pay him additional
rack-rent for land which is not his (save as the newly acquired watch of
the highwayman is) – that day will be the beginning of the fresh new-
birth of art in modern times.”

Morris’s thinking upon the aesthetic connection between art and nature
was, in fact, almost entirely confined to the period between 1877 and 1883.
The attraction of socialism was slowly making itself felt, but Ruskin’s in-
fluence was predominant, although, of course, in a fully secular form. But we
should take note of the fact, because nothing in Morris’s thinking leads us to
believe that he changed his opinions on the subject, although he approached
the problem by formulating it in the new terms we have seen, and his vision of
the future forms of art within daily reality are inspired by the same principles.
The ideas developed in the rather verbose pages of his early lectures can be
easily summarised. Like Ruskin, he advocates “resolute attention to the laws
of nature, which are also the laws of art”.

Education in art is not superfluous, but “no system and no teachers will
help you to produce real art of any kind, be it never so humble” unless you are
prepared to “follow nature”. On the other hand, the artist “is bound to
study old examples, but he is also bound to supplement that by a careful study
of nature, because if he does not he will certainly fall into a sort of cut and
dried, conventional method of designing”. It is the only way to learn “what
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beautiful forms and lines are". This is just what Morris did himself. His daughter May relates how he "noted every turn of a leaf or attachment of a stem, and watched every bird on the wing with keen alert eye: nothing in the open air escaped him". That did not indicate in the least that he was a disciple of photographic naturalism. "It is necessary to the purity of the art," he urged, "that its form and colour, when these bear any relation to the facts of nature should be suggestive of such facts and not descriptive of them." That was a point he was still stressing in the writings of his later years: nothing appeared to him to be preferable to "the simple and fresh beauty that comes to a sympathetic suggestion of natural forms"; but he best expressed it in his very first lecture, when he praised "forms and intricacies that do not necessarily imitate nature, but in which the hand of the craftsman is guided to work in the way that she does, till the web, the cup, or the knife, look as natural, nay as lovely, as the green field, the river bank, or the mountain flint. He required, too, that a work of art should be free from exclusiveness and should be readily communicable: "the only way for compelling people to understand you is to follow hard on Nature." That was why he disapproved of the exotic, which he described as a snare.

"I have said that it was good and reasonable to ask for obviously natural flowers in embroidery; one might have said the same about all ornamental work, and further, that those natural forms which are at once most familiar and most delightful to us, as well from association as from beauty, are the best for our purpose. The rose, the lily, the tulip, the oak, the vine and all the herbs and trees that even we cockneys know about, they will serve our turn better than queer, outlandish, upside-down-looking growths. If we cannot be original with these simple things, we shan't help ourselves out by the uncouth ones".

* * *

The analytical habits of the French intellect play unkind tricks upon anyone attempting to study thinking like that of William Morris, for whom all aspects of reality were bound up together and who regarded them all in a constant synthesis. It has cost us a great effort to pass smoothly from architecture to town planning and from town planning to its disappearance into nature. Now we have to retrace our steps and look at Morris's day-to-day aesthetics, by going into the houses in his utopia. We shall find the same dominant ideas there, and not feel in any way strange.

For him, the interior of a house was as important as its architecture. He wanted people "to take the trouble to turn them into dwellings fit for people free in mind and body". One day, the mediocrity and inadequacy of our present houses will only be a bad memory.

"For then—laugh not, but listen, to this strange tale of mine—All folk that are in England shall be better lodged than swine." They will even, he said emphatically, be "generously lodged". If architecture should be in harmony with the lives of the occupants, this is even more true when one comes to the interior, which "ought surely to express
the kind of life we lead, or desire to lead'. Such harmony alone can make our dwellings comely: "all rooms ought to look as if they were lived in, and to have, so to say, a friendly welcome ready for the incomer". Nothing there should look strained, and "though all rooms should look tidy, and even very tidy, they ought not to look too tidy". Simplicity everywhere should be the keynote, with the elimination of "any signs of waste, pomp, or insolence". It is true that the early luxurious interiors designed by the Morris Firm hardly conformed to this ideal, but a very clear evolution is noticeable in the style employed later, and the interiors created during the 'eighties, as Paul Thompson has sapiently remarked, offer "the clearest practical expression of the demand which Morris made in his later lectures for a return to simplicity". In this connection, he had trenchant words on occasion. James Leatham told Compton-Rickett that one day, as they came out of a lecture, a member of the audience asked the poet for advice on the decoration of a kitchen, and he replied, with a malicious twinkle in his eye: "Well, to begin with, I think a flitch of bacon suspended from the ceiling is a very good decoration".

He brought a desire for sober and simple elegance to all domestic arrangements. The walls, above all, were his concern:

"... whatever you have in your rooms, think first of the walls; for they are that which makes your house and home; and if you don't make some sacrifice in their favour, you will find your chambers have a kind of makeshift, lodging-house look about them, however rich and handsome your movables may be."

His preference was for every-day measures, and he recommended "putting out the intrusive rubbish and using the white-washing brush freely". This was advice which he never tired of repeating:

"... if we really care about art we shall not put up with 'something or other', but shall choose honest whitewash instead, on which sun and shadow play so pleasantly."  

He admitted to his daughter May, before visiting wealthy clients, that the Firm would never prosper if he were to give them honestly the advice which matched his personal taste: "Don't decorate at all: whitewash it all." Edward Carpenter relates similar confidences, and we know that, even in the magnificent Red House, his first residence, "the walls were bare, and the floors". Morris also liked wood-panelled walls, like those of the "very pretty room panelled and carved" into which Ellen's grandfather took his visitors. There again we detect his yearning for the Middle Ages, and think of the tavern described in A Dream of John Ball, where "the walls were panelled roughly enough with oak boards to about six feet from the floor, and about three feet of plaster above that". In this same room, "on the hood of the great chimney a huge rose was wrought in the plaster and brightly painted in its proper colours". So, no more gold-framed mirrors, "which had long reigned over the cold white marble mantelpiece". Walter Crane, whose account of the decorative methods used by the Firm is the most detailed and intelligent that we have, tells us that usually "small bevelled glasses were inserted in the panelling of the high wood mantelshelf". Morris attached great importance to
the fireplace, "which in our climate is bound to be the chief object in the room."

Whitewashed walls, wood-panelled at the most? I can well imagine that such a domestic décor in utopia may surprise many a reader. When one asks people of average education what the name of William Morris means to them, the majority do not know that he was a socialist or a poet; some have read *News from Nowhere*, or have heard of it, but almost all of them will tell you right out that he made very fine wallpapers. Well! I must take up the cudgels on his behalf: in William Morris's twenty-second-century England there are no wallpapers on the walls. Morris, despite the beauty of his own achievements in this field, despite the undoubted pleasure he must have felt in continually producing new designs, considered this kind of decoration to be "only a poor makeshift". It was not the quality of the material that inspired this disdain and his preference for chintz or dyed woven wool was dictated by purely artistic reasons:

"The aim should be to combine clearness of form and firmness of structure with the mystery which comes of abundance and richness of detail, and this is easier of attainment in woven goods than in flat painted decoration and paper-hangings; because in the former the stuffs usually hang in folds and the pattern is broken more or less, while in the latter it is spread out flat against the wall." 208

The reasons for it are obscure, but neither do we find woven hangings on the walls in *News from Nowhere*, and the only trace of them is in *A Dream of John Ball*, when the poet describes Will Greene's house: "the walls, instead of being panelled, were hung with a coarse loosely-woven stuff of green worsted with birds and trees woven into it." 209

On the other hand, while simplicity is the rule in ordinary homes, nothing can be too sumptuous for the walls of the grandiose communal palaces of the future, and in the northern countries the supreme decoration will be tapestry. Did not Morris himself avow his ambition of one day seeing his own productions on show in such buildings? For him, tapestry was "the noblest of the weaving arts." It allows to "to turn our chamber walls into the green woods of the happy month of June, populous of bird and beast; or a summer garden with man and maid playing round the fountains, or a solemn procession of the mythical warriors and heroes of old." 210

In a lecture given at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition of 1888, of which only a press report remains, Morris declared that "tapestries were to the North of Europe what fresco was to the South". While it is understandable that there should be no wallpaper in his utopia, it is a strange fact that we find no tapestries in the new age either. However, in the two public buildings of which we are given detailed descriptions of the interior, the Hammersmith Guest House and the dining hall of the Bloomsbury Market, the walls are decorated with frescoes and mural paintings. The only tapestry mentioned is in the "old house" at the end of the journey, and it is the same one as hung in the poet's favourite room at Kelmscott Manor. It dated from about 1600, and depicted the story of Samson. It was probably the type of classical composition for which he had little liking, but its colours were faded and, in spite of the designer, they gave an air of romance to the room which nothing else would
quite do”. It was “originally of no artistic value”, but by the twenty-second century it was “faded into pleasant grey tones which harmonised thoroughly well with the quiet of the place”, and “its futile design ... was now only bearable because it had grown so faint and feeble”.

This double inconvenience indicates the need for not relying exclusively upon News from Nowhere in order to appreciate fully Morris’s utopian thinking. In fact, scattered throughout his work and evidenced by his own artistic productions, there is a theory of tapestry which makes him an important precursor of the revival of this art in the twentieth century—a theory and a revival which make future development irreversible. Starting from an admiring and intelligent knowledge of mediaeval tapestry, he points out various mistakes which hastened its decline from the sixteenth century on. The first was the fatal confusion which assimilated it into pictorial art. Referring to the tapestries in the Sistine Chapel, he says: “The reason that I should assign for their being of little account beside the cartoons is that, whatever the merits of the latter may be as pictures, they are unsuitable for tapestries, as all Renaissance designs are.” The second mistake was the introduction of perspective:

“When the Gothic feeling died away, and Boucher and others began to design, they gave us wide expanses of waste sky, elaborate perspective, posing nymphs, and shallow artificial treatment.”

So he denounces “the arrangement of figures and landscape as in a picture proper, with foreground, middle distance and distance; with plan of arrangement, in a woven hanging in which the peculiar qualities of a picture must be lacking, gives a poor unfilled-up look at a far greater expense of labour than went to the production of the more conventional arrangement”. Contrary to what happens in mediaeval designs, “the planes of the figures being very near each other”, the long perspectives of classical art “produce an emptiness and lack of interest which destroy all ornamental effect”. This deterioration has become even greater in the modern productions of Gobelins, Beauvais, Aubusson and Windsor, until they have become “but an upholsterer’s toy”. So if tapestry is again to become the great art it was formerly and one day decorate the public palaces of future times, it must break finally with the vagaries of the classical period and draw inspiration from the pure mediaeval tradition so as to create new works: “There is nothing whatever to prevent us from reviving it if we please, since the technique of it is easy to the last degree”. It is certainly a pity that this bold and far-reaching thinking was not carried into News from Nowhere, and represented there by specific examples. The walls of the Guest House leave us unsatisfied, when we think of the splendid new displays Morris could have put there.

For flooring, in an ordinary house Morris preferred “a sanded floor”, but he naturally makes greater demands for public buildings. The floor of the Hammersmith Guest House is “of marble mosaic”, and one of the pretty girls who enliven this attractive place carefully scatters it with “little twigs of lavender and other sweet-smelling herbs”. In fact, people should “no longer look upon a carpet as a necessity for a room at all, at least in the summer”. Morris considers it to be “a great comfort to see the actual floor, and the same floor may be made very ornamental by either wood mosaic, or tile and
marble mosaic; the latter especially is such an easy art as far as technicality goes, and so full of resources, that I think it is a great pity it is not used more".

Since the action of News from Nowhere takes place in June, it is understandable that there are no carpets to be seen in the houses and buildings we enter. As with tapestry, this by no means indicates that Morris had no point of view. In this field also he was a renovator, and the products of the Morris Firm provide a refreshing spectacle after the overladen hideousness and artificial vegetation of Victorian carpets. Despite his many assertions, he was very tolerant towards the use of machinery and we have seen how he employed it himself; but his preference was for handicraft manufacture and we cannot doubt that, by the stage described in his utopia, it will have become one of the ways of palliating the feared work famine and of satisfying the creative needs that will have been released. While on the one hand he vainly regrets that floors should be covered by carpets "in our northern or western countries, where people come out of the muddy streets without taking off their shoes", all the same he regards their manufacture as a "useful industry" which he would like to see saved from the "poisonous touch" of "modern commercialism". He made many suggestions to this end. Omitting those of a purely technical nature, I will be content with recording the one which expresses Morris's fundamental considerations:

"... the designs should always be very elementary in form, and suggestive merely of forms of leafage, flowers, beasts and birds, etc... beauty and variety of colour must be attained by harmonious juxtaposition of tints, bounded by judiciously chosen outlines; and the pattern should lie absolutely flat upon the ground. On the whole, in designing carpets, the method of contrast is the best one to employ, and blue and red, quite frankly used, with white or very light outlines on a dark ground, and black or some very dark colour on a light ground, are the main colours on which the designer should dwell".

Here again we find the principle of inspirational, though not imitative, recourse to natural shapes, and we also find another, to which Morris was greatly attached, that of bold colour. He hated "iridescent blendings of colour which look like decomposition". This put the whole art of dyeing in question, and we know how Morris, who regarded the quality of the industrial dyes of his time, particularly the aniline-based ones, as detestable, embarked upon long and impassioned experiments to discover the secrets of old vegetable and animal dyes, even going as far back as Pliny in his search for ancient recipes. Here again, I will be satisfied with making a passing reference to this quite important part of his activities, since I do not want to be diverted into technical developments which might take us further than I wish from our subject. But I cannot pass over in silence this insistence of Morris's upon the quality of all materials, as well as shapes and colours, when referring to the decoration of walls and floors in the utopian home.

Morris's originality is displayed in his ideas about the arrangement of rooms. He dislikes their being specialised, as in the dwellings of our time. For him,
one should be able to live in all of them, and be able to eat, relax, converse, work, study or sleep in any of them. He installed a weaving loom in his bedroom, and was in the habit of drawing or of correcting proofs in a room where his family and friends were gathered.\textsuperscript{319} His utopian ideal was of a return to “the rational ancient way which was used from the time of Homer to past the time of Chaucer, a big hall, to wit, with a few chambers tacked on to it for sleeping or sulking in”.\textsuperscript{320} This is the sort of arrangement we have seen in the Hammersmith Guest House: “There were no windows on the side opposite the river, but arches below leading into chambers . . .”\textsuperscript{321} But in the end even these cells began to irritate him. Yeats tells of his enthusiasm when he described the House of the Wolfings: he was delighted by the return to barbarous simplicity, and confessed to the young poet: “I decorate modern houses for people, but the house that would please me would be some great room where one talked to one’s friend in one corner and ate in another and slept in another.”\textsuperscript{322} For Morris, the most important thing was the avoidance of “rabbit-hutches”: a man needs room to move around, and we know that he himself moved around a good deal. He stresses this aspect in his description of the Guest House: “thought it was not very large . . ., one felt in it that exhilarating sense of space and freedom which satisfactory architecture always gives . . .”\textsuperscript{323} Dick expresses the same need to the visitor: “Elbow-room within doors is to me so delightful that if I were driven to it I would almost sacrifice out-door space to it.”\textsuperscript{324}

To have elbow-room, it is necessary for the place not to be cluttered with the mass of furniture which made nightmares of Victorian houses. “If only our houses were built as they should be, we should want such a little furniture and be so happy in that scantiness . . . excess of furniture destroys the repose of a lazy man, and is in the way of an industrious one.”\textsuperscript{325} “If we want art to begin at home,” he says elsewhere, “we must clear our houses of troublesome superfluities that are forever in our way: conventional comforts that are no real comforts, and do but make work for servants and doctors”. He took this opportunity of repeating his golden rule: “Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.” He wrote those words in 1880, and attempted to define what a simplified furnishing of his time might consist of:

“First a book-case with a great many books in it: next a table that will keep steady when you write or work at it: then several chairs that you can move, and a bench that you can sit or lie upon: next a cupboard with drawers: next, unless either the book-case or the cupboard be very beautiful with painting or carving, you will want pictures or engravings, such as you can afford, only not stopgaps, but real works of art on the wall; or else the wall itself must be ornamented with some beautiful and restful pattern: we shall also want a vase or two to put flowers in, which latter you must have sometimes, especially if you live in a town.”

This passage, in which Morris tries to lighten Victorian furnishing, dates from the time when he had not completely broken with aestheticism, and I make a point of reproducing it as a measure of the distance he travelled as his utopia took shape. In fact, he tended more and more towards mediaeval simplicity:
"...a stout table, a few old-fashioned chairs, a pot of flowers will ornament the parlour of an old English yeoman's house far better than a wagon-load of Rubens will ornament a gallery in Blenheim Park."

In *A Dream of John Ball*, he admiringly describes the sober beauty of a village tavern in the fourteenth century:

"A quaintly-carved sideboard held an array of bright pewter pots and dishes and wooden and earthen bowls; a stout oak table went up and down the room, and a carved oak chair stood by the chimney-corner. That, except the rough stools and benches on which the company sat, was all the furniture."

Even during the time of the lush artistic experiments of the Morris Firm, he reacted personally against the over-opulent tastes of his clients and announced that "simplicity is the one thing needful in furnishing". He thought it ridiculous "to imitate the minor vices of the Borgias, or the degraded and nightmare whims of the blasé and bankrupt French aristocracy of Louis XV's time". He deplored "monstrosities or extravagances" and even an excess of beauty of which one might tire. He himself worked in a setting similar to that he advocated to the audiences at his lectures. His daughter May tells us that his workroom at Kelmscott House, in Hammersmith, was "almost frugally bare; no carpets, and no curtains: his writing table in earlier times a plain deal board with trestles, the wall neatly lined with books; just a fine inlaid Italian cabinet in a corner of the study". Undoubtedly the large drawing-room, where the mysterious grace of Jane was paramount, was impressively beautiful, but, as Bernard Shaw remarked, "Nothing in it was there because it was interesting or quaint or rare or hereditary, like grandmother's or uncle's portrait. Everything that was necessary was clean and handsome, everything else was beautiful and beautifully presented." So it had nothing in common with the hideous muddle of the Victorian drawing-room, in reaction against which Morris had, in fact, founded his Firm. The history and achievements of this have been described, studied and assessed at length by numberless art critics, and there can be no question of covering that ground again here. However, since this noble undertaking found an obvious continuation in Morris's utopia, I feel it appropriate to recall its main tendencies, which, as Walter Crane so well expressed it, "represented in the main a revival of the mediaeval spirit (not the letter) in design; a return to simplicity, to sincerity; to good materials and sound workmanship; to rich and suggestive surface decoration, and simple constructive forms."

Morris's constant message was for beauty in simplicity, "simplicity is the foundation of all worthy art". He did not presume to impose the forms evolved by the Firm on future generations, and did not claim to have exact ideas of what the domestic art of the future would be:

"In looking forward to any utopia of the arts, ... I can, under our present conditions, looking forward from out of the farrago of rubbish with which we are now surrounded, chiefly see possible negative virtues in the external of our household goods; can see them never shabby, pretentious
or ungenerous, natural and reasonable always; beautiful also, but more
because they are natural and reasonable than because we have set about
to make them beautiful.”

So in his descriptions in *News from Nowhere* he is discreetly cautious, and his
indications of the furnishing are both rare and brief. We only know that, in the
“old house”, “there was but little furniture, and that only the most
necessary, and of the simplest forms.” On the other hand, in the great dining hall of
Bloomsbury Market, as befitted a public building of the communist age, “the
furniture and general fittings of the hall were beautiful in form and highly
ornamented.”

As we have studied Morris’s conception of the development of handcraft, we have noticed the same discreet caution in his descriptions of the glassware and
pottery which filled the Bloomsbury tables. These represent the summit of
the new decorative art, but we are told only of their lack of industrial “finish”,
which, far from being a fault, gives the user the warm and real emotion of the
fraternal human workmanship of their makers. Morris gives no hint of their
shapes, and his many admiring adjectives refer only to their wealth of
ornament. The visitor observes that these folk have an “extravagant love of
ornament”. Although *News from Nowhere* lacks exact descriptions, and talks
more readily about people than things, these few hints clearly lead us to
understand that coming centuries will see a flowering of these “miner arts”
which Morris stubbornly defended all his life—“the art of the people, the art
produced by the daily labour of all kinds of men for the use of all kinds of
men”.

Because they have developed in a world of joy and beauty which they are still
helping to create, the men and women of twenty-second-century England care
just as highly for the gracefulness of their attire. The visitor is continually
surprised at this, and explains it to himself in terms typical of Morris. “I might
have known that people who were so fond of architecture generally, would not
be backward in ornamenting themselves.” It is worth noting that a few
years later, in *Socialism, Its Growth and Outcome*, we find precisely the same formu-
lation: “It is not too much to hope that the future society which will
revolutionise architecture, will not fail to do as much for costume, which is as
necessary an adornment as architecture.” This expression of the idea of the
unity of all the arts in terms of the major art of architecture, transcribed in the
literary fashion from *News from Nowhere*, once more completely demolishes Bruce
Glaser’s assertion that Morris had no hand whatever in the drafting of the
handbook.

A point that might cause some surprise is the way in which Morris continually
reverts to this revolution in dress all through his tale. Apart from his
1882 lecture, *The Lesser Arts of Life*, there is scarcely any reference to this topic
elsewhere in his work. Perhaps he was given pause by a sentence in Bellamy’s
*Looking Backward*: “It did not appear that any very startling revolution in
men’s attire had been among the great changes my host had spoken of, for,
having a few details, my new habiliments did not puzzle me at all.” The
violence of Morris’s reaction on reading Bellamy’s utopia was such that one
can easily imagine his searing upon the tiniest detail. The Fabian gradualism
of the American utopian was abhorrent to him, and against his bourgeois
American idealism he set the concept of a radical revolution, involving a complete
upheaval of all aspects of human life. Bellamy’s indifference towards aesthetic
matters was as detestable to him. Morris totally rejected all the ugliness of
Victorianism, and associated it indissolubly with all the social blemishes of
capitalism; he considered it a failure to demonstrate that communists, in all spheres,
represented the coming of beauty, and, in a book whose principal theme was
the transformation of man, the external appearance of the characters must of
necessity receive attention. Of course, this explanation is only a partial one,
seeking particularly to discover what detail set Morris off towards such marked
stress upon this facet of utopia. Moreover, it is not inconsistent with a more
general type of explanation which I have several times thought relevant, namely,
that the specific demands of utopian practice posed problems which
thetical utopians had managed to disregard. While it is true that glimpses of
the dress of the future do not occur in Morris’s lectures and essays, he
nevertheless frequently railed against the ugliness and discomfort of Victorian
clothing, and, in his looking forward, he found it necessary to give a positive
slant to this negative attitude.

While the stress he lays upon it does seem curious, it appears to suggest that
our writer overreached himself. His friends and his most well-disposed
biographers agree over his total unconcern about his own appearance, to
the extent of carelessness verging upon grubbiness. He always went about dressed
in a legendary, old blue-serge suit, over a common cotton shirt of the same
colour, and was often taken for a sailor or mechanic. He had a remarkable gift
for retaining dirt, and his long experiments with dyeing made this state of
affairs irreversibly worse. He detested mirrors and permitted none in his home
(this utopian world seems to have been liberated from them). Mackail tells us
that he was dressed and at work within ten minutes of waking up, which
suggests a somewhat nominal toilet and, according to Shaw, “his toasting
nondescript ragged and untrimmmed barely concealing their grubbiness. No
necklace, chain, sleeve links or personal adornment of any kind relieved his
shabbiness, and yet this person was Mr. William Morris, a poet of
world-wide reputation, the artist who has remodelled our domestic
interiors, the man of fine sentiments, of highly cultivated tastes, the lover of
the beautiful in language and in form.”

While he was thus speaking I narrowly examined the man. His
clothes were of blue serge, frayed at the cuffs and greasy at the seams. He
wore a dirty blue linen shirt without collar or necktie, his iron-grey
waistcoat ragged and untrimmmed barely concealing their grubbiness. No
necklace, chain, sleeve links or personal adornment of any kind relieved his
shabbiness, and yet this person was Mr. William Morris, a poet of
world-wide reputation, the artist who has remodelled our domestic
interiors, the man of fine sentiments, of highly cultivated tastes, the lover of
the beautiful in language and in form.”

With almost pathetic uncertainty, Morris makes no moves to *News from Nowhere*
of his scruffy appearance, and calls himself a foil for the dazzling costumes
of his characters. The visitor, when taken into the Hammerfield Guest
House, "could not help noticing that they looked askance at my garments; for I had on my clothes of last night, and at the best was never a dressy person." A few hours later, strolling in Piccadilly, he felt more and more embarrassed:

"I looked at what I could see of my rough blue duds, which I had plenty of opportunity of contrasting with the gay attire of the citizens we had come across; and I thought that if, as seemed likely, I should presently be shown about as a curiosity for the amusement of this most unbusinesslike people, I should like to look a little less like a discharged ship's purser." 346

When he could stand it no longer, he asked Dick's permission to acquire other clothes, but the young man dissuaded him. He wanted to present this odd stranger to his grandfather and did not want him to look "like everybody else". So the visitor agreed "to set myself up for a scarecrow amidst this beauty-living people", 349 and followed Dick to old Hammond. The latter is the only character in the story slovenly dressed, and the unexpected description of his clothing gives us food for thought:

"He was dressed in a sort of Norfolk-jacket of blue serge worn threadbare, with breeches of the same, and grey worsted stockings." 350

This surprising appearance, together with a few other characteristics, lends colour to the astute notion of Victor Dupont, who sees Hammond as Morris's grandson. 351 And perhaps this strange attire can also be explained by the fact that the Sage of Bloomsbury, lost in the erudition of his nineteenth-century researches, always fancies himself "as living in any period of which we may be speaking". 352 In any case, the visitor is only allowed to change his clothes after leaving him, and the following morning, in Hammersmith, he hastens to dress himself "in a suit of blue laid ready for me, so handsome that I quite blushed when I had got into it ..." 353

But in all this there is no illogicality in Morris's attitude. He considered the contemporary attire to be as absurd as it was ugly, and his native frankness led him to disregard any conventionality of appearance without feeling the slightest unease. But the beauty of the future which he pictured made him ashamed of his carelessness. The "well-knit and strong" figure of Dick appears in the first few pages, clad in his mediaeval costume "of dark blue cloth, simple enough, but of fine web, and without a stain on it!", and the visitor admired "its clasp ... of damascened steel". 354 He was soon joined by Bob, whose "dress was also of the same cut... though somewhat gayer, the surcoat being light green with a golden spray embroidered on the breast, and his belt being of filigree silver-work". 355 But the great shock happened when he met Boffin, the "Golden Dustman":

"I looked over my shoulder, and saw something flash and gleam in the sunlight that lay across the hall; so I turned round, and at my ease saw a splendid figure slowly sauntering over the pavement, a man whose surcoat was embroidered most copiously as well as elegantly, so that the sun flashed back from him as if he had been clad in golden armour." 356

He had "as much gold on him as a baron of the Middle Ages", and it
appeared that he frequently changed his clothes. The intention here is clearly symbolic and not just aesthetic. Boffin’s luxurious appearance typifies the plenty of the new age, as well as the great dignity of even the humblest worker. But one must observe that Morris does not become entrapped in rigid symbolism. His characters are everyday people, and Boffin’s friends regard his sartorial extravagances with smiling indulgence as a charming oddity, not in the least ridiculous. Nor does it seem that this oddity is purely individual. As the visitor goes by carriage through the London streets, he comes across a gang of young people happily exercising their muscles at roadmending, and his attention is caught by the pile of clothes they have taken off to work. “I could see the gleam of gold and silk embroidery on it, and judged that some of these workmen had tastes akin to those of the Golden Dustman of Hammersmith.” And such luxury is not just the prerogative of the young, for, on the journey back from the British Museum, the visitor notices a man of mature age whose suit of “fine woollen stuff . . . is covered with silk embroidery.”

Morris’s descriptions are not detailed enough to give us a clear idea of the cut or style of these clothes, and the comparison with the Middle Ages is not an adequate substitute. But over all is the regard for beauty, even while he stresses their simplicity. Anyway, are they comfortable clothes, or, in today’s delightful word, “functional”? There remains room for doubt, but every point of view is part of its period, and we cannot doubt, even from our viewpoint as twentieth-century people, that the clothes worn by the inhabitants of Morris’s utopia will compare favourably in all respects with the fashion prints of the Victorian age.

The same thoughts come to our minds when we turn to feminine costume, though the degree of emancipation seems more noticeable, having regard for the realities of the eighties. So it would appear from the descriptions of the first women we meet in Morris’s story, the pretty girls who look after the Guest House at Hammersmith:

“As to their dress, which of course I took note of, I should say that they were decently veiled with drapery, and not bundled up with millinery, that they were clothed like women, not upholstered like armchairs, as many women of our time are. In short, their dress was somewhat between that of the ancient classical costume and the simpler forms of the fourteenth-century garments, though it was clearly not an imitation of either; the materials were light and gay to suit the season.”

The same bright colours impress the visitor as he goes through Hammersmith market, and so, a little later, does the quality of the material worn by “the very handsome woman” with golden hair who holds the horses’ reins while they do their shopping, and who is “splendidly clad in figured silk.” All the women still have something of the flowing, decorative dress of the Pre-Raphaelite models, but—most remarkable detail—there is none of it in the way of dress of Ellen, who embodies everything most passionate in Morris’s yearning for the future:

“Though she was very lightly clad, that was clearly from choice, not from poverty, though these were the first cottage-dwellers I had come
across, for her gown was of silk, and on her wrists were bracelets that seemed to me of great value."

The same impression of simplicity surrounds Ellen when, in her frail boat, she rejoins her companions on the river:

"As it cleared the arch, a figure as bright and gay-clad as the boat rose up in it; a slim girl dressed in light blue silk that fluttered in the draughty wind of the bridge."  

If we compare these pictures of the young women of the Hammersmith Guest House, we observe the absence of any historical reference when speaking of Ellen. Morris no longer needs any. He is filled with so fervent a love for her that he sees her directly in the pure beauty of her new humanity, and the clothes she is wearing are an expression of this timeless simplicity.

At this point, memories of Pre-Raphaelite pictures seem to occupy our imagination to an undue degree as we read News from Nowhere, and possibly Morris is a victim of the excessive, though intentional, vagueness of his descriptions. He had long since jettisoned the stock-in-trade of Pre-Raphaelitism, and Rossetti's influence was no more than a memory. His mediaevalism was no longer grounded upon a more or less artificial aestheticism, but upon serious, realistic study of the Middle Ages and a remarkable sense of history. For this reason I feel it appropriate to assess the exact quality of the mediaeval references which besprinkle his vision, by looking at the descriptions of life in the fourteenth century in A Dream of John Ball. Here we have a group of peasants in the village street:

"They were most dressed in red or brightish green or blue cloth jerkins, with a hood on the head generally of another colour. As they came nearer I saw that the cloth of their garments was somewhat coarse, but stout and serviceable."  

And now here is the girl the visitor sees in the tavern:

"She was clad in a close-fitting gown of bright blue cloth, with a broad silver girdle, daintily wrought, round her loins; a rose wreath was on her head and her hair hung down unbound."  

No doubt there is a degree of stylisation about this last portrait, but the clear purpose is to show the good quality of the material and colours of the pre-industrial age, as well as natural simplicity and elegance. In any case, there is nothing reminiscent of the complicated finery and languid attitudes of characters depicted by Rossetti or Burne-Jones. So it is appropriate to judge the mediaeval references of News from Nowhere in a more clearly defined perspective.

It is true that the splendid costumes of Morris's utopian heroes lend colour to the idea of an eternally idle life. Nothing of the kind, however. Perhaps it is a pity that the writer did not make a greater effort to show them to us about their productive labours, which are suggested rather than described. In fact, the action is set in June, and the whole population is mobilising itself for the haymaking. This, of course, is not a very dirty occupation, and, above all, is regarded as a festival. So they all put on working clothes of simpler cut than
those we admired during their leisure time, but which are still dazzling in quality and colour. It is a great festival, asserts Dick, "so all things considered, I think we are right to adorn it in a simple manner". So when Dick and Clara set off to join the haymakers, they have dressed up in a manner befitting the happy occasion. She was

"looking most fresh and beautiful in a light silk embroidered gown, which to my unused eyes was extravagantly gay and bright; while Dick was also handsomely dressed in white flannel prettily embroidered".

Along the way, the visitor has the opportunity of seeing other haymakers at work.

"The majority of these were young women clad much like Ellen last night, though not mostly in silk, but in light woollen most gaily embroidered; the men being all clad in white flannel embroidered in bright colours. The meadow looked like a gigantic tulip-bed because of them".

Further upstream, there are glimpses of other groups of workers:

"I could only notice that the people in the fields looked strong and handsome, both men and women, and that so far from there being any appearance of sordidness about their attire, they seemed to be dressed specially for the occasion – lightly, of course, but gaily and with plenty of adornment."

So the need for simple, light clothing does not exclude great attention to appearance. One does not seem to get very dirty in this happy land, and Dick, whom the visitor encounters at the beginning of the tale about his duties as a boatman, is wearing his magnificent costume "without a stain on it". Morris no doubt felt that he had allowed himself to be tempted a little too far, and that the Golden Dustman, for example, presented a problem. So he took the trouble to describe him (very fleetingly, it is true) in working rig:

"The former had now veiled his splendour in a due suit of working clothes, crowned with a fantail hat, which he took off, however, to wave us farewell with his grave old-Spanish-like courtesy."

Moreover, Clara explicitly states that she dresses differently for work and for leisure. When the visitor is astonished at the luxurious attire of the strollers, she replies:

"They are not about any dirty work; they are only amusing themselves in the fine evening; there is nothing to fool their clothes."

Whatever the nature of these clothes, some general characteristics are plain: the use of the finest materials: silk, woollens, flannel, which have forever replaced the horrible shoddy of the capitalist era; the quality of the weaving, which is of the finest workmanship; the abundance of bright, gay colours with blue, green and gold predominating, but "it isn't gaudy, you know." The visitor is surprised, for his tastes were "cultivated in the sombre greyness, or rather brownness, of the nineteenth century". Finally, there is the variety of styles, which is quite a remarkable thing in itself when one considers how
strongly utopists, from Thomas More onwards, have tended to make clothing uniform, though there is no longer any need for this under conditions of plenty.

It is implicit that one thing has disappeared: changes of fashion. In 1882, Morris invited the ladies in his lecture audience to "resist change for the sake of change" and advised them to demand excellent and beautiful materials which take away any desire for change. Such appears to have been the effect of the widespread use of the finest cloths in Morris's utopia. Later he wrote, more generally, "in the future the tyranny of convention will be abolished; reason and a sense of pleasure will rule".

In these two passages this idea is linked with a hint, taken up in later writings, which can give us some idea of what Morris expected, even though it does not inform us any further about the cut and style of the clothing of the future. "Garments should veil the human form, and neither caricature it, nor obliterate its lines", and he repeated, eleven years later, "bad costume ... always either muffles up or caricatures the body; whereas good costume at once veils and indicates it". As they returned from the British Museum, and admired the passers-by strolling in the cool of the evening, the visitor observed that "the shape of their raiment ... was both beautiful and reasonable - veiling the form, without either muffling or caricaturing it". We do not achieve any more detail from the examination of these phrases; formulations are still negative, but there emerges a firm stand against ugliness, grotesque deformation and puritanism. In this respect, a strange development in Morris's attitude can be observed. In Notes from Nowhere the distinction between male and female dress is very marked, and the feminity of his heroines is clearly conveyed. During the three years separating the writing of this tale from that of the theoretical manual, Socialism, Its Growth and Outcome, his thinking progressed, and we are surprised to read, in the latter book:

"Another fault may be noted in all bad periods (as in the present), that an extreme difference is made between the garments of the sexes."

That is an idea well in advance of the outlook of his time, and it is only to be found from his pen on this one occasion. It seems impossible to ascribe responsibility for it to Bax, who was always noted for narrow anti-feminism, and it occurs in the same paragraph as that mentioned earlier as being entirely inspired by Morris. It clearly marks the beginning of a belated viewpoint, which Morris did not have time to develop any further and which would tend to lay stress upon practicality in matters of dress. In fact, this is an aspect of the question which he had not altogether neglected, for he continually protested against the imprisonment of the human body in the "upholstered" scaffoldings of Victorian gear: the costumes he describes and suggests undeniably represent a liberation. But while this need for liberation seems obvious to him, aesthetic considerations are even more binding, and he expresses this feeling in The Earthly Paradise:

"In such wise was she clad as folk may be,  
Who, for no shame of their humanity,  
For no sad changes of the imperfect year,  
Rather for added beauty, raiment wear."
The same natural need, at a higher level, finds its satisfaction in utopia. In one of the loveliest passages of the book, Clara, always alert and quick with repartee, sharply rebukes the visitor, whose stubborn puritanism is offended by the riot of luxury and colour:

"It would be easy enough for us to say, we will only spend our labour on making our clothes comfortable: but we don't choose to stop there. Why do you find fault with us? Does it seem to you as if we starved ourselves of food in order to make ourselves fine clothes? or do you think there is anything wrong in liking to see the coverings of our bodies beautiful like our bodies are? - just as a deer's or an otter's skin has been made beautiful from the first? Come, what is wrong with you?"

The visitor "bowed before the storm". But it would be a mistake to regard this view of dress as a simple apologia for personal indulgence and the selfishness of pleasure. It is much more a form of that integration into nature which is one of the motive forces of utopia. "You see," says Clara to him next morning, "we are not going to make the bright day and the flowers feel ashamed of themselves." Beauty is a law of nature, and man cannot claim exemption from that law. Even more, this effort to be beautiful is the expression of a new human morality. Clara also speaks of "making ourselves look pleasant to each other". She replies simply to the visitor's surprise at the luxurious silken embroidery which decorates the clothing of a passer-by:

"He could wear shabby clothes if he pleased, - that is, if he didn't think he would hurt people's feelings by doing so."

Morris's everyday aesthetics are not aestheticism, but an aspect of his humanism.
CHAPTER TEN

Dialectics of Art and History

In 1884 an anonymous contributor to Echo wrote a venomous paragraph in which he expressed surprised contempt for Morris's militant activity in the Social Democratic Federation.

"Mr. Morris... is not content to be heard merely as a voice crying in the wilderness. He will be content with nothing less than the propagation of his ideas by means which must result in a social revolution. To that end he has allied himself with a body with the aims of which, we must charitably suppose, he is only in imperfect sympathy. Judging him by the company he keeps, he would disturb the foundations of Society in order that a higher artistic value may be given to our carpets, our chimney ornaments, and our wallpaper.

The poet usually remained quite indifferent to such attacks and it was primarily in order to express solidarity with his socialist friends that he decided, a few days later, to reply. He protested incidentally that anyone should suppose "that I care only for Art and not for the other sides of the Social Questions I have been writing about."2 It would not be worth recalling the brief and trivial polemic but for the fact that the caricature of Morris's utopia presented by this journalist is basically not far removed from the summary interpretation of it that has become current. There is clearly no hostility involved in the assertion that Morris's utopia is an expression of aestheticism. I believe that I have adequately demonstrated that it is something very different. Nor is there any doubt that it is also that, in equal measure. All the same, it is as well to agree upon the content of such description and not be content with superficial impressions.

If there is misunderstanding or lack of understanding on this point — and there is nothing new or surprising about that — it is because reference is most often made to Morris's pre-socialist writings rather than to the works of his maturity. The former, of course, teem with idealistic formulations derived from Ruskin and the hangover of Pre-Raphaelitism. Admittedly, his social preoccupations are present and continually expressed, but the cult of beauty remains the chief concern, to such an extent that, in the earliest lectures, art figures as the cure for all society's ills and even as the driving force of any revolution. Following Ruskin, Morris was convinced that the fundamental tragedy of the working class lay in its being bound to dreary, dehumanising, mechanical labour.

... and they will some day come to know it, and cry out to be made..."
men again, and only art can do it, and redeem them from this slavery."

He cries out against the material and moral degradation to which the workers are subjected.

"I know by my own feelings and desires what these men want: what would have saved them from this lowest depth of savagery, employment which would foster their self-respect and win the praise and sympathy of their fellows, and dwellings which they could come to with pleasure, surroundings which would soothe and elevate them, reasonable labour, reasonable rest. There is only one thing that can give them this, and that is art."  

The aim of art, he repeats, is "the making of life happy and dignified for all people".

This naive idealism was of short duration and disappeared completely after 1881. As Morris's socialism took shape, art ceased to be the means of revolution, but it never ceased being, if not its only end, at least an essential end, and we should always bear in mind the very broad interpretation which the writer put upon the word art. At first, the transition from means to end was very confused. Nevertheless, in his very first lecture, Morris asserted that the future triumph of art is "wrapped up ... with changes political and social, that in one way or another we all desire". It was precisely because this form or this way were unclear in his mind that his language remained hesitant. He was still soaked in liberal ideology and thought that it would be enough to "spread the decencies of life, so that at the least we may have a field where it will be possible for art to grow". He saluted the workers for their efforts to advance themselves as a class and considered that "by such efforts is art more helped if we artists did but know it than by anything else that is done in our days".

By 1883, his thinking had taken a more vigorous turn. "Popular art," he wrote to the Manchester Examiner, "has no chance of a healthy life, or, indeed, of a life at all, till we are on the way to fill up the terrible gulf between riches and poverty". He demanded a social transformation "which will give all people a share in art". He sketched his first dreams of an egalitarian society and declared his conviction that "henceforth it will be no use looking for popular art except in such a Utopia, or at least on the road thither". Once class-divided society had been abolished, the change brought about would be "beneficial in many ways, so especially will it give an opportunity for art".

The very existence of art "depends upon the supplanting of the present capitalist system by something better, depends on changing the basis of society". In this field, "as in other matters, there is no hope save in Revolution".

So, while art ceases to be a means and becomes an end, it cannot for that reason be divorced from the economic and social process which leads towards that end. There can be no question of pure, disinterested, disembodied beauty, and the mutual interaction of means and end is ineluctable and essential: "it is futile indeed to expect any one to speak about art, except in the most superficial way, without encountering those social problems which all serious men are thinking of". When asked to address the people of Ancoats on aesthetics, Morris refused to observe the traditional limits: "I have only one..."
subject to lecture on, the relation of Art to Labour. A few years later, he expressed this refusal to be limited in particularly happy and precise words,

"it is impossible to exclude socio-political questions form the consideration of aesthetics. Also, I must at the outset disclaim the mere aesthetic point of view which looks upon the ploughman and his bullocks and his plough, the reaper, his work, his wife, and his dinner, as so many elements which compose a pretty tapestry hanging, fit to adorn the study of a contemplative person of cultivation, but which it is not worth while differentiating from each other except in so far as they are related to the beauty and interest of the picture. On the contrary, what I wish for is that the reaper and his wife should have themselves a due share in all the fulness of life, and I can, without any great effort, perceive the justice of their forcing me to bear part of the burden of its deficiencies, so that we may together he forced to attempt to remedy them, and have no very heavy burden to carry between us."

Such is the immediate task. No art is possible in a world where the people, who alone create beauty, are doomed to degradation. Morris objects to "wasting time and energy in any of the numerous schemes by which the quasi-artistic of the middle classes hope to make art grow when it has no longer any root". In a reaction against the reputation for latent aestheticism that was still dogging him, he employed the vigorous language of the Chartists to define his position.

"Surely any one who professes to think that the question of art and cultivation must go before that of the knife and the fork (and there are some people who do propose that) does not understand what art means, or how that its roots must have a soil for a thriving and unanxious life."

Perhaps the violence of these assertions implies a touch of working-class snobbery, a failing from which the bourgeois in Morris was not entirely exempt. It is a serious matter to relegate all possibilities of artistic development to utopia. But such utterances, despite their exaggerated tone, testify to the strength of his materialism and his revolutionary faith. Far from denigrating the importance of art, they give it, on the contrary, outstanding ultimate importance, since its immediate extinction in the cause of political struggle is the condition of its future pre-eminence. Morris readily admitted that his own attraction to socialism was imposed by aesthetic considerations. The stifling of art by conditions under capitalism led him to the condemnation of capitalism and it was that, he wrote, which "has been the thing which has drawn my attention to the subject in general". He recognised that his socialism was "in fact, Socialism seen through the eyes of an artist". However it still seems too much to think, as E. P. Thompson does, that he became an agitator as a consequence of the frustration he felt over the success of his poems and his decorating among the wealthy classes he despised. His decision was the result of deep thought, a gradual progress from his first idealistic positions to the Marxist materialism of his maturity. That is exactly what is expressed by the preface he wrote in 1888 for the collection of lectures published under the title of Song of Change:
"The repulsion to pessimism which is, I think, natural to a man engaged in the arts, compelled me once to hope that the ugly disgrace of civilization ought to be got rid of by the conscious will of intelligent persons; yet as I strove to stir up people to this reform, I found that the causes of the vulgarities of civilization lay deeper than I had thought, and little by little I was driven to the conclusion that all these uglinesses are but the outward expression of the innate moral baseness into which we are forced by our present form of society, and that it is futile to attempt to deal with them from the outside. Whatever I have written, or spoken on the platform, on these social subjects is the result of the truths of Socialism meeting my early impulse, and giving it a definite and more serious aim." 23

This aim became quite clear: it is necessary to break down the old infrastructure and replace it by a new one, upon which can grow up a truly human superstructure saturated in beauty. Even at the risk of being wearisome in the repetition, I cannot stress too strongly the breadth of William Morris’s concept of art. For him, art is the work achieved, whatever the nature of the work; it is joy in creation and use; it is the degree of civilization that shapes all human relationships; it is at the peak of the whole superstructure. The meaning of it is so broad that the word has disappeared from the English language by the twenty-second century. But “art is and must be, either in its abundance or its barreness, in its sincerity or its hollowness, the expression of the society amongst which it exists”. 24 The new production relationships will give rise to that abundance and that sincerity and we have observed how they flourish in the evidence of daily life. That does not wholly resolve the question, in the demanding eyes of the utopian. What will be the characteristics, the inspiration, the forms of this new art of the communist age? Morris believed in the “continuity of history”. Art does not gush forth spontaneously. It is determined by the social conditions of the moment, but it is also the culmination of a thousand-year-old tradition. The artist does not create out of nothing, “dead men guide his hand even when he forgets that they ever existed”. This long tradition is always many-fold and complex. It has been enriched by the successive contributions of different civilisations based upon social relationships of different kinds. Nor is it transmitted totally in a harmonious synthesis. Each age has been led by its own production relationships to select from the past some traditionally dominant thread rather than some other, because it better suits its own ideology, which is an abstraction drawn from its economic basis, and this dominant thread has inspired or guided its particular artistic creation. That is a developmental law which will govern the future, just as it has governed the past and the present. So Morris found himself constrained to decide, not what the art forms of the future will be (that would be to prejudge a development whose outlines are obscure), but the historical dominant, the context, the inspiration which will be best suited by the way of life, the needs and the aspirations of the new age.

Therefore, the work of William Morris contains a critical examination of the
past, made less in terms of that past than in those of the future. His attention focussed upon three civilisations: classical antiquity, the Middle Ages and the modern post-Renaissance period. For obvious reasons, I shall leave to the last Morris's thoughts about mediaeval civilisation, for its positive content will be shown in a brighter light by virtue of contrast with the other two.

I shall not spend much time over his critique of ancient art, first because it is a subject which he did not consider at great length and, even more, because there was nothing very original about his ideas. The judgments he made mostly date from his pre-socialist period and are faithful echoes of those uttered by Ruskin. However, we must take them into account, because he never changed his opinions in the matter during his later years and they form part of his total outlook.

Morris inveighed against the contrast between the high level of the way of life of the free men and the conditions of the slavery upon which it was based:

"...true they lived a simple life, and did not know of that great curse and bane of art which we call luxury — yet was their society founded upon slavery, slavery, mental as bodily, of the greater part of mankind." 36

"...an Athenian citizen... led a simple, dignified, almost perfect life; but there were drawbacks to happiness perhaps in the lives of his slaves." 37

This social division inevitably led to harsh discrimination between the arts:

"...the aristocracy... freed from the necessity of rough and exhausting work by their possession of chattel slaves, who did all that for them, and little oppressed by anxieties for their livelihood had... both inclination and leisure to cultivate the higher intellectual arts within the limits which their natural love of matter of fact and hatred of romance prescribed to them; the lesser arts, meantime, being kept in rigid, and indeed slavish subordination to them as was natural." 38

There could not be any popular art, in the real sense of the term: "the slavish handicrafts of the time produced things which were certainly not ugly, nay, which may in a sense be considered beautiful; but there was no delight in life in them, they were treated as works of the lower arts wrought by the lower classes". 39 As for the nobler arts, the highest expression which was the Greek temple, Morris's judgment was even more contemptuous:

"...the narrow superstition of the form of the Greek temple was not a matter of accident, but was the due expression of the exclusiveness and aristocratic arrogance of the ancient Greek mind, a natural result of which was a demand for pedantic perfection in all the parts and details of a building; so that the inferior parts of the ornament are so slavishly subordinated to the superior, that no invention or individuality is possible in them." 40

This greatly praised perfection carries its own condemnation within itself. It was attained "at the expense on the one hand of the full possibilities of epic expression, and on the other of architectonic ornament", and it soon declined into academism. 41 It sterilised human imagination, because in such architecture "no thought might be expressed that could not be expressed in
perfect form", "It made renunciation of many delightful things a necessity", and turned art into something "hard and unsympathetic". For Morris, an Athenian temple was a terribly dull and monotonous object, comparable with "a table on four legs". The limitations of Hellenic art were set by the absence of any free work-force that might have shown originality and by the practice of handing over to slaves the ornamentation, which was perfect because it was stereotyped: "this perfect art preferred blankness to the richness that might be given by the work of an unrefined and imperfectly taught hand, whatever suggestions of beauty or thought might be in it", and so were "crushed all experiment, all invention, and imagination". Morris called this "substantive art" that lacked any "adjective art". There was no evidence of "pleasure of labour", which was "oppressed by the sternness of hieratic art". The writer was offended by the lack of humanity that such art betrays: "what a mass of expression of human thought, what a world of beauty that exclusiveness shut out from the light of day". He claims to see proof of it in the quality of the paintings with which ancient pottery is embellished:

...we may partly guess what an astonishing number there must have been of capable and ready draughtsmen in the good times of Greek Art from that great mass of first rate painting on pottery, garnered from the tombs mostly, and still preserved in our museums after all these centuries of violence and neglect." 38

While he denounced the aristocratic inhumanity of Greek art, Morris avoided presenting a picture frozen in time. He admitted its evolution, but did so in a rather individual way that is of interest. He speaks of "its first period during which its thoughts outwent its power of expression"; then a second period "when, the expression having reached a point approaching perfection, the exuberance of thought in it had to be repressed to satisfy the exclusive fastidiousness of the Greek mind"; and, finally, a third period, "during which capacity of expression having reached its highest point could go no further, and when there was comparatively little to express by this perfected means, and the classical art was become academical and in fact all but dead".

This academism reappeared among "the plagiarists and compilers of the Augustan age of Rome; the authors of that mass of platitudinous rubbish". By then Roman architecture had encrusted and encumbered itself with "the swathing of ill-understood Greek art". Nevertheless, Morris allows enormous qualities to the Latins, declaring that they "invented architecture - no less", and that their greatest invention was that of the arch, "the most important invention to house-needling men that has been or can be made". Thanks to that, architecture ceased to be "fit for nothing but a temple", and it allowed all sorts of building in all sorts of climate, since it could "fit itself to north and south, snow-storm and sand-storm alike". Architecture of this kind followed, in its constructive part at least, the law of nature; in short, it was a new art - the great art of civilization". Another discovery to be set to the credit of the Romans was "the noble craft of mosaic", in which they excelled. But their architectural ornamentation was undoubtedly as servile as that of the Greeks and certainly of worse quality. And their art of building should also, without doubt, "be called engineering rather than architecture". Nevertheless, Morris regarded their contribution as more solid than that of the Greeks:
"May I ask you to consider, in case any Athenian gentleman had attempted to build a Gothic cathedral in the days of Pericles, what sort of help he would have had from the slave labour of the day." 43 On the other hand, among the remains of Latin antiquity we can see "a sign in them of the wave of that great change" which was to be introduced by Byzantine and Gothic art. 44

We must admit that in practice Morris did not show uncompromising partisanship. Did he not translate the Aeneid and the Odyssey? It is true that Homer pre-dated classical art, and that it was "the people of that time, who were the real authors of the Homeric poems". 45 In Jason and The Earthly Paradise Morris again took up ancient legends, but it is characteristic that he reshaped them into mediaeval forms. It was in the same spirit that he clad the pretty girls in the Hammersmith Guest House in dresses "somewhat between that of the ancient classical costume and the simpler forms of the fourteenth-century garments". 46 However, Bax has recorded his great surprise when Morris, invited to choose between re-incarnation as a mediaeval baron or an Athenian eupatrid, chose the latter "on the ground of the intellectual life of the classical epoch" which seemed to him to be preferable to "the rudeness of existence in the mediaeval castle". 47 Of course, these are only fleeting thoughts, quite natural in an unbigoted man, and they do nothing to lessen his condemnation of art based on slavery, which could have no place among the inspirations of his utopia. As for Greek temples, "no invention or individuality is possible in them, whence comes a kind of bareness and blankness, a rejection in short of all romance, which does not indeed destroy their interest as relics of past history, but which puts the style of them aside as any possible foundation for the style of the future architecture of the world". To which should be added the absurdity of imitating in our climate an art open to the sky: it would be an incongruous travesty. 48

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It is strange that the Marxist critic Lionel M. Munby should have seen Morris as "the last Renaissance man", 49 and he was clearly thinking of his multiplicity of talents. But comparison with Leonardo da Vinci is hardly appropriate, despite this common characteristic. Morris lacked not only the taste but the disposition for the exact sciences, and above all his conception of art was totally different. His aesthetic ideal was popular and decorative, excluding the noble techniques and aristocratic heritage of the Renaissance. That period was at least as obnoxious to him as was classical antiquity. Here again, the influence of Ruskin was decisive, and Morris's objections are largely those that his old mentor formulated in The Stones of Venice. But the tone is far from being the same. Ruskin uttered his vituperations in the name of a preaching and moralising Protestantism to which Morris could not subscribe: when he repeats Ruskin's arguments, they are, as it were, secularised and they spring from a humanism which is as far removed from Ruskin's idealism as it is from the Renaissance ideology. Similarly, while Ruskin blames the harmful trends on a feudal nobility that neglected its obligations, Morris, enlightened by historical materialism, sees them as the consequence of the rise of bourgeois commercialism and its destruction of human values. His criticism is in no way feudal but democratic. Finally, we must not forget that Ruskin's condemnations...
tion, although violent, was passing and he was soon "de-converted" by the revelation of the paintings of Veronese. With Morris, whose reason was less easily ruled by his emotions, condemnation of the civilisation born of the Renaissance was part of a system of thought, it was integrated into his socialism and so it remained for ever.

These are the terms, very different from the language used by Ruskin, in which he sketches the outline of the new era.

"Society was preparing for a complete recasting of its elements: the Mediaeval Society of Status was in process of transition into the modern Society of Contract. New classes were being formed to fit the new system of production which was at the bottom of this; political life began again with the new birth of bureaucracy; and political, as distinguished from natural, nationalities were being hammered together for the use of that bureaucracy, which was itself a necessity to the new system. And withal a new religion was being fashioned to fit the new theory of life: in short, the Age of Commercialism was being born." 50

At the artistic level, the transition was rapid and sealed the break with mediaeval values. "The men of the Renaissance looked at the thousand years behind them as a deedless blank, and all that lay before them as a perpetual triumphal march." 51 This brutal rejection of ten centuries of art aroused Morris's indignant contempt:

"Now it was the very essence of the academic pedantry to which the Renaissance led, as its natural degradation, that it was ignorant of real history: for it history fell asleep some time about the death of Nero to wake in Italy in the days of Kaiser Maximilian: all that had gone before the days of Pericles was a vague, ill-understood, empty dream: all that took place after the first palmy days of the Roman empire was but a confused jostling of barbarous people not worth looking at or considering . . .

The knowledge and hope together of these men of the Renaissance bred in them an absurd contempt for the just-past pure mediaeval times, and in the arts the result of that contempt was that for the first time since art began men looked backward for their ideal of beauty and fitness." 52

The "new pedants of the Renaissance" subjected the world again to the ossified forms of classical art. 53 There is a blatant contrast between the material ambitions of this individualistic age and the retrograde nature of its aesthetics.

"But, strange to say, to this living body of social, political, religious, scientific New Birth was bound the dead corpse of a past art. On every other side it bade men look forward to some change or other, were it good or bad: on the side of art, with the sternest pedagogic utterance, it bade men look backwards across the days of the 'Fathers and famous men that begat them', and in scorn of them, to an art that had been dead a thousand years before . . . Henceforth the past was to be our present, and the blankness of its dead wall was to shut out the future from us."

Morris certainly did not deny the merits of the new age, nor the progress it
had initiated. He was too conscious of the laws of historical development to deny the need for such transformations; the new system marked a decisive turning-point in human history:

"... amidst all the ugliness and confusion which it brought with it, it was a necessary instrument for the development of freedom of thought and the capacities of man; for the subjugation of nature to his material needs. This Great Change, I say, was necessary and inevitable, and on this side, the side of commerce and commercial science and politics, was a genuine new birth. On this side it did not look backward but forward: there had been nothing like it in past history; it was founded on no pedantic model; necessity, not whim, was its craftsman". 55

The period was inspired by "genuine and powerful enthusiasm", 56 and "many things were newborn then which have since brought forth fruit enough". 57 Even in the realm of art, there are works which are to be admired as "the results of their own wonderful individuality", 58 and in which we can see "the outburst of the expression of splendid and copious genius". But in Morris's view this outburst of beauty was just a survival of the impetus of the Middle Ages: "this glorious art was the fruit of the five centuries of free popular art which preceded it, and not of the rise of commercialism which was contemporaneous with it; for the glory of the Renaissance faded out with strange rapidity as commercial competition developed". 59 These great men "were really but the fruit of the blossoming-time, the Gothic period". 60 "the fruit of the old, not the seed of the new order of things". 61 A phenomenon of this kind was particularly noticeable in England, where architectural beauty survived longer than on the continent. When one looks at Elizabethan or Jacobean buildings, "even behind the quaint affectation of stilted pomp and would-be learning which not seldom oppresses it", their architecture "has a homeliness and love of life which makes it pleasant human and even in a sense beautiful"

"It will not bear criticism but it forces us to love it in spite of all defects. But you must always keep in mind that it is not its super-imposed defects that make it lovable but the tradition still lingering in it which has remained from the times of art which produced work at once logical and beautiful: it is not the Renaissance form which we love in it, but the Gothic spirit." 62

On the other hand, Renaissance art, in its purest continental form, has set a disastrous seal upon the separation between the masses and the élite. It had become "the exclusive privilege of a few, and has taken from the people their birthright". 63 The increase of the power of money, by accentuating class divisions, has exalted the noble arts and brought the popular arts into contempt. "Since the last days of the Middle Ages the creation of an intellectual aristocracy has been, so to say, the spiritual purpose of civilization side by side with its material purpose of supplanting the aristocracy of status by the aristocracy of wealth." 64 "Now the vulgar were beyond the pale, and the insults which the Greek slave-holders and the Roman tax-sweaters of old cast upon the people, upon all men but a chosen few, were brought forth and trick-ed up again in fantastic guise to adorn the day of boundless hope". 65 In this
upheaval, "adjective art" lost all opportunity of survival and "substantive art" was condemned to die by inches in noble solitude "amusing the upper classes". "Commercialism killed all art for the workman, depriving him necessarily of the power of appreciating its higher, and the possibility of producing its subsidiary form." The age of the mediaeval artisan was rapidly approaching its end:

"By that time Europe had begun to transform the great army of artist-craftsmen, who had produced the beauty of her cities, her churches, manor-houses and cottages, into an enormous stock of human machines, who had little chance of earning a bare livelihood if they lingered over their toil to think of what they were doing: who were not asked to think, paid to think, or allowed to think." 67

As for the artists, they were slowly losing all contact with life:

"... whereas once men were taught to look through the art at that which the art represented, they were now taught to deem the art an end in itself, and that it mattered nothing whether the story it told was believed or not". 68

For the Renaissance sculptor or painter, as for the artist in the days of Pericles, the most important aim was the attainment of perfection of form and appreciation for his talent, his skill and his knowledge. Like Ruskin, Morris detested Michaelangelo, and his diatribes, as reported by his son-in-law Sparling, are certainly less polished than those of his mentor:

"Now, you take his Moses, and you can see that Moses himself or what Moses stood for didn't interest him a little bit; or, at any rate, not enough, compared to turning Moses into a peg to hang his own cleverness on. He made of poor old Moses an opportunity for showing off his knowledge of anatomy and skill of hand. What he really liked was to pile up difficulties for the sake of coping with them, foreshortenings, and bunched up muscles, and that sort of thing, and he took jolly good care that they were such as every-one could see." 69

In this way, art became a pointless aristocratic game, and its functions were reduced to noble uselessness. Whereas in the Middle Ages the village artisan decorated the least useful objects with the same loving care as the mason devoted to carving the cathedral stones, the Renaissance artist, when he deemed to leave the easel or the block of marble, only ornamented luxurious furniture and articles. The spirit of the Renaissance was at the beginning of "the severance of art from the daily lives of men". 70

This art, devoted to the service of the great ones of the world and pedantically petrified to classical canons, had its finished - and most detestable - expression in architecture. Very few buildings have aroused Morris's peevishness to the same extent as St. Peter's in Rome, "the very type, it seems to me, of pride and tyranny, of all that crushes the love of art in simple people, and makes art a toy of little estimation for the idle hours of the rich and cultivated". 71 The starchy coldness of St. Peter's, just like that of St. Paul's, which is a dreary imitation of it, suggests to him the "taste of a man who should prefer his lady-love bald".

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"St. Peter's in Rome, St. Paul's in London were not built to be beautiful, or to be beautiful and convenient. They were not built to be homes of the citizens in their moments of exaltation, their supreme grief or supreme hope, but to be proper, respectable, and therefore to show the due amount of cultivation, and knowledge of the only people and times that in the minds of their ignorant builders were not ignorant barbarians."

Could it have been otherwise in an age when architecture had ceased to be the common effort of the whole people? Literature fares no better in Morris's eyes. He deplores "the loss of romance on the one hand, and epical sincerity and directness on the other, which the flood-tide of Renaissance rhetoric presently inflicted on the world." 54 In fact, his position on this point is less fully expressed and is less clear-cut. His knowledge of continental literature of the sixteenth century appears to have been insignificant, apart from a brief disdainful comment, "Certainly Montaigne was "one of the seven humbugs of Christendom"", quoted by his daughter May, 55 and apparently his knowledge even of Elizabethan authors was somewhat summary. Mackail tells us that "the Elizabethans and later authors he knew very imperfectly and read but little." 56 It is probable as well that sixteenth-century English literature, which was still far removed from classical purity, was not able to provoke his ire to the same extent as the plastic arts. But Compton-Rickett does record an occasion when he produced uproar in a Fleet Street pub by noisily inveighing against Elizabethan dramatists, Cyril Tourneur in particular, and he relates that Morris ended his diatribe by declaring that "the use of blank verse as a poetic medium ought to be stopped by Act of Parliament." 57 Spenser aroused no enthusiasm. "I have read the whole of the Faerie Queen, without being interested in the characters; but it is beautiful verse." 58

His attitude towards Shakespeare was considerably more ambiguous. During his student years at Oxford, he and his friends often met together and enthusiastically read the comedies and tragedies aloud. 59 A few years later, in 1857, when he and Burne-Jones shared the incredible glory-hole in Red Lion Square, the pair of them, along with Rossetti, spent many an evening at the theatre, faithfully following Keats' performances at the Princess's: Richard II delighted Morris by "the beautiful fluency and copiousness of the language". 60 Again in 1885, when asked by the Pall Mall Gazette to list his hundred favourite books, he put Shakespeare at the top of the poets mentioned. 61 In 1893 he published Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece at the Kelmscott Press, and even thought of a complete edition of the plays. It was one of the many projects he was obliged to drop, and it went no further than proofs of Macheath. 62 In fact, Morris went into the theatre very little in his maturity. He was irritated by the styles of acting and the dramatic practices of his day, and his daughter May tells us that he found it particularly intolerable to watch the "representation of the chronicle-plays and the romantic plays of Shakespeare, where the stage convention, the modern 'traditions', the tricks of diction and all the elaborations and parade of the modern setting rang falsely on an ear tuned to another key." 63 All this evidence would appear to suggest a quite lively appreciation of Shakespearian theatre, so it is the more surprising to find
among the notes left by Sir Sydney Cockerell comments such as this: "Shakespeare did not much attract me, as I have not much sympathy with the dramatic form." 83 On another occasion, referring to the bad influence of the great dramatist, "he said that the tyranny of Shakespeare's example had been injurious to modern playwrights, and that no modern play should contain soliloquies". 84 These remarks are confirmed by May Morris: "Shakespeare had done great harm to the drama, he thought, having imposed a certain tradition on the future, which no one after him has been strong enough to get away from." 85 All of which would leave us rather in the dark had not Bernard Shaw, with one stroke of his pen, provided us with the key to balanced judgment. Describing Morris's literary tastes, he says simply; "Shakespeare [sic] was not in the Morris movement, which was strongly anti-rhetorical", 86 a phrase reminiscent of that used by Ed. Bernstein to describe Morris: "Rhetoric, properly speaking, was not natural to him, his whole nature was, if I may say so, anti-rhetorical". 87 So the thing that put our poet off was simply a certain conventional form of expression that he regarded as typical of the Renaissance. It would, indeed, be difficult to imagine him unmoved by Shakespeare's epic verse. It would be even more difficult to imagine his failing to perceive, as he did so well in the case of More's *Utopia*, the clash between mediaeval tradition and the civilisation of the "new men", which resounds loudly throughout the Shakespearian tragedies and which has been plainly revealed by contemporary Marxist criticism. This picture of the threat to the Middle Ages is the very thing that Morris would most have appreciated in Shakespeare and he probably had it in mind in *News from Nowhere* at the point where Dick shows the visitor, as they cross Holborn, the site of the Bishop of Ely's house mentioned in *Richard II*, arousing admiration in the visitor for this man of the communist age "who read Shakespeare and had not forgotten the Middle Ages". 88

So we can see plainly that Morris's condemnation of the Renaissance proper is one of principle, and is directed against the state of affairs on the Continent rather than that in England, which was less quick to accept the new standards. Nevertheless, the condemnation is absolute, because for him the Renaissance was primarily the arrival, the necessary but baneful arrival, of the bourgeois. It marked the jettisoning of the popular creative traditions of mediaeval art, and the beginning of a mercantile age characterised by the slow decay of an art that was divorced from the people. For him it was forever "death or cataleptic sleep". 89 "They called it a new birth, not a death sickness as they should have done." 90 To make an accurate assessment, one has to measure its extent and its effects upon the centuries that followed, during that "period of blight which was introduced by the so-called Renaissance". 91

* * *

The seventeenth century was the "period of transition into corruption". 92 "The fine arts... lost every atom of beauty and dignity, and retained little even of the ingenuity of the earlier Renaissance." They became "mere adjuncts of pomp and state, the expression of the insouciance of riches and complacency of respectability", their only value for us is as evidence of the "incurable corruption of society". 93
French literature of the 17th century forms a natural target for Morris's inverte. According to him, it produced "little except worthless clever essays and still more worthless verses that have no claim to be called poetry". The French versifiers may hold one's attention by their pomp and style, but, for the rest, they are "unreal and lifeless". Only Molière wins any approval from him: the life and genuineness of his comedies serves to show the corruption of the times as clearly as the dead classicism of Racine. He was "the one man of genius of the time", and he came to express disillusioned scepticism. A "sham love of simplicity" developed side by side with "sham tragedy", in the form of a pastoral genre which was an insult to the poverty of the peasants and was nothing but "inane imitations of the later classics".

Morris had little to say about the English literature of the same period. The only poet against whom he took up the cudgels was John Milton, for whom he felt deep aversion, "though he sometimes betrayed more knowledge of him than he would have been willing to admit". 92 (a perversity on Morris's part with which we are becoming very familiar!). On this subject, the feelings he expressed to Sir Sydney Cockerell are quite clear: "I did not care for Milton, the essence of him was rhetoric, though he was of course a wonderful versifier." Those he expressed to Yeats are of the same kind: "Milton, though he had a great earnest mind, expressed himself as a rhetorician." But there were other reasons for his hostility: "He cannot abide either Milton's puritanism," reports William Clarke, "or what he regards as his false classicism; and he stamps his critical foot down unmercifully on Paradise Lost and Il Penseroso." 93 Morris himself made no mystery of these reasons. Explaining why Milton did not appear in his list of favourite poets, he wrote to the Pall Mall Gazette: "the union in his work of cold classicism with Puritanism (the two things which I hate most in the world) repels me so that I cannot read him".

So everything about seventeenth-century culture was rejected, both the impoverishment of life, whether in its French aristocratic form or its English bourgeois-religious form, as well as the art common to both these forms, from which everything natural was missing.

But that was only a transition. While the seventeenth century aroused nothing but deep repugnance in Morris, the eighteenth roused him to fury. For him the period was "the slough of despond". 100 This "vile Pompadour period" was marked by "restless and weary vacuity of mind", and the demands of fashion had "forgotten that there was such a thing as art". 101 May relates that, when he spoke to his intimates about the writers of that period, he abused them "in unclassic and richly figurative language". 102 When he addressed the public through his lectures, his language may have been more polished, but its tone was no less violent. Their literature "entirely lacks all imaginative qualities, has in it in fact nothing save... cleverness, readiness and confidence".

"Not only does poetry seem dead in the 18th century, but if you attempt to wade through the books of verses of the time which insult the name of poetry, you find that even the commonplace English of the time was too romantic to satisfy the writer's hatred of imagination and humanity, and that he has been obliged to invent a new language which
He described the school of the "Augustan Age" as "Bigwiggery". He felt a special aversion for Pope on account of his "scrawls at humanity". He hated this "literature produced by a few word-spinning essayists and prosaic versifiers, like Addison and Pope, prizeing themselves on a well-bred contempt for whatever was manly or passionate or elevating in the past of their own language, while their devotion to the classical times . . . had sunk to nothing but a genteel habit of expression". His feelings for Doctor Johnson were distinctly uncharitable, despite the resemblance Mackail claimed to discern between the two (and the latter's emphasis is a little suspect, appearing to arise from a desire to give Morris a patina of respectability). It is a fact that our poet "admired Johnson the man; but Johnson the writer he abominated".

Morris was at his most vehement when speaking of the fine arts of the eighteenth century. In them he saw the most distressing evidence of where the pathways indicated by the masters of the Renaissance were to lead: "these great men were dead, and lesser men of the ordinary type were masquerading in their garments". The taming of the artist had become complete. All those "were turned, what few of them were taught else than pretentious daubers, into courtly flatterers of ill-favoured fine ladies and stupid supercilious lords". The work "done entirely by 'artists' so-called and showing sometimes in the best pictures painted at the period a certain flippant cleverness as to invention and an amount of low manual dexterity in the execution which made the said pictures quite good enough for their purpose, the amusement namely of idle fine gentlemen and ladies". Among all these painters, the one most violently arraigned by Morris was Sir Joshua Reynolds: he was their "king" and their most typical representative:

"I call upon you . . . to shake off the bondage of sham admiration, and tell me what it is further than these qualities of cleverness, readiness, and confidence that you really like in the acres of canvas covered by Sir Joshua Reynolds, and on which such floods of adulation have been and I fear will be lavished: I ask you to look at them with your own eyes and not through those of art critics and tell me what you see in them; in that regiment presentation of the dullest men ever born, and the plainest women the world has ever seen whom not even the flattery of the courtly painter could turn into anything else than the simpering, vulgar fine ladies that they were: and all this smoothed down with commercial conventionality just fit for the period which was bringing to birth the final triumph of commerce and saw nothing beyond it, no glimmer of the change which I fervently hope is now on the way." 113

So the Renaissance leads not only to decadence, but to a dead end. "We have gone a long and weary way certainly," writes Morris bitterly, "from Ely Cathedral to Gower Street, from Giotto to Joshua Reynolds, from Beowulf to The Rape of the Lock." 114

However, he remarks, it is "strange too that very death is contemporaneous with new-birth of something at all events; for out of all despair sprang a new time of hope lighted by the torch of the French Revolution". Morris had no
illusions about its meaning; it marked the triumph of the bourgeoisie which, “after a long and violent struggle, has conquered and is supreme from henceforth.” But it smashed the established order, gave a new freshness to feelings and brought in a spirit of opposition and revolt which nothing would ever be able to kill. First was Romanticism, then Pre-Raphaelitism and the message of Ruskin. These are heralds of the future, in so far as they exalt the ancient human values that had for so long been despised. They are capable of firing the enthusiasm of the revolutionaries who will one day found a new society upon the ruins of the old. Meanwhile, the latter is still firmly established and its triumphant commercial civilisation prolongs the long agony of art which began in the sixteenth century with the arrival of the bourgeoisie and the degrading of the people to soulless mechanical labour. We see, says Morris, “the successive waves of degradation, the blindness of middle-class puritanism, the brutality of the eighteenth-century squierarchy, and the stark idealless stupidity of the early nineteenth century.” All that had its beginnings in “the false taste of the Renaissance”.

By the first years of the seventeenth century that degradation had befallen the art in Europe, in fact it was becoming, or had become no longer an art, but a trade, as we very properly nowadays call work, which is really but an accident of the profit-market . . . the great flood of the vileness of the eighteenth century swamped everything, and prepared the way for the inanity of the nineteenth.”

Morris insists upon the continuance of that decline and upon its origin: “There are many artists at present who do not sufficiently estimate the enormity, the portentousness of this change, and how closely it is connected with the Victorian Architecture of the brick box and the slate lid, which helps to make us the dullards that we are . . . The greater part of what we now call architecture is but an imitation of an imitation, the result of a tradition of dull respectability . . .”

Therefore the Renaissance, “as an epoch of art, can teach us nothing” Academic art, “developed from that misreading of history which we call the Renaissance, will prove a barren stem”. If we wish to discover true art, we must “forget three hundred years and go to school with the craftsmen and the painters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries”. These late dates may be surprising, but it is plain that here Morris is orientating himself by the facts of English history. When he refers to the Middle Ages in a more general sense he usually has the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in mind.

* * *

In an earlier chapter of my study, I indicated the breadth of Morris’s knowledge of the Middle Ages and the debt he owed to the historical science of his day. Similarly I have noted the lasting influence upon him of Cobbeit, Carlyle and Ruskin above all. But this passion for the Middle Ages went back to his earliest childhood. Mackail has justly underlined the archaic traits in the life of the Morris family. He was brought up on Walter Scott and his father introduced him early to the beauty of cathedrals. He devoured books at Marlborough and at Oxford and for a short time lost himself in the mystical
and sensual nostalgia of the High Church trend. This romantic, past-seeking mediaevalism was followed by the escapist mediaevalism of the Pre-Raphaelite phase, expressed in his poetic work up to *The Earthly Paradise*. After that came the more concrete mediaevalism of the Firm’s experiments in handicraft and then the militant mediaevalism of “Anti-Scrape”. This last activity, by showing him the baneful rôle of private interests, contributed to the development of his socialism. From then on, mediaevalism, absorbed into his social outlook, took on two aspects, the first critical, with the Middle Ages serving as a contrast to the bourgeois society he was attacking, the other utopian, to the extent that Morris looked to mediaeval values as the only possible historical inspiration for days to come on the aesthetic, ethical and social levels. It is, of course, this latter aspect which engages our attention at present.

Contrary to ancient art, and even more so to the art which came out of the Renaissance, mediaeval art was “organic art . . . in which people shared”. 124 In this art “the harmonious co-operation of free intelligence was carried to the furthest point which has yet been attained” 125 It was “the work of the associated labour and thought of the people”, 126 and this collective spirit found its most striking expression in the building of cathedrals:

“. . . in which work each knows that his success or failure will exalt or mar the whole; so that each man feels responsible for the whole; of which there is no part unimportant, nor any office degrading; every pair of hands is moved by a mind which is in concert with other minds, but freely and in such a way that no individual intelligence is crushed or wasted: and in such work, while the work grows the workers’ minds grow also; they work not like ants or live machines, or slaves to a machine— but like men”. 127

The obvious indication of this collective passion for fine workmanship is the extraordinary number of splendid buildings relative to the small total of the population of England, which Morris estimates, in the fourteenth century, at four millions, among whom we must naturally reckon “the regular proportion of women, children and idlers”. As we go across England, from one parish or one city to another, we find in each a humble church or a massive structure “the very sight of which fills us with a kind of awe at the patience and skill which produced them”. 128

One of the essential bases for this achievement, which was both individual and collective, was the absence of any division of labour. The mode of production “used the whole of a man for the production of a piece of goods and not small portions of many men; it developed the workman’s whole intelligence according to his capacity, instead of concentrating his energy on one-sided dealing with a trifling piece of work”. 129 In those times, “a man knew his work from end to end, and felt responsible for every stage of its progress”. 128 For this reason, they were all “working, every one of them, more or less as artists”. 128 There was no difference in kind between artisan and artist; all artisans were artists, and “they only differed in degree”. 129

So none among them ever expected to receive “any special reward for the beauty or invention of his work”. Still less did anyone expect the reward of glory. “only a few of those who had very special gifts of hand and brain have so much as left their names behind them”, “no one knows, e.g., the name of the
man who designed Westminster Abbey”, and it is interesting to note, write Morris, that this “work of art which has no individual architect’s name connected with it, and is obviously a work of co-operative art, should be of such unrivalled beauty”. He invites us to “contrast the dungeon-like propriety of St. Paul’s, the work of a ‘famous’ architect, with the free imagination and delicate beauty of the people-built Gothic churches, that were raised by masons who had no architect over them, and who did their work for the reward of a free life, and needed no fame as an extra. It was the collective people, and not a few miraculous individuals who have produced all worthy, that is all genuine, art in the past”. “There was no Plato, or Shakespeare, or Michelangelo amongst these humble folk.” Not a single name of all these creators has survived; “their work only is left, and all that came of it, and all that is to come of it”. More recent historical research has greatly undermined the legend of the anonymous builders of cathedrals, but it is not my purpose here to discuss the validity of Morris’s assertions on the point. They conformed to the beliefs of his time and they were part of a comprehensive view of the past which was not, for him, an end in itself; what counts above all is “all that is to come of it”.

The individual major arts had little place in this collective enthusiasm which left each worker his responsibility, his freedom and his initiative, within his acceptance of the whole plan, but the decorative arts, on the other hand, flourished extraordinarily.

“Substantive art almost disappeared and gave place to a fresh development of adjective art, so rich and copious as to throw into the shade entirely the adjective art of the past, and to fill up the void caused by the waning of substantive art.”

This art of decoration was not slavish, mechanical and monotonous like that of Antiquity and like that of the Renaissance was to be. It was popular in its inspiration as in its execution, it was of enormous human significance and did not allow itself to be bound by any one range of expression:

“Now as there was in it some melancholy and abundant sentiment, so also there was no stint of humour; that liberty or knowledge of necessity which was the mainspring of it insured that: rough but kindly humour is an essential part of all the Gothic of the North at least; a wish to scare nobody away by contempt or pride, a feeling as near as may be the opposite of that which is the motive feeling of the pedantic art of the Renaissance. Here then we have the characteristics of Gothic Art: It was common to the whole people; it was free, progressive, hopeful, full of human sentiment and humour.”

Morris himself gives an imaginary example of popular vengeful humour when he describes the fresco in the church where he talked with John Ball of “the Doom of the last Day, in which the painter had not spared either kings or bishops, and in which a lawyer with his blue coif was one of the chief figures in the group which the Devil was hauling off to hell”.

Precisely because this art was “the work not of individual but collective genius; the expression of a great body of men conscious of their union”, it was not addressed to an élite. The builders and decorators were assured of “a
vast public who could appreciate them; nor could that public have existed but for the constant unconscious education which was going on in those days by means of the ordinary work of the ordinary handicraftsmen." All those things which today appear to be works of art were "common wares, bought and sold in any market", and their beauty "surrounded all life". Art was not only the bond to the co-operation of the producers, but also that which united producer and user in one brotherhood. These artists "had no one but artists to work for, since every one was a potential artist". So every object in everyday use was modelled and decorated with care, "the mind of the workman was allowed full play and freedom in producing it": the price of the article was not thereby increased, because "it was a matter of course that such things should be ornamented, and the ornament was given and not sold". "All people who made anything shared in art, as well as all people who used the things so made", and these things were made "for direct use" and not, as today, "as exchange-wares for the world-market". The artisan "sold them himself to the man who was going to use them". Because of "this direct intercourse between the maker and the consumer of the goods", people in general were "good judges of manufactured wares, and, in consequence, the art, or religion rather, of adulteration was scarcely known". The modern idea of an objet d'art was as inconceivable as that of shoddy goods. "every man that made anything made it a work of art besides a useful piece of goods." Beauty and usefulness were intimately mingled, and the directly human element of manufacture and exchange gave it irreplaceable natural value. This brotherly humanity was made the warmer by the inevitable imperfection of handicraft production, and by the lack of commercial finish which standardises products. Despite any crudeness, "it was always intelligent work, there was a man's mind in it always, and abundant tokens of human hopes and fears, the sum of which makes life for all of us". It expressed "thought and emotion . . . in spite of any rudeness of drawing or shortcoming in knowledge". It was the work of "eager minds not too proud to tell us of their imperfect thoughts".

This flowering of beauty was encouraged by the eternal presence of a natural setting that had not yet been sullied and disfigured by the age of commerce. Even when the artisan lived in a town, "the fields and sweet country come close up to his house, and he at times occupies himself in working in them". In those days everyone was interested in architecture and "the green fields coming close to his own doors". The appearance of the town itself was a work of art, which would encourage the artisan to artistic creativity.

"Consider London of the fourteenth century: a smallish town, beautiful from one end to the other; streets of low white-washed houses with a big Gothic church standing in the middle of it; a town surrounded by walls, with a forest of church towers and spires, besides the cathedral and the abbeys and priories; every one of the houses in it, nay, every shed, bearing in it a certain amount of absolute, definite, distinct conscientious art".

The villages were no less beautiful, with "their churches, some big and handsome, some small and curious, but all crowded with altars and furniture, and gay with pictures and ornaments". There were to be found "many
religious houses, with their glorious architecture; the beautiful manor-houses, some of them castles once, and survivals from an earlier period, some new and elegant". The houses made the streets "lovely to the eye and elevating to the mind; the plan of them was handy and reasonable according to what their inhabitants demanded of a house; so far from blotching a fair landscape with ugliness, they themselves made ... the chief beauty of the landscape". It seems difficult to maintain that all these pictures do not include a degree of idealisation, and Margaret Grennan would seem to be reasonable in accusing Morris, when he described the village visited by John Ball, of drawing a veil over anything offensive to the eyes and producing a picture that is certainly attractive but probably fallacious.

However, one could not claim that Morris's vision of the Middle Ages was inspired by a systematic intention of deliberate idealisation. Despite his enthusiasm, and with great honesty, he did not hesitate to recognise that Middle Ages reality did not resemble paradise.

"I have been astonished when I have looked into the popular art of past ages to find art so refined and elegant done in times so rude and rough: work bearing so many tokens of quick wit and invention done in times so ignorant and superstitious: works showing as many signs of freedom of thought and pleasure in life and external nature in days which seem to us to have been so full of oppression, gloom and turmoil."

He even goes a great deal further, considering that this art which he admires so greatly might have reached a higher level if the social relationships had been different:

"I quite admit that the oppression and violence of the Middle Ages had its effect on the art of those days, its shortcomings are traceable to them; they repressed art in certain directions, I do not doubt that."

In his manual of socialism, a whole chapter is devoted to what he calls "The Rough Side of the Middle Ages", and he sums up his charges as follows:

The shortcomings of the life of the Middle Ages resolve themselves to the main, firstly, to the rudeness of life and absence of material comfort; secondly, to the element of oppression and violence in which men lived; and thirdly, to the ignorance and superstition which veiled so much of our truth from their minds."

Equally severe judgments can be found in all Morris's writings. The Middle Ages was "the most superstitious epoch of the world", a period of "confusion and misery", "barbarous, superstitious, unpeaceful", when "men sat under grinding tyrannies, amidst violence and fear so great, that nowadays we wonder how they lived through twenty-four hours of it". Morris denies being "a mere praiser of past times". He knows that life then "was often rough and evil enough, beset by violence, superstition, ignorance, slavery", and that the only consolation lay in pleasure in work. "Much of what was due to the Life of Man upon Earth" was frequently forgotten. Morris goes so far as to praise Froissart because, in his Chronicles, "he never thinks of softening any enormity of the lordly tyranny which he served." He
himself, in a beautiful story written in 1888, A King's Letter, vigorously denounced the oppression and exploitation to which the peasants were subjected, "labouring for the fruit they should never eat, and the wine they should never drink", living in dread of their lord, eternally condemned to exhausting toil.

Morris recognised all that, and yet the ills which he observed seemed infinitely less serious than those which oppressed the workers of the nineteenth century. There were distressing sights, "but they were caused by the destruction of wares, not as now by the making of them". The Middle Ages knew war and devastation, but, "ruin bore on its face the tokens of its essential hideousness; today it is prosperity that is externally ugly". They knew tyranny, but "the worst tyrants of the days of violence were but feeble tormentors compared with those Captains of Industry who have taken the pleasure of work away from the workmen". If art filled with beauty and hope was able to flourish despite all oppression, it was "because the instruments of that oppression were grossly obvious, and were external to the work of the craftsman". It is supremely important to bear in mind that the oppression was carried on openly, without recourse to the subtle disguises assumed today. The exploitation of the worker "was carried out quite crudely without any concealment or excuse by arbitrary taxation or open violence", he suffered "more from spasmodic arbitrary violence than from chronic legal oppression". The repressive laws were ferocious, but "after all, the Mediaeval folk acted after their conscience ... and they were ready to bear what they inflicted on others, whereas the nineteenth century ones were hypocrites and pretended to be humane". The roughness of life "made people less sensitive to bodily pain than they are now. Their nerves were not so high-strung as ours are, so that the apprehension of torture or death did not weigh heavily upon them ... Death, moreover, to them seemed but a temporary interruption of the course of their life". And are they to be blamed for the roughness of life? "Men do not suffer from the lack of comforts which they have never had before their eyes, and of which they cannot even conceive. There is no degradation in mere external roughness of life". Just as we should find it a hardship to be suddenly transported into the Middle Ages, is it not conceivable that mediaeval man "would probably be as ill at ease amid the 'comforts' of modern London"? This poverty that is so much stressed "must have been something totally unlike and surely far less degrading than the misery of modern Whitechapel, from which not even the faintest scintilla of art can be struck". Ignorance and superstition, too, are relative phenomena: "what to us has become superstition was to them science", and who knows whether our science will not be "the superstition of future times"? As we see, recognition of the negative aspects of the Middle Ages was accompanied by that of many moderating circumstances. At the end of his critical consideration of the centuries gone by, Morris declares: "We do not stand forward as apologists for them except in relation to modern times", but it is quite certain that, in his eyes, the positive aspects heavily tip the balance, and constitute a sum of values more worthy than any other to inspire his utopia.

One must take care not to regard this assessment of values as the culmination of an idealistic approach resembling Ruskin's. For Morris, their nature and their quality do not derive from any mystic force. Mediaeval art could only
have arisen in given social and material conditions. “People have sometimes supposed,” he writes, “that the motive power for it was religious enthusiasm or the spirit of chivalry, whatever that may be, but such theories are now exploded: history has been illuminated since then by careful research.” One might even say that his deep-seated materialism carries him a long way since all he wishes to retain of mediaeval religion is its rejection of any division between the material universe and the heavenly universe: “earth and heaven are not two but one”, declares John Ball, and in News from Nowhere old Hammond sees this feeling of unity as the reason why the men of the Middle Ages “loved and adorned” life upon earth. He clearly tends to minimise the importance of religion, which was a living superstructure, simultaneously influenced by and influencing the development of mediaeval art, to concentrate all his attention upon material conditions and social relationships, but this was undoubtedly because his eyes were turned towards the future as much as towards the past, because his study of the Middle Ages was not aimless, and he was seeking what he needed to find. It must be admitted that on this point however great his mastery of Marxism, he lays himself wide open to the charge of mechanicalism.

Nevertheless, he must be given the credit of having put the consideration of social realities in place of the romantic vision: his Middle Ages is not that of the Pre-Raphaelites. He was above all interested in the lot of the workers, and sought to discover what it was in the conditions of their existence which encouraged such a blossoming of art. Within this society, apparently fixed within a rigid framework, “there was going on a keen struggle of classes which carried with it the hope of progress of those days”: a struggle of serfs, of journeymen, of corporations. However, as Marx and Engels had already indicated in The German Ideology, the class struggle can only reach its full intensity with the advent of large-scale industry. Until then, the outlines of the various social divisions remain vague and overlap, and one is still a long way from the harsh bipolarisation of the industrial era. That is a fact which Morris frequently stresses and that he puts to the credit of mediaeval society. Of all past social arrangements, that is the one least marked by inequality and therefore the most suitable for the development of a great communal art foreshadowing that of the communist age.

Even though violence and despotism were commonplace, and the privileged felt no need of hypocritical manoeuvrings to impose their domination, “the workers were no worse off than now but better”. Despite the general harshness of the conditions of life, “the struggle for livelihood . . . was far less hard than it is at present; considering the prices of necessaries at the time the earnings of both labourers and skilled artisans were far higher than they are now”. Here Morris relies directly upon the works of Thorold Rogers, of whom Marx said that he had written “the first authentic ‘History of Prices’ of the time that we possess”. In the nineteenth century, the working class found itself “in a far worse position as to food, housing and clothing than any but the extreme fringe of the corresponding class in the Middle Ages”. To these more favourable material conditions must be added the greater extent of leisure-time. The mediaeval artisans “worked shorter hours than we do . . . and had more holidays. They worked deliberately and thoughtfully as all artists do”. Every year in those days, there were “downright play-days, and
there were ninety-six obligatory ones". The mediaeval artisan was an independent worker. He "sets to work at his own time, in his own house" and "what ornamentation there shall be on his finished work he himself determines". In this fourteenth century, when there were no electoral rights and no unions, he himself, in friendly collaboration with his fellows, assured his own defence, and, more than once in his life, "he has had to take the bow or brown-bill from the wall ... nor wholly unsuccessfully then". Morris does not seem to have painted an unduly rosy picture of the condition of the mediaeval worker, either urban or rural. The great plague had caused a shortage of labour that favoured a successful protection of wages and standard of living, thus taking the sting out of the restrictive measures of the Statute of Labourers. The situation was particularly good in Kent, and it was with good reason that Morris, who was accurate and serious in his historical documentation, made that the setting of A Dream of John Ball. "Men of Kent," says the rebel priest to the assembled villagers, "I wot well that ye are not so hard bested as those of other shires". This is a typical indication allowing us to define the writer's attitude precisely: he wants a reference, an inspiration; he will not overstep the bounds of history, but he is going to seek out the best he can.

In addition to observing that the lot of the mediaeval artisans was more enviable than that of the workers of the nineteenth century, Morris observes that their way of life did not offer so scandalous a contrast with that of the ruling class as was the case in his own day: "there was more approach to real equality of conditions in spite of the arbitrary distinctions of noble and gentle: churl and villein". This was a consequence of the low level of development of the productive forces:

"... men's desires keep pace with their power over nature, and in those days their desires were comparatively few; the upper class did not live so much more comfortably than the lower; so there were not the same grounds or room for discontent as there are nowadays. A workman then might have liked to possess a canopy of cloth of gold or a big cupboard of plate; whereas now the contrast is no longer between splendour and simplicity, but between ease and anxiety, refinement and sordidness".

The productive capacity of the labourer has, in fact, "multiplied a thousand-fold" without any great rise in his standard of living, but he produces for his employer "a state of luxury of which the old lord of the manor never dreamed". For the well-to-do man the world has progressed; for the labourer it has not. Formerly, the roughness of life was much the same for all; in this respect "there was very little difference between the gentleman and the non-gentleman, and you had to dress them differently from one another in order to distinguish them". Nor was there any feeling of humiliation caused by "violent contrasts of cultivation and ignorance". There again, differences were more arbitrary than real: "there was no such gulf in language, manners and ideas as divides a cultivated middle-class person of to-day, a 'gentleman', from even a respectable lower-class man". Despite the impossibility of crossing the class barriers, other than by way of the Church, "there was no class which was by virtue of its position refined, and none which was mentally degraded by the same virtue". Nor were there any striking contrasts among
the commoners themselves. Because of the very slight division of labour that
who conceived the work lived side by side with those who carried it out.

... the architects of our ancient buildings were not 'gentlemen', living
in offices, surrounded by an army of clerks and draftsmen giving them
work for them, but workmen abiding by the work, helping the masons
and carpenters certainly, directing them no doubt, but paid little more
than they were paid.

Within the guilds, at least during the first phase, before the masters had
become small capitalists, any apprentice could become a master and the
solely temporary hierarchy was all there was. Later things changed, as
with the creation of the class of journeymen, "but it does not seem that the
difference between them and the aristocracy of the guild was anything
more than an arbitrary one.

The craft guilds, in particular, aroused Morris's interest and enthusiasm.
Apart from the love of work well done which they upheld and the enjoyment
of work which they promised, he felt he saw in them a kind of human organiza-
tion which prolonged the highest values of the barbarian past into the Middle
Ages.

"It is remarkable how much the purposes of these early guilds answer
to those of the primitive kindred clan. To a great extent they were what
we should now call benefit societies: they engaged to defend their
members from captivity; to set them up in business again if they were
ruined; to pay their fines if they came into the clutches of the law. They
were also clubs for good fellowship, and also (which again makes an
analogy to the old clans the closer) drew their members together by
the bond of religion, providing the sacrificial feast while our forefathers
were still heathen, and paying for masses for the souls of their members when
Christianity had become the popular religion.

For Morris, the guilds represented the survival of "the tendency of the
Germanic tribes towards co-operation and community of life". He saw them
as evidence of the fact that, in England, their origin came before the Norman
conquest, that "England and Denmark were the least oriental countries in the
development of the guilds, which took root latest and most feebly in the
Lauded countries".

Their political role was considerable; "they were in their early days in
direct opposition to the authority of the period, which saw in them, as it was
well warranted to do, a threat of rebellious progress against the robbery
of the poor and the indigent by the rich and idle". More precisely still, they
aimed at "freeing the individual from the domination and protection of the
feudal lord, and substituting for that domination the authority and mutual
protection of the associated guild-brethren". In a later phase, when the
merchant guilds were breached by the craft guilds, "democratic bodies of
actual workmen", the latter were the "progressive part of the society of the
time". At the beginning of the fourteenth century, "their constitution was
thoroughly democratic; they employed no journeymen and the apprentices
were certain to become masters. The old merchant guilds resisted this new
system with all their might, which explains why Ghost, a manufacturing

Two words about the world we see
And sought but Mine and Thine they be.
Ah! might we drive them forth and wide
With us should rest and peace abide;
All free, nought owned of goods and gear
By men and women though it were
Common to all all wheat and wine
Over the seas and up the Rhine
No man slayer then the wide world o'er
When Mine and Thine are known no more.

Yea, God, well counselled for our health,
Gave all this fleeting earthly wealth
A common heritage to all,
That men might feed them where they will
And clothe their limbs and shoe their feet
And live a simple life and sweet,
But now so rageth greediness
That each desireth nothing less
Than all the world, and all his own;
And all for him and him alone.

These lines, he wrote to his readers in Commonweal, “show how the men of that day longed for the simplest Communism, probably with nearly as much reason amidst the high-handed open violence of ‘kings and scoundrels’ as we have for our longing amidst the fraudulent veiled violence of capitalists and scoundrels”. Far from despising the religious feelings that inspire these hopes, he valued the fraternal unity at the basis of mediaeval religion: “men did then feel themselves to be members each one of them of the great corporate body, the Church in earth and heaven”. The Catholicism of the Middle Ages had “retained ... a certain portion of the this-worldliness and the solidarity of the barbarian society, and so shows on one side a communistic interest in the corporation, whether church, guild, parish, or even monastery”. At that time individualism was still sporadic and it only appeared in all its virulence with Protestantism and the Reformation. But until this end of the Middle Ages “there was indeed a rumour of communism in the air, which even now and again took form in action, and produced such demonstrations as the community of the Munster Anabaptists”: the peasant wars were an outburst of Mediaeval Communism. However, Morris makes only passing references to Thomas Müntzer’s uprising and prefers to base himself upon the great English revolt of 1381. It is strange to observe how he firmly excludes Wat Tyler and Wycliff’s adherents from his story and isolates the personality of John Ball in a kind of apotheosis. This deliberate choice comes from the same desire to select only what he feels to be the positive elements from mediaeval reality, without overstepping the bounds of historical truth. Despite their boldness, the demands presented by the insurrections at Mile End contained nothing suggestive of social subversion: they simply demanded the right for anyone to buy plots of ground at fourpence an acre. But Morris had found in Froissart a short sentence of John Ball’s sermon referring to property held in common. This was all our poet needed to provide the theme for his marvellous picture. It is noticeable, too, how cautiously he moves down this road. The tone of the rebel priest remains prophetic and vague, and the socialism he preaches is agrarian, primitive and imprecise:

“He that soweth shall reap, and the reaper shall eat in fellowship the harvest that in fellowship he hath won ... and the tithe barn shall garner the wheat for all men to eat of when the seasons are untoward, and the raindrift hideth the sheaves in August; and all shall be without money and without price.”

It must be admitted that the “mediaeval communism” to which Morris often referred remains a very imprecise notion, and while he was right to recognise a tendency towards it, he was not justified in describing it as communism, a term which he normally used with full understanding. Some people might be sly enough to establish a case for suggesting that he would have done better with the utopism of the Renaissance, with More’s Utopia in particular.
No doubt he would reply, with some justification, \(^{221}\) that More's communism was both a flowering of and a nostalgia for "mediaeval communism", as well as being a challenge to the headlong individualism of the "new men" who had, by the enclosures, killed the old communal traditions. Morris demands these traditions as an integral part of his utopian birthright, and the fierceness of his detestation of the Renaissance arises from his charge that the Renaissance had brutally disrupted them.

"If the leading element of association in the life of the mediaeval workman could have cleared itself of certain drawbacks, and have developed logically along the road that seemed to be leading it onward, it seems to me it could scarcely have stopped short of forming a true society founded on the equality of labour: the Middle Ages, so to say, saw the promised land of Socialism from afar, like the Israelites, and like them had to turn back again into the desert."

These obstacles "checked the development of the Middle Ages towards Communism"; a progress whose beginnings go back to "the survival of the primitive Communism".

"As the need for the social and political organization of Europe blotted out the religious feeling of the early Middle Ages . . . , so the need for knowledge and the power over material nature swept away the communist aspirations of the fourteenth century, and it was not long before people had forgotten that they had ever existed." \(^{222}\)

But it is pointless to wonder what would have become of this "tendency to equality" if, for example, "Philip van Artevelde and his bold Ghentmen had defeated the French chivalry at Rosebeque . . . , if the stout yeomen of Kent and Essex . . . had had wits not quite so simple as to trust the young scoundrel of a king . . . All this is pleasant fooling, but it is little else", because nothing could put a brake on the development of the productive forces, which was the necessary condition for the birth of capitalism, the very negation of these egalitarian hopes. \(^{223}\)

* * *

Does this imply that Morris hoped to build his utopia upon social structures borrowed from the Middle Ages, or that he was in sympathy with the feudal socialism of nineteenth-century ideologists? Some people have indeed made this claim. Holbrook Jackson places him, along with Carlyle and Ruskin, among the "authoritarians in revolt against forces which are destroying the remnants of a benevolent feudal system which had received its death-blow in the French Revolution, but which they think could be revived in an improved version." \(^{224}\) Victor Dupont sees in News from Nowhere "a feudal structure without a castle . . . a pure and simple return into a past which Marxists regard as gone forever". \(^{225}\) There are even some Marxists who have made similar assertions. Morris's socialism, writes one of them, was "even more regressive then 'sentimental socialism' - it was, in fact, feudal socialism, exposed in the Manifesto". \(^{226}\)

All these categorical assertions seem to betray a certain ignorance of the
A programme of that kind cannot easily be reconciled with that of the advocates of feudalism. "So little do they conceal the reactionary character of their criticism," wrote Marx and Engels, "that their chief accusation against the bourgeois amounts to this: that under the bourgeois régime a class is being developed which is destined to cut up root and branch the old order of society. What they upbraid the bourgeois with is not so much that it creates a proletariat, as that it creates a revolutionary proletariat."  In a letter that was written in a way that oddly parallels this chapter of the Manuale, Morris denounced "reactionary plans for importing the conditions of the production and life of the Middle Ages (wholly misunderstood by them, by the way) into the present system of the capitalist farmer, the great industries, and the universal world-market." It is to his credit that he could react so strongly and lucidly against the immediate influence of Carlyle and Ruskin, and the odds is even greater when a socialist like Hyndman, very close to him, who was always proclaiming his Marxism, could be attracted towards Disraeli and attempt a political flirtation with him. Morris always felt an intense dislike of Disraeli and was not sparing of sarcasm about those who could feel attracted by the ideas of Sybil or Cousin. There are people inclined towards Socialism who haven't got as far as Radicals yet, and think that Tory Democracy might help them, save the mark!  He would certainly have adopted the saying of Jaurès: "Fighting the bourgeois on behalf of the future is revolutionary. Fighting it on behalf of the past is reactionary." Morris did not fight the bourgeois on behalf of the past, but by making use of the past, and the old egalitarian tendencies which he praised were undeniably those which tended to undermine the personal privileges of the ruling class in feudal society.

The forms of mediæval art could not be restored or simply imitated in the conditions of modern life, any more than feudal structures were possible or desirable in the capitalist nineteenth century — and even less so in a socialist society. Contrary to the legend, Morris did not restrict himself to deploving the absurd and sacrilegious restoration of ancient monuments, but took a firm
...as far from being works of harmonious combination as effortless as any artistic work can be, they are, even when most successful, the result of a constant conflict with all the traditions of the time. As a rule the only person connected with a work of architecture who has any idea of what it wanted is the architect himself; and at every turn he has to correct and oppose the habits of the mason, the joiner, the cabinet-maker, the carver, etc., and to try to get them to imitate painfully the habits of the fourteenth-century workmen, and to lay aside their own habits, formed not only from their own personal daily practice, but from the inherited turn of mind and practice of body of more than two centuries at least."

It is really strange that "while we are ready to laugh at the idea of the possibility of the Greek workman turning out a Gothic building, or a Gothic workman turning out a Greek one, we see nothing preposterous in the Victorian workman producing a Gothic one." But, no, it is not possible: "no man, and no body of men, however learned they may be in ancient art, whatever skill in design or love of beauty they may have, can persuade, or bribe, or force our workmen of to-day to do their work in the same way as the workmen of Edward I did theirs." One must have a very false idea of the continuity of history to refuse to admit that cannot be, it is all over! People who lack this understanding "believe that we can do the same sort of work in the same spirit as our forefathers, whereas for good and for evil we are completely changed." That, then, is the essential fact: the spirit has changed. The revivalists can only produce cold and artificial plagiarism devoid of all life. Art can only stem from the life of the workers, free to express collectively their love of life, of the world, and of men, in their work. The Gothic revival, like feudal socialism, is only a reformist patch-up. In order to recover the spirit of Gothic art, like the spirit of mediaeval brotherhood, the very foundations of bourgeois society must be destroyed in order to build a world of fraternal beauty.
Page Arnott remarks that utopia must find a point of reference in the past. The surge of imagination which marked the French Revolution, enamoured of “republican virtues”, made its dreams tangible by way of symbols, and the ancient republics of Rome and Sparta were recalled by the toga and the Phrygian bonnet: “Utopians all look back to a golden age and then project it into the future.”

Morris, as we have seen, did not regard the Middle Ages as a golden age, he recognised their shortcomings and faults; but, when he looked at human history, they seemed to him to be the only period showing positive aspects worthy of inspiring his utopia. His choice was dictated, not by romantic sentimentality or a love of the picturesque, but by aesthetic, moral and social analysis, based upon undeniable historical knowledge, whose single fault was certainly selectivity and consequently partiality. After all, Morris’s mediaevalism was not a personal or original characteristic. The same tendency was to be seen throughout English literature in the nineteenth century, from the Gothic novel to Yeats. In differing degrees and in contradictory ways it expressed the non-conforming inspirations of that literature. Mediaevalism gave a shape to the revulsion aroused by industrial ugliness, by the utilitarianism of Gradgrind and the Manchester School, the insolent mediocrity of Podsnap and the hypocrisy of Pecksniff. It was to be expected that the inhuman rule of money should inspire a nostalgic regret for the human relationships destroyed by the coming of large-scale capitalism in the petty bourgeoisie that was crushed, the landed aristocracy that was threatened, the dispossessed country folk, the ruined artisans and the working class reduced to poverty. Mediaevalism had sustained the aesthetic escapism of Keats and the Pre-Raphaelites, as well as social criticism which was radical with Cobbett, and aristocratic and pro-feudal with Kingsley, Carlyle and Ruskin. But even in its most reactionary form mediaevalism was anti-bourgeois. Poets and novelists, mostly from the middle social layers, rose up against the lack of culture and humanity of their own class, or were rejected by it. They became the natural spokesmen for the general unrest, and preached the lost paradise which was the natural antithesis of industrial civilisation. Marx and Engels themselves, even while they stressed the progressive, revolutionary rôle of the bourgeoisie, echoed the preoccupations of their time, even using phraseology dear to Carlyle in the Manifesto:

“The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his ‘natural superiors’, and has left no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous ‘cash payment’. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth in exchange value and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms has set up that single, unconscionable freedom – Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation veiled by religious and political illusions it has submitted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.

The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physi-
can, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourers.

The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation. 196

Morris's language is identical, and he clearly had the *Manifesto* in mind. "Honour, piety, beauty, pleasure, hope, all must be cast into that invariable maw. 197 How is one to blame the Pre-Raphaelites, he says, for having turned away from the sight of the modern world? Since the artist has to give form to his imagination, why should he not prefer "the raiment of some period in which the surroundings of life were not ugly but beautiful"? Only in this way will he feel "at his back in the form of history anything like that traditional combined idea of Art which once was common to the whole people". 198

Morris's originality lies in his not having been satisfied with mediaevalism based upon escapism or purely negative social criticism, and his own social criticism was free from all reactionary Romanticism. It was not an arbitrary and nostalgic mediaevalism 199 but the raw material for the production of utopian values. "We should," he confided to his son-in-law Sparling, "learn from the Middle Ages what it alone is able to teach us, not revive or imitate it through indiscriminating admiration, and less yet condone its defects of any kind for the sake of its picturesqueness. We should study it in order to find out for our own guidance what conditioned the lofty standard of work to which it attained, and learn how to re-knit the broken threads of tradition, then intact, applying our discoveries to the daily work of our own day, adapting them where necessary to our increased mechanical powers and wider desires." 200

The architecture of the future, in particular, will find its inspiration in Gothic art. 201 "The form, as well as the spirit, must be Gothic; an organic style cannot spring out of an eclectic one, but only from an organic one. The Gothic style is the only one "on which it is possible to found a true living art, which is free to adapt itself to the varying conditions of social life, climate, and so forth". Unlike classical art, which can only be pedantic and unvarying imitation, it is the only one with "capacities for fresh developments". 202 It is this adaptability, born of its constantly renewed and tirelessly creative inner life, which makes it the art of the future as well as the art of the past: "it was flexible to a degree yet undreamed of in any previous style of architecture, and had no difficulties in dealing with any useful purpose, any material or climate". 203

Its development in a society no longer fettered in any way will enable it to express the new realities with greater ease and beauty. Mediaeval art was unable to achieve its full stature because of the brutality and tyranny which then existed, but, "when we shake off the present oppression as we shook off the old, we may expect the art of the days of real freedom to rise above that of those old violent days". 204 It is not a vain dream, because new man, in his regained freedom, will be transformed, and in his art he will express a nobility of feeling as yet unknown:

"... such an art once was in times that were worse than these, when there was less courage, kindness, and truth in the world than there is now; such an art there will be hereafter, when there will be more courage, kindness and truth than there is now in the world". 205
It is remarkable that Morris should have arrived at this vision of the nature of history and the purpose of the future rendered in a formal sense to the mind by the poet. In the poet, the mind of the Ovidian and Chaucerian dreamer of a distant world, the attitude of the modern poet towards the future is revealed. The poet, in his own time, was the seer who, through the visions of his imagination, was able to see the future as it was to be. He was in a sense the prophet of the future, for he was able to see the world as it was to be, and to guide the course of events towards that end.

The vision of the future is not one of mere anticipation, but of the realization of the possibilities of the present. The poet is not merely a dreamer, but one who is able to bring the future into being. The poet is the artist who is able to create the future, and who is able to guide the course of events towards that end. The poet is the seer who is able to see the world as it is to be, and to guide the course of events towards that end.

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So Morris’s mediaevalism is an act of militant utopism. But does a return view of the past not tend to distort? The risk is unavoidable, and the utopian recognises it:

"It is possible to succeed in a manner in portraying to ourselves the life of past times: that is, our imaginations will show us a picture of the past which may include such accurate information as we may have of them. But though this may be a vivid delineation, and though the information may be just, yet it will not be a picture of what really took place; it will be made up of the present which we experience, and the past which our imagination drawing from our experience, conceives of—in short, it will be our picture of the past."

Conversely, the vision of the future after which the utopist is striving is not at all achievable in terms of the present and of the past seen as if through a prism:

"...his palace of days to come can only be constructed from the aspirations forced upon him by his present surroundings, and from his dreams of the life of the past, which themselves cannot fail to be more or less unsubstantial imaginings."

Such an admission is not accompanied by any sense of guilt. It is a lucid expression of a fact and a description of a thought process. However much confidence Morris felt in the competence of the historians of the nineteenth century, and however great his gratitude for the progress they had made in the understanding of the Middle Ages, the picture which we have is only approximately true and cannot be either neutral or disinterested. His scale of mediaeval values reflects a definite motive and the important thing is that his search has borne fruit: this is how he sees it and why he believes that the Middle Ages "will leave its mark on future ages".271

How is this passionate adoption of mediaeval values to be reconciled with a refusal to turn the clock back? Morris overcomes this contradiction in a thoroughly Marxist fashion. His mediaevalism, which was successively historical, aesthetic, critical and utopian, rises to a higher level and becomes dialectical.

More than once I have referred to the constant recurrence of Morris’s sense of the continuity of history. This concept is not a vague or sentimental abstraction. It is defined in his mind as unchanging laws, the existence of which is continually hidden from our notice by the contradictory events which constitute the very movement of history: "the process of evolution is building up with one hand while it pulls down with the other, so that revolution does not always mean reconstruction".272 This constant contradiction means that nothing can stand still and it inevitably sets us off on the search for new solutions:

"The hopes for the social life of the future are involved in its struggles in the past; which indeed, since they have built up the present system, and created us out of its conflict towards fresh change, have really forced us, whether we will or not, into our present position of seeking still further change."273
This idea, which is at the heart of Morris’s historical thinking, is perhaps not expressed here in a very felicitous way, despite its fundamental importance: while the joint drafting by Morris and Bax of the handbook of socialist theory was fruitful in many ways, there are times when it illustrates the difficulties of working with a collaborator whose thinking was often muddled. The thinking of Morris by himself allows us to see more clearly what he is driving at, and this is how he describes the movement of history in a lecture which is one of his richest in content:

"... inchoate order in the remotest times, varying indeed among different races and countries, but swayed always by the same laws, moving ever forward towards something that seems the very opposite of that which it started from, and yet the earlier order never dead but living in the new, and slowly moulding it to a recreation of its former self."\(^{27b}\)

This continuity, embracing the successive forms of the "negation of the negation", provides the essential theme of A Dream of John Ball, which could well carry as sub-title one of its chapter headings: "I’ll would change be at whiles were it not for the change beyond the change."\(^{27a}\) He who fights for the fellowship of mankind, declares the rebel priest, "shall not fail though he seem to fail today, but in days hereafter shall he and his work yet be alive, and men shall be holpen by them to strive again";\(^{27a}\) and the poet himself, both witness of and participant in the mediaeval battle, equipped with a knowledge of later history and utopian thinking about a much greater theoretical experience than John Ball’s, allows his mind to range over a long perspective:

"I pondered all these things, and how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out to be not what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name."\(^{27a}\)

It is an astonishing quotation if one reflects that, at the moment when A Dream of John Ball was appearing by instalments in Commonweal, Engel was publishing Ludwig Feuerbach in two issues of Neue Zeit, and in it one finds:

"That which is willed happens but rarely; in the majority of instances the numerous desired ends cross and conflict with one another, or these ends themselves are from the outset incapable of realisation or the means of attaining them are insufficient ... The ends of the actions are intended, but the results which actually flow from these actions are not intended, or when they do seem to correspond to the end intended, they ultimately have consequences quite other than those intended."\(^{27a}\)

Does such a coincidence of thought and expression arise from chance? I venture to doubt it. It seems to me that the internal evidence is too emphatic for it to be possible to deny the truly Marxist origins of Morris’s dialectics. But this is not the last of our surprises.

It was not enough for Morris to rediscover the dialectical law which governs the evolution of society, however hidden it may be beneath the cloak of random chance. He had to follow the reasoning to its end and reach a conclusion capable of forming a theoretical basis for his utopia. Well before his first
reading of Capital he sensed the problem, though he only found a negative solution to it. In a lecture given in 1880, he said to his listeners:

"No man has any right to say that all this has been done for nothing, that all the faithful unwearying strife of those that have gone before us shall lead us nowhither; that mankind will but go round and round in a circle for ever." 279

But at that time he could go no further than this denial of going round and round forever. Then, suddenly, in the Notes accompanying the Manifesto of the Socialist League, signed jointly by Morris and Bax, we find these extraordinary lines in paragraph C:

"All progress, every distinctive stage of progress, involves a backward as well as a forward movement; the new development returns to a point which represents the older principles elevated to a higher plane; the old principle reappears transformed, purified, made stronger, and ready to advance on the fuller life it has gained through its seeming death. As an illustration (imperfect as all illustrations must be) take the case of advance on a straight line and on a spiral, – the progress of all life must be not on the straight line but on the spiral." 280

While the style of this passage seems to be that of Morris, the idea expressed is probably that of Bax, who directly echoes Engels. However, we must not overlook the fact that, when the Manifesto of the League was being written, there was not yet any cloud over the relationship between Morris and Engels, so I have no reason to assert that he may not have received the idea direct. What is remarkable in any case, is that this formulation of spiral development did not figure in any Marxist text that Morris could have read in 1885. There is a reference to it in Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, and a French translation by Paul Lafargue (the first to be published of this fragment of Anti-Dühring) did appear in 1880, but it was only a brief reference, and not very explicit to a non-expert reader. 281 This pamphlet certainly contained a useful critique of Hegelian dialectics, expressed in quite simple terms and not explicitly defining any of the fundamental principles of dialectical materialism. The theory is only to be found, formulated briefly and clearly, in Dialectics of Nature, at which Engels was working, without ever referring to it, which he did not have time to finish and which did not appear in print until 1925. 282 It needed the genius of Lenin for the formulation to be rediscovered and developed by him in his theory of knowledge. 283 As for Morris, he could only have acquired it by hearing it spoken by Bax or by Engels himself.

I do not think anyone will contradict me when I say that the spread of any real appreciation of dialectical materialism is relatively recent, and it is immensely to the poet's credit that he achieved it in the eighties. None of his comrades in the struggle appears to have reached this theoretical level other than Bax, and in his case a reading of what he wrote tempts me to think that he was just a vehicle and hardly made any personal use of this tool of thought. His dominating tendency is uninspired mechanism. One striking thing is the tiny number of critics who have appreciated the dialectical quality of Morris's thinking. Truly, the majority of them have been either anti-Marxist or simply ignorant about Marxism. The tone seems to have been set by Bernard Shaw.
"... the dialectic, though it may have been a convenient instrument of thought a hundred years ago for a German university student soaked in Hegelianism, can now only make Communist thinking difficult and unconvincing. Morris put all that aside instinctively as the intellectual trifling it actually is."

The same knell tolls in most studies devoted to Morris. To content myself with one typical example, Victor Dupont alleges that "his attempt at intellectual discipline and total acceptance of the Marxist texts ... was burdensome ... for him. He seems ill at ease, he struggles, contradicts himself, and on occasion frees himself by a sort of outburst of his own, precisely à propos of dialectical materialism". It is true that, according to Victor Dupont, dialectics is defined by "the triad thesis-antithesis-synthesis". So it is scarcely surprising that he had difficulty in detecting the Marxist in Morris. There is more interest in the criticisms coming from the other direction, notably that made by E. P. Thompson, the poet's most eminent interpreter, of not having "emphasized sufficiently the ideological rôle of art, its active agency in changing human beings and society as a whole". While, he adds, "this dialectical understanding of change, growth and decay was ever-present in his writing, he saw man's economic and social development always as the master-process, and tended to suggest that the arts were passively dependent upon social change". This reproach seems to me to call for two observations, one theoretical, the other factual. In his well-known letter to Joseph Bloch, Engels clearly indicates that superstructures "also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form". But he also recalled that, "according to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life". This is exactly Morris's position. While it is true that he has a tendency to be mechanistic about religion and not recognise its active rôle, that is not true where art is concerned. We have observed how he regarded it, particularly in its utopian form, as a mobilising factor in the class struggle.

Let us call a halt to this apparent digression, and come back to the point where we left Morris's approach. Note C of the Manifesto of the League does not express a neophyte's complacent acceptance of ideas conveyed by Bax. On the contrary, it seems that the theory of the spiral was a real revelation for him that slowly determined the whole direction of his thinking. We find proof of it in this outstanding passage from a lecture delivered four years later:

"Past times: are we reactionists, then, anchored in the dead past? Indeed I should hope not, nor can I altogether tell you how much of the past is really dead. I see about me now evidences of ideas recurring which have long been superseded. The world runs after some object of desire, strives strenuously for it, gains it, and apparently casts it aside; like a kitten playing with a ball, you say. No, not quite. The gain is gained, and something else has to be pursued, often something which once seemed to be gained and was let alone for a while. Yet the world has not gone back, for that old object of desire was only gained in the past as far as the circumstances of the day would allow it to be gained then. As a consequence the gain was imperfect; the times are now changed, and
allow us to carry on that old gain a step forward to perfection: the world has not really gone back on its footsteps, though to some it has seemed to do so. Did the world go back, for instance, when the remnants of the ancient civilisations were overwhelmed by the barbarism which was the foundation of modern Europe? We can all see that it did not. Did it go back when the logical and orderly system of the Middle Ages had to give place to the confusion of incipient commercialism in the sixteenth century? Again, ugly and disastrous as the change seems on the surface, I yet think it was not a retrogression into prehistoric anarchy, but a step upward along the spiral, which, and not the straight line, is, as my friend Bax puts it, the true line of progress.

So that if in the future that shall immediately follow on this present we may have to recur to ideas that to-day seem to belong to the past only, that will not be really a retracing of our steps, but rather a carrying on of progress from a point where we abandoned it a while ago. On that side of things, the side of art, we have not progressed; we have disappointed the hopes of the period just before the time of abandonment: have those hopes really perished, or have they merely lain dormant, abiding the time when we, or our sons, or our sons’ sons, should quicken them once more?285,286

Any comment would be superfluous. Morris excels at stating clearly what others oddly attempt to confuse. Bearing in mind the poet’s modesty, we can take it as certain that, despite Bax’s invaluable service in the transmission of ideas, it was better for them to be expressed by someone possessing a less woolly mind than his. From Morris’s pen, after all, they take on a personal, concrete form; they provide the final solution to his own problems as utopist and artist, the theoretical expression of long-matured aesthetic thinking.

From the time of his first public lecture in 1877, the question of artistic creation occupied his attention, and it is striking to see how utopian considerations already filled his thinking. “I do not think that any man,” he said, “but one of the highest genius could do anything in these days without much study of ancient art, and even he would be much hindered if he lacked it.” But it was by no means a question of imitating or reproducing that art: the alternatives were “to have either no art at all, or an art which we have made our own”. And that should not be the end of our concern. The present era was not propitious for the development of art; it was also necessary “to keep alive some tradition, some memory of the past, so that the new life when it comes may not waste itself more than enough in fashioning wholly new forms for its new spirit.”287 And three years later he repeated that we have “to guard traditions of time past that we may not one day have to begin anew from the beginning with none to teach us”.291

During this first period he clung to tradition and, at the same time, feared it; it should not affect the artist of today more than “is natural for one who practises an art which is alive, growing, and looking toward the future”.288 He still feared that his meaning would be misinterpreted as an invitation to dull imitat

Burne-Jones tells us that all his life he hated the copying of ancient work as unfair to the old and stupid for the present, only good for inspiration and hope”.289 Morris recognised the difficulty which this involved for the artist. “It
takes a man of considerable originality,” he wrote, “‘to deal with the old examples and get what is good out of them, without making a design which lays itself open distinctly to the charge of plagiarism.’” In his opinion, that is what the Pre-Raphaelites did achieve, “‘steeped through and through with the manner and ideas of the great Italian painters and their forerunners’; for that very reason they were “‘able to produce their beautiful and, paradox as it may seem, original works’”. 294 That demands a constant and ever-new elaboration of tradition: “‘They must help us to produce something which has not been produced before’”, and only in this way will we have “‘not mannerists, but original artists’”. 295 In fact, “‘every real work of art, even the humblest, is inimitable’”. 296 And Morris indefatigably recommended young students to “‘study antiquity, make your own art, and do not steal it’”. 297

The definitive key to the problem of aesthetic creation is a sense of history, and as early as 1879 he was expressing hopes of “‘an architectural style, the growth of its own times, but connected with all history’”. 298 When he reached maturity he had clarified his theoretical understanding by long pondering over the mediaeval inspiration of the art of the future, and he was able to give final form to the problem that he had been turning over for years:

“‘... the style of architecture will have to be historic in the true sense; it will not be able to dispense with tradition; it cannot begin at least without doing something quite different from anything that has been done before; yet whatever the form of it may be, the spirit of it will be in sympathy with the needs and aspirations of its own time, not simulation of needs and aspirations passed away. Thus it will remember the history of the past, make history in the present, and teach history in the future’” 299

Taking into account the laws of history and the conscious acceptance of the most precious values of the past, what will be the spirit and forms of the original, creative art of centuries yet to come? Morris avoids any dogmatic or detailed anticipation, confining himself to laying down a few principles which he mostly defines negatively.

Between form and spirit, the determining factor is spirit. “‘I warn you against supposing,’” he says, “‘... that you will do any good by attempting to revivify art by dealing with its dead exterior. I say it is the aims of art that you must seek rather than the art itself.’” 300 Art, then, has an important function and cannot be an idle pastime. Once his social conscience was aroused, Morris no longer allowed himself to regard it as such: “‘to write verse for the sake of writing is a crime in a man of my years and experience’”. 301 His attitude was the same in the visual sphere. He rejected “‘colour for colour’s sake’”, mastery over one’s materials must not become a mere demonstration of skill: “‘You must not make it your slave, or presently you will be a slave also. You must master it so far as to make it express a meaning.’” Otherwise, “‘you will not make a work of art, but a mere toy; you are no longer an artist, but a juggler ... To have a meaning and to make others feel and understand it, must ever be the aim and end of our Western art.’” Morris sharply dissociated himself from the aestheticism which seemed to be engulfing his time and denounced that “‘piece of slang that does not mean the harmless thing it seems to mean – art for art’s sake’”. 302 He had followed the reverberations of the lawsuit between
Ruskin and Whistler in 1878, after which the latter’s attitude had hardened. In 1885 he made an aggressive defence of uncommitted art in his famous ‘
Art and Industry’ Lectures. This lecture, full of more or less veiled jeering references to the influence of Morris, defined the artist, from prehistoric times, as a ‘soulful
dreamer’, already irretrievably cut off from the mass of his fellows, and refusing them any responsibility. Morris held aloof from personal controversy, but the next year, in a lecture that remained in manuscript, he set out a phraseology similar to Whister’s, the origins of popular art and its collective nature from the most remote ages. In his typewritten thesis, which constitutes an excellent critical introduction to a number of hitherto unpublished lectures, Eugene Dennis Le Mire very accurately pinpoints the part of the lectures where Morris replies directly to Whister. It would be, I consider, superfluous to recapitulate this lucid analysis, so, without dwelling any further, I refer to the incident simply to indicate that Morris’s attitude was bound to harden, and his later writings show how it did. He spoke for artists who strive for most of their lives “to get hold of some ‘style’” and who, when they think that they have achieved this, are so intoxicated with the means that they forget the end and discover that they have nothing more impressive than their satisfaction over the possession of an imperfect instrument. Such people will maintain “that art has no other function but the display of clever executive qualities, and that one subject is as good as another”. This “production of beauty for beauty’s sake” can only lead to “affectation and effeminacy”, and it is to be hoped that, in future times, art will again be, as it was in the great times of the past, a vehicle for expressing great collective feelings.

What must at all costs be jettisoned is the individualist mentality born of the laissez-faire of the mercantile age. “It was the collective people, and not a few miraculous individuals who have produced all worthy, that is all genuine, art in the past.” In a society where the majority of the population, enslaved by the profit motive, leads a deprived and brutalising existence, art can only exist sporadically, in restricted circles, and “it is only when beauty produced by man becomes rare that we take to defying its producers”. Such a situation, as well as being harmful to the community that is deprived of any part in art, is not less so for the artists, who are themselves “injured and thwarted, and deprived of due sympathy by the lack of co-operative art”. They must be apart, as though they were the “possessors of some sacred mystery”, and this isolation makes them “shy, over-sensitive and narrow, or else cynical and mocking, and in that case well-nigh useless”. All this “makes his work feverish and dreamy, or crabbed and puerile”. Art must stop being “a kind of superstition of civilization a sort of magic growth of certain morbid intellects”. “It is not absolutely necessary,” declared Morris to the students of the Macclesfield School of Art and Science, “you should become great men, there is no necessity for that. What you have to try to be is not great but genuine men, which is both absolutely necessary to being great and absolutely necessary in any case.” The poet had no illusions about the possibility of transforming art before changing the basis of society, however good one’s intention and however clear one’s mind: “a reform in art which is founded on individualism must perish with the individuals who have set it going.”
Nothing aroused his indignation so much as the legend which holds social deprivation to be necessary for the blossoming of genius:

"Or do you think, as some do, that it is not ill that a hundred thousand harmless people should be boiled down on the fire of misery to make one single glorious great man? I honestly believe that there are people who are fools enough to think that I answer plainly, great men are nourished on no such soup, though pigs may be, it is the happiness of the people that produces the blossom of genius. But even if it were so I should say that I would rather have a hundred thousand happy persons than one genius made up of murder." 155

This rejection of the cult of the individual carried Morris a long way and led him to regard decorative art, which is popular and co-operative in its conception, as more important than individual art, sculpture or painting at the casel. At present, we are witnessing the wasting of talent. Many painters achieve mediocre results because they "are, in fact, good decorative workmen spoiled by a system which compels them to ambitious individualist effort, by cutting off from them any opportunity for co-operation with others of greater or lesser capacity for the production of popular art". Morris does not reject what he calls "intellectual art", but he observes that there has been a close link between the two kinds of art during all the periods when art was healthy. There was not the barrier between them which today makes the painter a member of a liberal profession, a gentleman, while the decorative artist is a wage-earner.156 The belittlement of the worker extends to decorative art, and "what is left of art is rallied to its citadel of the highest intellectual art, and stands at bay there": 316 there it wilts and "that higher art produced only by great brains and miraculously gifted hands" will only be able to grow strong again in so far as there exists a popular art which will infuse it with its own vigour. In fact, Morris's attitude, while not strictly speaking contradictory, is not altogether clear; sometimes he tends to associate the two forms and sometimes he sets one against the other. His own calling and his anti-individualist socialism join forces; they appear to strengthen each other and lead him to take less and less interest in the nobler arts. There were very few pictures on the walls at Kelmscott House. 316 Once he was no longer under the influence of Rossetti, he stopped going to picture galleries and frequently showed a preference for murals and tapestry. According to a remark passed on to Mackail by Burne-Jones, Morris felt uncomfortable at seeing the feeling of a picture concentrated in the faces, and would rather have it diffused over all parts of the artistic composition; it is certainly a characteristic reaction. Mackail acutely remarks that it is for this same reason that there are so few truly memorable lines in all his poetic output. 317 Sir Sydney Cockerell has recorded in his diaries other remarks of Morris's with the same sense: the poet maintaining that the only perfect work of art was a fine building cleanly decorated; and expressing his disregard for pictures. 318 This was always a matter for friendly disagreement between him and Burne-Jones, who, during a journey in Italy, chided him for being more interested in olive-trees and pottery than in painting, to which Morris, with the self-deprecation that was characteristic of him, replied that "I understand more of pots than of pictures." 319 We have seen how sculpture and painting find a place in the
great public buildings of the future in his utopia, but, on the subject of pictorial art, he felt that he must add:

"... the circumstances of a society free from chronic war, public, corporate, and private, cannot fail to affect this art largely, at least in its subjects, and probably will reduce its independent importance."

The elimination of individualism from art goes hand in hand with the whole people having access to culture. "I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few." There is to be an end to self-styled élites. Art will cease to "live this poor thin life among a few exceptional men, despising those beneath them for which they themselves are responsible, for a brutality that they will not struggle with," 325 It will cease to be a pastime "practised by a few for a few, adding a little interest, a little refinement to the lives of those who have come to look upon intellectual interest and spiritual refinement as their birthright." 326 No one will commit the fatal mistake of confusing art with luxury any more. What can there be to an art which survives only "by the action ... of a few groups of specially gifted men and their small circle of admirers amidst a general public incapable of understanding or enjoying their work"? 327 It cannot be anything other than "contemptible and dishonourable, a rag of luxury and folly." 328 The worship of élites is a class ideology, quite foreign to any artistic ideal: "those who look upon art as merely a handmaid to the luxury of rich and idle people, do not understand what it means." 329

In a classless society, art will recover its human quality. "It is this manly reverence for the life of man past and present and to come which is the foundation of all art." 330 That is exactly why it "must be shared by all," 331 The example of the Middle Ages proves to us that "the collective genius of a people working in free but harmonious co-operation is far more powerful for the production of architectural art than the spasmodic efforts of the greatest individual genius." 332 "What we want," writes Morris, "is to extinguish not the artist, but the artisan, by destroying the flattery-craving flunky in the one, and the brutal toil-worn slave in the other, so that they may both be men, in which case they must be artists in one way or other, that is, they must take an interest in life." 333 Access to culture and art for the whole people is not a figment of the mind: all men "have imagination in some measure, and also have some of the order which guides it" and they will find that "their due audience is the whole race of man properly and healthily developed." 334 Not only is art for all a possibility, but it will be "a good thing which all can share, which will elevate all"; 335 in times to come, art will be "of the people, for the people, and by the people." 336

Since it will be created by the people and addressed to the whole people, art will use language within the reach of all. Today, shut up in a sort of ghetto, "the artists are obliged to express themselves ... in a language not understood of the people." 337 Some painters produce pictures "whose meaning we can only guess at, and suppose that they are intended to convey the impression on a very short-sighted person of divers ugly incidents seen through the medium of a London fog" 338 The art of which Morris dreams will "be as a language that all can understand". 339 "It will not be an esoteric mystery shared by a little band of superior beings; ... it will be a part of every life, and
a hindrance to none." One may be tempted to wonder whether Morris has not simplified his conception to the extent of visualising an art which excludes all boldness, all questioning, all experimentation; is it not potentially a kind of Zhdanovism? And is there not also a slight trace of that working-class snobbery to which his bourgeois origin made him an easy prey? Such questions naturally come to mind, but they may well be incautious in so far as we ask them in terms of our own days. To answer them we must recall the state of culture in the nineteenth century and remember that the cultural separation between the ruling class (or the enlightened part of it) and the bulk of the working population was then practically complete. To bridge this gulf, even as a long-term objective, must have seemed to a utopist a much more enormous task than it does to us today, requiring a suitable climate and facilities for access. Let us do Morris the justice of recognising that, despite the imperious optimism that went with his appreciation of the difficulties, he never leaned towards "proletarian culture". Finally, we must consider the part played by temperament: in visual creativity, as in poetry and political writing, Morris always displayed natural clarity, and a taste for simplicity which by no means excluded artistic richness. No doubt (and he made no secret of it) his utopia is cast in his own image, which is the limitation of all utopias, but a personality of his stature pushes back the usual limits. His faith in the future is even greater than it appears at first glance; did he not, perhaps, reply to our questions, which may be unjustified questions, when he wrote that, in the society of the future, "the man of the most refined occupation, student, artist, physician, what not, shall be able to speak to him who does the roughest labour in a tongue that they both know, and to find no intricacy of his mind misunderstood"?

Such is the spirit in which Morris foresaw the art of the future. I have sketched its general characteristics without laying undue stress upon those which have figured prominently in my earlier analysis and which constitute the principal themes of all Morris's work. He has defined them himself by his opposition to the deformed monstrosities which he saw in the art produced by the Renaissance and by capitalism. He prudently refuses to venture further than generalisations, though he is sometimes more definite, on the rare occasions when he does give some positive guide-lines. These apply primarily to the visual arts whose qualities and functions seem to him to be as follows:

"1st. The embodiment in art of some vision which has forced itself on the artist's brain. 2nd. The creation of some lovely combination of colour and form. 3rd. The setting forth of a faithful portraiture of some beautiful, characteristic, or historical place, or of some living person worthy to be so portrayed; in either case so as to be easily recognisable by a careless observer, and yet to have a reserve of more intimate facts for a careful one. 4th. Mastery over material; the production of a finished and workmanlike piece, as perfect in all ways as the kind of work admits of. - Or more briefly: 1st. Expression of imagination. 2nd. Decorative beauty. 3rd. Realization of Nature. 4th. Skill of execution." 340

To some people today such a definition of art may seem limiting or even retrograde. The pictorial realism demanded by Morris seems excessive to us, and we cannot help feeling somewhat embarrassed when we think of the
academic attitudes to which it has led in some socialist countries. But one
must certainly not judge Morris's intentions in the light of these dogmatic
mistakes, which the poet would certainly have condemned. On his part there
was a perfectly healthy reaction against the theories of art for art's sake, for he
could see its decadent, bourgeois, formalistic and sterile nature. On the con-
trary, he wanted art to be reinvigorated by a popular breath of liberty,
simplicity and natural development. What he rejected was artificiality.

"though a designer may put all strangeness and surprise into his
patterns, he must not do so at the expense of beauty... The fertile man,
be of resource, has not to worry himself about invention. He need but
think of beauty and simplicity of expression; his work will grow on and
on, one thing leading to another, as it fares with a beautiful tree.
Whereas the laborious paste-and-scissors man goes hunting up and
down for oddities, sticks one on here and another there, and tries to con-
nect them with commonplace, and when it is all done, the oddities are
not more inventive than the commonplace, nor the commonplace more
graceful than the oddities." 141

Neither commonplace nor contrivances, but a return to that great collective
inspiration which produced the masterpieces of human culture.

"All organic art, all art that is genuinely growing, opposed to
rhetorical, retrospective, or academical art, art which has no real growth
in it, has two qualities in common: the epical and the ornamental. 6 140

In News from Nowhere, utopian practicality induced Morris to apply his
aesthetic theories with less strict austerity, just as he did in the personal prac-
tice of his art. The ornamentation of the pipe and tobacco pouch, which so
much astonished the visitor, expressed a familiar joy in living. But this same
joy in living inspired the great epic and decorative architectural achieve-
ments of the communist age.

While Morris is content with bold strokes to indicate the general direction of
this art of times to come, his reserve is even greater when it comes to its forms.
One thing alone seems certain to him, and that is that this world that is to be
built will be splendid: to find beauty, we have to look backward and ahead. 141
Much more, the art of days to come "will outgo the art of the past in the degree
that life will be more pleasurable from the absence of bygone violence and
tyranny." 15 In what forms will this beauty be displayed? Is it important to
know that at present?

"For my part I believe, that if we try to realize the aims of art without
much troubling ourselves what the aspects of the art itself shall be, we
shall find that we shall have what we want at last: whether it be called
art or not, it will at least be life; and, after all, that is what we want." 141

So we must not hope to find plentiful pointers from Morris's pen.
Nevertheless, there is one such which calls for our attention as casting light
upon his temperament. Art, he thinks, will not deal in abstraction or pure in-
tellectualism.

"... healthy bodily conditions, a sound and all round development of the
senses, joined to the due social ethics which the destruction of slavery
will give us, will, I am convinced, as a matter of course give us the due art
and literature, whatever that due may turn out to be. Only, if I may
prophecy ever so little, I should say that both art and literature, and es-
pecially art, will appeal to the senses directly, just as the art of the past
has done."

They will be, he adds, "at once sensuous and human". This healthy
sensualism is all the more logical in his predictions because "the new art will
come to birth among the handicrafts" that is to say, in the joy in work in its
most everyday form.

For the rest, Morris avoids any more definite description. In News from
Naushehe he could not, of course, resist the temptation to give visual reality to
his dream. One might even say that this has served him ill, since the average
reader is sure that the costumes of the characters and the architecture described
are strictly mediaeval in form. In fact, one is left with this impression if one
loses sight of the fact that the poet was not following a model, but the only
standard of reference at his disposal. However, he did take certain precautions
and it would be wrong not to notice them sufficiently. Admittedly, the dresses
of the pretty girls who welcome the visitor to the Guest House are "somewhat
between that of the ancient classical costume and the simpler forms of the
fourteenth-century garments", but Morris hastens to add that they were
"clearly not an imitation of either". In the same way, the great public
buildings in Hammersmith "embrace the best qualities of the Gothic of
northern Europe with those of the Saracenic and Byzantine" styles, but he also
adds that "there was no copying of any one of these styles". Old Hammond
is categorical: "You must not suppose," he says, "that the new form of art was
founded chiefly on the memory of the art of the past. That is why Morris
watches himself whenever he can. The most splendid buildings in twenty-
second-century England are to be found in the City, but we do not visit
them and their styles remain shrouded in mystery. In the same way, the
beauty of the crockery and glassware in the Bloomsbury dining hall is only
suggested by cautious adjectives.

He shows the same prudence in his lectures, even when he cannot resist
dreaming and supposing:

"It may lead us into new splendours and beauties of visible art:
to architecture with manifold magnificence free from the curious in-
completeness and failings of that which the older times have produced—
to painting, uniting to the beauty which mediaeval art attained the
realism which modern art aims at; to sculpture, uniting the beauty of the
Greek and the expression of the Renaissance with some third quality yet
undiscovered, so as to give us the images of men and women splendidly
alive ..."

Such effusions are rare. Whenever the question arises in his mind, Morris
replies, humbly and modestly, with an avowal of ignorance. "Of the art that is
to come who may prophesy?" he exclaims, and negative replies follow one
another throughout his works: "the new art, of whose form we know
nothing", "some kind of culture of which we know nothing at present".
“no one can tell now what form that art will take.” Its upsurge will, too, be “furthered in a way which we slaves of Competition cannot comprehend” by that new life of the Commonwealth. Morris’s utopia is characterized by an avoidance of any description of future art; it seemed to him to be pointless and fraught with the same danger of ridicule as a futuristic description of science and technology. It is a curious fact that the impossibility of prophecy on this very point made him momentarily doubt the value of utopia itself, and contrast it with the overriding need for immediate action.

“...As to that form, let us not trouble ourselves about it... For in fact, considering the relation of the modern world to art, our business is now, and for long will be, not so much attempting to produce definite art, as rather clearing the ground to give art its opportunity.”

In fact, for Morris utopism was only of value within the limits of its militant usefulness.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

Man

During one lecture, while he was reviewing the stupendous changes that had taken place in the world over the previous four centuries, Morris felt himself possessed of a sturdy optimism:

"And when I think of this it quickens my hope of what may be; even so it will be with us in time to come; all will have changed, and another people will be dwelling here in England, who, although they may be of our blood and bear our name, will wonder how we lived in the nineteenth century."

Socialism, in fact, will not consist of a simple material modification, but a profound mutation: "Socialism will transform our lives and habits." 3 Morris frequently berated those militants who were bogged down in practicalities, who, either from fear of alienating an unsympathetic public or from a sort of innate myopia, refrained from indicating the sweep of that transformation. It must be understood, he said, "that such a stupendous change in the machinery of life as the abolition of capital and wages must bring about a corresponding change in ethics and habits of life; that it would be impossible to desire many things which are now the main objects of desire; needless to guard against many eventualities which we now spend our lives in guarding against; that, in short, we shall burn what we once adored, and adore what we once burnt."

The radical upheaval in the relations of production and the institutions which will result from this will have human consequences that can scarcely be imagined today. The new society will be

"a Community striving for the happiness of the human race: each man striving for the happiness of the whole and therefore for his own through the whole. Surely such a community would develop the best qualities of man, and make such a world of it as it is difficult to conceive of now; a world in which sordid fear would be unknown and in which permanent injustice defended by authority would not exist." 4

This fear and this injustice were brakes upon man's free development and reduced him to a sadly animal level. Marx wrote that "this social formation constitutes the closing chapter of the prehistoric stage of human society", 5 thus illuminating the internal contradictions of capital which will bring about its downfall. In Morris's last article, published on 1 May 1896, when he was already seriously ill, he expressed his joy at the thought that one day the workers whom industrialists contemptuously call "the hands" will become
"MEN", and his use of capitals expresses the basic orientation of his thought better than any long phrases could do. This is the unchanging preoccupation which conditions the whole conception of work as Morris sees it in Communist society: mechanical and insane overwork will be replaced by "Intelligent work rising gradually into Imaginative work, which will turn all 'operatives into workmen, into artists, into men". Thanks to this work, which will create beauty, "the humanizing influence which the daily sight of beautiful handiwork brings to bear upon people" will be restored.

How many times was the objection put to Morris that communist society would never be achieved because it demanded exceptional virtues in the people composing it? Such doubts were even expressed by readers of Communist. Morris did not deny all validity to the argument, but objected to its idealist character and turned the argument upside down:

"It is quite true that men must be 'regenerate' before they can be depended upon to carry out a communal state of things successfully, but this 'regeneration' cannot be accomplished by magic, either Parliamentary or theological, but by the general conditions of life... nor can the 'individual moral character' of men be 'improved' so long as society is divided into two classes, one of which thinks it right to impose slavery on their fellows, and the others tamely to accept it."10

The most striking thing about this short paragraph, published in 1885, the year during which I believe contact between Morris and Engels to have been at its most close, is not only its thoroughly Marxist nature but also its exact resemblance to a passage in The German Ideology which did not appear in print until 1932!10 Once again I do no more than add this coincidence of thought to the others. Morris's humanism and his total rejection of any abstract conception of man is, in its essence, just as thoroughly Marxist. No doubt he had read in The Communist Manifesto the refutation of "true communism" whose adherents had congratulated themselves upon "representing, not true requirements, but the requirements of Truth; not the interests of the proletariat, but the interests of Human Nature, of Man in general, who belongs to no class, has no reality, who exists only in the misty realm of philosophical phantasy."11 This is the only formulation existing in any text published at that time which we can be sure of Morris's having read, and we cannot know to what extent this already somewhat ancient polemic may really have impressed him. There is no doubt, either, that Bax could have conveyed the ideas, for in the theoretical manual of socialism which the two men wrote together, there are references to "platitudes about 'human nature', which are really deduced from orthodox theology and an obsolete view of history"; and the authors added: "Human nature is itself a growth of the ages, and is ever and indefinitely moulded by the conditions under which it finds itself."12 But the book was not published until 1893, and its phraseology here is more vague than earlier writings by Morris. Meanwhile Engels had published Ludwig Feuerbach (in 1886 in Neue Zeit and in 1888 as a book) and in it he tore to shreds "the cult of abstract man which formed the kernel of Feuerbach's new religion" and which "had to be replaced by the science of real men and of their historical development."13 In the book form Engels added the famous Thesis on Feuerbach, hitherto unpublished, the sixth of which gives a clear definition of
Marxist humanism. Did Morris have any direct or indirect knowledge of these writings and the ideas they express? We simply do not know, but there is evidence enough that this Marxist conception of man saturates his whole thinking. It is quite impossible to be mistaken about the inspiration behind old Hammond’s violent outburst during his conversation with the visitor:

“Human nature! . . . what human nature? The human nature of paupers, or the human nature of wealthy freemen? Which? Come, tell me that!”

* * *

As we have studied, in earlier chapters, the institutional, economic and aesthetic framework within which communist man develops, the essential relationships between men in the new society have largely been revealed. I shall endeavour to avoid unnecessary repetition, but it does seem necessary to deepen and complete my analysis of the general characteristics of Morris’s expectations in so far as they relate to private life and relationships between individuals.

The most striking thing about personal relationships is the complete disappearance of antagonism. The abolition of private ownership of the means of production and exchange, the final elimination of class divisions, general plenty progressively undermining the possessive attachment even to items of personal consumption, the withering-away of the State, and real equality making all ambition and all craving to dominate unthinkable, the opportunity for everybody to carry on all the activities that satisfy his inclinations, the absence of any frustration, all these things are factors reducing reasons for aggressiveness to the point of disappearance. After a century and a half of history (or lack of history) during the second stage of socialism, the evil past of bourgeois society will have been erased from human consciousness: “in those days the community will be composed of men who so thoroughly realize Communism that there will be no chance of any of them attacking his neighbour in any way.” There will no longer be any struggle for life or treacherous and hate-filled competition at all levels of society: “no man shall then be glad of his fellow’s fall and mishap to snatch at the work he had.” There will have been an end to the cult of implacable personal success: “our standards of honour and public estimation,” says old Hammond, “are very different from the old ones; success in besting our neighbours is a road to renown now closed, let us hope for ever.” A hundred and fifty years of a new way of life have completely changed consciousness and customs, and this way of life, says the old man, “has become a habit of acting on the whole for the best. It is easy for us to live without robbing each other. It would be possible for us to contend with and rob each other, but it would be harder for us than refraining from strife and robbery. That is in short the foundation of our life and our happiness.” What stands out in such a declaration, as in many other passages in News from Nowhere, is the complete substitution of the concept of habit for the concept of morality. The stage is definitely past of elaborating a “communist morality”, the demanding morality of the militant, or of elaborating a code of
responsibilities for the first difficult stages of socialist society, with all the contradictory human problems which harass modern thought. In Morris's utopia in the twenty-second century there is no longer any moral code nor is there need for any. "Communist man" makes mock of the abstraction of "eternal man". Old Hammond, in the speech from which I have quoted a few lines, speaks not only of the way of life, and of habit, but even of tradition.

Morris, as a consistent materialist, explains this transformation in human relationships by that of the very essence of labour, which is henceforth based upon joy and upon a reciprocity of services in a society of equals:

"Thus the market of neighbours, the interchange of mutual good services, will be established, and will take the place of the present gambling market, and its bond-slave the modern factory system. But the working in this fashion, with the unforced and instinctive reciprocity of service, clearly implies the existence of something more than a mere gregarious collection of workmen. It implies a consciousness of the existence of a society of neighbours, that is of equals; of men who do indeed expect to be made use of by others, but only so far as the services they give are pleasing to themselves; so far as they are services the performance of which is necessary to their own well-being and happiness." 30

In other words, joy in pleasing others is born from the joy each derives from his own work. It is in this way that the fraternal links which give the totality of social relations its affective quality is materially established. For Morris it is not at all a matter of self-abnegation, of heroism or even perhaps of disinterestedness. The way of life in the new society is based on a sort of altruistic hedonism and not at all upon some idealistic imperative of any sort whatever. Everyone feels an understanding respect for the joy of his fellows, even when it assumes extreme forms like the obsessive toiling of the "Obstinate Refusers".

Once the goal of communist society has been reached, there is that atmosphere of "unanxious happiness and good temper" 21 which so much surprises the visitor during his journey through London, but which was not expressed by a strained and fixed Hollywood grin:

"Some faces I saw that were thoughtful, and in these I noticed great nobility of expression, but none that had a glimmer of unhappiness, and the greater part (we came upon a good many people) were frankly and openly joyous." 22

The universally sought, experienced and avowed enjoyment of labour, the desire to realise and to express oneself fully in this labour and, consequently, to put everything into it, the mutual appreciation of the service thus performed by everyone's enjoyment, these things have become such basic and obvious realities that all sham, all false shame, all mock modesty have disappeared. Dick has no hesitation over declaring that he is "a pretty good mower"; 23 Mistress Philippa is convinced that without her they will never be able to complete successfully the stone garland which decorates the house built by the "Obstinate Refusers", and they, through the mouth of their foreman, boast of the prowess they will display at the forthcoming harvest. 24 It is not only physical or intellectual qualities that are simply and openly referred to without any vanity or shame. The visitor observes that it is "with no blush or simper of
false shame" that Ellen imagines the vile traffic to which "my beauty and cleverness and brightness" might have been subjected in the nineteenth century. 25

This lack of all constraint gives an easy affability to human relationships, and the fraternal bond which cannot be broken by any clash of interests creates a habit of friendliness, spontaneous courtesy and unfailing consideration between individuals. This is the world John Ball dreamed of, "set free from evil-doers for friends to dwell in". 26 Dick is the first representative of the new world whom the visitor meets, and he is immediately struck by his "peculiarly pleasant and friendly look", 27 by his readiness to put himself at his disposal for information and guidance, 28 and by his delicacy in shielding him from any indiscretion. 29 His companions show the same attitude. Bob, for example, whose "face was not wanting in that happy and friendly expression which I had noticed in his friend". 30 Without wanting to go into the details of all the little incidents throughout the story which emphasise the simple and kindly courtesy of these happy and relaxed people, I simply remark that not even the grumpy old man (Ellen's father or grandfather) failed to receive his guests with generous hospitality and feared upsetting them by his odd remarks. 31 It has become the most natural thing in the world and when the visitor remarks upon Dick's friendly welcome, old Hammond replies: "if he were not 'kind', as you call it, to a perfect stranger he would be thought a strange person, and people would be apt to shun him". 32

In one of the earliest chapters of this study, 33 I tried to show that in our times utopia is a way of thinking that inevitably has bourgeois roots, even if its content is inspired by the class situation of the proletariat. I also drew attention to the fact that William Morris, however strong and sincere his revolutionary convictions, never repudiated his bourgeois origin nor renounced his bourgeois way of life: it was as a member of the middle classes that he joined in the struggles of the working class, without concealing the sometimes painful stresses of conscience involved. I also said that for him utopia represented an attempt to resolve these stresses. This explains the solicitude, shown in all his writings, which he feels for the fate of the former middle classes in the new society. Sometimes aggressively, sometimes pleadingly, he never stops exhorting them about the coming adaptation, preparing them for the all-embracing "regeneration".

In 1884, with a beginner's enthusiasm, he immediately put the question which was near his heart: "Can the bourgeoisie be regenerated?" and his impetuous reply was that it was immediately possible. How? "By renouncing our class and on all occasions when antagonism rises up between the classes casting in our lot with the victims"; "there is no other way," he concluded. 34 This ingenious expectation soon came into collision with hard facts, and seeing all hope lost, he quickly transferred it to utopia. Already, during the preceding year, when exhorted to give up his status of employer for the sake of his socialist convictions, he declared that "we are but minute links in the immense chain of the terrible organization of competitive commerce: only the complete unrivetting of that chain will really free us". 35 This revolution was to
be "the freeing both of the slaves and of their masters." It was to be the prelude to an era "when the brutality of the poor and the insolence of the rich shall have been slain by hope and pleasure shared by all." It is just, Morris wrote, that the working class should demand a higher standard of living but it must not think only of its own advantage, because its aim is "the good of the whole world and the regeneration of the conscience of man." The abolition of social classes will have the supreme end of restoring the unity of the human race, which has been shattered ever since the breakdown of gentile society, since the time when a Thiodolf could cry, in the face of the invading Romans who brought military and bureaucratic oppression: "I am of the whole earth, and all the kindreds of it, even of the foeman, whom this day the edges in my hand shall smite." This is the aim towards which the revolution must strive, and it is by such a spirit that it must be inspired, for "it is not revenge we want for poor people, but happiness; indeed, what revenge can be taken for all the thousands of years of the sufferings of the poor?" It would only satisfy useless and irrational passions having no connection with the end to be achieved: "Men are but creatures of circumstances. If it is no crime to be born poor, it is no crime to be born rich. We aim at a State where none will be born either rich or poor but with the full freedom to use such capacities as they are born with for the equal benefit of all and each." After the revolution nobody will dream of punishing the grotesque Judge Nupkins for his iniquitous class sentences; it will be enough for him to learn "to live decently." What I want, said Morris, is "there to be no more master and slaves, no more gentlemen and cads (as we used to say at the university). I want us all to be friends, and all to be gentlemen, working for the common good, sharing duly the common stock of pleasure and refinement." He even appeared to expect this mutual understanding at an early stage because, in his revolutionary predictions in *News from Nowhere*, it is in the horrors of civil war that the middle classes "at last learned something about the reality of life, and its sorrows" and that finally "the two combatants, the workman and the gentleman, between them ... destroyed commercialism." This belief does not appear to have been short-lived because we find it a few years later, admitted in a more elaborate form, in the socialist handbook: "In the course of that revolt this great middle class will in its turn be absorbed into the proletariat, which will form a new society in which classes shall have ceased to exist." Clearly, Morris showed singular optimism and had very little idea of the bitter resistance of the possessing classes, of their ideological ascendency, or of the capitalist environment. His symbolical Nupkins, although "he will be trying some of his old lawyers' tricks again," is regarded by the revolutionaries as no longer representing a threat.

Despite Morris's material and sentimental links with his class, there does not appear to be any reason to doubt the generosity of his feelings or to reproach him with anything more than utopian impatience. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the young Engels, when he wrote *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1845, allowed himself to be carried away by a very similar idealism, which he himself severely criticised in the 1892 preface. This work, he wrote, "bears the stamp of the youth of the author", and he clarified it further:
"Thus great stress is laid on the dictum that Communism is not a mere party doctrine of the working-class, but a theory compassing the emancipation of society at large, including the capitalist class, from its present narrow condition. This is true enough in the abstract, but absolutely useless, and sometimes worse, in practice."

In fact, he feared that badly understood assertions might lead some to preach "socialism of all shades: Socialism conscious and unconscious, Socialism prosaic and poetic, Socialism of the working-class and of the middle-class". Morris could certainly not be suspected of heterodoxy of this kind, although he cannot be exempted from a degree of naivety. And above all it must be clearly understood that Engels was concerned about immediate practical effectiveness, while accepting the truth of the proposition "in the abstract". But what was "abstract" for the socialist leader Engels, could not but become concrete for Morris the utopist, and for him the vision of the future took on immediacy.

How was this "regeneration" of the bourgeoisie to be brought about? By work, made compulsory for all though transformed in its essence. The formerly privileged, he wrote with a touch of humour, will have to "yield with a good grace to the terrible necessity of forming part of a world in which all, including themselves, will work honestly and live easily". Perhaps it will be less hard on those who gained the right to riches and idleness by their own efforts, suspect as these may be: "then, Mr. Self-made Man, you must turn to and work once more, an equal among equals." There is no doubt that coercion will be needed, and in News from Nowhere Dick tells us that the former idlers were obliged to work because their laziness had made both them and their children so physically ugly that "the neighbours couldn't stand it."
The only way to be found for Nupkins to learn to "live decently" will be to put a spade into his hands.

Morris could not help feeling a certain compassion when he thought how defenceless and impotent those people will feel, not being used to making any real effort; so he urged understanding and patience: "nor as individuals have they any means of earning their livelihood, if you take away their pensions before you have begun to reconstruct a new world in which they would find a place like other people". It will be necessary to trust in man, and nothing will be impossible in a world which recognises the usefulness, not only of "the useful classes", but also "the usefulness of all others". Even former landowners will be "compensated", not by any continued ownership of the country's natural resources, but by "a position in which they will be able to exercise their capacities and earn themselves a non-precarious livelihood."

Their material well-being will be assured, and after the revolution described in News from Nowhere, "even the once rich" discovered that their conditions of life were not too bad. When they have understood the transformation that socialism means for humanity and when they have reflected upon the degradation of their earlier life, will it be possible for them to feel the slightest regret?

"I must ask the rich and well-to-do what sort of a position it is which they are so anxious to preserve at any cost? And if, after all, it will be such a terrible loss to them to give it up?"
It is doubtful whether their wealth has brought them true happiness, and they will learn "that they have nothing to fear from a system which will destroy poverty as well as riches." There will be great compensations for them. "I hold that the abolition of classes," Morris declared to a journalist, "would tend to the general elevation of all society; would be for the good of the upper as well as the lower." What has fortune given them, in fact, apart from the power to oppress? Will there not be great joy in realising that so evil a power has been removed?

"The rich man will have lost riches, i.e., dominion over others, and find that he is happy." 39

This joy will be in addition to all the others that man will find in the world transformed. "We don't want," declared Morris, "to ruin and render unhappy a group amongst this class . . . what we want is that the rich, who as things go now are not necessarily happy, should melt into the great community of labour and take their fair chance of happiness which Socialism would ensure to everyone: could they possibly complain of this as an injustice?" They would have nothing worse to fear than "the inevitable and by no means hard fate of their forming a part, on terms of absolute equality, of a happy and mutually helpful community." 40

Morris's prolonged thinking about the problems of his own class in utopia no doubt helped him to define better the human climate in the new society he advocated. All the same, one cannot help noticing that his usual enthusiastic, joyful, relaxed approach is much less so when he encounters these problems. One feels that he is grappling with obstinate realities, and the tone is apologetic.

* * *

On the other hand, is it necessary to go back to Morris's bourgeois origins when he declares that the aim of communism will be the full development and the liberty of the individual? I feel that this temptation should be resisted. Before studying the ideas he expressed on this subject, and in order to understand their exact significance, let us recall a few facts. May Morris tells us, among the memories which are scattered through her invaluable edition of many of her father's unpublished works, that he often declared that "he would no more accept the tyranny of a Collectivism that would crush individuality than he would accept the tyranny of Capitalism." We cannot help feeling some degree of mistrust over this formulation. May's two volumes were published in 1936, at a time when she was steeped in Fabian and Labour ideology, and quite susceptible to anti-soviet propaganda. The style of this phrase seems to me to express her personal inclinations much more than her father's thoughts. Let there be no misunderstanding: it is not only possible but even very probable that Morris made remarks very similar to those his daughter relates, but his thinking, as revealed by careful study, is demonstrably not consistent with May's tendentious simplification. Even without lingering over her own standpoint, there is evidence to show that her theoretical education was in no way comparable to Morris's. Her ignorance of Marxism appears to have been complete and, in particular, it is obvious that
the Marxist and Morrisian conception of two stages remained completely foreign to her: in her commentaries, Morris's socialism is usually translated into language that is sentimental, idealistic or even mystical. Once again, it is essential to have in mind the theory of two stages, which explicitly underlies the whole of the writer's utopian thinking, in order to understand and restore the exact meaning to remarks he may have made. The first stage, following the seizure of power and lasting some time (according to his estimate, half a century) is an inevitable transitional stage, implying the existence of a State organisation to which he does not refuse the necessary coercive instruments. But while he regards it as inevitable within the perspective of achieving a society that is ultimately communist, he feels no pleasure over it. State socialism is an unavoidable transition, but he accepts it with resignation and apprehension. So, in some verbal outbursts, he may well have feared, and condemned in advance, some excesses, a certain trampling upon the individual, a certain possibility of diverting the State apparatus from its true function. In fact, in all his work he avoided excessive pessimism on this point, expressing a fear rather of some decline in material comfort during this first period, which he deliberately chose to put it into parentheses so as to be able to describe with fervour and passion the communist society of the second stage. We can rest assured that there was no confusion on the subject in Morris's mind.

Another point that must be recalled, and one which I feel I have fully established, is that Morris's conception of the rights of the individual had nothing in common with anarchism. Nor had it anything in common with bourgeois liberalism, as is proved by Morris's criticism of the illusion of freedom under capitalism. Nor had it anything in common, obviously with its counterpart laissez-faire individualism, against which he waged ceaseless and open war. The monstrous, inhuman, anarchistic free competition of the present order cannot promote the harmonious development of the personality: "individualism suppresses individuality" in the same way as nationalism crushes all that is genuinely national. Morris, faithful to the letter and the spirit of The Communist Manifesto, believes that full personal development will only be possible when, in the words of Marx and Engels, there arises "an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." Engels said, similarly, that "society cannot itself be free unless every individual is free", and Morris, in his turn, believed that communism "brings about the habit of making no distinction between the common welfare and the welfare of the individual."

That is the red thread which runs through Morris's vision of the future: "my ideal of the Society of the future is first of all the freedom and cultivation of the individual will, which civilization ignores, or even denies the existence of." The determining factor in this liberation will be the transformation in the nature of work: "the crushing weight of this pleasureless labour laid with such cruel indifference on our lives by the present anarchy is what individuality is languishing under; from Socialism it has nothing to fear, but all to gain." Individuals will cease to be just machines for manufacture and the earning of money.

"Individuality of character is the real child of communal production; it is the reckless scramble for individual gain which reduces all character
to a level by giving it one object in life, an object sordid in itself, and to which all other objects and aspirations, however noble, must bend and be subsidiary." 69

"Nor indeed, can that order be called Society which is not upheld for the benefit of every one of its members." 70 In the new society, on the other hand, "each man is free to exercise his special faculty to the utmost," 8 and every member of it should have a chance of a happy life." 72 That is why "healthy and undomineering individuality will be fostered and not crushed out by Socialism". 73 The true value of every individual will be fully recognized and appreciated, because this appreciation will not be distorted by artificial criteria:

"It will no longer be the hierarchical position, the office of the man, that will be considered, as in the Middle Ages, nor his property as real, but his person." 74

After the withering-away of the State and all the former kinds of coercion, the free operation of popular democracy cannot fail to promote, not only the development of all the qualities of the individual, but also "the liberty of the individual, which would be, in fact, only limited by the natural and inevitable restrictions of individual will incident to all societies whatever." 75

Only questions of general concern will be subject to majority decision, in accordance with the usages and customs we have already studied, but in matters which are merely personal which do not affect the welfare of the community - how a man shall dress, what he shall eat and drink, what he shall write and read, and so forth - there can be no difference of opinion, and everyone does as he pleases." 76

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The most striking example of the exercise of this almost unlimited freedom of the individual appears in the use of housing. So far we have looked at the general arrangement of urban and rural centres of housing, and it now remains for us to take a look at the way men arrange their living within the framework.

Morris's first reaction was a strong one, against the unbridled individualism of the Victorian family, in contrast to which he set the virtues of communal living, while recognising that "we may differ pretty much according to our tendencies towards social life." But, for his part, "I can't see why we should think it a hardship to eat with the people we work with." Similarly, "as to many things, such as valuable books, pictures and splendour of surroundings, we shall find it better to club our means together." He declares himself to "have been sickened by the stupidity of the mean idiotic rabbit warrens that rich men build for themselves in Mayfair and elsewhere - nor do I think I am better off," he exclaims, "to live in a vulgar stuccoed house - simply because I call it my own, or my house." And that, he observes, "is my opinion as a middle-class man". He does not know whether the working-man may not prefer "the possession of his wretched little room" to the amenities of large and magnificent communal dwellings, "say on washing-day".

The enthusiasm of his early years of militancy led Morris to advocate com-
mural life at every opportunity. He visualised people living "in airy rooms
decently decorated", with their dwellings provided "not only with good public
cooking and washing rooms, but also with beautiful halls for the common meal
and other purposes, as in the Colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, which it
would be a pleasure merely to sit in." In another article, he imagined "tall
blocks, in what might be called vertical streets, but that need not prevent am-
ple room in each lodging, so as to include such comforts of space, air, and
privacy as every moderately-living middle-class family considers itself entitled
to". The persistence of this outlook is striking in his first socialist writings: it is
only later that the way of life in the new society definitely breaks away from
reference to bourgeois comfort. Morris insists again upon the advantages of
communal laundries and kitchens, and of large communal rooms on the
highest floor, the main one being reserved for meals and meetings. Naturally,
the existence of these great public rooms "would not interfere with the ordi-
mary private life of each family or individual: they would be there for use, if
any one wished to use them, as they quite certainly would, for the avoidance of
waste and the fostering of reasonable pleasure." 79

However, this apologia for communal life was not long in losing its per-
suasive repetition. As his conception of dispersed living took shape, and he en-
visaged the progressive elimination of large urban concentrations, Morris lost
his taste for these "vertical streets" among lofty communal buildings. He had
too much respect for the freedom of the individual to ban them totally from his
utopia, but he had no wish to see them increase in number: "It is understood,
of course, that any association in dwelling in such places would be quite volun-
tary, although . . . no individual or group could be allowed to engross an un-
due area." 80 not a very felicitous expression, being neither clear nor logical
(perhaps Bax is responsible for it), but it expresses obvious repugnance.
Moreover, this growing repugnance has another very characteristic origin in
his horror of anything resembling regimentation or recalling the forms of
bourgeois philanthropy. Morris clearly yearned for a return to the simple life,
free of all the superfluous lumber of modern life.

"But again, what is simplicity? Do you think by chance that I mean a
row of yellow-brick, blue-slated houses, or a phalangstere like an
improved Peabody lodging-house; and the dinner-bell ringing one into a row of white basins of broth with a piece of bread cut nice and square by
each, with boiler-made tea and ill-boiled rice-pudding to follow? No,
that's the philanthropist's ideal, not mine." 81

This is the root of his dislike for utopias of the Fourierist kind, a dislike
which could only have been intensified by reading Bellamy's Looking Backward.
"I should have thought you would have lived more in public," says the visitor
to old Hammond, and the old man retorts hotly:

"Phalangsteries, eh? Well, we live as we like, and we like to live as a
rule with certain house-mates that we have got used to. Remember,
again, that poverty is extinct and that the Fourierist phalangsteries and
all their kind, as was but natural at the time, implied nothing but a
refuge from mere destitution. Such a way of life as that could only have
been conceived of by people surrounded by the worst form of poverty." 82
In a society of plenty, no cut-and-dried arrangement will be imposed and Morris, speaking over the heads of his listeners to the inhabitants of the world of the future, urges them to exercise their imagination within their entire freedom of choice:

"... find out what you yourselves find pleasant, and do it. You won't be alone in your desires; you will get plenty to help you in carrying them out, and you will develop social life in developing your own special tendencies."

Everyone will live as he chooses. "There are some people who are fond of crowds," observes Dick, adding that he does not share their liking. Scattered about the countryside are great houses where, "for the sake of society", foregather the most studious men of our time to exchange knowledge while they engage in agriculture. On the other hand, in the upper reaches of the Thames, there is a preference for small isolated houses. But no way of life is compulsory, or final. "We live in a little house now," explains Ellen, "not because we have nothing grander to do than working in the fields, but because we please; for if we liked, we could go and live in a big house amongst pleasant companions." The usual way of living is in the family group but even there the greatest flexibility and freedom is the rule. Nothing is less like the jealously shut-in world of the Victorian home, and old Hammond's remarks on this point are full of interest:

"But you must understand therewith, that though separate households are the rule amongst us, and though they differ in their habits more or less, yet no door is shut to any good-tempered person who is content to live as the other house-mates do: only of course it would be unreasonable for one man to drop into a household and bid the folk of it to alter their habits to please him, since he can go elsewhere and live as he pleases."

In this way everyone's rights and preferences are protected, within a framework of customs in which human relationships, no longer disturbed by any antagonisms, have become as relaxed as they are fraternal. One might be tempted to think that such enormous personal freedom would lead to a feverish mobility of population. But just the opposite happens. When we examined the means of transport as Morris imagined them in his England in the twenty-second century, we observed how primitive they had remained. There was no craving for speed or technical perfection. What for? The mania for speed and escape which gnaws at our times no longer has any reason to exist. Ellen tells the visitor that although "of course people are free to move about", in fact they do not do so a great deal, and she explains that, as far as she is concerned:

"I must say that I don't like moving about from one home to another; one gets so pleasantly used to all the detail of life about one, it fits so harmoniously and happily into one's own life, that beginning again, even in a small way, is a kind of pain."

In the same way, the visitor is surprised that old Hammond persists in living in the dreary classical architecture of the British Museum. Dick explains that
"of course he could live in a prettier house if he liked; he is not obliged to live in one place any more than anyone else." 91

Should we see this detail as a projection of Morris's own temperament? May tells us that he "was not a seasoned traveller", that he was "deeply rooted in the home-life" 92 and "somewhat stay-at-home by nature" 93 He wrote himself that "people ought to live in one place" 94 and that he felt little sympathy "with the moderners whose chief desire always seemed to be to be somewhere where they are not". 95 But when one is dealing with a personality like that of William Morris, it is difficult to draw the line between temperament and reason. A purely biographical explanation, while it may shed useful light, has its limits and cannot entirely account for the details of thought processes that are quite capable of setting natural idiosyncracies aside. One would surely risk becoming involved in quite artificial subtleties if one tried, for example, to resolve the obvious contradiction between Morris's carelessness over his toilet and appearance and the sartorial refinement of the English in his utopia, or that between the friendly courtesy of their ways and his own temper, which was explosive, choleric and frequently disagreeable. As I read the innumerable studies which have been made of Morris I constantly have the feeling that the very understandable fascination of his extraordinary personality has, in fact, deflected a number of critics from assessing the quality of his thought.

If the English of the twenty-second century have little interest in tourism it is not only because Morris had stay-at-home tastes; the main reason is that this facet of humanity is part of the logic of his utopia. First, let us follow his criticism of his ancestors:

"There is another kind of makeshift amusement, however, which consists in going a railway journey to some place and then coming back again. There are two things that force persons into this business; one acts upon rich people, the other on poor. With the rich people it is the uneasy longing to be somewhere where you are not, which drives people to Switzerland and the Rhine and Italy and Jerusalem and the North Pole, and where not; and for the most part people go to these places with their eyes in their pockets, and except that they have satisfied their above mentioned craving for perpetual motion had much better have stayed at home. With the poor people of our great cities and manufacturing districts it is I admit different. Their homes are so devoid of all pleasure of the senses, that they may well long to have a look now and again at the green fields and the sun shining upon them or the wind and the rain sweeping over them. Yet to my mind to go from a weary ugly place to a beautiful one, and to have a look at it and then go back to the weariness and ugliness is but a poor makeshift after all. I want to see the beautiful face of the earth not once a month, or once a week, but every day, but generally."

It should be realised just how fresh and penetrating such a judgment was in a century when literature was saturated with the theme of escape. In utopian times, when men have changed the face of the world and made it a place of pleasure and beauty, there will be nothing to justify these desperate flights. 96 Strong natural bonds will be formed between a man and the place where he
lives and works. That does not in the least imply that he will deliberately restrict his horizon and remain imprisoned within it, but journeys there will be something quite different:

"And then now and again you may go from that friendly home to see fresh beauties and wonders in other places and to store your mind with memories for quiet days, always with the confidence that the well known, untiring beauties of your home will welcome you back to the old unbroken pleasure."

How could a man not feel unbreakable ties with the surroundings he has created with no artificial or commercial pressure, where the beauty of things reflects the new joy of his own life?

"This outward order and beauty will be but a token of fair and orderly life, of days made up of unwearisome work, and of leisure restful but not vacant: of a life in which year by year the land of his fathers shall grow dearer and fairer to a man as he gets to know it better and better, though his times be cast in a place where nature wears her everyday clothes, no queen but a thrifty housewife: so that when he goes into other lands richer of startling beauty and wild romance, he will fare not as a man driven by dullness that nothing can brighten, by weariness that no idleness can soothe, but as a pilgrim who has left his home a while that he may come back stored with new pictures and tales of the life of other men. A steadfast home that he shall never weary of."

So, in this new life when man will "learn to love the narrow spot that surrounds our daily life", there will be every chance to live where one please and go where one will, but this unbounded liberty will create its own limits by virtue of itself being part of an unbounded enjoyment of the world.

* * *

Two questions which could not fail to have an important place in Morris's, as in any other, utopia are the place of women in society and the relationships between the sexes. They were matters to which he frequently devoted serious thought, but one observation is important: while he regarded such problems as deserving special attention, they were not the essential problems, and this, no doubt, is one of the reasons why Morris seems to have disconcerted and even put off an important sector of modern criticism that is inclined to regard sexuality as the motive force of all human activity. Another preliminary remark is that writers about Morris have, in the main, treated this aspect of his thinking rapidly, superficially and indecisively. The reason is not far to seek: one feels that they are caught in traditional patterns, and when they have failed to find a ready answer to the question of whether this writer is feminist or anti-feminist, they have preferred to gloss it over. In fact, such an approach is over-simple, and I think it wise to avoid classifications which are not very likely to get us anywhere.

Morris never made any secret of his hostility towards the movement for feminine emancipation which began in the eighties to assert itself somewhat noisily, though without yet developing the militant methods of the suffragettes.
In News from Nowhere one finds a few sidekicks aimed at "the 'advanced' women of the nineteenth century, and their male backers." But such hints, necessarily scanty in a narrative that is utopian and not polemical, need amplifying and explaining. He was quite well acquainted with the movement he was attacking, since he has been claimed as a regular visitor to the Pankhursts, though this would seem rather surprising. In general, his opposition was provoked by the essentially bourgeois and sometimes flatly reactionary nature of these feminist organisations. Marian Ramelson, in the valuable study published just before her untimely death, underlines the fact that they never received the affiliation of any working-class organisation and displayed a complete ignorance and lack of understanding of working women. This separation only became worse during the twentieth century as a result of Sylvia Pankhurst's splitting tactics in the East End. In 1885, the Primrose League, an offshoot of the Tory Party, had set up its female section (Ladies Grand Council), and Morris, attacking the "Primrose Ladies" wrote that "that valuable institution is furthering the emancipation of Ladies, not of women." Moreover, he found the anti-masculinism which basically provided the propaganda theme of such movements to be ridiculous and laughable. For William Morris, as a Marxist, social divisions ran between classes, not sexes, and while he cared about the lot of women, it was not woman in the abstract. The factory worker was of more interest to him than the great lady of the Primrose League, and the more because of the rôle to which she was condemned by the mechanism of capitalist exploitation than as a working-woman as such:

"A word may here be said to the 'women's rights' group. They are far too apt to put women forward as competitors with men, and thereby injure the cause of the emancipation of women which every Socialist is bound to further. They are therefore blind to the fact that the capitalist employment of women for the general cheapening of labour is founded on that very dependence of women which they (and we) want to get rid of. Under reasonable conditions of society every woman will be free to earn her own livelihood, as every man will be, but for that very reason there will be no competition between the sexes, and women will neither get nor seek employment in work which men can do better than they can. Capitalism forces them to accept such work now — at starvation wages; just as it forces males to accept work which is not fit for human beings. As long as men are slaves, women can be no better. Let the woman's rights societies adopt that last sentence as a motto — and act on it."

It is quite likely that Morris had read Bebel's famous book on Women and Socialism, Eleanor Marx had reviewed in Commonweal the English translation made in 1885 by Harriet B. Adams Walthier, who reproduced its ideas in a pamphlet entitled The Woman Question which she wrote with Edward Aveling, Morris's thinking followed the same lines. In 1889 he attended the Paris International Socialist Congress, which was to lead to the establishment of the Second International, and he was deeply impressed by the speech made there by Clara Zetkin. "When printed," he wrote in Commonweal on his return, "it will be valuable as clearly establishing the difference in view between the Socialist and the 'Women's Rights' women." So I feel it appropriate to publish a
passage relating to that speech from the article which F. Kitz, who had accompanied Morris to Paris, wrote the following week as a report of the Congress:

"Comrade Clara Zetkin, of the Berlin Women Workers, roused the Congress to enthusiasm when she said that the capitalist had destroyed women's place at home and forced her into the market as a producer, only to widen her ideas and create another enemy who would strive with energy for the overthrow of capitalist domination. She said that little thanks were due to the men for women's awakening, for they have held that women's place was at home as a domestic slave. The women would never return to that condition; but in opposition to the middle-class agitation for so-called Women's Rights, which simply means to put women in antagonism to men and use them as competitors in the wage-market against them, the women Socialists, disregarding the question of sex in economics, would work with men on a basis of equality for the social revolution."

For Morris, then, the problem of woman is a social as well as a political problem which cannot be divorced from other problems set by the revolutionary struggle. That is the sense of his opposition to the feminist movement of his time, and it is pointless to seek any other.

Furthermore, there is nothing to support any supposition that he adopted a superior attitude to women in his personal life, and one might even say that all indications are to the contrary. Wilfred Scawen Blunt makes an odd remark in the manuscript memoirs he has left:

"He was the only man I ever came in contact with who seemed absolutely independent of sex considerations. He would talk in precisely the same tone to a pretty woman as to a journeyman carpenter - that is to say, he would be interested if she had anything interesting to tell him, but not for a minute longer."

His correspondence with the women who were dear to him is still more revealing, whether it be Georgiana Burne-Jones, Aglaia Coronio or, most of all, his own wife. His letters to Jane are full of consideration. He knew her dislike of his socialist activities, but even with her he tried to be clear and convincing and keep her informed about all he was undertaking. How often did he invite her to make the decisions on important issues, and what unlimited freedom he gave her, despite all the suffering involved! In the most intimate matters of his life there was never any gap between his behaviour and the principles of equality in which he believed; he acted quite straightforwardly; without any attempt to flout public opinion, and with admirable dignity.

In 1885 he declared to Bernard Shaw: "nor do I consider a man a Socialist at all who is not prepared to admit the equality of women", but for Morris that equality was not the abstraction that it was for bourgeois liberalism. It could only be achieved on the solid basis of woman's admission to productive work. In a letter he wrote in 1886 to his old friend Charles Faulkner, which is now in the manuscript collection of the Bodleian Library, he wrote:

"When a wife can earn her living as a citizen, and the children are citizens with inalienable rights there will be nothing to force people into
legal prostitution or tempt them into irregular venal deals, which for the rest they couldn't have, as it is simply a form of ordinary market exploitation. 1119

It is interesting to observe that Morris can only have arrived at this conclusion through active theoretical consideration, and to get there he had to overcome his own class prejudices. Three years earlier, in fact, when he only just discovering Marxism, he was still declaring publicly that the employment of mothers of families in factories was "to my mind a most abominable custom". 111 It is true that, the following year, he foresaw "merry parties of men and maids" at work in the ideal factory of years to come, 112 which marked a step forward. But in 1885 the Manifesto of the Socialist League is not very explicit, and even somewhat ambiguous, since it goes no further than the declaration that "women also would share in the certainty of livelihood which would be the lot of all". 113 But a few months later, the revelation in The Pall Mall Gazette of the scandal of child prostitution in London gave an impulse to his thinking and led him to adopt an unequivocal position. He observed that "women's wages are not even subsistence wages", and have no other purpose than to "cheapen labour for the manufacturers". And he added:

"There is the closest of relations between the prostitution of the body in the streets and of the body in the workshops... We desire that all should be free to earn their livelihood - with that freedom will come an end of these monstrosities and true love between man and woman throughout society." 114

He was also encouraged in this development by his constant regard for the barbarian precedent. He loved to regale his audiences with the customs described in the Icelandic sagas: "The position of women was good in this society, the married couple being pretty much on an equality." 115 In The House of the Wolfings he praises the part played by the women in the wars waged against the invaders by the Germanic tribes: Hall-sun organises the non-combatants, she helps in the direction of operations, she sends a group of the bravest women out on a reconnaissance, she leads the retreat and makes Thing-Stead into a citadel. In The Roots of the Mountains, the Bride "was a woman fair and strong: not easily daunted amid perils: she was hardy and handy and light-foot: she could swim as well as any, and could shoot well in the bow, and wield sword and spear". 116 We find these same marks of independence about most of the heroines of the romantic tales written by Morris in his later years.

But here one distinction is quite essential. For him, utopia was not romantic fiction. On the contrary, it represented an attempt to lay down the outlines of what will one day be reality. On the other hand, it was subject to the laws of historical development and was located at a definite stage of that development, not that of "Socialism Militant" but that of "Socialism Triumphant". 117 The condition of the productive forces and production relationships will have been radically changed. Humanity, itself completely transformed, will no longer be tied down by the needs of the struggle but will be in full enjoyment of victory, and will organise its own ways of life as it pleases. What, before the revolution and even during its first stage, was a condition of women's liberation, will
cease to have an obligatory nature in conditions of general plenty. Henceforward there will be no restrictions on the choice of occupation, there will no longer be crises to shake the world, no artificial tensions will distort the free play of human inclinations and there will be an equilibrium conforming better to the tendencies of nature, to which humanity will be ever more close.

Women will have the same political and social rights as men, but that by no means implies that they will be forced into the same way of life and the same kind of occupation, which would be an infringement of their liberty. There are physical factors which must be taken into account. "You must not forget," wrote Morris in a letter to Bruce Glasier, "that child-bearing makes women inferior to men since a certain time of their lives they must be dependent on men." And he added: "Of course we must claim absolute equality of condition between women and men, as between other groups, but it would be poor economy setting women to do men's work (as unluckily they often do now) or vice versa." 118

In News from Nowhere he is very explicit on the point. In passing, we notice that the young men, delighting in "easy-hard work", who are repairing the road to Bloomsbury, are surrounded by admiring women, not one of whom would dream of joining them. 118 And talking of the movement for feminine emancipation in the nineteenth century, old Hammond declares "that all that is a dead controversy now. The men have no longer any opportunity of tyrannising over the women, or the women over the men; both of which took place in those old times. The women do what they can do best, and what they like best, and the men are neither jealous of it or injured by it." The visitor is struck by the pleasure they find in carrying out domestic tasks. At the Hammersmith Guest House, he is surprised to see the women serving the men and he asks the old man whether "that seems a little like reaction". One cannot insist too strongly upon the importance of such a question, which clearly shows that Morris has no wish to avoid the difficulty and wants to get to the bottom of the problem. "Does it?" replies old Hammond to his guest. "Perhaps you think housekeeping an unimportant occupation, not deserving of respect... Come, now, my friend, don't you know that it is a great pleasure to a clever woman to manage a house skilfully, and to do it so that all the house-mates about her look pleased, and are grateful to her? And then, you know, everyone likes to be ordered about by a pretty woman: why, it is one of the pleasantest forms of flirtation." 129 To be ordered about? Flirtation? It must be said that these terms suggest a sham reversal of the real rôles and that Morris, despite all his good intentions, and possibly unconsciously and involuntarily, did not succeed in casting off old bourgeois habits that were stronger than any acquired theory.

All the same, it would be excessive and unjust to consider, with Raymond Ruyer, that the women in News from Nowhere "decorate the countryside, arrange flowers on the tables, and introduce a touch of healthy eroticism into the atmosphere." 131 This forgets that the pretty girls at the Guest House are not the only female characters in the story; and be it noted, besides, that their attitude towards their guests is not that of servants at all, but quite the opposite, that of respected friends to whom one listens. The women are in no way tied to these household tasks. They perform them because they prefer them, but we observe, on our way up the Thames, that numbers of them join in the
work in the fields, and that Mistress Philippa and her daughter, who are both sculptors, seem to make that their only occupation.

Let us notice something else also. Morris never considers these household tasks to be either the prerogative of women or the sphere to which they are relegated. Old Hammond, after declaring that they prefer to do them because they are best at them, asserts that he is himself an excellent cook. Nor is this a flash in the pan. In the rediscovered text of the lecture of 1889, *How Shall We Live Then?* there is a very interesting passage on what Morris calls the “domestic arts”, which is to say “the arrangement of a house in all its details, marketing, cleaning, cooking, baking and so on; sewing with its necessary concomitant of embroidery and so forth. Once more whoever was incapable of taking interest and a share in some parts of such work would have to be considered diseased, and the existence of many such diseased persons would tend to the enslavement of the weaker sex.”

So Morris’s view seems to be just tendentious, but it is presented with great strength of conviction. Despite the poet’s obvious sincerity, and his cautious approach, there is in *News from Nowhere* a somewhat disconcerting appearance of ambiguity. But it is the result of honest thought and deserves consideration as such. In any case, it could not be taken out of the context of his utopia. It is clear that the spread of manual work, by restoring esteem to physical strength, will tend to eliminate women from some productive processes. The extraordinary development of sources of power (mysterious and hidden, but effective) which underlies the uprise of handicraft, contributes, as does the recovered joy in creative effort, to producing the fear which we have seen to exist of there one day being a shortage of work. All these factors would favour pushing women back into family life. In so far as it might be true that this is their natural vocation, one cannot *a priori* deny this approach all validity. It clearly involves all the other approaches seen in their historical development, and all we can do is to take note of it and refrain from presumptuous conclusions.

This semi-domestic aspect of the status of women, thought Morris, could be shocking only to those socialists who looked at it from the viewpoint or in the terms of nineteenth-century bourgeois society. In the world he describes, it would be a matter of free choice and not of obligation. Abundance ensures the satisfaction of the needs of everybody: no material consideration any longer forces any human being into any given occupation. But above all, the very nature of the social relationship has transformed individual consciousness and the relationships between the sexes. Along with private property, the idea of woman as a possession has disappeared, “the idea (a law-made idea) of the woman being the property of the man, whether he were husband, father, brother, or what not”. She is no longer held on a leash, jealously watched and repressed, “brought up in affected ignorance of natural facts, reared in an atmosphere of mingled prudery and prurience”. Such an education for the bourgeois heiress had as its counterpart the presence of “poor girls in the street, who are doing what our present society insists that some women shall do, that is, to serve as a safeguard for the chastity, or a veil for the respectability, of their richer sisters”. Besides, for how many women was not marriage the outcome of cautious calculation which made it scarcely distinguishable
from prostitution? How many among them said to themselves: "Good is a housekeeper’s life, so I shall sell my body that I may be matron and wife." Ellen reflects that, had she lived in the nineteenth century she would have been "wrecked and wasted in one way or another, either by penury or by luxury." In fact, "as long as women are compelled to marry for a livelihood, real marriage is a rare exception, and prostitution or a kind of legalized rape the rule." Only the abolition of capitalist tyranny will see the disappearance of "the present system of venal prostitution which is the meaning of the marriage system on its legal side." As the Manifesto of the Socialist League had already proclaimed:

"Our modern bourgeois property-marriage, maintained as it is by its present necessary complement, universal venal prostitution, would give place to kindly and human relations between the sexes.

The present institution of marriage is all the less defensible in so far as it attempts to be indissoluble. It postulates the enduring feelings of the couple, in the face of all human experience. Through the painful years of his married life Morris had felt in his flesh and his heart the full hypocrisy of this myth. The poems of The Earthly Paradise do not only have an appearance of serenity, a long thread of suppressed suffering is mingled into the fabric of the shining tapestry.

"Love while you may; if twain grow into one
'Tis for a little while; the time goes by,
No hatred 'twixt the pair of friends doth lie,
No troubles break their hearts - and yet, and yet -
How could it be? we strove not to forget;
Rather in vain to that old time we clung,
Its hopes and wishes round our hearts we hung,
We played old parts, we used old names - in vain,
We go our ways, and twain once more are twain." 132

But such estrangement can assume even sharper forms, and Morris’s social and utopian thinking quickly led him to take a determined stand against indissolubility of marriage and against theological prejudice. He did not consider it just that,

"... once 2 people have committed themselves to one act of copulation they are to be tied together through life no matter how miserable it makes them, their children, or their children’s children. That is a superstition...; under our present circumstances it does not burden men of the world at all since there are plenty of whores in the market owing to our system of industrial exploitation. I think though that it weighs heavily on sensitive people endowed with real sentiment."

In a world freed from the blemishes of private property and the prejudices arising from it, "the couple would be free" and "being free, if unfortunately distaste arose between them they should make no pretence of its not having arisen." Divorce, which was in no way shocking in barbarian society, would not be so either in the more human society of the future;

"Thus a new development of the family would take place, on the basis.
not of a predetermined lifelong business arrangement, to be formally and
nominally held to, irrespective of circumstances, but on mutual inclina-
tion and affection, an association terminable at the will of either party
... There would be no vestige of reprobation weighing on the dissolution
of one tie and the formation of another.”

Old Hammond speaks a similar language in *News from Nowhere*

“If there must be sundering betwixt those who meant never to sunder,
so it must be; but there need be no pretext of unity when the reality of it
is gone: nor do we drive those who well know that they are incapable of it
to profess an undying sentiment which they cannot really feel.”

Divorce, however, would be something very different from what it is today.
The ties between a couple can be no more than ties of pure affection. Private
property having disappeared, no thought of interest can poison the breaking of
these ties. So there are no longer any civil courts, no more divorce suits with
their stinking mud-slinging; and old Hammond speaks of the unhappy past
with immense contempt:

“...I know that there used to be such lunatic affairs as divorce courts.
But just consider; all the cases that came into them were matters of
property quarrels: and I think, dear guest,” said he, smiling, “that
though you do come from another planet, you can see from the mere out-
side look of our world that quarrels about private property could not go
on amongst us in our days.”

Various phrases in the passages I have just quoted might lead to the sup-
position that Morris would have looked favourably upon the abolition of
marriage pure and simple, and the practice of free unions. The question is
worth looking at, because Morris’s attitude was, in fact, very mixed. We know
with what respect and openness of mind he unreservedly accepted the
irregular union between Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling, and defended
them against the hostility of Hyndman. He possibly had them in mind at the
founding of the Socialist League with their support, when he wrote its
Manifesto, from which I have earlier quoted a few lines. It seems to me to be
worth repeating. “Our modern bourgeois property-marriage,” he wrote,
“would give place to kindly and human relations between the sexes.” One can-
not help being struck by the brevity and lack of explicitness of this formulation.
This did not pass unremarked. I was lucky enough to find, among papers of
Bernard Shaw’s preserved in the British Museum, an unpublished letter to
him from Morris, and it does not lack interest. The subtle Irishman had sent
our poet an article intended for *Commonweal*.

In the article, Shaw quoted the ambiguous and inadequate remark in the
Manifesto, and made much bolder proposals. Morris, very embarrassed,
replied:

“...I don’t quite know what is to be done with the very clever paper
which you have kindly sent us; you see there are some things in it which
as a body we could not quite endorse. We can hardly attack our own
manifesto for instance: also we could not agree that Socialists ought to
leave the marriage question alone ... Of course I agree that abolishing
wedlock while the present economical slavery lasts would be futile... I should like things altered in your article which I am afraid would take the spirit out of it, and it is too good to spoil. I think we of the S.L. must before long state our views on wedlock quite plainly and take the consequences, which I admit are likely to be serious. But I think we had better leave the subject alone till we can pluck up heart to explain the ambiguities of our sentence in the manifesto."

I feel that the lesson to be learned from this letter lies in its hesitation and caution. Morris was conscious of his political responsibility in the leadership of a socialist movement. The problem of relationships between the sexes is not the basic problem from which all the others derive. Now that he had become a Marxist, he was convinced that the opposite was true. He knew that in his days to adopt too bold a position would indeed have led to "serious consequences" and would provide welcome food for hostile propaganda. This was no idle supposition, and the opprobrium heaped upon the Avelings was a living example of the dreadful power of an aggressively pharisaic public opinion. He by no means denied the importance of the problem and thought that socialism had no right to disregard it. But he refrained from any hasty and dangerous declaration and wanted mature consideration given to the problem first. In any case, it did not arise urgently, since the abolition of marriage under the capitalist system would be a futile demand and it would doubtless be just as vain to try to eliminate it in an authoritarian way even after the revolution. This would explain (and Morris's letter to Shaw enlightens us admirably) one of the Notes which accompany the second edition of the Manifesto, published a few months later:

"Under a Socialistic system contracts between individuals would be voluntary and unenforced by the community. This would apply to the marriage contract as well as others, and it would become a matter of simple inclination."[46]

So the ambiguity pointed out by Shaw was removed, with Morris avoiding any foolhardy wording at the level of political action. When, in 1887, Lane and his anarchist splinter group published a manifesto containing an apologia on behalf of free love, he was careful not to follow them on that issue, although he needed their support at the time in the struggle against the parliamentary section of the League.[41] He was in no hurry to declare himself, although he accepted that one cannot hedge indefinitely. "As regards the policy of putting the matter forward," he wrote to Faulkner in the important letter from which I have already quoted, "it is a ticklish subject, but one day or another we must face it."[42] What he wanted to avoid above all was tackling it in a doctrinaire or idealistic way, without making clear the dependence of the superstructure upon the economic basis. He repeated in another letter, sent the same year to Bruce Glasier, that this is a difficult question, but "when Socialism is complete the new economics will have transformed the family, and this will clear up the difficulty". How will it be resolved? Even at the level of utopian anticipation, Morris refused to be dogmatic. It would be possible that there would still be people believing in the sanctity of marriage.

"But if property were abolished such a view would not be very harm-
ful; simply because it could not possibly be the general view; only those would hold it whom it suited, and public opinion would leave people free."

It is interesting to note that Engels showed the same caution in looking ahead in *The Origin of the Family*, two years earlier. He confined himself to observing that it will "suffice to bring about the gradual growth of unconstrained sexual intercourse" and observing that the people of the socialist age "will make this their own practice and their corresponding public opinion about the practice of each individual—and that will be the end of it".

In writing *News from Nowhere*, Morris certainly felt that he had more elbow-room to express his opinion more openly. No doubt he was fully conscious that he was engaged in a militant activity, but in a personal composition he felt more free from restraint and immediate responsibility. Since he was dealing with the twenty-second century, distance in time provided him with some latitude. Nevertheless, he did not venture too far. Clearly relationships between the sexes have become very free. Ellen makes a passing reference to "two or three young men who have taken a special liking to me, and all of whom I cannot please at once", but the nature of their relationships is still left unclear. The attitude towards men of the pretty girls at the Guest House is "without the least affection of shyness", and they exchange kisses and friendly caresses with them. Dick and Clara do not feel any need to hide their desires and their love. A more significant fact is that, before the couple came together again, Clara had left Dick for another man she thought she loved, and when Hammond mentioned the fact it was without any expression of blame. Perhaps one should take special note of the old man’s remarks when he mentions, among the horrors of the nineteenth century, "certain lollies about the 'ruin' of women for following their natural desires in an illegal way, which of course was a convention caused by the laws of private property".

Morris would not go any further. More, marriage itself appears not to have disappeared, since Dick and Clara were married before their separation and old Hammond says they will doubtless get married again. Probably marriage and divorce have become very simple formalities. But we are not altogether certain about this. Since Morris was opposed to all hypocrisy and convention, he would have considered hide-bound, unpleasing and even inhuman the "advanced" idea of what we have come to call "marriage between two courses". "Artificial bolstering up of natural human relationships is what I object to," he wrote in his letter to Faulkner, "though I admit that to make some ceremony or adornment of them is natural and human also." A few lines further on, speaking of the society of the future, he thinks that public opinion "would without violence and in some way that I cannot foresee, take care of the decencies; that it would adorn the subject in such a way as its knowledge of the great art of living would bid it". In the same vein, after returning from the impressive funeral of Alfred Linnell, a victim of the repression of Bloody Sunday, Morris, though deeply moved, simply said: "Well, I like ceremony". Obviously one must be careful not to think that the word "ceremony" implied the slightest formality to him. He simply felt that deep feelings and important acts in human life deserved fraternal consecration.

If one considers it, such a way of thinking is not in the least inconsequential.
Morris was neither a bourgeois individualist nor an asocial anarchist. Man lives among men. He lives with them, by them, and for them, and has a need for their friendship and esteem quite as much as for their services. That is exactly why, whether one likes it or not, there will always be that public opinion which Morris took into account in his letter to Faulkner. It will certainly no longer be expressed by "this universal hypocrisy of modern society, which is its special characteristic." 154 It will be "a truly enlightened public opinion, freed from mere theological views as to chastity", 155 and there will be an end, for example, of the "shame" of the unmarried mother. 156 But it will inevitably continue to exist and to make itself felt, although in a form and spirit free of all intolerant, hypocritical puritanism. Listen again to old Hammond talking to the visitor:

"Don't misunderstand me. You did not seem shocked when I told you that there were no law courts to enforce contracts of sentiment or passion; but so curiously are men made, that perhaps you will be shocked when I tell you that there is no code of public opinion which takes the place of such courts, and which might be as tyrannical and unreasonable as they were. I do not say that people don't judge their neighbours' conduct, sometimes, doubtless, unfairly. But I do say that there is no unvarying conventional set of rules by which people are judged; no bed of Procrustes to stretch or cramp their minds and lives; no hypocritical excommunication which people are forced to pronounce, either by unconsidered habit, or by the unexpressed threat of lesser interdict if they are lax in their hypocrisy." 157

What becomes of the mutual feelings of the couple, within this social setting with outlines that are both defined and flexible, and whose basic characteristic is brotherly respect for the individual? Whether sanctioned by public ceremonial or otherwise, they are based on an animal reality of which nobody is in the least degree ashamed. But man is a superior animal and he would be degrading himself to the lowest level of animalism by a purely physical act not involving all his human sensibility.

"Copulation is worse than beastly unless it takes place as the outcome of natural desires and kindness on both sides: so taking place there is even something sacred about it in spite of the grotesquery of the act, as was well felt by the early peoples in their phallic worship. But further man has not been contented with leaving the matter there, mere animal on one side, inexplicably mysterious on the other; but has adorned the act variously as he has done the other grotesque act of eating and drinking, and in my opinion he will always do so. Still if he were to leave off doing so, I don't think one ought to be shocked; there would still remain the decent animalism plus the human kindness." 158

No doubt the couple of the future will be released from the hypocritical restraints and the false or artificial sentiments which it is customary to parade today, but Morris considers that "there would still remain abundance of real sentiment which man has evolved from the mere animal arrangement." 159 That does not imply that love would become an insipidly idyllic and peaceful business, with no complication or suffering. The intensity of our emotional
reactions will always generate misunderstandings and illusions which are sometimes painful: communist humanity, freed from so many other artificial and avoidable cares, will accept inevitable torment along with the joy.

"Calf love, mistaken for a heroism that shall be life-long, yet early waning into disappointment; the inexplicable desire that comes on a man of riper years to be the all-in-one to some one woman, whose ordinary human kindness and human beauty he has idealised into superhuman perfection, and made the one object of his desire; or lastly the reasonable longing of a strong and thoughtful man to become the most intimate friend of some beautiful and wise woman, the very type of the beauty and glory of the world which we love so well, - as we exult in all the pleasure and exaltation of spirit which goes with these things, so we set ourselves to bear the sorrow which not unseldom goes with them also; remembering those lines of the ancient poet (I quote roughly from memory one of the many translations of the nineteenth century):

'For this the Gods have fashioned man's grief and evil day, That still for man hereafter might be the tale and the lay.'

Well, well, 'tis little likely anyhow that all tales shall be lacking, or all sorrow cured."

And old Hammond, after making this speech full of wisdom to the visitor, adds, "The folly which comes by nature, the unwisdom of the immature man, or the older man caught in a trap, we must put up with that, nor are we much ashamed of it." Earlier he had said: "We do not deceive ourselves, indeed, or believe that we can get rid of all the trouble that besets the dealings between the sexes. We know that we must face the unhappiness that comes of man and woman confusing the relations between natural passion, and sentiment, and the friendship which, when things go well, softens the awakening from passing illusions." The difference between then and earlier times, which enables people to get over such crises less painfully, when they do happen, is in the frankness of discussion and total lack of hypocrisy: "At least if we suffer from the tyranny and fickleness of nature or our own want of experience, we neither grimace about it, nor lie", and that is why, even if love can never be sheltered from all torments, "there is not by a great way as much suffering involved in these matters either to men or to women as there used to be." 160

Morris certainly does not promise our descendants perfect, everlasting, insipid happiness. What he proposes is that we shall be delivered, by our own revolutionary action, from all ills that can be cured. The rest will not be so bad: "though we shall have our troubles then, they will seem as the troubles in a tale compared to the grovelling anxieties that now beset us." 161 In days to come, a free and responsible mankind will be bold and vigilant, better equipped than we are to face them.

"The world would be the world still, I do not deny it; but such men as I have been thinking of will surely be fitter to meet its troubles than the dwellers in our present muddle of authority and unconscious revolt." 162

They will fashion a new ethic "which . . . will not indeed enable us to get rid
of the tragedy of life . . . but will enable us to meet it without fear and without shame. 163

In News from Nowhere, Morris was careful to leave no doubt upon the point. We see Clara, for all her rational and critical outlook, tormented by jealousy when she fears that Dick may succumb to Ellen’s dazzling beauty. When she hears him liken Ellen to a fairy, she enquires whether she is a good fairy, and she is careful over her own appearance, so as not to seem too much of a town-girl. 164 She feels constrained and intimidated in the presence of the other girl, and is not sorry to leave Runnymede. 165 When Ellen rejoins the rowers near Oxford, Clara is unhappy again and wonders anxiously how the two couples are going to be divided between the boats. 166 She is only consoled when she sees bonds of affection being formed between the visitor and Ellen, and the latter admits, too, that she had hesitated to come because she had “often troubled men’s minds disastrously” and was afraid of upsetting the happiness of Dick and Clara. 167

All of this is of no great consequence, it is true, but these concrete details, as well as giving life to the tale and dimension to the characters, give us clearly to understand that communist humanity will not consist of bloodless, artificial supermen and superwomen. Communism will not exert any charismatic effect. Human sensibility, while it raises man above the animals, still leaves him at the mercy of his passions. The elimination of conflicting interests, together with the gentle friendliness of manners, have made violence rare, but, as Dick says, “love is not a very reasonable thing, and perversity and self-will are commoner than some of our moralists think.” 168 Certainly there will not be the flood of crimes of passion previously caused by “the artificial perversion of the sexual passions” and the reduction of women to the state of chattels. Nevertheless, although such incidents become extremely uncommon, they “will happen. Hot blood will err sometimes. A man may strike another, and the stricken strike back again, and the result be a homicide, to put it at the worst.” 169 Dick tells of a tragedy of this kind which “cost the lives of two men and a woman”. 170 and we are given a detailed account of a similar incident during the story: a rejected lover attacks his fortunate rival and gets himself killed through sheer mischance in the affray. 171 How is society to react in such circumstances? There will be no sanctions or punishment. If the guilty person is mad or sick, he will be restrained until he is cured. If he is of sound mind, nothing will be done that might “make it worse still”, since it can only be a question of “an occasional rough blow”. His own remorse will be his punishment. Society will “expect the transgressor to make any atonement possible to him, and he himself expects it.” People habitually guilty of violence do not exist: “In a society where there is no punishment to evade, no law to triumph over, remorse will certainly follow transgression.” 172 After the incident in question during the journey up the Thames, which appalled a whole village, the murderer’s friends and neighbours take him to an isolated house where he meditates until he has exhausted his remorse and his regrets and is again in a fit state to resume his normal place in the community with the woman he loves. Are we to say that Morris is allowing himself to be swept along by optimistic illusions? It is too soon to prejudge what men will be like after a century and a half of life in communist society; we must simply say that his hypothesis fits the logic of his utopia. In a society of this kind, he considers.
acts of wrong would be but the result of sudden outbursts of passion repented by the actors.” 174 No other motivation, in fact, is possible, because “we shall live among friends and neighbours, with whom indeed our passions or folly may sometimes make us quarrel, but whose interests cannot really be dissociated from our own.” 176 Also, “crime will be rarer because there will not be the same temptation to it.” In the absence of the antagonisms caused by pride of possession, the dramas that may arise will be simple human aberrations: these are cases that a hidebound juridical system is incapable of dealing with. Each one of which needs brotherly understanding: “every case of clashing rights and desires will be dealt with on its own merits – that is, really, and not legally.” 178

This admission of human frailty and of the tragedy latent in love adds an extra dimension to utopia, removing all mawkishness from the all-embracing, healthy, peaceable and happy eroticism which suffuses the narrative. Many commentators have seen this calm happiness and the glorification of Ellen as an unconscious compensation for Morris’s painful repressions. 176 Long biographical researches have been undertaken with the aim of uncovering the mysteries of his private life, which he himself never put upon show. There have been interminable controversies about Jane’s real nature, her relationship with her husband and the nature of her connection with Rossetti. The latter’s letters to Mrs. Morris, which have been available since 1964, proved disappointing and lacking in any great interest. 176 At the end of it all, we know no more than we learn from Morris’s correspondence (such of it as was not destroyed) and his poems, and I do not feel that the understanding of his poetry has profited greatly from these investigations and the psychoanalytical interpretations arising from them. Morris suffered, like many other men, and experience of grief helped him to avoid a systematised idyll in his utopian view of sexual relationships. The stirring portrayal of Ellen may very possibly express a personal yearning for the love of a woman who was more exciting and closer than the frigid and perhaps commonplace Jane, whom Morris never ceased loving, all the same. But is such an explanation adequate? Does an exclusive reliance upon susceptibility and the unconscious take into account a whole thought pattern that was in no way egocentric and was sustained by years of militant activity? For years past Morris’s ideal of womanhood had ceased to be the sensual, mystical statue of the Pre-Raphaelite years, which had been embodied and crystallised for him by Jane’s unusual beauty. 176 Would she have found a place in News from Nowhère? Is it by chance that she was openly anti-socialist? Ellen is much more than the sublimation of a repression. She is the woman whose unfolding will be the flowering of communist society, intensely alive, richly endowed physically and mentally, free from all inhibitions and poses, close to the very springs of life, beautiful without aestheticism or attitudinising, both energetic and feminine at the same time. Born as she was of Morris’s sensibility, she is much more a daughter of his reason. Even if one insists upon appealing at any price to biography to support one’s theories, it seems strange to me to speak of the unconscious. Morris seems to have been fully conscious of all his inner life; it was for him an experience upon which he pondered at length, drawing from it precise lessons for himself and for the happiness of mankind in the future.

If one really wants to have a clear idea of Morris’s thinking, one must first of
all talk of reason, and not be content with absurd traditional categories. Far from being the last of the Romantics, as one finds him described in most handbooks and even in monographs, he continually proclaimed his abhorrence of Romantic passion. Could anything in this connection be plainer than old Hammond’s language:

“But you must know that we of these generations are strong and healthy of body, and live easily; we pass our lives in reasonable stride with nature, exercising not one side of ourselves only, but all sides, taking the keenest pleasure in all the life of the world. So it is a point of honour with us not to be self-centred; not to suppose that the world must cease because one man is sorry; therefore we should think it foolish, or if you will, criminal, to exaggerate these matters of sentiment and sensibility. we are no more inclined to eke out our sentimental sorrows than to cherish our bodily pains; and we recognise that there are other pleasures besides love-making. You must remember, also, that we are long-lived, and that therefore beauty both in man and woman is not so fleeting as it was in the days when we were burdened so heavily by self-inflicted diseases. So we shake off these griefs in a way which perhaps the sentimentalists of other times would think contemptible and unheroic, but which we think necessary and manlike. As on the other hand, therefore, we have ceased to be commercial in our love-matters, so also we have ceased to be artificially foolish . . . but to be conventionally sensitive or sentimental – my friend, I am old and perhaps disappointed, but at least I think we have cast off some of the follies of the older world.” 129

It is worth while to add that Morris, even at the height of his emotional crisis, already felt this aversion to any wallowing in misery. The letters he wrote at that time to Aglaia Coronio bear witness to this constant struggle within himself.

“When I said there was no cause for my feeling low, I meant that my friends had not changed at all towards me in any way and that there had been no quarrelling: and indeed I am afraid it comes from some cowardice or unmanliness in me. One thing wanting ought not to go for so much: nor indeed does it spoil my enjoyment of life always, as I have often told you: to have real friends and some sort of aim in life is so much, that I ought still to think myself lucky.”

And three years later he wrote to her again that “I am ashamed of myself for these strange waves of unreasonable passion: it seems so unmanly.” 130

In his life and his work alike, he was able to set reason and respect for the human individual against the obstinacy of despair. For a while he stood down to Rossetti before regaining Jane’s affections, just as Dick awaited Clara’s return to him. He even goes much further in some of the romantic tales of his later years, particularly in The Roots of the Mountains. The Bride, abandoned by Face-of-God for the Friend, resigns herself to the situation without great difficulty, despite her grief, and marries Folknight. She sincerely reciprocates his love and sees definite political advantage in doing so. May Morris tells us that he first intended the Bride to die, but changed his mind, explaining the reason for the new twist in a letter to his other daughter Jenny: “It would be a
very good alliance for the Burgdalers and the Silverdalers both, and I don't think sentiment ought to stand in the way." There could be nothing less romantic indeed!

I cannot for one moment believe Lloyd Eric Grey in his assertion, upon the authority of Frank Harris, that Morris once declared that he found the idea of romantic love absurd because "all women taste the same" and are all equally unsatisfactory. I have already had reason to cast doubt upon the honesty of this strange interpreter, and the remark he alleges here is outside the bounds of all probability. Such cynicism was totally foreign to Morris, whose whole work glorifies the tender purity of love and feminine charm, to which he remained susceptible to the very end of his days. The reasons for his anti-romanticism are of quite a different nature, and old Hammond sums them up very simply: a rejection of any cult of sorrow and recognition of the fact that love, despite its importance, could not be man's only interest. Nothing was more distasteful to Morris than the obsessive singlemindedness of a Rossetti. But is not utopism itself anti-romantic in essence, since it is optimistic by definition and proclaims the rational, constructive use of all human energies even more than fine sentiments? Love is, and will always be, our joy and sometimes our sorrow, but it is unhealthy to make it the sole object of our thoughts and the only motive for our actions. When Birdalone, in The Water of the Wondrous Isles, comes to tell the story of her loves to the good fairy Habundia, the latter replies slyly: "Love is not so tyrannous a master but that his servants may whiles think of other matters, and so solace their souls, that they may live in spite of all." Old Hammond advises the visitor, who is about to go up the Thames with Clara and Dick, not to worry about being one too many: "It is just what these birds in a nest like, to have a good convenient friend to turn to, so that they may relieve the ecstasies of love with the solid commonplace of friendship."

Love, to be sure, and work even more so! Morris was able to overcome the disruption of his private life thanks to his prodigious activity. "In his private life," remarked Scawen Blunt, "Morris was too busy to be unhappy, and of too sanguine a temperament to worry himself much over past disappointments; yet disappointment cannot but have been his." In 1872 he published a long poem, perhaps justly forgotten today, entitled Love is Enough, but, we are told by his son-in-law Sparling, "it was obviously not among those of his works he liked most". Sparling goes on:

"On one occasion ... he electrified those present by snatchng down the volume from his bookshelves, rapping upon it with a paper-knife, pointing to its title and exclaiming: 'There's a lie for you, though it was I that told it! Love isn't enough in itself; love and work, yes! Work and love, that's the life of a man! Why, a fellow can't even love decently unless he's got work to do, and pulls his weight in the boat!'"

They are typical words expressing the need for a rounded life that is at the basis of Morris's humanism, words, moreover, which recall the aspirations of his youth, when, at the age of twenty-two and still trying to find his way, he wished for nothing more than "love and work. these two things only." Further reflection as a grown man puts work in the first place, but love, far from being cast out, finds health and nourishment in the inner riches which
are alone created by daily toil. This is the meaning of the words spoken by the
visitor, after hearing old Hammond tell him what work has become in com-

“... to speak plainly, this change from the conditions of the older world
seems to me far greater and more important than all the other changes
you have told me about as to crime, politics, property, marriage.”

As a Marxist Morris knew where, in the last analysis, to find the deter-
mining factor of the manifestation of human consciousness and the criterion
for their evaluation.

* * *

In this new world, where woman is man’s equal and love unfolds freely
“without grimaces or lies”, where there can be no worry for the present or for
the future, motherhood is freed from all the anxieties which formerly went with
it. It is not the object of marriage, but simply a natural function which deepens
affection and is accompanied by joy, as old Hammond explains with lyrical
enthusiasm:

“How could it possibly be but that maternity should be highly
honoured amongst us? Surely it is a matter of course that the natural and
necessary pains which the mother must go through form a bond of union
between man and woman, an extra stimulus to love and affection
between them, and that this is universally recognised. For the rest,
remember that all the artificial burdens of motherhood are now done
away with. A mother has no longer any mere sordid anxieties for the
future of her children. They may indeed turn out better or worse; they
may disappoint her highest hopes; such anxieties as these are a part of
the mingled pleasure and pain which goes to make up the life of
mankind. But at least she is spared the fear (it was most commonly the
certainty) that artificial disabilities would make her children something
less than men and women; she knows that they will live and act accord-
ing to the measure of their own faculties. In times past, it is clear that
the ‘Society’ of the day helped its Judaic god and the ‘Man of Science’ of
the time, in visiting the sins of the father upon the children. How to
reverse this process, how to take the sting out of heredity, has for long
been one of the most constant cares of the thoughtful men amongst us. So
that, you see, the ordinarily healthy woman (and almost all our women
are both healthy and at least comely), respected as a child-bearer and
rearer of children, desired as a woman, loved as a companion, unanxious
for the future of her children, has far more instinct for maternity than the
poor drudge and mother of drudges of past days could ever have had.”

An admirable exposition, though it makes the remark which occurs inciden-
tally a few pages later, that “the population is pretty much the same as it was
at the end of the nineteenth century”, somewhat surprising. Morris seems
to have developed somewhat uncertainly on this point. I pass rapidly over his
pre-socialist period, during which he feared that “the terrible swift multiplica-
tion of the race” was contributing to the disfiguration of the beautiful face of
Right at the beginning of his revolutionary activities he reproached capitalist with "urging people to the reckless multiplication of their kind" and with "gathering population into unmanageable aggregations to satisfy her ruthless greed, without the least thought of their welfare." All of that is rather confused and still betrays a complete ignorance of the Marxist critique of the theories of Malthus. Incidentally, we should not overlook the fact that these theories were widespread even among the working-class and that, at the same period, they were strongly influencing even such a militant as Tom Mann. Despite quite a close reading of Capital, Morris does not seem to have made a serious study of Marx's pages on "relative overpopulation". All the same, he did understand that Malthusian theories were weapons in the hands of the bourgeoisie, as can be seen from a few short indications which are to be found in his later writings. But he shows little sign of having bothered to study their economic roots. In News from Nowhere he appears to take up the cudgels primarily against the feminist movement of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh, who, in the 'eighties, were boldly carrying on the first propaganda for birth-control. His condemnation is brief enough. "You have studied the 'emancipation of women' business of the nineteenth century," says the visitor to old Hammond, "don't you remember that some of the 'superior' women wanted to emancipate the more intelligent part of their sex from the bearing of children?" And the old man replies: "I do remember about that strange piece of baseless folly, the result, like all the follies of the period, of the hideous class tyranny which then obtained." These vague formulations are not at all satisfactory and their only purpose is to introduce the glorification of motherhood, freed from capitalist trammels, in the communist society of the twenty-second century. But why, in that case, has the population not increased? It is true that old Hammond explains at once that "we have helped to populate the other countries – where we were wanted and were called for," but that does nothing to remove the difficulty, since one can ask what the other nations have been doing. One feels that Morris is trying to avoid the issue by means of a convenient, but not very acceptable, memory of Thomas More, who set a limit to the population figure and regarded the surplus as available for colonial emigration. So the question remains unanswered and is not an idle one, since it is linked with other problems that Morris possibly resolved by this device without quite realising it. First, there is the care for the preservation of the countryside and of nature, the source of all art. There is the need to make possible the abolition of large urban concentrations. But it is also possible that Morris may have felt, more or less consciously, that direct democracy on a local scale, which he regards as the goal of political evolution, might only be attainable with a population that is sufficiently limited and dispersed. These problems are left in mid-air and Morris's uncertainties show clearly through these contradictory aspirations. How could demographic development remain static in a world where the marvellous and symbolic Ellen, the spokeswoman, it would seem, of the women of her time, looks forward with understandable joy to one day having many children?

And would not women be encouraged to this attitude by the striking physical beauty of the new generations? By freeing love of all the restraints which had distorted it, humanity has been able to "take the sting out of heredity", as old Hammond puts it.
"Well, as to our looks, the English and Jutish blood, which on the whole is predominant here, used not to produce much beauty. But I think we have improved it. I know a man who has a large collection of portraits printed from photographs of the nineteenth century, and going over those and comparing them with the everyday faces in these times, puts the improvements in our good looks beyond a doubt. Now, there are some people who think it not too fantastic to connect this increase of beauty directly with our freedom and good sense in the matters we have been speaking of: they believe that a child born from the natural and healthy love between a man and a woman, even if that be transient, is likely to turn out better in all ways, and especially in bodily beauty, than the birth of the respectable commercial marriage bed, or of the dull despair of the drudge of that system. They say, Pleasure begets pleasure." 261

Raymond Ruyer has sapiently observed that "eugenics is bound up in depth with utopia", 262 but few utopists have tackled the subject with as much freedom, human warmth and conviction: "men will develop swiftly both bodily and mentally in the new society." 263 The ugliness of former times, caused by the grinding toil of the poor or by the idleness of the wealthy, has been replaced by the sturdy and healthy grace and natural elegance that we find in the characters of *News from Nowhere*. In passing, it is worth while observing that none of them was used by Morris as a pretext for descriptions of highfalutin aestheticism. He is content with a few simple adjectives, and does not even seek to vary them. The men are handsome, strong and well-set-up, the women are healthy and open, and they are all beautiful so that, as Dick says, "every Jack may have his Jill", without having to fight over her. 264 Even in the case of Ellen we are simply told of "her beauty, so delicate, yet so interfused with energy." 265 We are a long way from the interminable Pre-Raphaelite languors which bedecked the sensual and mystical portrait of *Beata mea Domina* in the poems of his youth.

There is no lingering trace either of the mental morbidity or of the material lack of hygiene of previous society. "First of all," exclaims Morris in one of his lectures, "I claim good health; and I say that a vast proportion of people in civilization scarcely even know what that means." There is not the slightest need to look for the fundamental cause of the innumerable diseases of our day: "the poor suffer always from one disease – hunger", 266 and the burdensome, so-called comfort of which the wealthy are so proud has no other outcome than to "make work for servants and doctors." 267 The growing urbanisation of the population makes this situation worse. "The proportion of the town and manufacturing districts to the country is so great that the inhabitants, no longer recruited from the peasantry but become townsmen bred of townsmen, are yearly deteriorating in physique." 268

The socialist revolution will put an end to these evils. The raising of the level of life, "the increased ease of life and education combined will tend to free us from disease of body and mind." 269 Clearly it will not all happen overnight. "Indeed, I suspect that these good conditions must have been in force for several generations before a population in general will be really healthy... but I also doubt not that in the course of time they would... gradually breed such
a population, living in enjoyment of animal life at least, happy therefore, and beautiful according to the beauty of their race." 210

And so, in *News from Nowhere*, old Hammond tells us that cholera has completely disappeared: 211 we should not forget that the last epidemic was no further back than 1854. It even seems that the most trifling case of illness has become an event of sorts, since Dick declares that, to his knowledge, there is nobody sick at the moment, at least in Hammersmith. 212 The practice of medicine does not, however, seem to have disappeared completely, since he also declares that "in a society of equals, you will not find any one to play the part of torturer or jailer, though many to act as nurse or doctor." 213 And it goes without saying that if anyone "be sick or otherwise incapacitated from work, it will be a sacred duty for his fellow-men to sustain him in all comfort." 214 Morris does not claim, therefore, that communism has miraculously put an end to all possibility of illness: Mistress Philippa attacks her work so furiously because she has been out of action for two months for health reasons. 215 But she is, surely, somewhat exceptional? She is rightly teased for not knowing how to enjoy life properly.

This flourishing of the healthy life breathes through every page of Morris's utopia, and is a response to a deep natural tendency in him. 216 There is one detail which the reader of today may well overlook but which will certainly have struck the public of 1890: that is the taste for open-air life, for exposing the body to the sunshine and for suntan. The female characters of *News from Nowhere* have rejected forever the pale translucent complexion, the chlorotic pallor, which represented charm and distinction for the Victorian young lady. No more tight-laced corsets or dresses buttoned up to the chin and covering the ankles, no more enormous hats with trimmings recalling the aviary, the flower-garden or the vegetable-garden, no more veils, parasols or sunshades; and, consequently, no more dying poses, romantic anaemia nor sudden swoonings. 217 In Morris's tale, the bronze of the young men matches the passionate tan of the young women. No more tight high boots: Ellen's bare feet are as sun-browned as her face and hands. 218 When she was roused, "the colour mantled in her delicate sunburnt cheeks," 219 "the beautiful brown of her face was deepened by a flush," 220 "her cheeks reddened under their tan." 221 And the town-dwelling Clara was in haste to join the haymakers to get a tan, and the only one to take exception to these habits is Ellen's grumbling father (or grandfather), 222 which is not lacking in significance and stresses Morris's intent. His utopia is bathed in the brightness of sunshine. Nocturnal life plays no part, except for the very short evening in the moonlight at the Hammersmith Guest House, at the end of which the visitor, as on other evenings, falls deeply asleep. 223 That was Morris's own way (and it caused one of the difficulties of house-sharing with Rossetti at Kelmscott Manor) and such is the way of life of all the characters in his romantic novels; during their wanderings they wake with the dawn and make for the nearest river, in order — the phrase is often repeated — "to wash the night off from them". In the glorious June of *News from Nowhere*, there is repeated reference to the beauty of the morning, and it was not yet five o'clock when the astounded visitor emerges from what, the previous evening, had been his house to go and plunge into the unwonted purity of the Thames. 224 Morris's utopia is a hymn of diurnal rejoicing.
In this world of reason, beauty and healthfulness, men, freed from all theological and social restraints, devote themselves simply and without shame to the natural pleasures of life. What Morris most hated, wrote Bax, "as a view of life, was Puritanism in all its aspects", and in his eyes it was the most typical product of bourgeois civilisation:

"... it is grievous to think how much prowess this Puritanism still has. Although it has sunk from a destructive fanaticism into a slimy superstition, it is still a dangerous ally of the gigantic robbery of capitalism, which gave it birth."

He hated this civilisation for "its contempt for simple pleasures which everyone could enjoy but for its folly." He pilloried Victorian hypocrisy for "its concealment and ignoring, rather than restraint of, natural longings which does not forbid the greedy indulgence in them if it can but be decently hidden." He was equally forthright, moreover, about all moral asceticism, even when sincere:

"I demand a free and unfettered animal life for man first of all. I demand the utter extinction of all asceticism. If we feel the least degradation in being amorous or merry, or hungry, or sleepy, we are so far bad animals, and therefore miserable men."

But this rejection of asceticism is complemented by a rejection of luxury:

"Does that seem a paradox to you? It ought not to do so. What brings about luxury but a sickly discontent with the simple joys of the lovely earth? What is it but a warping of the natural beauty of things into a perverse ugliness to satisfy the jaded appetite of a man who is ceasing to be a man — a man who will not work and cannot rest!"

Luxury, adds Morris, "is really the sworn foe of pleasure." He asks his contemporaries to consider that "the good life of the future will be as little like the life of the present rich as may be," for "that life of the rich is only the wrong side of their own misery." Free men, he asserts "must lead simple lives and have simple pleasures." And he concludes by demanding "the due results of revolution on the basis of non-ascetic simplicity of life."

Because this was Morris's way of thinking, Bruce Glasier (apparently forgetting the parable of the mote and the beam) felt obliged to assert that "there was a sense in which it might be said of him that not only was he a puritan, but a puritan of the puritans." What Morris said is quite clear, and this is an odd interpretation to put upon it. Just as he condemned any rejection, hypocritical or sincere, of man's simple pleasures, he also repudiated the artifices which distort and, in the end, destroy them. One other clarification is necessary. Morris's rejection of destructive luxury and his demand for a simple life had nothing in common with the eccentricities of the "simple-lifers" who later laid claim to him. He himself was repelled by any affectation and any spirit of conformism, and he would certainly have seen in this movement, which had its day early in the twentieth century, the same bourgeois trend to
escapism that he detected in the handicraft snobbery of his own time. If the
followers of the "simple life" had a claim to a father-figure, it was represented
by Carpenter rather than by Morris, and we shall soon see that the simple-
jioes to which the latter refers had precious little in common with the (all in all
rather ascetic) practices which were later indulged in his name.

Future humanity altogether, with no arbitrary choice, will be passionately
devoted to this way of life. They will feel "intense and overwhelming love of the
very skin and surface of the earth on which man dwells, such as a lover has in
the fair flesh of the woman he loves." But this passion will not remain vague
and abstract in the way of pantheistic transports: "the real way to enjoy life is
to accept all its necessary ordinary details and turn them into pleasures by
taking interest in them," and Morris frequently repeats such invitations: "the
true secret of happiness lies in the taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily
life." The visitor in News from Nowhere is surprised to observe that "with
everybody else we met they were eager to discuss all the little details of
life."

There will no longer be any obstacle to the free development of normal sen-
suality. "The pleasures of such a society would be founded on the free exercise
of the senses and passions of a healthy human animal, so far as this did not in-
jure the other individuals of the community and so offend against social unity:
no man would be ashamed of humanity or ask for anything better than its due
development." People of days to come will be able "to rejoice in satisfying
the due bodily appetites of a human animal without fear of degradation or
sense of wrong-doing." No taboo or interdict will henceforth impede man's
fundamental needs:

"Shall we be ashamed of our love and our hunger and our mirth, and
believe that it is wicked of us not to try to dispense with the joys that ac-
company the procreation of our species, and the keeping of ourselves
above those joys of desire which make us understand that the beasts too
may be happy?"

It is only then, says Morris, that "we shall find life worth living; we shall not
be afraid to die, or, worse still, ashamed to live." But there is to be no
question of choosing or of establishing an order of merit among these basic
pleasures. Just as he objects to amorous or sentimental obsession, Morris con-
siders that the physical delights of love must not be the only ones to provide
man with the natural joys that are his right. Why, for example, should eating
and drinking be regarded as unworthy functions, particularly when one
reflects how close are their ties with manifestations of friendship?

"By the way, need I apologize for introducing so gross a subject as
eating and drinking? Some of you perhaps will think I ought to, and are
looking forward to the day when this function also will be civilized into
the taking of some intensely concentrated pill once a year, or indeed once
in a lifetime, leaving us free for the rest of our time to the exercise of our
intellect – if we chance to have any in those days. From this height of
cultivated aspiration I respectfully beg to differ, and in all seriousness,
and not in the least in the world as a joke, I say that the daily meeting of
the house-mates in rest and kindness for this function of eating, this
restoration of the waste of life, ought to be looked on as a kind of sacra-
ment, and should be adorned by art to the best of our powers.36 295

In the eighties, vegetarianism had many adherents, particularly among
militant socialists, and, what was more serious, for some of them
vegetarianism became an article of the socialist faith. As one can easily im-
agine, Morris, despite all his tolerance, felt little sympathy for such an outlook.
During 1886, from August to October, the columns of Communist carried an
impassioned debate on the pros and cons of vegetarianism, with arguments
that were sometimes quite astonishing. In the end Morris, probably a bit tired
of it all, intervened:

"It seems to me that there is no need either to attack a vegetarian or to
confuse a vote of thanks on him, so long as he is one because he chooses to
be so on any grounds that please himself, whether he makes it a matter of
health, or economy, or sentiment. But a man can hardly be a sound
Socialist who puts forward vegetarianism as a solution of the difficulties
between labour and capital . . .344 there are people who are vegetarians
on ascetic grounds, and who would be as tyrannical as other ascetics if
they had the chance of being so. I do not mean to say that Socialist
vegetarians are likely to fall into these traps; they only make themselves
liable to the sneer of an anti-Socialist acquaintance of mine, who said to
me one day: 'All of you Socialists have each of you another fad besides
Socialism'."345

Morris seems to have been harassed by proselytising vegetarians.346 Two
years later, in 1888, he was obliged to come back to the question:

"I have not a word to say against vegetarianism voluntarily practised
on the grounds of its suiting the health of the practiser, or of a natural
sentiment against 'corpse-eating' as a friend of ours24 has called it . . .
Simplicity of life – good, most good, so long as it is voluntary, but surely
there is enough involuntary simplicity of life . . . and to live poorly is no
remedy against poverty, but a necessity of it."

However, he added, with as much generosity as utopian wisdom: "When we
are a society of equals we shall be able to consider all these niceties of life, and
do what we think best," 248

He had a healthy appetite himself; he enjoyed talking of the pleasures of the
table 249 and was intolerant of hunger.250 He was an excellent cook, declared
that women knew nothing about cooking, derived immense joy from doing it
himself and was very proud of his talents.251 The storytellers overfill with
picturesque anecdotes about this aspect of Morris's personality; his letters and
all his works are sprinkled with culinary references; this could form the object
of a study that would not be in the least boring, but it would divert us from our
purpose for too long. We must be content with noting the care taken over the
meals and the quality of the food described in News from Nowhere. First, here is
breakfast at the Hammersmith Guest House:

"Our breakfast . . . was simple enough, but most delicately cooked,
and set on the table with much daintiness. The bread was particularly
good, and was of several different kinds, from the big, rather close, dark-
coloured, sweet-tasting farmhouse loaf, which was most to my liking, to the thin pipe-stems of wheaten crust, such as I have eaten in Turin." 232

But this anticipatory gourmandise, far from receiving steady and unvarying satisfaction, is subject to prudent restraint. Morris is too attached to the pleasures of this world to allow them to be dimmed or eroded by monotonous excess. "Feasts are spoiled," he declared in conversation, "if you have them every day, and I promise you I should keep up good strict discipline. I should say to you, 'Now this is tripe and onion day,' and on another day, 'Now this is porridge day,' and you should not have any choice." 233 Remember how Dick remarked to the visitor that "we don't want salmon every day of the season." 234 We find the same thought in the description of lunch at Bloomsbury:

"...everything was cooked and served with a daintiness which showed that those who had prepared it were interested in it; but there was no excess either of quantity or of gourmandise; everything was simple, though so excellent of its kind; and it was made clear to us that this was no feast, only an ordinary meal." 235

While Morris was relatively tolerant of vegetarians, he showed somewhat less patience towards teetotalers. He liked good wine and had a remarkable knowledge of it. 236 He could never meet a friend without suggesting a drink, 237 and was disconsolate when, after a socialist meeting, the comrades he was treating refused everything but lemonade. 238 In a broadcast talk which he gave on the B.B.C. on 24 June 1952, Fred Henderson told how, on the occasion he first met Morris on a propaganda tour, the latter was highly indignant at the idea of having had a room booked for him in a Temperance Hotel. 239

Contrary to what has been noted about vegetarianism, teetotalism was more common among the rank-and-file militants than among the leadership. 240 Morris, a well-to-do bourgeois and bon vivant, never drank to excess and appears not to have taken any alcoholic drinks other than wine or beer, but this he regarded as a harmless natural pleasure and saw no reason to exclude it. Wine especially seemed to him to possess noble qualities: "I saw him once at Hammersmith, holding up a glass of claret towards the light, and saying, 'Why do people say it is prosaic to get inspiration out of wine? Is it not the sunlight and the sap in the leaves? Are not grapes made by the sunlight and the sap?'" 241 He certainly did not expect the men of the future to ban drink, because "we shall it is hoped be able to enjoy ourselves without bestiality, on one side, so shall not need abstinence ritual on the other." 242 In a letter written on 13 March 1889 to an unidentified correspondent he defined his position with the greatest clarity, and the extract I reproduce shows, once again, Morris's constant respect for the freedom of every individual:

"I think the question of the advantage of alcoholic liquors is a matter which each man must find out for himself having admitted that one may easily drink too much even without getting drunk. My own experience is that I find my victuals dull without something to drink. A great point would be to try to get the liquors free from adulteration. But that I fear is impossible under a capitalistic régime." 243

In the happy republic of News from Nowhere wines have, naturally, retained
their savour and their attraction, and the visitor appreciates the bouquet of the glass of Steinberg which is offered to him along with his pipe and tobacco. He wonders, incidentally, "how they managed to make fine wine when there were no longer labourers compelled to drink rot-gut instead of the fine wine which they themselves made". He intends to put the question to Dick, but thinks no more about it, and this perhaps embarrassing question remains unanswered as far as we are concerned. We may note in passing that the children in the shop, when invited to have a drink, say that they do not drink wine and are happy with lemonade and ginger-beer. Again, the young roadmenders, enamoured of "easy-hard work", who are repairing the Bloomsbury road, have by the roadside "a good big basket that had hints of cold pie and wine." Old Hammond and his guests, lunching in the Guest House, are not to be left out and continue their lively conversation over a bottle of excellent Bordeaux, soon followed by a second. The wine is just as good at Hammersmith and all the way up the Thames when they visit the Obstinate Refusers a lad hastens to bring out "the inevitable big wickered flask and tall glasses." Tobacco, also, is another of life's pleasures which Morris refrains from condemning. He smoked, and also took snuff, if H. A. Barker is to be believed. He smoked the same excellent latakia that the visitor was happy to find in Piccadilly. It is an odd fact, since Morris was a habitual and well-informed smoker, that no other character in News from Nowhere seems to use tobacco, with the possible exception of Bob the weaver. However, the smoking habit appears to be quite natural and Dick, who says he is a non-smoker, declares himself selfish for forgetting that the visitor is without pipe and tobacco. But we may wonder whether Morris, despite his own tastes, did not look forward to the disappearance of what he considered a harmful habit. And in fact, in that same letter to an unknown correspondent from which I have just quoted, he says:

"If I were to say what I really think I should say that tobacco seems to me a more dangerous intoxicant than liquors because people can and do smoke to excess without becoming beastly and a nuisance."

A wise caution, but still tempered by his desire to leave everyone free to enjoy the simple pleasures of daily life just however he may wish!

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"I love life better than death!" exclaims Ellen, and this love of life is the main theme of the tale. Apart from the two crimes of passion to which Morris refers, the idea of death is missing, and even in these two cases, the dominant feeling is less fear or sadness than the repudiation of acts of unreason. Once only, and in a very fleeting manner, is a different note struck, when Dick, responding to the sequence of the seasons, talks of "autumn, when one almost believes in death." But, as E. L. Cary aptly puts it, "no one entertains such a belief longer than he must." Once again the rejection of romanticism and morbidity shines forth.

But this rejection is not entirely spontaneous. It comes from the argued development of long thinking. Mackail tells us that Morris had a "haunting fear of death", and he was equally haunted by the fear of old age. As a
matter of fact, he avoided all talk of death, and even when those about him knew from the doctors that he was beyond hope of recovery, we strove to persuade him that he was better — and he was anxious to believe it." 278 This fear was more than once expressed in the poems of the 'seventies, and is present throughout The Earthly Paradise: "... then I held my breath, and shuddered at the sight of Eld and Death"; "... that day of their vanished youth, when first they saw Death clear, and deemed all life accurst by that cold overshadowing threat, - the End"; "Death have we hated, knowing not what it meant." 279 But already the horror is accompanied by another feeling, indignation at the shortness of life which prevents man's giving all that he has within him. As man advances in age, "the ghosts of dead hopes" beset him and ask, "where is thy work? How little thou hast done!" 280 This too-close end "all perfection mocks" 281 and encourages man to baseness not known to the immortal gods. 282 This resentment was probably one of the motive forces of Morris's unbounded activity: "Art is long and life is short; let us at least do something before we die", 283 but he deplores "the helplessness of people, who don't live long enough to do what themselves, and have not manliness enough to begin the work, and pass it on to those that shall come after them." It is true that "a man in his short life can see but a little way ahead", 284 and it is not surprising that he should feel himself powerless, in so short a time, to put right the evils that surround him.

"Surely if people lived five hundred years instead of threescore and ten they would find some better way of living than in such a sordid loathsome place." 285

This yearning for longevity, thus expressed in 1874, is still to be found in works written just before his death. In The Well at the World's End, Ralph and Ursula are received, during their wanderings in search of the fountain of eternal youth, by the Innocent People, and their aged chief tells them that he understands only too well the reason for their search:

"Ye wear away your lives desiring that which ye may scarce get, and ye set your hearts on high things, desiring to be masters of the very Gods. Therefore ye know sickness and sorrow, and oft ye die before your time, so that ye must depart and leave undone things which ye deem ye were born to do; which to all men is grievous . . . Therefore ye do but right to seek to the Well at the World's End, that ye may the better accomplish that which behoveth you, and that ye may serve your fellows and deliver them from the thrallship of those that be strong and unwise and unkind, of whom we have heard strange tales." 286

So, gradually, the physical horror of death gives way in Morris to the fear of not being able to carry the task undertaken through to completion. His son-in-law Sparling tells how "the death of Dickens, for whom his love and admiration were unbounded, in the midst of an unfinished and unfinished work, haunted his memory for the rest of his days as a heart-shaking tragedy". 287 It is not difficult to understand how a feeling of this kind became stronger in him year by year. He was fifty years old when he came to socialism, and the event brought with it a feeling that his whole being was transformed, that he had at last reached maturity. He could no longer feel fully satisfied
with his earlier work and could not help wondering whether he would have
time to express all the ideas bubbling up within him or to make an adequate
contribution to the cause he had embraced.

This very commitment provided new fuel for his resentment at the shortness
of life. He was undoubtedly impressed by the documentation he found in
*Capital* (notably the tenth chapter of Book I, on the working day) and also,
perhaps, in Engels’s *Condition of the Working Class in England*. He discovered
with horror the workers’ expectation of life: “the labourers (they live on the
average \( \frac{1}{2} \) as long as rich).” 288 So the capitalist system is put into the dock.
The rich are “longer lived, more beautiful, more honoured, more refined than
those of the other class.” And Morris completes the discovery with a typical
thought: “I do not say that it [i.e. the capitalist class] troubles itself about its
members being *positively* long lived, beautiful or refined, but merely insists that
they shall be so *relatively* to the inferior class.” 289 So the essential cause of the
brevity of life lies in men’s misery and their social system. Pretty Annie of the
Hammersmith Guest House recalls having heard it said that “one ages very
quickly if one lives amongst unhappy people;” 290 and Ellen, “tears in her eyes
at the thought of the past miseries of people like herself”, says gravely, “as for
me, I am twenty years old. In those days my middle age would be beginning
now, and in a few years I should be pinched, thin, and haggard, beset with
troubles and miseries, so that no one could have guessed that I was once a
beautiful girl”. “Yes,” replies the visitor, “... Often — in my country I have
seen that wretched change you have spoken of, from the fresh handsome
country lass to the poor draggle-tailed country woman.” 291

These then are the roots of that utopian yearning for long life that is to be
found throughout Morris’s work. Long before it found its triumphant
materialist fulfilment in *News from Nowhere* it found brilliant expression in a
romantic form in *The Earthly Paradise*, in which the Wanderers set off in search
of “... gardens ever blossoming, across the western sea where none grew old”,
and of “... that desired gate to immortality and blessed rest within the
landless waters of the west.” 292 Their long odyssey was fruitless, and it is the
vanity of their search which gives the poem its note of infinite melancholy.
Much later, when Morris wrote his romances, Hallblithe, the hero of *The Story
of the Glittering Plain*, was more fortunate than his predecessors and reached the
land of everlasting life, but he became tired of eternal repose and returned, dis-
appointed, to the struggles of mortal life. The impossible ideal contains no
solution.

As a Marxist, Morris could find a solution only in putting new roots into life
on earth, in human society and its history. In 1889, when he wrote *The Roots of
the Mountains*, his nostalgic dreaming took a sudden and unexpected turn as he
spoke of the happiness of barbarian times. Describing the festival at Burgdale,
he abruptly wrote:

“Nay, so kind were they and so friendly, that you might rather have
deemed that this was the land whereof tales tell, wherein people die not,
but live for ever, without growing any older than when they first came
thither, unless they be born into the land itself, and then they grow into
fair manhood, and so abide.” 293

A year later, when he finally brought his vision to completion in *News from*
Nowhere, there was no longer any question of romantic and unnecessary fantasies, nor even of memories of a golden age. His utopia must be real. He felt a thirst for rational explanation, and looking forward only made sense for him as a logical development of the laws of history. Capitalist exploitation has disappeared, with its train of poverty, undernourishment, worklessness, illness, war, overwork, nervous tension, stresses of all kinds. Everywhere there is plenty, life is simple and healthy, all pleasures and joys are within reach, including the greatest joy of all, that of developing ones personality and skills in all directions. Love, freed from all fetters, has "taken the sting out of heredity". Now that there are no antagonisms to set men against each other, they live in an atmosphere of peace and brotherhood. Nature, cleansed of all pollution, is everywhere, pleasant for the body and refreshing for the mind. Art and beauty, freed of artificiality, represent the eternal flowering of daily life. Is it not to be expected, in such conditions and after a century and a half of communism, that human life should be extraordinarily prolonged? "We of these generations," says old Hammond, "are strong and healthy of body, and live easily... You must remember also that we are long-lived, and that therefore beauty both in man and woman is not so fleeting as it was in the days when we were burdened so heavily with self-inflicted diseases." Hammond himself is more than a hundred and five years old, and the visitor is astonished by his sparkling and loquacious vitality:

"And I sat watching how his eyes glittered, and how the fresh life seemed to glow in his face, and I wondered how at his age he should think of the happiness of the world, or indeed anything but his coming dinner."  

Before reaching the British Museum, Dick and the visitor had already talked with a ninety-year-old, full of sparkle and sprightliness, and as the "man from another planet" watches dumb-founded as he "strode away vigorously, like a young man", Dick tells him that "certainly we have beaten the three-score-and-ten of the old Jewish proverb-book". Earlier still, at the Hammersmith Guest House, the visitor had taken the beautiful Annie to be twenty, instead of forty-two, and she had taken him for an octogenarian. Morris felt dreadfully old in this world of renewed youth, and one can see his own pain peeping through when Clara promises him that he will look younger again after spending a few months with his new friends. Old Hammond, who had guessed the visitor's secret, just shook his head sadly.

At any event, socialism cured Morris of romantic dreams of immortality, by bringing the more reasonable hope of longer life – not by any means the hope of a long life at any price, but that of a long and productive youth. The old men in Morris's tales have nothing in common with the horrible Struldbrugs of Swift. The important thing, says Dick, is that "a man is healthy and happy while he is alive." The monotonous and aimless immortality of the Glittering Plain is a prison from which Hallblithe escapes. Even in The Earthly Paradise, Morris comes to resign himself to mortality and admit the necessity for it:

"For on them God is pleased to send
The gift of Death down from above,
William Morris: The Marxist Dreamer

That envy, hatred and hot love,
Knowledge with hunger by his side,
And avarice and deadly pride,
There may have end like everything,
Both to the shepherd and the king;
Lest this green earth become but hell
If folk for ever there should dwell." 301

No doubt the evils enumerated by Morris would have disappeared from his socialist utopia, and the earth, greener than ever, would be in less danger of becoming a hell. But it would not do for human life to be prolonged beyond its natural limits, even though these might be normally extended. The Elder of the Innocent People in The Well at the World's End tells his young guest the reasons why his people have no wish to drink the magic water of the Well:

"Now our own folk live well and hale, and without sickness and pestilence ... Of strife and of war we know naught: nor do we desire aught which we may not easily attain to. Therefore we live long ..."

This romantic tale, set out of time, deals with a population living in primitive simplicity, but Morris wrote it five years after News from Nowhere, and one cannot help reading these lines as a sort of continuation, or echo. The old man goes on: "so have the Gods given us the gift of death lest we weary of life", and he gives the young couple a strange thought to ponder. If some of them, he says, were to drink the water of the Well, they "should be stronger and wiser than the others, and should make themselves earthly gods, and, maybe, should torment the others and make their lives a very burden to be borne". So, by implication, it is the risk of a sort of gerontocracy which makes the idea of death acceptable. Note, moreover, that the magic water of the Well, in this last tale of Morris's, does not confer immortality -- "it may not keep any man alive for ever" -- but gives to those who drink it a life extending over many generations. 302

So, even in romantic fantasy, Morris overcomes his personal revulsion and reconciles himself to the inescapable necessity of death. The sorrow of mourning must be overcome, explains Dick: "such things must be." 303 And in Morris's utopia there is no trace of any corpse-cult. His sturdy materialism is deeply repelled by any such idea. This is made plain in A Dream of John Ball, 304 and only a cult of living humanity, in its passing lifetime (though prolonged thanks to the benefits of socialism) and its continuing lifetime across the generations, seems to him to be worthy of the men of future ages. Freed from metaphysical torments concerning the hereafter, they will be able to "live without shame and die without fear"

* * *

The major achievement of socialism will not be longevity in itself, but rather the physical and moral rejuvenation of the species. One of the most pregnant moments in News from Nowhere is the consideration of the mural paintings in the magnificent dining hall in Bloomsbury. "Their subjects were taken from queer old-world myths and imaginations", particularly those which "Jacob
Grimm got together from the childhood of the world, barely lingering even in its time, myths and imaginations which in yesterday’s world only about half a dozen people in the country knew anything about. The visitor expressed his surprise, only to learn that nothing was better known to this new race of people than these lovely, fragrant stories. “Such childishness”, as he was unwise enough to call it, far from being forgotten, was presented to the imagination all the time and provided inspiration for the poetry of the new age. “It is the child-like part of us,” says old Hammond, “that produces works of imagination.”

“He sighed, then smiled and said: ‘At least let us rejoice that we have got back our childhood again. I drink to the days that are!’

‘Second childhood,’ said I in a low voice, and then blushed at my double rudeness, and hoped that he hadn’t heard. But he had, and turned to me smiling, and said: ‘Yes, why not? And for my part, I hope it may last long; and that the world’s next period of wise and unhappy manhood, if that should happen, will speedily lead us to a third childhood: if indeed this age be not our third,'”

These remarks of old Hammond’s claim our notice on more than one account. They have a ring which is familiar today, and one cannot help comparing them with a famous passage of Marx on Greek art:

“A man can not become a child again unless he becomes childish. But does he not enjoy the artless ways of a child and must he not strive to reproduce its truth on a higher plane? Is not the character of every epoch revived perfectly true to nature in child development? Why should the social childhood of mankind, where it had attained its most beautiful development, not exert an eternal charm as an age that will never return?”

This passage was only published by Kautsky in 1904, but it was with Engels in manuscript. Was reference made to it during conversations he had with Morris? The supposition is a shot in the dark, but the similarity of thought is certainly striking. This idea of renewed youth for the world had been working in the poet’s utopian thinking for some time, for he wrote as early as 1886:

“Now it has been said, and surely with truth, that those men are the best and usefullest who never altogether threw off their childlike qualities even when they are grown old; and that same maxim I would apply to the race of man as well as to the individuals composing it, and if it were good that it should be so in other matters, and that the mirth and simplicity of earlier ages of the world should yet leave some reflection on our leisure, still more I think it is important that it should be preserved in our working time.”

Morris himself had no difficulty over putting this precept into practice in his own life. Biographers and anecdoasts are unanimous about the childlike traits in his character. Mackail says that he “retained the most childlike simplicity in the expression of his actual thoughts or feelings on any subject”. A. M. W. Stirling declares that he was “simple as a boy, delighting in romance, and able at 47 to lead an imaginary life and to enjoy the simplest pleasure with
childish gusto." Yeats remarks that "people loved him as children are loved," and that he depicts "a happiness that is often what a child might imagine." Theodore Watts-Duncan refers to "the radiant boy of genius that he remained till the years had silvered his hair and carved wrinkles in his brow, but left his blue-grey eyes as bright as when they first opened on the world." Some even went so far as to talk of childishness. For Clutton-Brock, Morris was a sort of "grown-up child," and William Clarke wonders "how far this child-like element which so fascinated Morris can be retained in modern life." Alfred Noyes detects a "pleasant childish lack of philosophical calm," and Lloyd Eric Grey questions "if, indeed, he ever reached his full potential maturity." R. Ruyer has no hesitation over including *News from Nowhere* among the utopias that are "pure dreams, realisations of childish desires." These are very disparaging opinions which appear to betray a somewhat feeble appreciation of all the richness of thought that was Morris's! One doubtless prefers to concur with A. Compton-Rickett, that "at the back of all this ebullience of youth were the stern, steady purpose and clear outlook of the man who has passed through much and felt many things." As Bruce Glasier noted: "in Morris the trait of childishness was the more singular because of the otherwise dominantly manly, self-reliant, and exceedingly manifest practical capacity of the man." It was surely a close combination of deep thought and extraordinary freshness of feeling that led him to see in communism new youthfulness for the world.

It should be noticed that Morris did not rely exclusively upon old Hammond's assertions of principle, striking as they may be, to convey this idea to the reader. The story is dotted with specific allusions, all the more affecting for being deeply personal. From the moment of his arrival at the Guest House, the visitor finds familiar perfumes of his youth. Beautiful Annie is standing behind him, placing a hand with a sprig of balm on his shoulder:

"Its strong sweet smell brought back to my mind my very early days in the kitchen garden at Woodford, and the large blue plums which grew on the wall beyond the sweet-herb patch, – a connection of memories which all boys will see at once." 322

When he is taking his leave of old Hammond, the latter asks him whether he has ever experienced feelings like those he had felt on that day when he was in the country from which he came. "Yes," replies the visitor, "when I was a happy child on a sunny holiday, and had everything I could think of." And the feeling is recalled constantly. Of the morning they set out on the journey up the Thames, he speaks of feeling "that excited pleasure of anticipation of a holiday, which, well remembered as it was, I had not felt since I was a boy, now come home for the summer holidays." A little later, "as we slipped between the lovely summer greenery, I almost felt my youth come back to me, and as if I were on one of those water excursions which I used to enjoy so much in days when I was too happy to think that there could be much amiss anywhere." In the early morning, at Runnymede, looking at the delightful countryside of river-banks, "I . . . felt almost back again in my boyhood." The meeting with Ellen was deeply disturbing: "I felt young again, and strange hopes of my youth were mingling with the pleasure of the present; almost destroying it and quickening it into something like pain." This counterpoint of childhood
memories and the youthfulness of the new world culminates in wandering through the “old house” as far as “the strange and quaint garrets amongst the great timbers of the roof,” now occupied by children’s beds with all kinds of assorted and touching objects lying about amongst them—“bunches of dying flowers, feathers of birds, shells of starlings’ eggs, caddis worms in mugs.”

* * *

Childhood, however, is never directly shown in *News from Nowhere*. There are no adolescents among the characters. The only immediate presence (and that is a passive one) is that of the young campers in the woods at Kensington, and that is just a pretext for general comments on education. Apart from the passing mention of the children occupying the attics at Kelmscott Manor, the only other reference is a curious one: we learn almost incidentally that Dick and Clara have two children whom they have left with a daughter of old Hammond’s while they, their parents, are away at the haymaking, they never once mention them and appear not to be in the least concerned about them.

What is the explanation of this strange gap? First, let us appreciate that it exists in most utopias, despite the importance given to education in all of them, but I must add that all the classic utopias describe institutions and the few people they do put on the stage are usually stereotyped abstractions with no life of their own. It is a sign of Morris’s genius that he is perhaps the only utopist to offer us living beings with feelings, whom we remember as we do the heroes and heroines of other novels. This is exactly why the lack of children makes an impression on us. So we must seek another explanation. Is it not Morris’s chief idea to show us communism as the youth of the world? The youth of children is to be taken for granted; is the interesting thing not the youth that has been rediscovered by adults of all ages? Possibly, but should we not also take into account Morris’s own temperament? Glasier speaks a good deal of his amused tolerance of childish cheekiness, but that is episodic and superficial. We know of the deep love that the poet had for his own two daughters, especially for Jenny, the elder, whose chronic illness was an unending and overwhelming worry to him. But Mackail tells us flatly that he was not without “prejudices ... against children other than his own; for outside of his own family he was not a lover of children, and seldom took any notice of them.” With him, the passion for youth was nostalgia for his own youth, and we have just been seeing that this exclusively provided the concrete references he needed to point the wonder of the new life. However, what utopia could be complete without touching upon the subject of the family and education? Morris did not shirk the task, he even made a good job of it, but perhaps the attitude of indifference to which Mackail refers is the reason for his choosing utopian theory in preference to utopian practice.

The point of departure of his thinking was a critique of the bourgeois family, an exclusive unit, enclosed within itself, aggressively defending its interests against the outside world, with no other *raison d’être* than “the petty individual and family selfishness which in modern times habit has made a second nature to most of us.” It is “an affectionate and moral tiger to whom all is prey a few yards from the sanctity of the domestic hearth.”
“Our present family of blood relationship — parents to replace the degrees of affection to be felt between different persons according to the amount of kinship between them — so that, for instance, the brotherhood of blood would always extinguish the sense of duty to that same brotherhood of affection or of mutual interests and pursuits, and let us suppose that such ties would be real, the bond of obligation, a tenacity possessed to prevent the wrangling and hatred caused by the clashing of the discordant dispositions of persons directed always to promote the world as special friends. In short, the family profession to us as affording us a haven of calm and useful affection and the humanising influences of mutual help and consideration, but it gives quietly in real reason for existence, its real aim, namely, protection for individualistic property by means of inheritance, and a nucleus for resistance to the outside world.”

Today the objective of every family is to raise its children up the social ladder, to push them into “the class of non-producers, that is to say, those by force or fraud take away from their unwilling fellows the means of livelihood or pleasure,” or “as a result of all our religion and all our morality, we consider it a sacred duty to put these whom we love best, ourselves and our children into the position of thieves.” On the other hand, in the lower classes, where the family of blood relationship might afford some real position and help to its members, it is completely broken up by the laws of the factory system, under which father, mother, brother, sister, husband, and wife, compete against each other in the labour market, the end of which is to provide a profit for the capitalist employer.”

In a society based on the domination of profit, children will in large be subjected to such a stifling atmosphere that, writes Morris, “we hold the children are persons, not property, and so have a right to claim all the advantages which the community provides for every citizen.” This right is asserted in the Manifesto of the Socialist League: “children would be treated from their birth as members of the community entitled to share in all its advantages.” Then they will be “inmates with inalienable rights of livelihood” and “the economic freedom of the family would clear away the false sentiment which we have gilded the chain.” In the socialist handbook of 1893, Morris reiterated this idea: “property in children would cease to exist, and every infant that came into the world would be born into full citizenship, and would enjoy all its advantages, whatever the conduct of its parents might be.” We should notice that the past applied all these principles in his own family, which was quite exceptional in Victorian times, and his daughters were not subjected to any abuse of authority. “Our parents,” writes May, “always treated us with the respect due to childhood.” In the society of the future, “a most essential factor will make the family atmosphere, the absence of any worry about the children’s future. No mother will have to fear that artificial disabilities would make her children something less than men and women, she knows that they will live and act according to the measure of their own faculties.”

Parent, then, will have how “the power of tyranny over children.” It might look very much as though Morris envisaged depriving them of power of
Bernard Shaw relates remarks he made on the subject of poor

The question of who are the best people to take charge of the children
is a very difficult one, but it is quite certain that the parents are the very

Until very recently we have only had this small piece of evidence from Shaw
to inform us of Morris's ideas on this problem. Since then, E. P. Thompson
has discovered a letter written in 1886 or 1887 to the Rev. William Sherman,
which states his position directly and unambiguously. Here are the essential

"How is it possible to protect the immature citizen from the whims of
his parent's?...must he be under the tyranny of two accidental persons?
At present the law says yes, which means that the young citizen is the
property of the two accidental persons. Putting myself in the position of
the immature citizen, I protest against this unfairness. As for myself,
being the child of rich persons, it did not weigh heavily on me, because my
parents did what all right people do, shook off the responsibility of my
education as soon as they could, handing me over first to nurses, then to
grooms and gardeners, and then to a school—a boy farm. I should say.
In one way or another, I learned chiefly one thing from all these—
rebellion, to wit. That was good, but, look you, if my parents had been
poorer, and had had more character, they would have probably com-
mitted the fatal mistake of trying to educate me. I have seen the sad
effects of this with the children of some of my friends."

On the whole, experience has shown me that the parents are the un-
fittest persons to educate a child; and I entirely deny their right to do so,
because that would interfere with the right of the child, as a member of
the community from its birth, to enjoy all the advantages which the com-
munity can give it...But for children, I feel that they have as much need
for the revolution as the proletarians have.

Must one conclude that the family is doomed to disappear in Morris's
utopia? On that point, our poet has been very sparing of public declara-
tions, and I can find only one short sentence uttered in one of his lectures that could
support such a supposition: "the family of blood-relationship would melt into
that of the community and of humanity." However, it is not so radical a
transformation that we see in More from 'Utopiad. We have already seen that the
most widespread way of living is in the family house, though this is to a great ex-

tent open to any guest who wishes to become part of it. And old Hammond tells
us that "families are held together by no bond of coercion, legal or social, but by
mutual liking and affection, and everybody is free to come and go as he or she
pleases." So while the way of life has considerably broadened, there is no
question whatever of abandoning blood ties; whenever true feeling gives them
force and reality.

Morris's general attitude is without dogmatism. "There is so much to be said
on the subject of the family," he wrote to Faulkner in the letter from which I have
several times quoted, "that I can not attempt to state the whole of my opinion,
part of which of course is only mine and not necessarily doctrine." He restrained the ardour of his socialist comrades, who were always ready to plunge into theorising: "there would be no hard and fast line as to what a family should be, it would be what people might choose, what they might find convenient, according to the circumstances." He warned against impatience and even considered that there could be no solution before the second stage, that of communism. He wrote to Bruce Glassier: "The religion-education-family question is a difficult one, if one looks at it from the point of view of transitional Socialism and we might, I think, be content to let it alone in that stage. But when Socialism is complete, the new economics will have transformed the family, and this will clear up the difficulty." For the moment, any cut-and-dried declaration would be as ill-advised as pointless; he explained to Dr. John Glassie a few months later, that there was nothing to be gained by shocking people unnecessarily:

"I agree that it would not be so much impolitic as impossible to pronounce on the matters of religion and family. People's instincts are I think leading them in the right direction, in these matters, and yet the old superstitions, as they have now become, have such a veil of tradition and literature about them it is difficult to formulate the probabilities (they can be no more) of the new order in words that will not be misunderstood, and so cause offence."

Morris's tolerant humanism concerning his immediate political approach is the natural counterpart of his lack of dogmatism in his utopian anticipation.

* * *

How are these free and happy children to be brought up? It would be an exaggeration to say that in Morris's utopia we can find a sound, balanced theory of education, and the very phrase would be in plain contradiction of a conception that is decidedly anti-pedagogic, as we generally understand the term. If we are not to be disappointed, rather than seek a detailed structure we should extract some general principles based essentially upon an over-all critique of the teaching available in the nineteenth century.

Clearly, that is where we have to begin. On the one hand, his attack is directed against aims and, on the other, against methods and content. Avoiding any idealistic abstractions, Morris does not criticise in the name of Culture, or even that of a culture. As a responsible Marxist, he regarded education as a superstructure fulfilling the needs of a given society, bourgeois society, and suited to certain production relationships, those of capitalist production. In a class-divided society, the educational system will be "liberal" for the children of the ruling class and "elementary" for those of the exploited class, but in both cases its sole purpose will be to prepare both categories for the place in the production and consumption of goods that awaits them by virtue of their birth:

"At present all education is directed towards the end of fitting people to take their places in the hierarchy of commerce – these as masters,
those as workmen. The education of the masters is more ornamental than that of the workmen, but it is commercial still; and even at the ancient universities learning is but little regarded, unless it can in the long run be made to pay.”

All capacities, Morris adds, are subordinated “to the great end of ‘money-making’ for oneself – or one’s master.” 360 “Our present education is purely commercial and political: we are none of us educated to be men, but some to be property-owners, and some to be property-servers” 338 We are prepared for “a life of commercial success on the one hand, or of irresponsible labour on the other, and therefore in either case a short and perfunctory exercise with a definite object, more or less sordid in view.” 337 The children of the poorer classes are taught “to become the machines by means of which the other set could carry on their life to the injury of the community in general.” 336 Here Morris echoes the Manifesto of Marx and Engels: “culture . . . is, for the enormous majority, a mere training to act as a machine.” 336

Apart from objectives, there is an inequality between the leisured classes and the workers in matters of education that does not derive simply from considerations of duration and content. The bourgeoisie has long since acquired “the taste for reading and the habit of it, and the capacity for the enjoyment of refined thought and the expression of it.” The working class lacks all that.

“The immediate reason for that lack, I know well enough, and that forms another item of contrast: it is the combined leisure and elbow-room which the expensive class considers its birthright, and without which, education . . . is a mere mockery.” 360

Thanks to the dogged struggles of the working-class movement, the 1870 Act had made elementary education more or less universal, but during the eighties a new struggle was going on for the provision of free meals at school for the great numbers of children who arrived hungry. 361 In 1884, Hyndman’s weekly paper, Justice, was engaged in this campaign, and Morris, then a leading member of the Social Democratic Federation, denounced through its columns “the cruel farce of educating starving children.” 362 He took no pleasure in this extension of education, but was clear-sighted enough to perceive its significance:

“Nor after all can the workers be kept quite ignorant; once more the necessities of the capitalists have forced them to instruct the workers more or less, and instruction breeds education.” 363

As Marx says, the bourgeoisie has unintentionally created its own grave-diggers, and the slow and painful conquest of knowledge by the working class is part of the historical process. Certainly at the time when Morris was writing, the elementary school presented a frightful spectacle, and one might well have doubts about its usefulness. But the meagre and inadequate gleanings from it were sufficient to provide a ferment for the workers’ consciousness. “I wish him educated indeed,” writes Morris, “in order that he may be discontented, more education than that he cannot have as things go.” 364 A few years later, with the situation scarcely any better, Morris repeated: “In short, our present education outside its uses to our enemies, the masters of society, is good for one
thing, the creation of discontent. I doubt it will serve us in no other way."

For the greater part of the population, it came down, in effect, to "a regularly dole of not very accurate information", and the way in which it was dispensed aroused Morris's indignation. It was "something to be swallowed by the beginner in the art of living whether he liked it or not, and was hungry for it or not: and which had been chewed and digested over and over again by people who didn't care about it in order to serve it out to other people who didn't care about it." Having enjoyed all the advantages of a bourgeois education (though he was sceptical about it) he was all the more shocked by the deplorable methods of elementary education:

"I must say in passing that on the few occasions that I have been inside a Board-school, I have been much depressed by the mechanical drill that was obviously being applied there to all the varying capacities and moods. My heart sank before Mr. M'Choakumchild and his method, and I thought how much luckier I was to have been born well enough off to be sent to a school where I was taught—nothing; but learned archeology and romance on the Wiltshire Downs." 367

He clearly has no soft spot, either, for public-school education. At Eton, he declares, "they taught rich men's sons to know nothing", 368 which is exactly what he claims to have learned himself at Marlborough College, 369 which does not prevent his asserting with lordly contempt that the allegedly cultured bourgeois "though they are badly educated are probably over-educated for their intellect". 370

What offended him above all was the systematic and indiscriminate stuffing of young heads with ideas that were of no interest and of which they would make no use later, "teaching boys what they don't want to learn", 371 making the schools into "boy-farms", 372 "applied to the fortuitous cramming of unwilling children, and of young men intensely desirous of doing anything else than being educated, and only submitting to that process for the sake of getting on in their careers". 373 Old Hammond, talking of the past, does not fail to point out how barbarous such teaching was:

"The whole theory of their so-called education was that it was necessary to shove a little information into a child, even if it were by means of torture, and accompanied by twaddle which it was well known was of no use..." 374

How much will be retained of knowledge acquired in this way? Certainly not a great deal: "the dead mass of mere information which the worker comes away with when his 'education' is over, he will and must soon forget this when he finds that it is of little use to him and gives him no pleasure." 375 This education will trail along behind him as "a piece of mere waste", 376 because he has not been taught what ought to be the very essence, "the art of thinking at present not taught in any school or university that I know of". 377 The most serious fault that Morris has to find is that it behoves the pupil to adapt himself to the teaching, and not the reverse. Children, says old Hammond, were

"thrust into schools when they had reached an age conventionally sup-
posed to be the due age, whatever their varying faculties and dispositions might be, and when there, with like disregard to facts, ... subjected to a certain conventional course of 'learning.' My friend, can't you see that such a proceeding means ignoring the fact of growth, bodily and mental? No one could come out of such a mill uninjured; and those only would avoid being crushed by it who would have the spirit of rebellion strong in them."

Education, in Morris's utopia, is presented less as a system than as the simple converse of the evils he denounces and which were undoubtedly very real in his day. That, of course, is the point of departure for setting any situation to rights, and in communist society there will no longer be any class privilege. In fact, Morris had no inclination to postpone the demand for democratic education until a distant future, and he expressed it even before his acceptance of socialism. "I think of a country," he wrote as early as 1880, "where every man ... would be thoroughly educated, whatever his condition might be;" 389 such education would be provided for all children "not according to the money which they or their parents possess, but according to the capacity of their minds." After 1883, he spoke in just the same way, adding that, to fall short of that demand was to perpetuate "class education which is a monstrous oppression of the poor by the rich." 390

Another principle close to his heart was that education should be a continuing process. He considered it a scandal that education should be "a system of cram begun when we are four years old, and left off sharply when we are eighteen." 392 Once men have got rid of utilitarian and mercantile restraints, they will be able to make better use of their time and approach the acquiring of knowledge less hastily, more intelligently and more fruitfully. "The hurry of poverty," explains old Hammond, "forbade anything else. All that is past; we are no longer hurried, and the information lies ready to each one's hand when his own inclinations impel him to seek it. In this as in other matters we have become wealthy: we can afford to give ourselves time to grow." In this way "no man will ever 'finish' his education while he is alive" and it "will become one of the most serious businesses of life even to men of the greatest natural capacities." 393 It will be utter prejudice to consider it as reserved to youth, a prejudice which surprises Dick when the visitor expresses it: "Why not old people also?" he retorts. 394 "It will be its function to develop any gifts which children or older people may have towards science, literature, the handicrafts, or the higher arts, or anything which may be useful or desirable to the community" 395 which is why "adults would also have opportunities of learning in the same schools." During his early years of militant activity, while his ideas about the future organisation of production were still not yet fully clarified, Morris saw the factory of the future as the home of the continuing culture. There the worker was to be able to acquire the highest levels of qualification in his trade; but, on the other hand, "similar opportunities will be offered him to study, as deeply as the subject will bear, the science on which his craft is founded; besides, a good library and help in studying it will be provided by every productive group (or factory), so that the worker's other
voluntary work may be varied by the study of general science or literature. 369

But to come back to childhood. Above all, the education provided will no longer be doctrinal, uniform and schematic. Children will no longer be spoken of in the abstract, as a generalisation. "You must remember," says Dick, "how much they differ." 370 Education will consist of "a reasonable drawing out of men's varied faculties", 371 of "making the best of the individual's powers in all directions to which he is led by his innate disposition", 372 of "finding out what different people are fitted for, and helping them along the road which they are inclined to take". 373 That, declares Morris, is what will constitute a real "liberal education." It will be "opportunity...to have my share of whatever knowledge there is in the world according to my capacity or bent of mind" and also to develop my manual skills, "either in the industrial handicrafts or in the fine arts". Care will be taken to teach the child everything relevant to his gits and interests, excluding what bores him, but equal care will be taken not to make him a narrow specialist, in order to prepare him for the diversity of occupation which will be the way of life in the new society and the condition for his happiness. "I claim to be taught," writes Morris, "if I can be taught, more than one craft to exercise for the benefit of the community." 374 Instead of confining children within rigid norms, "we should teach them with one aim in view, to make their lives pleasanter to them". 375

*News from Nowhere* marked a sharp turn in Morris's thinking about education. Turn, in fact, is not really the best word, because he makes no departure from the principles he had laid down before. It is more a question of a leap forward, an adventurous leap necessitated by the chronology of his utopia. As he tried to see what life would be like two hundred and fifty years later, he concluded that things would have changed radically and that he had to go to the final consequences of the principles he maintained. Whereas in 1884 he was demanding an increase in the numbers of schools and libraries, "being sure that no reasonable community could bear to be without such helps to a decent life", 376 one finds that in his story all schools have simply disappeared, and the very word no longer exists in the language of the twenty-second century. The word "education" also has become incomprehensible. 377 It is true that we learn, on our way up the Thames, that at Eton "there are often plenty of boys there, who come to get taught", 378 but that is distinctly inconsequential. Possibly he was a little ill-at-ease over the extremism of his ideas, and felt he had to mitigate it somewhat by this expedient. But it seems to be an occasional and more or less isolated phenomenon, and, above all, the boys come voluntarily. There is no longer any compulsory education. Children learn because they want to, and come to it through "imitating their elders." 379

Learning to read presents no problems. "Most children, seeing books lying about, manage to read by the time they are four years old", and "when a person can read, of course he reads what he likes to; and he can easily get some one to tell him what are the best books to read on such a subject, or to explain what he doesn't understand in the books when he is reading them..." We are, of course, left to assume that, with mankind transformed by a hundred and fifty years of communism, children, having nothing to fetter their development, will all have the same precocity and facility as Morris himself, who, at the age of four and not having learned to read, was plunged into the novels of Walter Scott. 380 All the same, precocity is not to be encouraged:
"As a rule, they don’t do much reading, except for a few story-books, till they are about fifteen years old; we don’t encourage early bookishness, though you will find some children who will take to books very early; which perhaps is not good for them; but it’s no use thwarting them; and very often it doesn’t last long with them, and they find their level before they are twenty years old."

Over writing, there will be even less encouragement, and in this connection we see Morris’s aesthetic interests peeping oddly through, with Dick as their exponent:

"As to writing, we do not encourage them to scrawl too early (though scrawl a little they will), because it gets them into a habit of ugly writing; and what’s the use of a lot of ugly writing being done, when rough printing can be done so easily. You understand that handsome writing we like . . . I am interested in this matter of writing, being myself a fair writer."

Morris, in fact, learned to write much later than the usual age, and for a long time his writing was very bad. In 1870, after initiating himself into the art of illuminated design, he became enamoured of mediaeval calligraphy and began to write in the simple, beautiful, virile manner which we so much admire. That is the explanation of the insistence he shows. It remains to be seen whether it is wise to keep the child so long from writing, running the risk, with all its attendant consequences, of depriving him of a necessary means of expression and development. I am not competent to judge, and confine myself to observing that it is in the sphere of education that Morris’s utopia is at its most subjective.

However, it would not be reasonable, after such a quick and superficial consideration, to find nothing but a compilation of personal whims. It would be tantamount to a refusal to see what lies at the bottom of Morris’s deep thinking, despite the extreme forms it assumes: a demand for an education in direct contact with life. The main educative influence upon the child, from its early life onwards, should be the reality of social life. The brain will develop soundly with the use of the hands and with day-to-day mental activity. Away with bookish culture in a vacuum! Books are by no means outlawed, they are still read and studied, though far fewer than formerly are published; but they are only of interest upon the basis of human experience. And this, from childhood on, is privileged. The young learn early to swim, to ride horses, to cook, to mow, to thatch roofs and to do odd bits of carpentry. They see the pleasure their elders derive from “easy-hard work” and they are eager to copy them. They are employed in looking after shops: “The children like to amuse themselves with it, and it is good for them, because they handle a lot of diverse wares and get to learn about them, how they are made, and where they come from, and so on.” They are passionately fond of camping, and in summer they spend weeks under canvas, learning in this way to fend for themselves and to observe nature. Morris had developed this taste in Iceland, and throughout News from Nowhere, both at Hampton Court and in the meadows alongside the Thames, people are happily camping. But it would be wrong to see him as a precursor of Baden-Powell, for he would have
objected to his moralising philosophy and para-military organisation. Far from constituting a kind of world apart, the young campers in Kensington woods are part of the normal reality of the time, which has swept away the division between town and nature and no longer has any need for escape. That is as true for this sort of activity as for all the others we have noted. Study, when it occurs, deals with "the make of things and the matters of cause and effect," and we are far away from any kind of idealism.

Among these activities, we should not overlook those which link education with productive work. In this respect, Morris's ideas in 1890 are a continuation of those he was expressing in 1884, when his thinking ahead had still not yet passed the stage of industrial society. Imagining the factory of the future, he wrote:

"... such a factory will surely be a centre of education; any children who seem likely to develop gifts towards its special industry would gradually and without pain, amidst their book-learning be drawn into technical instruction which would bring them at last into a thorough apprenticeship for their craft; therefore, the bent of each child having been considered in choosing its instruction and occupation, it is not too much to expect that children so educated will look forward eagerly to the time when they will be allowed to work at turning out real useful wares." 466

As in News from Nowhere, one cannot help seeing here, on another plane, a direct memory of The Communist Manifesto and of Capital. 467 What is called "polytechnic education" in today's socialist countries comes from the same inspiration.

Morris's eccentricity (his mistake, perhaps) in his utopian story was to lay so much stress upon the anti-scholastic, or non-scholastic, aspect of education. This exaggeration arose from a passionate reaction against education that was still formal, cut off from life, marked with the blemishes of a class-divided society which held all forms of manual work in contempt. In this way he was led into exclusively praising everything that pointed in the opposite direction, and it is almost with a note of defiance that old Hammond tells the visitor that he has "gathered left-handed", when the latter accuses the new society of having "so far refined your education, that now you have none". 468 Study does not, in fact, go on, but Morris, with an undeniable axe to grind, expatiates more readily upon the acquisition of knowledge that does not demand purely bookish effort. This is the case with living languages. The British peoples of the twenty-second century speak French and German, along with Welsh and Irish.

"Children pick them up very quickly, because their elders all know them, and besides our guests from overseas often bring their children with them, and the little ones get together, and rub their speech into one another." 469

That, to us, seems somewhat inadequate. Yet it was a new and revolutionary approach when one bears in mind the state of modern language teaching in the nineteenth century! Morris tells us in far fewer words that the children "mostly learn Latin and Greek" as well, and we have to suppose that they do so by other methods. History is more or less left out, and Morris is
almost dodging the question when he admits that the easiest method is to recommend suitable reading. As for mathematics, that seems to be very much an individual matter, and something of a grown-up one. Dick refers to it almost contemtuously, and the visitor admits to old Hammond that he has retained absolutely nothing from his childhood studies in the subject. In the voluminous diaries he kept, now in the manuscript collection at the British Museum, Sir Sydney Cockerell has recorded interesting sayings of Morris's. We learn from them that mathematics, at which Morris had never been any good, inspired a degree of contempt, because "he never knew a mathematician who could reason". So the gap we find in News from Nowhere evidently comes from personal distaste. But among these same remarks, made in 1891, we find some rather curious details. "He would have Greek and Latin," says Sir Sydney, "Sanskrit or Persian, and one modern language, preferably German, taught. French to be learned from its literature... He would never teach English grammar, unless by a course of philological reading beginning with the literature of the 14th century." We are a long way here from the revolutionary education of News from Nowhere. Are we to talk of duplicity or hypocrisy? These are very big words. I feel rather that Morris chose, in building his utopia, to make a selection of his preferences as a literate bourgeois, and when setting down the bases of communist education he allowed himself to be carried away by his habitual violence of reaction, first and foremost against everything in his own time that he found hateful. His hypothesis is in its essence critical. The positive element in it consists of general principles, whose detailed application at the utopian level is undecided and imperfectly worked out.

His anticipation of the culture of the communist age shows the same characteristics of extravagance, subjectivity and indecision, but the sketch of it is shot through with strange and interesting ideas, inspired by flawless optimism. "The storing up of knowledge of all kinds and the power of disseminating it" rank among the true riches to which man is entitled and which will form an integral part of days to come. Man "will find his pleasure in the satisfaction, first, of his bodily desires, and then of the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic needs which will inevitably arise when a man is not at odds with his body, and is not exhausting his intellect in a vain combat with its urgent promptings".

In earlier chapters we studied at length the importance of visual creativity in Morris's vision of communism. It is intimately bound up with the conception of the new nature of work, inseparable from the very progression of daily life; it informs the problems of historical references for the new society and constitutes one of the essential superstructures of utopian society, continuously acting upon the infrastructure, in so close a dialectic that the distinction is sometimes almost imperceptible. It remains for us to look more closely at the other forms of cultural activity, all those which are not directly sensual.

In the world of which Morris dreams, what has become of books and reading? This voracious reader, this wealthy bibliophile and printer of luxurious editions, shows the same reticence and indecision that we have already
detected in his outline of education. There is the same contradiction—once attempted to say the same break—between his earlier lectures, in which he enforces the faculties of the future with vast libraries and covers the walls of houses with books, and his utopian narrative's rejection of bookish culture. These English of the twenty-second century, says Morris, "were not great readers, considering the refinement of their manners and the great amount of leisure which they obviously had. In fact, when Dick, especially, mentioned a book, he did so with an air of a man who has accomplished an achievement as much as to say, "There, you see, I have read that." Both the weaver tells us that "machine printing is beginning to die out, along with the waning of the plague of book-making." There are even some works "of which only a few copies are needed—poems, and such like" and the authors of these "write their books out when they make them, or get them written," for love of "handsome scattering." Ellen herself gives us an explanation of this surprising state of affairs when she apostrophises her grumbling grandfather:

"Books, books! always books, grandfather! When will you understand that after all it is the world we live in which interests us, the world of which we are a part, and which we can never love too much?"

And the adds a thought: very characteristic of Morris's mediaevalism, that if all the natural and human beauties were not enough one could find other books in "the beautiful buildings that we raise up all over the country, wherein a man can put forth whatever is in him, and make his hands set forth his mind and soul." Morris obviously felt an extravagant need to declare war upon the intellectualism of his time and to preach a whole-hearted return to the natural sources of culture. It can be seen, too, that he was quite ready to strain his attitude, since the inhabitants of the England of the future carefully preserve the treasures of the British Museum and the Bodleian, and also because the children, as we have seen, learn to read from books lying about everywhere. So he is not to be taken too literally, and we must see these remarks as no more than indications of trends.

One literary genre, anyway, has disappeared: the novel, as written in the nineteenth century. Without going into the details of Morris's opinions of his contemporaries, which would deserve a separate study, it is of interest for our purpose to notice the general opinion that he frequently expressed of the romantically painted literature of his day, because it provides a negative definition of what he expected of communist culture. First, he objects to it as being class literature, reserved entirely to descriptions of bourgeois settings:

"I have often thought with a joyful chuckle how puzzling, nay inexplicable to the generations of freedom, will be those curious specimens of human ingenuity called novels now produced, and which present with such faithful detail the lives of the middle-classes, all below them being ignored except as so many stage accessories."

When the working-class is described, it is in a monstrously biased fashion, and the only interest these books can hold for our descendants is that they will "find evidence of what the upper and middle classes thought working men were like." But such descriptions are uncommon, and the most frequent theme is an account of "the troubles of a middle-class couple in their struggle..."
towards social uselessness." The writers of these books are "merely rhetorical word-spinners and toasters of introspection." In *Norns from Necheen*, Ellen is equally contemptuous.

"But I say frankly that in spite of all their cleverness and vigour, and capacity for story-telling, there is something loathsome about them. Some of them, indeed, do here and there show some feeling for those whom the history books call 'poor', and of the misery of whose lives we have some inkling; but presently they give it up, and towards the end of the story we must be contented to see the hero and heroine living happily in an island of bliss on other people's troubles; and that after a long series of sham troubles (or mostly sham) of their own making, illustrated by dreary introspective nonsense about their feelings and aspirations, and all the rest of it; while the world must even then have gone on its way, and dog and sewed and baked and built and carpentered around those useless - animals." 427

What Morris can stomach even less is the parade of laboured psychology, the novelists' attempt "to spin out their own insides like silk-worms into dreary yarns of their sickly feelings and futile speculations"; and he adds:

"We shall not desire and we shall not be able to carry on the feverish and perverted follies of the art and literature of Commercialism." 428

In fact, no one had a greater horror of introspection than did Morris, who was always reaching out to creation and action. E. L. Cary is quite right to link this horror with that he had of mirrors. 429 Nothing revolted him more than the sentimental romanticism and gloomy cultivation of what Ellen calls "a sham sorrow, like the ridiculous characters in some of those queer old novels that I have come across now and then". 430 Elsewhere, a talk with Dick leads the visitor to reflect that "in those days it was thought poetic and imaginative to look upon life as a thing to be borne, rather than enjoyed". 431 These novelists prided themselves upon their realism and believed that they reached their objective by developing their plots against the background of their period, but their social prejudices and their false psychology made a mockery of their pretensions:

"It is true that in the nineteenth century, when there was so little art and so much talk about it, there was a theory that art and imaginative literature ought to deal with contemporary life; but they never did so, for, if there was any pretense of it, the author always took care to disguise, or exaggerate, or idealise, and in some way or another to make it strange; so that, for all the verisimilitude there was, he might just as well have dealt with the times of the Pharaohs." 432

So it is not surprising that Boffin, the Golden Dustman, is teased by his companions because "he will spend his time in writing reactionary novels" in the manner of the nineteenth century, trying to introduce "local colour". 433 It is just a ridiculous hangover, henceforth quite unjustifiable in a society in which man no longer has anything in common with those artificial heroes, and where the situations formerly described have become inconceivable:
"... fiction as it is called, when a peaceful and happy society has been
long time afoot, will probably die out for want of material. The pabulum
of the modern novel in its various dressings is mostly provided by the
anomalies and futilities of a society of inequality yielded by a conven-
tional false sense of duty, which provides the necessary imbroglio where-
with to embarrass the hero and heroine through the due number of
pages.

So there is an appeal against the sentence, but one is entitled to wonder
whether it is entirely justified. Is it not possible to imagine that new forms of
the novel may arise? Would not the richness of the new life provide mate-
rial? Because conflict will have vanished, is one to conclude that the contradictions
which will always constitute the dialectical movement of life will have been
eliminated as well? And is not the novel, in whatever unforeseeable form it
may take, more suited to their expression than in any other art form? Some
afterthought of this nature certainly came into Morris's mind and surely it was
expressed when the argumentative Clara was musing in her turn before the
great timeless mural in Bloomsbury?

"How is it that though we are so interested with our life for the most
part, yet when people take to writing poems or painting pictures they
seldom deal with our modern life, or if they do, take good care to make
their poems or pictures unlike that life? Are we not good enough to paint
ourselves?

Even if the novel is doomed, the same is not true of poetry, despite the old
reference, quoted above, to a few artistically handwritten copies; when Morris
strains his position, in consequence awaits him. But poetry will no longer be in-
trospective and whining. Glasier reports remarks made by Morris in 1893 at
the end of a Sunday evening lecture in Hammersmith:

"Those I am sure who have themselves experienced, or who have any
knowledge whatever of such suffering as that endured by the poor miners
and their families during the recent lock-out, and who know what it is to
see 'little ones cry for bread' when bread for them there is none, are not
likely to have much patience with poets who moan about their broken
hearts (which, of course, are never broken) and the imaginary sights of
their sweethearts or mistresses, especially when, as in so many instances,
the sweethearts and mistresses are as fanciful creatures as the supposed
heartbreaks.

It is, of course, easily understandable that Morris should banish such arti-
ficial conventions from his utopia. But there again, does he not go too far and
contradict himself? He celebrates the development of the individual and his
enormous enrichment under communism. Is it thinkable that such interior
richness, even if it rejects shoddy romanticising, would not discover new kinds of
lyric expression? One sometimes has a feeling that Morris momentarily
lags behind his own prophetic vision, that a hiatus occurs in the internal
chronology of his utopia. In his denunciation of bourgeois egotism, he feels no
response, other than on a theoretical level, to a future antithesis that could
result from the natural, straightforward outpouring of genuine personal feel-
ing, deeply in harmony with the innermost feelings of a fraternal human group. Is there not a touch of working-class snobbery in his tendency to depersonalise art and restrict poetry to the framework of the epic? In fact, after prescribing the novel, he writes: "Literature, however, need by no means die, for we can neither limit nor foresee the development of the great art of poetry which has changed so little in essentials since the Homeric epics." Such a tendency will inevitably be present during the revolutionary phase of socialist construction, but will it still be so during the peaceful stage of communism? In any case, would not the same question arise concerning a decline in the visual arts of architecture, mural painting and tapestry?

A comparable attitude appears with regard to the art of the theatre, this time accompanied by a curious personal contradiction. Morris hated the theatre, despised it even, and never went to a play unless he was obliged. This dislike was strengthened by the general mediocrity he saw at the time. "I think it is a very serious matter...that the standard of excellence at theatres should be so low, and that such sorry makeshifts should be forced on us at a great expense of the labour of many honest and often not unintelligent people." But could it be otherwise under the present social system?

"Given a society corrupted by the existence of general misery, and founded on the sheer robbery of the dispossessed, and what are its theatrical entertainments likely to be? At the best, corruption whitewashed with respectability; at the worst? - but can there be anything worse than that?"

In his looking forward to utopia Morris takes the radical change in conditions into account, and consents to reconcile himself to the theatre, but he obviously does so in order to conform to the cultural ideology he professes. It is, he writes, "wholly a co-operative art,...and its production does not require the same amount of training as any other of the arts; and therefore could be more easily and pleasantly dealt with by a communal society working co-operatively." The least that one can say is that these lines express enthusiasm much less than they do a need to apply principles. We may note that there is never once in News from Nowhere any mention of theatrical performances, and we shall never know what the repertoire of the future will consist of - did Morris know, or even want to know? However, there is a theatre in Hammersmith, though his only remark about it concerns its admirable architecture, recalling that of the Baptistry in Florence.

And music? Did Morris have any response to it? It would need a very long chapter to attempt a clear understanding, between the contradictory assertions of his family and friends and his own declarations, no less contradictory, in which I distrustfully detect his maia for understatement and his calculated attempts to turn curiosity aside. What seems to emerge from all these varied fragments of evidence is that he did have some musical sensibility, though not a great deal, but that he more or less refrained from indulging it for lack of time. He hated pianos, and said so emphatically, and this earned him the reputation of being a music-hater; but this hatred came, on the one hand, from the ugliness, in his eyes, of the instrument and, on the other, from the over-mechanical playing, as he thought, of most of the players. However, he loved the sounds of ancient instruments, both stringed and wind, particularly
the lute, the violin and, above all, the virginals. He hated opera, as well as comic opera and music hall. For Wagner he felt a total detestation, and he never forgave him for debasing the great Nordic legends with lyrical settings. He appreciated Mozart and Beethoven, but his preference was for medieval music and that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But above all, he loved plainsong and, yet more, popular songs. He claimed not to be able to sing, but appears to have had a very pleasant tenor voice.444

If we wish to determine the personal factor in Morris’s utopia, it seems to me that two traits should be borne in mind: on the one hand, this love of folk music and, on the other, the lively pleasure he derived from listening to natural sounds, notably bird-song.445 This induced a naturalistic conception of music which puts him in great danger of appearing somewhat restrictive. I cannot, he wrote, “think . . . of music existing without the sounds of nature, the song of birds, the voices of cattle, the ripple of streams, the wash of the sea, the noise of the wind and the rain and the thunder.”446 Such is the inspiration that should allow all to find pleasure in music and to make it a truly popular art; “Nor would he who took to heart the piping of the wind and washing of the waves as he sat at the helm of the fishing-boat, be deadened to the beauty of art-made music. It is workmen only and not pedants who can produce real vigorous art.”447

One cannot help being struck by the contrast between statements of this kind and the predictions contained in Socialism, its Growth and Outcome in 1893. It is true that there Morris was not writing alone. Bax, who wrote the socialist handbook with him, was a knowledgeable musician; he had even studied composition at the Stuttgart Conservatoire,448 and perhaps, for his part, he was not averse to “the music of the future”. The following passage is somewhat amusing, as one can readily imagine it to be a compromise arrived at after violent arguments between the two friends. One senses that Morris fought every foot of the way.

“Modern music begins at the close of the Middle Ages with the birth of counterpoint; its great development has been during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and has been in its earlier period synchronous with the most degraded period of all the other arts. Classical music (technically so-called) would seem to have reached its zenith about the middle of the present century; but the great revolution in dramatic music, effected by Wagner during the second half of the century, has occupied the field for the present, though what future developments it may have we cannot foresee. Of one thing, however, we may be very certain, that under a quite changed social condition Music will develop completely new styles of its own no less than the other arts. And in our belief, Music and Architecture, each in its widest sense, will form the most serious occupation of the greatest number of people. In this connection we may observe that Music is on the executive side largely dependent on co-operation, notwithstanding that on the creative side it is more, rather than less, individual than painting.”449

It is very easy to picture Bax’s jubilant obstinacy, and the rear-guard action on the part of poor Morris in defence of the rights of architecture and the collective nature of musical art. So, I shall turn to our poet’s earlier writings in
search of his own desires, although we cannot hope to find anything more than general suggestions. I pass rapidly over his 1884 lectures, with their brief reference to the factory of the future, where the workers, assembled as brothers, find relaxation in "musical or dramatic entertainments." Old Hammond, in the course of his long account of the vicissitudes of the "great change," tells us that "what of art existed under the old forms, revived in a wonderful way during the latter part of the struggle, especially as regards music and poetry." Two hundred years later, in the communist stage, it seems that music has scarcely progressed beyond this phase of folk revival or discovered "new styles," the idea of which Bax was to impose upon Morris later. There is mention of afternoon open-air concerts "around the fountain", in the quadrangle of the great hall at Bloomsbury, but we are not told their nature. There is singing during the evening gathering at the Hammersmith Guest House, and again at Runnymede, in the little house where the visitor meets Ellen, but we know nothing about the songs. The only musical incident mentioned in any definite way is when Dick and Clara go off, during the talk between Hammond and the visitor, to "hear some Welsh folk sing in a hall close by." This is all rather disappointing, and it is not even open to me to say that Morris is observing the same deliberate caution in this sphere as in that of scientific invention: there are no suggestions comparable to the one about the mysterious barges! The outlook is restricted and somewhat discouraging. We must be prepared to admit that Morris's utopia is notably impoverished by the brutal rejection of four centuries of bourgeois civilization, and it is at this point that he must obviously departs from Marxism, which is concerned for the preservation and utilisation of all cultural heritages.

When we move from the ornamental arts to study in the proper sense, the outlook broadens somewhat, but not to a very satisfactory extent. I have already noted Morris's personal idiosyncrasies where mathematics are concerned, and Bob the weaver, who is a dedicated mathematician, is a butt for rather silly teasing by Dick. On the other hand, science, in a broad and rather vague sense, meets with more approval in the eyes of our poet. On this subject his thinking is somewhat less sketchy and deserves our attention. He respects "science for science's sake, and that is the only kind of science that's worth a rap," he tells a journalist, adding: "applied science doesn't interest me at least." To discover the real meaning of these remarks it is necessary to consider his works as a whole. It is not applied science, in an abstract sense, to which he objects, and we have sufficiently seen that he regarded technical progress as a necessity for the future. What he condemns is the use capitalism has made of science, both from the material and the ideological points of view.

In fact, the bourgeoisie "allows learned men to seek out the secrets of nature and to subdue her forces because those matters can be turned to the advantage of the profit-market," Science "is in the pay of the counting-house... and the drill-sergeant" she is "a servant of profit-making industrialism." "Not all the discoveries of science," wrote Morris in the last article he published, "will produce true wealth so long as the end and aim of it all is the production of profit." Old Hammond refers contemptuously to "the
so-called science of the nineteenth century, which...

...was in the main an appendage to the commercial system: nay, not seldom an appendage to the police of that system. In spite of appearances, it was limited and cowardly, because it did not really believe in itself". 460 Morris is remembering Marx's remarks, though he tends to narrow their application, about the status of learned men, whom the bourgeoisie has "converted into its paid wage-labourers", 461 and "modern industry, which makes science a productive force distinct from labour and presses it into the service of capital". 462 On the ideological plane, Morris is indignant over the perversion of science, on one point, at least. We must realise, when he rebels at the idea of seeing "the place of Homer taken by Huxley," 463 that the choice of name was not fortuitous. T. H. Huxley, vulgarising Darwin's theory of evolution in a mechanistic way, had been chiefly responsible for the theory of "the struggle for existence" which nineteenth-century capitalism took as its justification, and the materialism of which he was the champion closely resembled, in its rejection of everything other than scientific fact, the utilitarianism of Gradgrind. 464 Morris, always ready to generalise, probably had this kind of distortion in mind when he wrote:

"Science will grow more and more one-sided, more incomplete, more wordy and useless, till at last she will pile herself up into such a mass of superstition that beside it the theologies of old time will seem mere reason and enlightenment." 465

This is all the more probable because, in the interview given to the Daily Chronicle reporter, Morris was much more explicit:

"The Huxley-mathematical sort of thing I look on with the deepest contempt. Besides, it is probably all wrong, and the next generation will only regard us as a pack of ninnies for having believed such rubbish." 466

It did not, however, cause Morris to despair of science. He asserted his great confidence on seeing the large numbers who devoted themselves to it, "many of whom are doubtless single-hearted, and worship in her not the purse of riches and power, but the casket of knowledge". It will suffice for her to throw off the hotchpotch of ideological pretensions: "she seems to need no more than a little humility to temper the insolence of her triumph, which has taught us everything except how to be happy". The future will belong to her. "In those days science also may be happy." 467 Once "freed from the utilitarian chains which commerce has cast over it, and, cultivated once more for its own sake, (science) may be expected to develop in a manner at present undreamed of". 468 And in those days to come, old Hammond echoes the prediction when he declares that one of the reasons why he does not fear any work-lamé is that science is as inexhaustible as is art. 469

When he enters the field of science, Morris is plainly venturing into very unfamiliar territory, and we cannot expect shattering prophecies from him. So it is with greater curiosity that we take a look at his thinking upon a topic much closer to his own interests, the part played by the study of history in the culture of his utopian people. And our curiosity is not disappointed, although here again Morris's approach is uncertain and almost contradictory. We are not
surprised to hear him say that “the genuine tales of history will still be with us, and will, one might well hope, then be told in a cheerfuller strain than is now possible.” It is true that it will no longer be “the dull gulf of lies, hypocritical concealments, and false deductions, which is called bourgeois history.” Nor will it any longer be “a string of doubtful tales of the bloody wars and unaccountable follies of kings and scoundrels in which the necessary slavery of the people was taken for granted.” What it will be is suggested by the book that Bob the weaver is writing, “a sort of antiquarian book about the peaceful and private history, so to say, of the end of the nineteenth century, more for the sake of giving a picture of the country before the fighting began than for anything else.” Perhaps a more definite suggestion, and one more in line with Morris’s taste for the concrete, is afforded by the museum of labour shown to us by old Morson.

However, we learn with a start of surprise that these are isolated efforts, and that the study of history had been generally abandoned in this twenty-second century. Dick explains to the bewildered visitor that “it is mostly in periods of turmoil and strife and confusion that people care much about history; and you know... we are not like that now.” The inexhaustible joy of the new life is too enthralling for men to take much interest in a past that was unhappy, grim, rather inexplicable and has totally passed away. “The last harvest,” says old Hammond, “the last baby, the last knot of carving in the market-place, is history enough for them. It was different, I think, when I was a lad, when we were not so assured of peace and continuous plenty as we are now.” In fact, when the visitor and the sprightly nonagenarian who goes a little way in the carriage with them become involved in a discussion about the ways of the nineteenth century, Dick quickly becomes “rather restive under so much ancient history” and tries to change the conversation. Moreover, the visitor finds among the people to whom he talks total ignorance and lack of understanding of the conditions of life in the world he has left. Whether it is the use of money, the difference between town and country, the poverty of former times, the class struggle, education, politics and its vocabulary, relationships between nations, everything is quite unknown and incomprehensible to these new generations, although, by contrast, they know and love the Middle Ages. Only a few rare individuals like Ellen, “those of us who look into these things”, still have an approximate knowledge of that past. But if Ellen, for example, has acquired that knowledge it is only from having frequented old Hammond, the Sage of Bloomsbury. What is to happen when he is gone?

Of course, Morris is taking an extreme position, designed to make more obvious the happiness of the communist age, and also based upon the much more arbitrary hypothesis of the link with the Middle Ages and the systematic obliteration of four centuries of bourgeois culture. He appears to believe sincerely in the possibility of such a state of affairs as this future disregard for history, and while I accept the logic of his expectation, I venture to offer a gentle denial, which is no less arbitrary. Some manifestations of political indifference that have recently appeared in the youthful stages of various socialist republics might well be a sign, other things being equal, that the conjecture should not be rejected a priori. Morris believed in it, but does that mean that he wanted it to happen? Definitely not, and he explains this very clearly through the mouth of Ellen:
"I think sometimes people are too careless of the history of the past - too apt to leave it to the hands of old learned men like Hammond. Who knows? Happy as we are, times may alter; we may be bitten with some impulse towards change, and many things may seem too wonderful for us to resist, too exciting not to catch at, if we do not know that they are but phases of what has been before; and withal vain, deceitful, and pernicious."

In addition to this need not to lose the lessons of history, to draw effective weapons from them against all the dangers of adventurism, irresponsibility and willfulness, on top of this need to remain conscious of, and therefore in control of, the laws of development, there is another reason which Morris explained in one of his lectures, in so convincing a way that it expresses the opposite of the hypothesis found in News from Nowhere:

If anyone puts forward in good faith the fear that we may be too happy in the possession of pleasant surroundings, so that we shall not be able to enjoy them, I must answer that this seems to me a very remote terror. Even when the tide at last turns in the direction of sweeping away modern squalor and vulgarity, we shall have, I doubt, many generations of effort in perfecting the transformation, and when it is at last complete, there will be first the triumph of our success to exalt us, and next the history of the long wade through the putrid sea of ugliness which we shall have at last escaped from."

These are impressively profound words, throwing into relief the relative nature of all happiness, even that of communist society! Happiness only exists as a term of comparison, and that comparison, in such a society, can only exist through a knowledge of the past. A people with no history, or cut off from history, is threatened with the loss of the immense advantages it has acquired. Morris had unintentionally put his finger upon the flaw in the utopia he was to write two years later. When Dick, with a somewhat heavy insistence verging upon conformism, tells the visitor, "We feel so happy, you know"; one is tempted to think, "Fine! But how does he know?"

And the case of Dick poses a problem, that of the diffusion or, more precisely perhaps, the sharing of culture. When we were considering the authentically Marxist thesis that Morris puts forward on the diversity of occupation, I noted that he stressed the elimination of any separation of manual work from intellectual work. The characters in his book carry on activities in both directions with splendid enthusiasm. But if we look rather more closely, we notice all the same that the basic occupation of each of the characters individually drawn is a manual one: Dick is a ferryman, Bob a weaver, Buffin a dustman. In so presenting them, Morris was motivated by an anti-intellectualism whose roots were undoubtedly healthy. On the other hand, in the background we see sketched another category of people, who are only referred to and whose life-style is the opposite: their main occupation is intellectual and it is almost for health reasons only that they participate in manual, mainly agricultural, activities. Dick speaks of them in a way which clearly suggests that they constitute a separate category.

"It is a great pleasure seeing them so happy over work which is not
much sought for. And besides, these students are generally such pleasant people; so kind and sweet-tempered; so humble, and at the same time so anxious to teach everybody all that they know. Really, I like those that I have met predigiously… 48

Some of them live alone, like the one at Bisham whose "literary work" is interrupted by the visitor and his new friends. 48 Mostly, however, they seem to congregate in great houses deep in the country; they are, says Hammond, "some of the most studious men of our time" and they help with the work in the fields at certain times. 48 Like everybody else, they regard it as a holiday to help with the haymaking, when "there is room for a great many people who are not over-skilled in country matters: and there are many who lead sedentary lives, whom it would be unkind to deprive of their pleasure in the hay-field — scientific men and close students generally." But, explains Dick, they simply provide labour. On account of insufficient qualification, they cannot be given anything to do in the earlier stages. They cannot handle a scythe and the scientific men and historians, and students generally, will not be wanted until we are fairly in the midst of the tedding." 48 So, while there could never be an "aristocracy of intelligence", as old Hammond is careful to point out, there are still workers who are almost exclusively intellectual ones. They do not constitute a caste, since every activity is open to everyone, but all division of labour is not wholly eliminated. Study and research are carried on pretty well full time by a minority, who do not receive any privileges or special consideration, and probably certain members of it would keep alive the knowledge of history amid the growing indifference of a world too happy to care about it.

That world, forgetful of history and the past, lives in geography and the present. 48 No longer in the imaginary geography of the utopias of former times, covering countries situated beyond the world known to navigators, no longer, in the words of Wordsworth, "in Utopia, subterranean fields, or some secreted island, Heaven knows where! But in the very world, which is the world of all of us". 48 The English of the twenty-second century, fulfilling Blake's prophecy, will have "built Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land". 48 During Morris's period of Romantic escapism, the Wanderers, in the Prologue to The Earthly Paradise, were still setting off in search of "a nameless city in a distant sea", of "strange lands and things beyond belief to see", of "a land… where men have bliss". 48 For Morris the socialist, escapism is no longer acceptable: his utopia is not arbitrary, it is a political act, a work of propaganda, and it is limited by a perspective that aims at reality. It has its roots in our native soil and piles up landmarks familiar to the reader in order to overwhelm him with the feeling of what could come to pass. Moreover, one is a little surprised at the title Morris chose for his tale, which is certainly not situated "nowhere". No doubt he wished to keep the etymology "outopia" in preference to "eutopia", probably following his master Thomas More, 48 though in flagrant contradiction of his own intention. In passing, I may observe that these native roots conform strictly to the traditional utopian preference for islands. While England impresses the immediate reality of its
geography upon the reader who is to be convinced, it is still an island, and, as George Bernardso well points it, "an island provides complete security for the imagination in search of a perfect city which is not to be missed in any way." There is something of this about Novels from Nowhere, England as Morin describes it appears to exist almost in isolation, cut off from any continental influences, living a life more English than it has ever been. The visitor meet foreigner, though there is a passing reference to a holiday visit by French and German young people.

And thus brings us to the consideration of a preliminary problem. Have all countries reached the same stage as England by the twenty-second century? This problem would involve another, a political problem (which I shall not tackle in detail so as not to be too far diverted from our purpose), that of knowing whether the revolution can succeed in one country. I simply point out that Morin, astonishingly enough in this day, asked himself that question several times, and responded with uncertain and contradictory answers: an answer had to await Lenin, in the fullness of historical development. So I put aside this initial question, which belongs to the theory of revolution and not to the study of utopian society, which is the limited, and quite sufficiently vast, subject of my analysis.

Reference to Novels from Nowhere to the international situation is only of a very allusive nature. It does not appear that socialism has reached the same level of development in all countries as it has in England. Old Hammond points out to the visitor that one can only really talk about an eventual work-lamone "in parts of Europe which are more advanced than the rest of the world," so there is an inequality of development even in Europe itself, and the visitor, concerned with concealing his origin from his new companions, explains his ignorance by saying that he has "been such a long time away from Europe." How are things going on other continents? There is only one definite indication, and Morin gives it with a savagery that seems to explode with all the horror that Edward Bellamy's utopia provoked in him. One remedy for the threatened work-lamone is the export of beauty to the backward countries.

"Those lands which were once the colonies of Great Britain, for instance, and especially America - that part of it, above all, which was once the United States - are now and will be for a long while a great resource to us. For these lands, and, I say, especially the northern parts of America, suffered so terribly from the full force of the last days of civilization, and became such horrible places to live in, that they are now very backward in all that makes life pleasant. Indeed, one may say that for nearly a hundred years the people of the northern parts of America have been engaged in gradually making a dwelling-place out of a stinking dust-heap, and there is still a great deal to do, especially as the country is so big." 88

It even appears that there are some countries elsewhere which have not had their revolution. This seems to be implied by some of the remarks made to the visitor. Dick proclaims that he "must come from a place very unlike England," and pretty Annie, at the Guest House, that he must have been "travelling in unsocial countries." 89 Bevin thinks he has arrived "from some distant country that does not know of us, or our ways of life," 90 from
some forgotten corner of the earth, where people are unhappy.” Much more significantly, Ellen’s father (or grandfather) is perversely pleased to meet a foreigner supposedly coming from a country where they “have not wholly got rid of competition.” It is possible that Morris imagined such a state of affairs to suit the needs of his story structure, so that the visitor’s strangeness should be comprehensible to the English population. But it would not be like him to subordinate theoretical considerations to the needs of fiction. This conception of unequal development was in line with the political analysis of the facts of his time, as he expressed it in the columns of *Communist*, and he had no idea that it might turn out otherwise in the future. Did he not go so far as to write:

“... it will surely be one of the solemn duties of the society of the future for a community to send out some band of its best and hardiest people to socialise some hitherto neglected spot of earth for the service of man.”

That clearly goes a good deal further than just the export of beauty! This impulsive outburst (incidentally, a completely isolated one) is only comparable with the situation described in *News from Nowhere* because it derives, in an extreme form, from the same feeling, which is both revolutionary and patriotic—a faith in the high destiny reserved for England. Perhaps it will not be the first country to take the road to socialism, after having first thought so (an illusion shared for a time by Marx and Engels themselves). Morris soon became less sure about it. But he was certain that she would, one day, be in the front rank of the communist nations. This confidence was justifiable in the Great Britain of the nineteenth century, because of the advanced state of her productive resources. No doubt it was a sentimental confidence as well.

Love of the land of England is expressed with deep, restrained emotion in all his work. One passage from his first public lecture is often quoted and is worth recalling:

“The land is a little land; too much shut up within the narrow seas, as it seems, to have much space for swelling into hugeness; there are no great wastes overwhelming in their dreariness, no great solitudes of forests, no terrible untrodden mountain-walls; all is measured, mingled, varied, gliding easily one thing into another; little rivers, little plains, swelling, speedily-changing up-lands, all beset with handsome orderly trees; little hills, little mountains, netted over with the walls of sheep-walks: all is little, yet not foolish and blank, but serious rather, and abundant of meaning for such as choose to seek it; it is neither a prison nor palace, but a decent home.”

And he adds, “it must be a hard heart, I think, that does not love it whether a man has been born among it like ourselves, or has come wonderingly on its simplicity from all the grandeur overseas.” England in the twenty-second century, cleansed of all the stains of “civilization”, will be more beautiful and more comely, it will retain that engaging simplicity and its inhabitants will not grow tired of its charm. With the same restrained emotion, the visitor says, “it is not big, but it is pretty.” The love England inspires in Morris is all the more deep because he sees her as she will one day be.
"I am no patriot as the word is generally used; and yet I am not ashamed to say that as for the face of the land we live in I love it with something of the passion of a lover; that is to say more than its beauty or interest in relation to other parts of the world warrants. Perhaps it is because I am in the habit of looking at things that pass before my eyes and connecting their present outward seeming with times gone by and times to come.

This vision of the England to come fills him with unfailing lyricism.

"And the tale shall be told of a country, a land in the midst of the sea. And folk shall call it England in the days that are going to be."  94

Its seasons will be more beautiful than ever. The summer day through which the visitor and his companions glide over the water beneath the heights of Windsor, is "one of those days which, if they were commoner in these islands, would make our climate the best in the world."  100 In this respect Morris is even fervently optimistic: "if we were working for livelihood and not profit," he says, "we might easily neutralize many of the disadvantages of our climate, at least enough to give full scope to the development of our race."  101 It is for this reason that pretty Anzie can assert that "southern England is a good place for keeping good looks." 91 The pleasant climate is enhanced by the renewed delightfuliness of the landscape, particularly that of the Thames, henceforth fresh and unpolluted. Its banks, lovingly described by Morris in unforgettable pages, are the joy and pride of the English people of the future. He sees it through Ellen's eyes of the future, and the utopian viewpoint lends an even more vibrant note to his affection. The same pride is to be found in his description of the new beauty of London and in the feeling he has about the way the capital has retained its importance: "Here was the ghost of London still asserting itself as a centre, - an intellectual centre, for ought I knew," 93 96

Not only did Morris love the land of his country, he also loved its people. William Richmond says in his memoirs that he was "English to the marrow of his bones." 94 95 Morris continually praised "this land of stout-hearted men... the land of England, with all its growth of familiar beauty, sweetened every fibre of it with the memories of the men that made us" 91 92. It is "the home of rough and homely men," 95 possessing "the English character, forcible, certainly," 95 "the country of order, peace and stability, the land of common sense and practicality, the country in which all eyes are turned of those whose hope is for the continuance and perfection of modern progress". 95 This practical sense by no means excludes artistic qualities. "I doubt," says Morris, "if they [the French] have so much innate love of beauty as a great part of our population has", 96 and again, "I doubt if said Briton is more anti-poetical than the man of other nations." 96 No national characteristic strikes him as being more worthy of notice and appreciation than this restraint, this traditional reserve of the English people. The peasants of the fourteenth century, moved by the forthright eloquence of John Ball, "all had that look as if they were ashamed of themselves, and did not want others to see how deeply they were moved, after the fashion of their race when they are strongly stirred." 96
The counterpart of Morris’s deep love of his native soil and of the people to whom it belongs (and it forms an indissoluble complement) is his no less intense hatred of chauvinism and nationalism (which he calls patriotism, without drawing the French distinction between the two words). It was this feeling which awakened his awareness of political life, at the time of the Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria in 1877. England was in danger of being dragged into what he called an “unjust war” (“People go about in a Rule Britannia style that turns one’s stomach”) for the sake of protecting the route to India and the interests of the holders of Ottoman bonds. Morris fought against this drift and issued an appeal to the workers of England, asking whether they wanted to die for such causes. Recalling this period a few years later, he himself wrote that the first object of his action had been to “stem the torrent of Chauvinism, and check the feeling of national hatred and prejudice for which I shall always feel the most profound contempt.” This was no easy task, because “any approach to Jingoism however feeble is certain to be popular with the whole mass of non-political people, i.e., about 999 out of the 1000.” Morris kept up the struggle and in a lecture given in 1880, when he was still a member of the Liberal Party, his attack was at its strongest:

“I should say then that when stripped of its borrowed gear, false patriotism becomes National Vain-glory, which is both begotten of ignorance and begets it: a legacy of the injustice of past times, it breeds injustice in us in the present that we may be unjustly dealt with in the future; it gabbles of the valour of our forefathers, while it is busy in undoing the deeds that their valiant lives accomplished: it prates of the interests of our country, while it is laying the trail of events which will ruin the fortunes, and break the hearts of the citizens: it scoffs at wise men and honest men for what it calls a policy of isolation, while itself it would have nothing to do with foreign nations except for their ruin and ours: its great office is for ever to cry out for war without knowing what war means; all other nations, it seems, pay the price of war; but we never do, and never can pay it and never shall.”

Nationalism is a constant provocation to war, and all militarism was hateful to Morris: “I won’t submit to be dressed up in red and marched off to shoot at my French or German or Arab friend in a quarrel that I don’t understand, I will rebel sooner than do that.” Chauvinistic frenzy is nourished by xenophobia, and, in 1878, he was denouncing its virulence in the Tory Party, which had only “contempt of all people not born within the compass of the narrow seas.” In his satirical comedy, The Tables Turned, he presents the caricatured Judge Nupkins, who deplors “the ill-judged leniency of even a Tory government in permitting that pest of society, the unrespectable foreigner, to congregate in this metropolis.” Unfortunately, as Morris well knew, the working class is not immune to this virus. When necessary, particularly during the discussions which followed his lectures, he drew attention to “the wickedness of using the word ‘foreigner’ and the impossibility of workers of different countries having any cause to quarrel.” Xenophobia and socialism are incompatible: “a socialist does not recognize a possible enemy in a foreigner as such.” He observed bitterly that such tendencies were not altogether absent among the leadership of the Social Democratic
Federation, and one of the reasons for his rupture with Hyndman in December 1884 was his "attacks on foreigners as foreigners or at least sneers at them: coquetting also with jingoism in various forms." It is relevant to remark that the attacks in question were directed against Engels and Scheu.

As Morris's thinking took more definite shape, he stopped reacting emotionally and achieved a theoretical level. He still maintained his condemnation of chauvinism and xenophobia, but as part of a criticism of the concept of a nation, which was born in the sixteenth century, with the arrival of a bureaucratic bourgeoisie, for the purpose of political and commercial war it was the new ruling class which fostered "that thrice-accursed spirit of nationality which so hampers us even now in all attempts towards the realization of a true society." National States were never invented to provide protection for their nationals, but, quite the contrary, with a motive of oppression: "the object of their existence now is organized robbery of the weak both within and without their own bounds." They apply measures of unification that are prejudicial to man's free development.

"The fact is, as individualism suppresses individuality, so nationalism suppresses all that is worth keeping in the special elements which go to make up a real and not an artificial nation. The sham community of the present - the nation - is formed for the purposes of rivalry only, and consequently suppresses all minor differences that do not help it to supremacy over other nations."

Old Hammond repeats this accusation during his conversation with the visitor, à propos of the national question:

"How should it add to the variety or dispel the dullness, to coerce certain families or tribes, often heterogeneous and jarring with one another, into certain artificial and mechanical groups, and call them nations, and stimulate their patriotism - i.e., their foolish and envious prejudices?"

There can be no doubt that here Morris has allowed himself to be drawn into serious confusion. While he is certainly justified in denouncing movements towards the harmful integration of local or ethnic groups, and while it is a legitimate question to ask how far the creation of a national consciousness is accompanied by certain mental stereotyping, he makes the mistake of denying the reality and strength of such consciousness. In the course of his political life, this brought him a number of setbacks without his drawing the moral. At a time when the whole of Europe was shaken by movements for national independence, an unrealistic sectarianism made him see nothing but their bourgeois nature and demand that they assume a totally premature socialist orientation. His attitude to the Irish question deserves a deep study that would exceed the limits of the present work. Addressing Italian and Irish patriots, he exclaimed: "Your revolutionary struggles will be abortive or lead to mere disappointment unless you accept as your watchword: Wage-workers of all countries unite!" Only once did he take a more reasonable view of things, and then he wrote that "Home Rule is not of itself necessarily a revolutionary measure, but it will clear the ground for sowing the seeds of Revolution." This gleam of wisdom was short-lived. It is a fact that he was hooted in Dublin for preaching socialism to an audience that cared for
nothing except the passing of the first Home Rule Bill. It was in vain that he observed that "at the moment they could listen to nothing but Home Rule"; he still continued to denounce nationalism in the name of socialism. In 1893 again, when writing his socialist handbook with Bax, he wrote of the events of 1848:

"Poland, Hungary, Italy, Servia, Ireland, and France, as represented by her Chauvinists, have all once and again contributed their quotas to this nuisance of "Patriotism", which has so often in these latter days dragged the red herring over the path of Revolution." 542

It is strange that the dialectical sense that Morris showed in so many other circumstances should have deserted him to this extent when he faced these problems. In News from Nowhere we find the same tendency towards mechanistic and economistic simplification when old Hammond claims that, at the time of the wars between England and France, the English workers would have been no worse off had they been defeated by the French army and exploited by foreign employers. 543 What, in such an event, would have been the reaction of Morris himself, "English to the marrow of his bones"? This unsophisticated materialism is surprising in the case of a humanist so well aware of the importance of superstructures. That is the extent of the danger of the working-class snobbery which lies in wait for a socialist of bourgeois origin.

He is certainly more convincing when he writes: "the interests of the workmen are the same in all countries and they can never really be the enemies of each other," 544 and when he appeals to international proletarianism: "I bid you to class combination - but what class: the class of labour all over the world." 545 To show the emptiness of nationalism, he did not hesitate to repeat Disraeli's famous dictum: "a nation of the poor dwells beside a nation of the rich, and both are supposed to call each other fellow countrymen". 546 How is a worker to feel at home in "the country, which in grim mockery is called 'his'" 547 Behind all these declarations one can sense an incomplete assimilation of a famous passage of The Communist Manifesto of 1847:

"The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word." 548

Like so many others of his time (and even later), Morris retained mainly the negative part of these famous words, thus depriving himself, both immediately and in a middle-term perspective, of an analytical tool that would have spared him many mistakes in the daily struggle. Despite the apparent paradox, the factor that saved him from a lack of realism then common is that the best of his thinking was in the distant utopian perspective, which often had more body and substance than his direct political action. In this way, through the byways of prediction, he reached greater fidelity to the teachings of Marx.

In 1888 Commonweal published an editorial signed by the Council of the Socialist League and probably drafted by Morris, which contains an interesting verbal formulation:
the League believes, when it speaks of International Socialism, that the word internationalism applies only to the present state of slavery, in expressing that the workers do not recognise the national distinctions made by their masters, and that in the society of the future, nations as political entities will cease to exist, and give place to the federation of communities bound together by locality and convenience.  

In the following year, the Council of the League issued another "Declaration of Principle", affirming that "the change which would put an end to the struggle between man and man, would destroy it also between nation and nation", thus almost reproducing the terms of The Common Man's Manifesto.

"In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end."

From then on, a process of disintegration begins: "when competition shall have given place to combination, the function of the nation will be gone."

And the moment when there are no longer any commercial antagonism between different countries, there will no longer be any need for attack or defense, and "this function being taken away from the nation, it can have no other, and therefore must cease to exist as a political entity."

A day will come when "nationality, except as a geographical or ethnological expression, would have no meaning", and Morris even looks forward to a period, dubious in distant, "when the change of the world has made our race nothing more than a name of what has been."

We have already seen, when studying public life in future society, that people will live in local and professional communities, established and federated to different extents (even on a world scale) for the needs of production and consumption, "so that all civilized nations would form one great community."

In News from Nowhere, "the whole system of rival and contending nations has disappeared along with the inequality between man and man in society". The very word nation has become meaningless: The National Gallery, for example, has kept its name, but Dick no longer knows what the word means. That does not, however, mean that the characteristics of each people have disappeared. There is no hint of a cosmopolitanism that makes the whole planet uniform. "Cross the water and see," says old Hammon to the visitor.

"You will find plenty of variety: the landscape, the building, the diet, the amusements, all various. The men and women varying in looks as well as in habits of thought: the costume far more various than in the commercial period... it is obvious to us that by means of this very diversity the different strains of blood in the world can be reconciled and pleasant in each other, without in the least wanting to rob each other: we are all bent on the same enterprise, making the most of our lives. And I must tell you, whatever quarrels and misunderstandings arise, they very seldom take place between people of different race, and consequently since there is less incentive in them, they are the more readily appeased."

In this way, Morris's internationalism and the love of his native land which gives such warmth to News from Nowhere are fused into a harmonious whole. The characteristic of the approach of his thought and his humanitarianism is that these two sentiments both cease being abstractions and become concrete material realities. The country to which one belongs represents "a familiar, material, and not some mysterious unapproachable altar of an unseen God."

The same is true of the great human brotherhood.

We may note here that "fellowship" is the most precise and perhaps the warmest term used by Morris to describe what the more abstract habits of French thought tend to render by the word fraternité. The exaltation of this feeling provides the la-thèse of A Dream of John Ball. "Fellowship is heaven," exclaims the rebel priest, "and lack of fellowship is hell." Fellowship is often found, both under the mediaeval order where John Ball is fighting oppression and under the capitalist system with its exploitation that the poet is trying to make clear to him, but, in a great surge of utopian optimism, Morris asserts that "the Fellowship of Men shall endure, however many tribulations it may have to wear through." In our day, when socialism is gestating, the two adversaries at grips with each other are no longer, as they were in the days of the French Revolution, absolutism and democracy, but "Mastership and Fellowship", and after the triumph of the latter the new order will be that of "fellowship working in the harmony of association for the common good", an order "bearing with it its own ethics". It is "EQUALITY, which, and which only, means FRATERNITY". This will end the "prelatory of human society", as Marx called it, for "the condition of competition between man and man is bestial only, and that of association human." In the same way, relationships between men will no longer be dominated by capitalistic dedication of property. "Socialism is to substitute the relationship of persons to persons, for the relationship of things to persons". In the new society, "wherein motion shall be really and without qualification "one for all and all for one", our work would essentially be a labour of love, given freely and happily to the commonwealth, as the commonwealth would freely and ungrudgingly supply our needs for us". Morris said simply, to an open-air meeting of Scottish miners:

"I want everybody to be friends and to behave towards one another as real friends always do, that is to say, trying to be happy with one another, and sharing as far as possible every means of making themselves happy. And that is just the aim and substance of what Socialism means."

In this way Morris was refusing to limit his definition of socialism to its purely economic aspects; for that would provide no basis for the construction of superstructure or ideology:

"Socialism is emphatically not merely a system of property-holding, but a complete theory of human life, founded on the visible necessities of animal life, but including a distinct system of religion, ethics, and conduct."

This is an assertion he insistently repeats in several of his writings in the same terms. This mentality for the future imposes serious demands upon the
militants of our own time, for even now they should show themselves to be worthy of the ideal to which they aspire and fit their own behaviour to it.

"Let us remember that the Religion of Socialism ... calls upon us to be better than other people, since we owe ourselves to the Society which we have accepted as the hope of the future." 571

An important distinction between today's bourgeois morality and the ethic of the future society becomes plain:

"... men's social and moral relations would be seriously modified by this gain of economic freedom, and by the collapse of the superstitions, moral and other, which necessarily accompany a state of economical slavery: the test of duty would now rest on the fulfilment of clear and well-defined obligations to the community rather than on the moulding of the individual character and actions to some preconceived standard outside social responsibilities." 572

With this passage of the Manifesto of the Socialist League goes a note reiterating the collective nature of this future morality, which "should mean nothing more than the responsibility of the individual man to the social whole of which he forms a part". 573 It may be thought that this ethical conception, despite its breadth, is nevertheless limiting, since it entirely eliminates any individual conscience in favour of the collective conscience. Morris did not find an opportunity, under the cloak of historical development, to give shades of meaning to his thinking. His position was one of principle, both theoretical and polemical, in total and energetic reaction against Victorian morality. Its superiority is asserted by freeing the individual from subjective, conventional or superstitious restraints and by laying the bases for a materialist ethic. Moreover, Morris carefully specified, during his controversy with the anarchists, that in the stage of communism a morality of this kind would no longer have any need of recourse to machinery of enforcement. "I am not pleading for any form of arbitrary or unreasonable authority, but for a public conscience as a rule of action." This "ethical based on reason" 574 would not need enforcing in a "society of well-wishers, of reasonable people conscious of the aspirations of humanity and of the duties we owe to it through one another". 575 In a world from which all reason for antagonism will have disappeared, there will be established "a basis of common honesty in the ordinary transactions of life", and this honesty will be accompanied by "a sense growing up in you of your unity with humanity." 576

This growing feeling of unity with humanity is both an extension, at a higher level, of the gentle integration of barbaric society and a revolutionary break with bourgeois individualism; it is the ultimate morality of the new society. In Morris's works it is expressed by two terms which sometimes become confused: "religion of socialism" and, above all, "religion of humanity." He did not invent these expressions. The second, in particular, was in quite wide use in the intellectual circles he was in touch with. It came straight from the phraseology of Auguste Comte and had been popularised in England during the seventies by the Positivists, whose ranks included such influential people as Beesly, George Eliot, John Morley and Frederick Harrison. It was taken up by Mill, used by Gissing, and, across the Atlantic, by Edward...
Bellamy. Some English Comtists, such as Congreve, even projected the creation of a “Priesthood of Humanity.” The variant “religion of socialism” appeared during the ’eighties in response to the needs of new viewpoints, but its ideological content was little different from that of the earlier form. Balfour Bax, who was so close to Morris, had been strongly influenced by Positivism, and one may wonder whether he ever completely freed himself from it, in 1886 he published a rather dull and wordy book under the title of *The Religion of Socialism*, and the topic seems to have been one of unfailing interest among Morris’s close friends.  

Morris first used the phrase in 1883, when he had only been a member of the Democratic Federation for a few months, in a letter which expressed all the ardent faith of the new convert. I think, he wrote, that “the aim of Socialists should be the founding of a religion, towards which end compromise is no use, and we only want to have those with us who will be with us to the end.” The following year he was proclaiming with equal ardour that the love of beauty, “the crown of a full and noble life”, seemed impossible to him without “full faith in the religion of Socialism.” In 1885, the Manifesto of the League concluded with an appeal for “single-hearted devotion to the religion of Socialism, the only religion which the Socialist League professes.” At that point, quite clearly, it is just a question of fervent but vague enthusiasm, without any real theoretical content, expressed by a convenient and well-known formula, calculated, moreover, to shock conservative and right-minded folk.

During the following years, a search for content becomes apparent. In so far as Morris, who had little inclination towards mysticism, was satisfied to equate it purely and simply with morality, it did not go very far. When he is trying to convince the Rev. George Bainton that there is no great discrepancy between the latter’s faith and socialism, his tone becomes quite simply apologetic. I have “a determination,” he wrote to him, “to do nothing shabby if I can help it, or if I do anything shabby to admit that I have done so and to be sorry for it. This appears to me to be the Socialist religion, and if it is not morality I do not know what it is.” It was in the same proselytising vein that he had written to him a month earlier that the socialist revolution “must be accompanied by an ethical or religious sense of the responsibility of each man to each and all of his fellows.” But he added these more precise words, which express his meaning more clearly:

“Socialism aims, therefore, at realizing equality of condition as its economical goal, and the habitual love of humanity as its rule of ethics.”

The phrase “religion of socialism” really expressed nothing more than his new-found revolutionary enthusiasm. He really preferred to speak of love—or religion—of humanity. For him the word religion held no metaphysical sense but was convenient because current, and he restored its etymological meaning of a bond between men, while retaining its sentimental overtones and implications of hope. He was all the more ready to use it in this way because it gave him the feeling of continuity with mediaeval religion as he chose to see it, popular, realistic, organic and communal. In this respect nothing is more revealing than the moment in *A Dream of John Ball* when its hero expresses
Morris’s meaning in his own words: “and ever shall I be a member of the Church and that is the Fellowship”. But at the same time, in that extraordinary page recording the conversation of the two men during their vigil over the dead in the empty church, Morris dissociates himself from John Ball’s faith. His religion of humanity is not based upon hope of another world, but on building a progression of mankind that led, generation by generation, towards a higher stage of his destiny: “though I die and end, yet mankind yet liveth, therefore I end not, since I am a man”. 583 And from the future, the voice of old Hammond provides an echo, respectfully acknowledging the mediaeval heritage, freed from superstitions of heaven and hell, exclaiming: “now we do, both in word and in deed, believe in the continuous life of the world of men”. 586 But the historical link has not been broken. The new religion of humanity needs its festivals, and we have seen that Morris was attached to them. In the materialist society of the twenty-second century there will be no “Festival of the Supreme Being”, but there will be the fraternal haymaking festival, taking place in the old church at Kelmscott, in which the visitor finds again the mediaeval tradition of ‘church-ales’, those early love-feasts when the sanctuary was consecrated by the faithful, tankard in hand, for then it was truly their common house. 587

This religion of humanity will be lay in character, and what remains of Christian morality will be “absorbed in Socialism”. 588 It will be materialist: “Its ethics will have to be based on the recognition of natural cause and effect, and not on rules derived from a priori ideas of the relation of man to the universe or some imagined ruler of it”. 589 It will not be created out of nothing, nor of arbitrary lucubration. Just as the art of the future, in the ultimate forms, will be the dialectical heritage of what is best in the past, reshaped and elaborated at a higher level, the ethics of the future will follow a similar spiral development:

“The religion of Socialism will be but the ordinary ethics carried into a higher atmosphere, and will only differ from them in degree of conscious responsibility of ones fellows. Socialistic ethics would be the guide of our daily habit of life; socialistic religion would be that higher form of conscience that would impel us to actions on behalf of a future of the race, such as no man could command in his ordinary moods.” 590

But this religion of humanity which Morris heard discussed so much around him and to which he did not hesitate to refer himself could only, at the time at which he was writing, be an empty abstraction, and he was quite aware of this. It had no justification in the picture presented by the life of the time, and seems to have arisen from the idealism of benevolent and innocent-minded individuals. Only the coming of communist society, built upon the ashes of the hideous and vile jungle of the bourgeois world, could give birth to a humanity so far transformed as to be worthy of a cult of self-worship. This religion of humanity, just like the ethics inseparable from it, will have become so deeply rooted a habit, such an everyday sentiment, that its very name will have disappeared, as the words art and socialism will have disappeared. Morris’s utopian genius and theoretical maturity find full expression in these reflections of old Hammond’s:
"In times past, indeed, men were told to love their kind, to believe in the religion of humanity and so forth. But look you, just in the degree that a man had elevation of mind and refinement enough to be able to value this idea, he was repelled by the obvious aspect of the individuals composing the mass which he was to worship; and he could only evade that repulsion by making a conventional abstraction of mankind that had little actual or historical relation to the race; which to his eyes was divided into blind tyrants on the one hand and apathetic degraded slaves on the other. But now, where is the difficulty in accepting the religion of humanity, when the men and women who go to make up humanity are free, happy, and energetic at least, and most commonly beautiful of body also, and surrounded by beautiful things of their own fashioning, and a nature bettered and not worsened by contact with mankind? This is what this age of the world has reserved for us."

These lines summarise the humanism of Morris, no longer the conceptual humanism of the bourgeois philosophers up to Feuerbach, but a factual humanism, directly inspired by Marxist thought, describing man in the dialectic of his own true destiny through historical contradictions and class-struggle. The optimism which it breathes does not come from any smug faith, but from a slowly-formed understanding of the laws of history and of the positive rôle played by men when they intervene, not to modify these laws but to ensure their logical application, which would be impossible without that intervention. This will achieve the leap from the rule of necessity to the rule of liberty, and the higher mankind which will one day be born of this rational action, through which men will have created themselves, may perhaps show some features of the encouraging picture of it painted by William Morris.
Conclusion

In his study of utopias, Raymond Ruyer makes an important observation: "From the mere fact that utopia usually presents a picture of a utopian social world, it is, despite its appearance of dishevelled fantasy, dedicated to the academic construction of a fixed model and not to a world which changes in accordance with generalised principles and norms." Following the line of thought, he adds: "It is very plain that the utopists have extreme difficulty in endowing their imaginary world with a time dimension. This difficulty is most obvious in the forward-looking utopias, that are situated, not in the elsewhere, but in the future. The utopist's future is almost never a line, but a point in time. The future is like a fixed image, it is a port where one arrives rather than an indefinite journey." This leads Raymond Ruyer to establish a contrast between, on the one hand, utopian thinking, for which "the whole value of the world lies in its culmination and history is just a roadway to this culmination", and, on the other, Hegelian and Marxist thinking, for which "the value of the world exists now and at every moment, now as well as tomorrow" and which believes in "the importance of time".

This two-fold criterion seems to me to be perfectly well founded if one is judging utopian literature as a whole and is giving the Marxist concept of time its concrete historical meaning. In my view, it offers the inestimable advantage of providing a criterion in the light of which William Morris's thinking will perhaps assume more definite relief. In other words the problem is to know whether his utopia is, as Victor Dupont asserts, nothing more than "a static conception of a happy society".

At first sight, it looks very much like that, and nothing strengthens that impression more than the wonderful balminess of the temperature, the utopian glorious weather of News from Nowhere, in which everything seems to be transformed and even reduced in size. Many critics, insensitive to its charms, complain bitterly about Morris on this count. Ronald Fuller is indignant about "Nowhere's un-English weather", and Alfred Noyes declares that "he did subconsciously abolish the seasons from his new Arcadia". Such judgments surely betray preconceptions? Would a description of a new England, with nature cleansed from all the ugliness of 'civilization' have been more convincing in rain and squalls? When Morris describes the loveliness of June on the clear and verdant Thames, and revels in it to the extent of writing:

"It was the sort of afternoon that Tennyson must have been thinking about, when he said of the Lotus-Eaters' land that it was a land where it always seemed afternoon".
he was not making any claim that England had become a land of eternal afternoon. He even tells us exactly the opposite, stressing the unusual nature of this beautiful weather, when he speaks of "one of those days which, if they were commoner in these islands, would make our climate the best of all climates, without dispute". Anyway, who could deny the charm of the English countryside in summer? This is not the only indication of this kind in the story. The Obstinate Refusers are happy to have got ten days ahead of schedule on account of the continuing fine weather. And these twenty-second-century English, for whom nature is no longer alien and hostile, and who identify themselves with her, are extremely sensitive to "the ever fresh pleasure of the recurring seasons, and changeful weather, and diverse quality of the soil". They know how to enjoy the harshness of winter as well as the languorous summer: Dick thinks of the scope for sailing at Runnymede, "on the floods on a bright frosty January morning" and is "as much pleased and interested with the winter and its trouble and pain as with this wonderful summer luxury". Morris is expressing two feelings: first, a personal liking, not only for the glory of the sunshine but also for all of nature's varying aspects, as he had already described them in The Earthly Paradise; and even more he is expressing the utopian wish that, some day, thanks to the transformation of the human condition, "the great drama of the seasons can touch our workmen with other feelings than the misery of winter and the weariness of summer".

Even more – what Morris rejects as anti-utopia is precisely that of The Story of the Glittering Plain, that of immortality and everlasting summer which the hero Halliblythe spurns with horror to return to the harsh climate of his northern island and to the bitter struggle of men; just as he rejects the anti-utopia of the Isle of Increase Unsought in The Water of the Wondrous Isles. The glorious June weather of News from Nowhere by no means excludes the frosts of winter, nor is it the climate of a humanity wallowing in indolence: it is a month for haymakers and builders. The choice of a marvellous summer, which is not in the least everlasting, does not even echo the old myths (and here, for once, I disagree with A. L. Morton of the Land of Cockaigne, where the weather itself is adjusted to man's desire. The choice is aesthetic rather than ideological, and has no other purpose than to sharpen the contrast between the hideousness of 'civilization' and the beauty of the new world. Perhaps too one may explain it in terms of a kind of vision cultivated by the luminous and colourful imagery of mediaeval art, made yet more conscious through the influence of Ruskin.

So let us leave at that what I feel to be a trivial dispute and come to more serious matters. In fact, there are other details which might suggest the picture of a static utopia. One word constantly recurs in Morris's tale, the word 'rest': the full title of the book is News from Nowhere, or an Epoch of Rest. He was obsessed with the word, and it expresses the longings of a man overburdened with work and temperamentally incapable of relaxing. In this respect one can legitimately speak of a compensation wish.

When, at the start of the story, after the brisk discussion "up at the League . . . on the Morrow of the Revolution", the narrator returns home, the
strange magic which is the prelude to the dream begins to work, "and of the discussion itself there remained no trace, save a vague hope, that we now become a pleasure, for days of peace and rest, and cleanliness and feeling goodwill". Once he is caught up in his vision of the days to come, the smallest hint of return to the old world brings back to mind "all my longing for rest and peace in the past", and, when he finally re-awakes in the depressing surroundings of his suburb, he takes comfort from the assurance born of his vision, that "there is yet a time of rest in store for the world". The vision has, in fact, fulfilled this yearning. The comparison suggested to his mind is that of youthful holidays, and old Hammond describes the new society as one of "peace and stability". However, we must beware of risky interpretations and must give words the meanings that Morris gave them. For a man like him, there could be no inactive leisure. Rest could only be a change of activity. When Hammond speaks of peace and stability, he well understands that the origin and guarantee of these lie in the happiness consequent upon the radical transformation in the nature of labour. Ellen expresses this vividly when she speaks to the visitor of "our life of repose amidst energy, of work which is pleasure and pleasure which is work". Ellen herself provides a picture of this new life: "she was far from languid; her idleness being the idleness of a person, strong and well-knit both in body and mind, deliberately resting", and Morris admires "her beauty, so delicate, yet so interfused with energy" at length. She is the incarnation of the dream of the world to come that had haunted his mind for years: "this outward order and beauty will be but a token of fair and orderly life, of days made up of unwearisome work, and of leisure restful but not vacant".

The people of Nowhere are "free, happy, energetic at least" asserts old Hammond, and he also says: "we have plenty to do, and on the whole enjoy doing it. What more can we ask of life?" What Morris calls rest is, basically, an absence of feverish grind in work, a joy in creation, an enjoyment of all the world's pleasures intimately bound up with creative effort. "Men," he writes, "would at last have recognized that it was their business to live, and would at once come to the conclusion that life without endeavour is dull." In this story, as in the rest of his writing, the word "energy" is at least as frequent as the word "rest", and it is the key-word of his utopian vision.

"No man need think ... that Socialism, that is, a society of peace and mutual help will destroy the energies of mankind or make dull days for the world. That human energy I believe to be irrepressible, and when there is no outlet for it in war and destruction and the injuring of our neighbours and waste of our own goods, when good fellowship has taken the place of competition, is it unreasonable to suppose that our energy will be turned into the channel of finding out how to make the best of the world instead of the second worst?"

If we work in this spirit, "we shall be men, and our days will be happy and eventful" and, adds Morris, "a holiday our whole lives might be, if we were resolute to make all our labours reasonable and pleasant". It is clear that, in his eyes, nothing separates rest from energy, and the two words are constantly associated when they are not confused: the promise of socialism is "the elevation of mankind to a level of intelligent happiness and pleasurable energy unat-
tained as yet", and rest will come from the fact that the new life will be "rich in incident and variety, but free from the strain of mere sordid trouble." This freedom from care will not involve the slightest risk of corrupting the human race.

"But perhaps you may think that Society being thus happy and at peace, its very success would lead it to corruption once more? Yes, that might be if men were not watchful and valiant; but we have begun by saying that they would be free, and free men are bound to be responsible, and that means that they shall be watchful and valiant."

They would, in fact, reach "that higher form of conscience that would impel us to actions on behalf of the future of the race, such as no man could command in his ordinary moods." Their life would be "at once happy and manly," Is it to be supposed, repeats Morris, that free men "should lose the sparks of manliness which they possessed as slaves"? Recall the indignation of the men of Nowhere at the idea that the people of the nineteenth century should have tolerated the oppression of which they were victims:

"‘And they put with that?’ said Dick, with the first unpleasant expression I had seen on his good-tempered face."

Nor are there any grounds for fearing that the love of beauty which inspires their whole life may "tempt them into effeminacy or luxury, ever the worst of all the foes of art". Experience will show the contrary. Art, woven into the fabric both of labour and the leisure of daily life, will "prevent them wearying even of rest." Old Hammond reassures his guest on the point: "we live amidst beauty without any fear of becoming effeminate."

However, one question does arise. Is there not a risk that this outpouring of energy will be inhibited by plenty? Morris is unperturbed by this question, and replies, as we have seen earlier, that the very upsurge of production leads men to feel "fresh desires and fresh demands on nature" and that "this will always be so". We have also seen that old Hammond does not believe either that there is any reason for the spreading fear of a "work famine", the resources of art and science are inexhaustible, the manufacture of some articles that had been abandoned can be resumed when ways have been found of making it attractive, and beauty can be exported to less developed countries. Is Morris’s declaration of faith altogether convincing? Plenty reigns and men no longer produce beyond their needs. Much more: far from experiencing new desires and making fresh demands of nature, they have learned to throw off irrelevant needs and to live richly and simply at the same time. It can certainly be argued that this rejection of artificiality is, in fact, the result of a higher level of humanism. But this abundance seems to have been provided once and for all and its possible reshaping lies exclusively in the unfolding of artistic imagination. It coincides with an arrested development of the productive forces, that is to say, with economic stagnation. At this point Morris’s utopian predictions hold a limit that it is difficult to pass. Any attempt to pass it would lead either to an undesirable superabundance or to the restitution of artificial needs. Such is the shape of the dilemma of the future. Socialism brings the end to antagonisms, but not to contradictions.

But does not even the end of antagonisms create a psychological problem?
Cannot the very pleasantness of human relations become stagnant too? Morris does not avoid the problem. The character of the old grumbler, Ellen's father or grandfather, is intended to draw attention to it, and perhaps he could not be classed among the minor characters, as Victor Dupont suggests. He regrets the passing of free competition and the adventurous spirit of capitalist days, and when the visitor replies that the new age is heaven by comparison with the horrors of the past, he replies: “You like heaven, do you? . . . Well, I am far from sure that I do. I think one may do more with one's life than sitting on a damp cloud and singing hymns.” This is caricature, of course, and his feeble arguments are demolished by the happiness which is described and above all by the creative growth of the new life. Nevertheless, Morris is admitting that the question can arise, and on the very last page of his book he feels obliged to provide an answer. Just as his presence is fading out and he is about to be brutally flung back from the future to the present, Ellen's last glance seems to say to him: “You cannot be of us; you belong so entirely to the unhappiness of the past that our happiness even would weary you.” These are words which reveal penetrating thought and a deep sense of historical relativity. This idea of future “stagnation” is the fruit of the conditions of our time, it is inescapably contemporaneous with us, and cannot provide an absolute criterion for judging the future. There is no such thing as an abstract and everlasting human nature.

For this reason I have a slightly guilty feeling of allowing myself to be drawn into something resembling a fallacious problem. Morris possessed a wisdom which grew as the years passed, together with an ever lively sense of the dialectics of necessity and freedom. In one of his last lectures, he said:

“For the rest, time will teach us what new machinery may be necessary to the new life; reasonable men will submit to it without demur; and unreasonable ones will find themselves compelled to by the nature of things, and can only I fear console themselves, as the philosopher did when he knocked his head against the door post, by damning the Nature of things.”

Perhaps it is in this spirit that we should understand the old grumbler's peers and should understand better what, in the last chapter, I somewhat hastily called, à propos of Dick, conformism of happiness. Does this mean that Morris claims to give us a picture of a society fixed in perfection? His narrative is one in which, despite a few slips, everything seems to have been weighed up, and in it there is the unobtrusive development of a character whose importance grows steadily in the eyes of a careful reader. Clara is, in truth, a rather complex creature, and the quick little touches which sketch in her behaviour have an interest which is not exclusively psychological. She is young, beautiful, full of health and vigour despite a relative lack of grace. She is more of a town-girl than Ellen, but has a deep affinity with nature all the same. She exemplifies the universal passion for beauty in her art of dress. Her matrimonial escapade provides a specific example of the freedom in the new morality. But she is not just a type or an exemplary symbol, she is perhaps the character with the greatest human depth. She is extraordinarily feminine both in her flirtation with the old men and in her love for Dick, with its mingling of physical frankness, modesty and jealousy. It is in this love that the two sides of her nature are first
revealed. She derives a secret pleasure from the comparison of the slender frailty of her stature and the square sturdiness of her companion. She feels a satisfaction at this inferiority, but at the same time she feels herself to be his intellectual superior, and her personality is certainly the stronger. Her gentle irony is very revealing when she teases Dick for his impatience to display his strength at the haymaking. This two-sidedness (which is what I want to come to) is even more striking in her general behaviour. She gets deep enjoyment from the sweetness and beauty of the new life. She is aware of living in an age when mankind has reached its full development, and in her conversations with the visitor or the old grumbler she displays all her claws in defence of the way of life of communist society. She has a passionate rejection of the past, to which her keenly intuitive sensibility gives violent expression when she comes into the room in Bloomsbury where Hammond and the visitor have discussed at length the sadness of the human state in earlier days and she senses baleful ghosts in the air around making “us feel as if we were longing for something that we cannot have.” But this reaction of her sensibility is intimately mingled with an intellectual disquiet, a constant questioning of the value of the present and the possibility of remedying its shortcomings. Her critical sense is always alert, whether to wonder if the use made of Eton College is wise or to seek the best way of bringing back to a normal life the man unintentionally guilty of a crime of passion. It is a characteristic which does not greatly please Dick, who, “somewhat boisterously”, proposes to send her “to bed pretty tired every night” during the haymaking and harvest, to “get some of those strange discontented whims out of your head”.

Clara, in fact, is not ready to accept quite everything and seems “to be always a little on the defensive”. It is not enough for the past to fill her with horror, or for her to jump down the throat of the old grumbler when he defends it; she still cannot help listening to him “with restless eyes, as if she were excited and pleased”, while Dick “knitted his brow and looked more uncomfortable”. It is in connection with artistic inspiration that her thinking finds its keenest expression and raises a fundamental question. Dick and Hammond are quite satisfied with the murals in Bloomsbury which take up Grimm’s old legends and refer back to the youth of the world, now come again. She is not with them and “a slight cloud came over her pretty face”. Finally, unable to contain herself any longer, she bursts out:

“How is it that though we are so interested with our life for the most part, yet when people take to writing poems or painting pictures they seldom deal with our modern life, or if they do, take good care to make their poems or pictures unlike that life? Are we not good enough to paint ourselves?”

She is unconvinced by the explanations of Dick and the old man and in the end says: “Well, for my part ... I wish we were interesting enough to be written or painted about.”

So all the contradictions have not disappeared and all is not yet decided. Clara’s thought is echoed by Ellen when she deplores the general lack of interest in history. Marx had described all human life up to the socialist revolution as “the prehistory of humanity”. News from Nowhere raises the problem of deciding whether the new age is not the negation or suspension of history.
Morris himself declared: “When the change comes, it will embrace the whole of society, and there will be no discontented class left to form the elements of a fresh revolution.” Socialism will be a definitive accomplished fact. Does that mean that henceforth life will be set in a mould? Two years before he wrote his utopia, Morris foresaw the question and answered it precisely:

“Some may say such a condition of things might lead indeed to happiness but also to stagnation. Well, to my mind there would be a contradiction in terms, if indeed we agree that happiness is caused by the pleasurable exercise of our faculties. And yet, suppose the worst, and that the world did rest after so many troubles — where would be the harm?” I remember, after having been ill once, how pleasant it was to be on my bed without pain or fever, doing nothing but watching the sunbeams and listening to the sounds of life outside; and might not the great world of men, if it once deliver itself from the delirious struggle for life amidst dishonesty, rest for a little after the long fever and be none the worse for it?”

And he adds that “I am sure, that the simplicity of life I have spoken of, which same would call stagnation, would give real life to the great mass of mankind, and would raise them at once to a higher level of life because they would feel themselves useful and happy, that is alive.” We must not overlook that men are “to rest for a little.” In fact, if we read News from Nowhere without preconceptions, we see that Morris paints an impressive fresco of human development from the revolution onwards. He refers to the difficulties of the first stage, the enormous growth of productive capacity, then abundance and the reappearance of handicraft. Looking more closely, this second stage he describes as us mankind’s second post-revolutionary moment of rest, if one recalls the “dull level of utopian comfort” to which the unconfined development of machinery had led. The comparison of these two moments indicates the immensity of the distance travelled. And what we are considering is a moment in Morris’s mind, not an eternity, just as, in A Dream of John Ball, there is already reference to “the change beyond the change.” The dice are not cast once and for all, and history, of which Ellen deplores the lack of study, can take odd turns and even make sad returns. “Who knows?” she says, “happy as we are, names may alter, we may be bitten with some impulsion towards change, and many things may seem too wonderful for us to resist, too exciting not to catch at.” That is just what old Hammond thinks, too. For all his saying: “we are too happy, both individually and collectively, to trouble ourselves about what is to come hereafter”, and his hoping that this “second childhood” of the world may last a long time, he considers that “the world’s next period of wise and unhappy manhood, if that should happen, will speedily lead us to a third childhood.”

Of necessity, all that remains indeterminate. To the visitor’s question about “What is to come after this?”, Morris, the curator of the museum of labour, laconically replies: “I don’t know. We will meet it when it comes.” It would be unreasonable to reproach Morris for not having introduced a twenty-second-century utopia into his story, but for all that he does not shut the doors on the future. Utopian foresight in itself is bold; it must have its limits,
while history cannot have any. Morris explicitly makes these two points. In
1885 he had already written in the Manifesto of the Socialist League:

"Socialism closes the era of antagonisms, and, whatever may be the case
as time goes on, and though we cannot accept finality, at present we can
see nothing beyond it." 38

The following year he admitted the limitation again:

"The end does seem to elude even far-sighted and earnest men in this
way, that none of us can see clear enough: so that what all men are today
sure is an end turns out only to have been some halting-place on the
road, which when we have reached it shows us the road stretching along
still toward the new perspective blue in the distance.

The essential thing is not to consider the first stage as final and to "try to see
as far as we can". This denial of any end to history appears in Morris’s writ-
ings from the first years of his militant activity. As early as 1884 he affirmed
that "no step is really final on the road of progress, that there is always some-
thing ahead if we can but see it". 39 Four years later he repeated that "Social-
ism does not recognise any finality in the progress and aspirations of human-
ity", 40 and the same idea provides the conclusion for the theoretical handbook
in 1893-

"We may be asked, since we have been continuously putting forward the
doctrine of evolution throughout these pages, into what Socialism in its
turn will evolve. We can only answer that Socialism denies the finality of
human progress, and that any particular form of Socialism of which we
can now conceive must necessarily give way before fresh and higher
developments, of the nature of which, however, we can form no idea.
These developments are necessarily hidden from us by the unfinished
struggle in which we live, and in which therefore for us the supreme goal
must be Socialism as we have here expounded it. We would be the very
last to wish to set any bounds to human ideals or aspirations." 41

In 1884, Marx wrote: "Communism is the necessary pattern and the
dynamic principle of the immediate future, but communism as such is not the
goal of human development – the structure of human society", 42 and many
years later Engels wrote in his turn: "What we call socialist society is not, in
my opinion, something completed once and for all, but, like all other forms of
society, it should be regarded as taking its place in a process of transformation
and continuous renewal." 43 Marxism denies to proletariat and bour geoisie
alike the right to speak of "eternal values". It is precisely because this funda-
mental idea breathes life into Morris’s utopia that it is different from all
earlier utopias.

... 

Are we to understand that, while Morris admits his inability to lift the veil
from the future beyond the second stage, he nevertheless has full confidence in
his power to prophesy up to that point? To do so would be to misunderstand
Once again. In his own eyes, his utopia is neither a visible certainty nor an intangible ideal.

"Hard it is for the old world to see the new," he wrote in *A Dream of John Ball*. It was a difficulty of which he had been conscious for a long time; "a man in his short life can see but a little way ahead." What is more, even after his conversion to socialism he believed for a long time that all prophecy was empty: "It is no use prophesying as to the events which will accompany that revolution," he said to his audience in 1885; and the following year he told them again: "I have no elaborate plan, no details of a new society to lay before you...to attempt this would be putting before you a mere delusion." At the very most, he agrees to "hazarding some guesses...painting a picture in the air." His imagination took wing very slowly, as a scientific understanding of the laws of evolution provided more and more solid bases for his thinking. But he remained cautious and in 1888, in the most utopian of his lectures, he declared that "we cannot help guessing at a great deal which we cannot know." A year before the publication of *News from Nowhere*, he could still write: "When I try to picture to myself the forms which that life will take, I confess I am at fault, and I think we must all be so." On reading through the writings of the last years, one even has a feeling that Morris regretted having ventured too far. In 1893, in particular, we can find three very clear declarations of that nature. In the preface to a collection of essays on the arts, there is a passing reference to "some other condition of life, the details of which we cannot foresee", and in the theoretical manual he similarly speaks of "some other form of society, the tendencies of which we can see, but not the details." Finally, in a public lecture, he goes so far as to say: "What shall we do, how shall we live? I don't know, nor do you and we cannot know." Nevertheless it would be overmuch to read into these declarations a renunciation of his utopism, and I should be more inclined to see them as a very understandable reaction against any dogmatic use of his story. The realistic form in which he had chosen to present his speculations had necessarily involved him at times in dangerously detailed descriptions and for this very reason he issued warnings against trusting to details. He writes that only tendencies can be discerned. But he had always spoken thus. In 1886, when he regretted not being able to offer his audiences a detailed plan of the future society, he nevertheless declared himself "prepared to state the principles upon which it would be founded". He made the same declaration in the same terms on a number of occasions, and he showed the same caution in the socialist handbook:

"No less surely we know what the foundation of the new society will be. What will the new society build on that foundation of freedom and co-operation? That is the problem on which we can do no more than speculate." Morris had no hesitation over giving his reasons for this caution. One can say, he wrote, "with a tolerable certainty that the actual details won't be like the imagined ones." But error can extend to general aspects, which are not just simple details, and a theoretical knowledge of the laws of history cannot be certain to shield us against this happening. Our knowledge of the past is built up of definite facts, yet it is only approximate. We have none about the future,
and our picture of it is "nothing but mere abstract deductions from historic evolution, the logical sequence of which may be interfered with at any point by elements whose force we have not duly appreciated". This is an important remark, to be further illuminated by recalling the thoughts upon the dialectics of history expressed in 1886 in almost the same words in *A Dream of John Ball* and in Engels's *Ludwig Feuerbach*.80

The only point of departure for a utopia is the present, or, more exactly, the negation of everything humanly intolerable that the present contains. "In the course of my endeavour to show how we might live," he wrote in 1884, "I must more or less deal in negatives." 81 "Admitting that we are unable to realize positively the life of the future... yet the negative side of the question we can all see."82 But this inevitable recourse to the present is "often a stumbling-block".83 We run the risk of becoming victims of the words we employ:

"... surely in speculating on the future of society we should try to shake ourselves clear of mere phrases: especially as many of them will cease to have a meaning when the change comes that we all of us long for." 84

Man is marked by the life he leads, and "his palace of days to come can only be constructed from the aspirations forced upon him by his present surroundings, and from his dreams of the life of the past, which themselves cannot fail to be more or less unsubstantial imaginings". "It is impossible to build up a scheme for the society of the future, for no man can really think himself out of his own days." 85 One has to deal, truly, with a state of affairs too "different from that in which we were born and bred". Let us then be modest, and, where details are concerned, leave them to the men who will have the good luck to be born in a free society and who will, in consequence, be "more prudent and reasonable than we are". Let us be modest, but not cease to dream. Changes taking place before our eyes force us to turn our activity towards the future and "cannot fail to rouse our imaginations into picturing for ourselves that life at once happy and manly which we know social revolution will put within the reach of all men".86

And so, Morris tells us, we must look ahead, because utopia provides an encouragement to struggle, but it is fallible and limited. Even our understanding of the evils that oppress us is imperfect and incomplete, perhaps to the point of surprising our descendants, on account of "a law of nature which forbids men to see evils which they are not ready to redress".87 Marx, too, said that "mankind always takes up only such problems as it can solve".88 For this reason, Morris knows that he cannot deal with all the questions which the human consciousness will one day raise, and this provides an explanation of the subtitle of *News from Nowhere: Being Some Chapters from a Utopian Romance*.

Morris, then, does not attempt to impose doctrine upon us, but offers us a hypothesis. He avoids doing like Fourier and falling into "the trap of formulating dogmatically an elaborate scheme of life in all its details".89 "I daresay," he remarks to his audience, "that you will find some of my visions strange enough". 90 In another lecture, the manuscript of which I found in Amsterdam, his first words to his audience are a warning: "What I have to say to you relates to matters that may be discussed amongst Socialists... but can not be altogether a matter of controversy amongst Socialists. I want to give you
my view of the Promised Land of Socialism." He even remarks, with some humour, that "the visions of us visionary or practical people differ largely from each other, and that we are not much interested in each other's visions." From his earliest lectures he continually stressed the personal nature of each utopia. Some of his own suggestions "may seem to some strange and venturesome", he said, but "these must be considered as being given without any intention of dogmatizing, and as merely expressing my own personal opinion.” And in the 1893 handbook he was still repeating indefatigably—

"It must be understood therefore that in giving this outline of the life of the future, we are not dogmatising, but only expressing our opinions of what will probably happen, which is of course coloured by our personal wishes and hopes."

"Of course, the pictures so drawn will vary according to the turn of the mind of the picturer." He even went so far as to write the monumental sentence that has been turned against him by so many critics: "The only safe way of reading a Utopia is to consider it as the expression of the temperament of its author." It is a devastating fact that these critics have made this sentence a convenient excuse for not seeing all the importance and richness of Morris's thinking, without realising that the phrase itself is an indication of the discipline of thinking that does not hesitate to define its own limitations.

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This is not all. I believe that I have fully demonstrated that Morris's utopia was not an arbitrary action, but a form of militant activity. Like Marx and Engels before him, he reproached Owen for having led the working class into a dead end, and thus diverted the class struggle during the Chartist period. He avoided following such an example, and subordinated utopian thought to immediate action, asserting the primacy of the latter. "To try to settle amidst our present corruption," he wrote, "what that education, those morals shall be, except in the most general way seems to me a putting of the cart before the horse." In his major utopian lecture on the society of the future, he was still more categorical. "We socialists," he said, "are satisfied with demanding what we think necessary for that Society to form itself... this we think better than putting forward elaborate utopian schemes for the future"; and he added "the function of the reformers now alive is not so much prophecy as action."

Talking to his friend Scawen Blunt, on the eve of his death, about the organisation of life in the future, Morris said: "It will be time enough to think of that when we shall have made a clean sweep of present conditions." From him, that was in no way a condemnation of utopias. What he meant was that utopia can only achieve reality through action: "There are certain definite obstacles to the real progress of man; we can tell you what these are; take them away, and you shall see."

In the whole position adopted by Morris there is a striking resemblance to that expressed by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*:

"Communism is not for us a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the
real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence."

Which of course recalls the opposition to utopias expressed by Karl Marx when he objected to "writing recipes... for the cook-shops of the future." One feels impelled to quote a well-known passage from a letter to Sorge:

"It is natural that utopianism, which before the era of materialistically critical socialism concealed the latter within itself in embryo, can now, coming belatedly, only be silly, stale, and reactionary from the roots up."

But let us beware of incautious conclusions. What Marx was denouncing was the degeneration of utopian socialism and the mystical lucubrations of Weitling in the 'seventies. His meaning was that arbitrary and doctrinal anticipation, divorced from real struggles, was no longer on the agenda in the days of scientific socialism. It is self-evident that Morris's utopia, directly inspired by Marxist philosophy, taking into account the laws of historical development, is of quite another kind. It is a great pity that Engels did not find time to read *News from Nowhere* and say what he thought of it. However, we may recall the high opinion he had of the theoretical work by Morris and Bakunin, *Socialism, its Genesis and Outlook*, in which the poet again expressed many of his utopian ideas. It is worth mentioning that the Russian edition of *News from Nowhere* found a place among Lenin's books.

Moreover, while Marx and Engels resolutely turned their backs upon the utopian socialism of their predecessors, although they recognised their merit, they by no means hesitated to look ahead themselves, with the theory of two stages, the theory of the withering-away of the State, or towards the future of the family. These were certainly not arbitrary or subjective blue-prints, but analyses based upon a scientific study of history. It was these analyses which provided the foundation for Morris's utopia, and he did not depart from them in his endeavour to give a detailed illustration of them. The factor that made such looking ahead possible was that the development of productive capacity and the rise of the proletariat brought about by the development of capitalism during the nineteenth century made the victory of socialism a historical certainty, and not a vague and timid dream. While Thomas More concluded his story by saying that the institutions of his imaginary realm expressed wishes that he could never hope to see fulfilled, Morris ends his by asserting that it was not a dream, but a vision. While earlier utopists warn their readers that their tale will be difficult to believe, Morris feels no need for any such precaution. Not at all, as we have seen, dogmatically, but simply because his utopia possesses historical maturity and expresses understanding of historical laws. This is what made it possible for A. L. Morton to write that "Morris's is the first Utopia which is not a utopian".

Certainly, the danger of precision in a vision that was inevitably over-detailled has led Morris into hazardous hypotheses. But in any case, how are we to know? The twists of history, of which he had so clear a perception, might prove him right some day when we are no longer there to be surprised at it, even if the course of events since 1890 does seem to have modified some of his data. "As Nowhere becomes Somewhere," to quote A. L. Morton again, "the News
we receive from it cannot but change." That is my conviction also. But that is not the essence of it. The details of Morris’s utopia, as the author himself admits, are only a tissue of possibilities, and one that is richly coloured by the many facets of his personality. His expectation of the course of history, based upon scientific arguments, deserves to be taken seriously. All the same, it is Morris’s humanism, more than the detail or the general line, which makes *News from Nowhere* a lasting work. Utopia supports a scale of values. The communist society he describes is a human society, not a mechanism. The unity of necessity and freedom makes man master of himself and of nature, not an arbitrary master with subjective impulses, but one who turns necessity to his own purposes, thus achieving his full development and transforming himself as he transforms the world. He is free of all alienation and of any kind of asceticism, having no other purpose than himself: his existence is based upon the many-sided exercise of all his faculties and thus puts beauty and happiness within his reach. In Morris’s work there is explicit warning against the temptation to mistake the means for the end. While the implacable needs of the struggle and of construction sometimes impose imperative urgencies upon history, there must be a human vanguard to retain an understanding of the perspectives. It is this constant achievement of understanding which makes Marxism into humanism. In this sense, Morris’s utopia is a call to future generations, and their attentiveness could increase as the problems which he foresees do arise.
APPENDICES

Unpublished Texts

I Justice and Socialism

The text below comes from the collection of manuscripts belonging to Mr. Chaim Abramsky, of London, who very kindly gave me permission to reprint it. These notes were used by William Morris when he gave a lecture to the Bloomsbury branch of the Socialist League on 1st October 1885. The date and place are noted in Morris's own writing at the top of the manuscript. Apart from its intrinsic interest, this lecture is valuable in not having been either announced or reported in the press at the time. Its existence was previously unknown, and it is not even mentioned in the remarkably minutely detailed schedule of Morris's speeches and lectures provided by Mr. Le Marc as an appendix to his thesis.

Read Oct. 1, 1885 at Socialist League Bloomsbury Branch.

JUSTICE AND SOCIALISM

The essential question which underlies all discussions as to the relations between men is ARE THEY JUST? If the relations which prevail between the various members of a society are unjust, that society, without further argument stands condemned.

For I suppose no one etc., etc.

Socialism was before itself the question. - In what respects is the present soc. most unjust? and it sets before itself the action to revolutionize society so that all injustice may disappear.

It may help us to answer our question and to guide our action, if we could determine what is justice and its contrary injustice, or even if we could agree upon some of the marks by which they are most easily recognized.

JUSTICE AND INJUSTICE CHARACTERIZED

It does not help as much to say that justice consists in giving to each what is due to him. For then we are left with the equally difficult question, WHAT IS DUE TO EACH?

Various suggestions:

- Men, i.e. children, women, men are obviously not equal;
- equal division is faulty;
- They have also different capacities for work, more may be done etc.,
- The cripple?

Hence the solution, excellent in its way, that each should have the results of their labor, leaves out cripples and those most needing assistance. It must therefore be regarded as a very convenient but only rough statement of the object of Socialism. It has the advantage of being as pointed a contradiction as possible to the present condition of Society etc., etc., wherein the weakest goes to the wall, i.e. not the weakest intellectually but etc., etc.
We shall be following the highest thinkers (Socrates, Plato, Sir Tho. More, Bacon, etc.), if we speak of Justice in any system as a condition of harmony and proportion between in part, free from VIOLENCE AND DECEIT, free from EXAGGERATION AND UGLINESS.

A Society which exhibits any or all of these 4 characteristics: violence, exaggeration, deceit, ugliness, is based more or less completely on INJUSTICE.

Ideas cannot be in minds by bits.

Now I do not think that the condition of a man’s mind, for example that condition of the mind which leads him to act with violence and deceit is there by bits and starts, by bits and pieces – A man cannot really give his mind to plundering others all the week and be virtuous on a SUNDAY.

Nor on the other hand will men’s minds have in them and hold fast to the idea of harmony, proportion and JUSTICE, so long as they grow up in the midst of usual exaggeration, ugliness and dulness. For what is usual is natural, and the mental step from thinking a thing natural to thinking it right and just is fatally easy.

I do not mean that the one person in a century who is the genius of reform may not shake himself free from the influence of his surroundings.

**Justice and Socialism.** Question ansd and what Socialism proposes.

The question propd by Socialism “in what respects is modern Society most unjust” I have partly answered ... viz it is full of ugliness and exaggeration. Or in other words of Jill and misery for nearly all contrasted with idleness and luxury for the few. It is not necessary to prove this to be the case. For none (i.e. no set of men) whether Liberal, Whig or Tory, venture to deny it. But they make no attempt to amend it, while they waste their time in squabbling about whose fault it is or tinkering at some trivial detail.

I propose also to show how MODERN SOCIETY has been created by and is still supported by violence and deceit. If this is so, it has all four of the foul characteristics of INJUSTICE, and has scarcely a title to be called a Society at all, but rather a collection of people who live by cheating and oppressing their fellow-countrymen and foreigners but who have not even the virtues of pirates, inasmuch as they are unable to effect a fair division of the spoil.

I will here anticipate by saying that Socialism sees no way to banish these injustices except by abolishing private property. To quote Sir T. More’s words in his Utopia there can be no “wealth of a commonalty”, i.e. no common well being of a whole society “where every man’s goods be proper and peculiar to himself: for where every man under certain titles and pretences draweth and plucketh to himself as much as he can, so that a few divide among themselves all the whole riches, be there ever so much abundance and store there to the residue is left lack and poverty”; and again “no equal and just distribution of things can be made, nor perfect wealth ever be among men, unless this propriety” i.e. private property “be exiled and banished”.

On that then I take my stand as a Socialist that there cannot be equality and justice in a society, if private property is allowed in it.

*Is this just?*

Society then being so bad, it is all natural and the lookout would be indeed dreary, if history did not also show us that it is part of man’s nature, the part indeed which really distinguishes him from the beasts, to be not content with what is, but to ask *is this just?,* and to try to amend it.
Appendixes

Our Tory friends may satisfy themselves with talk "it has come down to me from my father," or "this is unconstitutional."

Our Commercial friends may tell us that every one may do as Brassay or some other capitalist great or small has done.

But all that has so much relation to the justice of such things as the shape of a workman's claim has to the goodness of his work.

Our Duties

This then is the first great question is it just? Not enough to answer with bare yes. In what way it is just— and here we must enquire how such injustices have arisen that in framing let ourselves some definite idea of the form of Society at which we should aim: we may exclude those elements which have led on to such evils in our present Society.

Our duty then will be to take action to change Society without ourselves committing injustice.

Men are but creatures of circumstances. If it is no crime to be born poor, it is no crime to be born rich. We aim at a State where none will be born either rich or poor but with the full freedom to use such capacities as they are born with for the equal benefit of all and each.

It is not to be wondered that those smarting under the misery of our Commercial Classes should think and speak of those who live on their misery as "thieves and murders."— But let us rather try to fix our minds on the better state and on the action we should take to get it.

So far as our action goes, it matters little whether the Capitalists or the Labourers or any other class are most to blame or whether this Anarchy descended to us from our forefathers (as it undoubtedly to a large extent does) or whether it began only yesterday.

The point is that if injustice exist to-day, it ought to be amended to-day and amended with as small same misery as may be.

SIMPLE ILLUSTRATION

of how injustice has arisen

I propose now to set before you a very simple case of the rise of a small Society, troubled with just the same symptoms as ours. We shall then more easily see how such injustice arose.

The general tendency is to take complicated cases. This is a great mistake for etc. etc.

We then only get averages like Giffen.

What for e.g. would be the use of a set of figures which told us that the average income of Brassay and one of his wage-slaves was £50,000 a year, but omitted to tell us etc., etc.

Simple case of injustice

Suppose then we take a simple case similar to that of ROBINSON CRUSOE in his island: and that the people who afterwards come instead of being some Caribees, some Spaniards, some Negroes and some Englishmen like himself, were all Englishmen like himself. Suppose that the R.C. has been fixed there say 2 or 3 years, and had done very much what our well-known friend did, and that then another Englishman is thrown naked on the shore—Our friend Robinson gives him food, and being an educated man but finding him to be a common sailor, without any such advantages, points out to him that every thing in the island "belongs" to him Robinson, and that consequently he, the sailor, must work for Robinson and so forth. The sailor, Friday by name, being a man of sense though not educated, asks how it is that the fact of Robinson's being in the island 2 or 3 years, and the mere accident of his being in possession of
the goods out of the ship which had not originally belonged to him. In Friday the
asked Robinson how these merely accidental circumstances were so much in favor of
him. Indeed he added that it seemed to him that it would be faire if Robinson would
give up his enjoyment of all these pleasures, which so accidentally surrendered
him, and let him Friday have a turn.

Robinson was puzzled and not being altogether civilized was disposed to bid a
mark off his light, when fortunately for him a COLONIAL BIRDS was put in the
island. He being also an educated man at once etc. that R. was on the point of
more criminally than even F. (Educated not excepted). The Bishop said that "Property
was Sacred", and was not so to be handled over with that turn and turn about lady.

Friday: What is the meaning of "Sacred"?
Bishop: I don't know. But what I do know is that you'll have a hard time - it won't
work.

Shewed him BOOK in foreign tongue.

So Friday was frightened and knocked under and slaved while the Bishop praised
and R. saved his soul.

R.C., Friday and B* come.

No one can possibly think that justice was done between R.C., F. and B. For the just
benefits of Justice are truth and freedom from violence.

R. and B* said their knowledge to deceive F. or we may say that their minds were
in agreement with the idea of "property" that they could not see how miserable a lot is to
some that have an accident as their being there gives them "right of property" and
includes all others, who may come.

Friday: In Thursday the minds of R. and B* was the idea of property. To hold that
they got by deceit, they use violence, for it is as much as threaten a man with evil
in the future as to shake a whip at him now.

This in the point particularly to be noted that the whole was true from paper
Quot: Utopia - the piece written on sheet E. (back).

This of R.C. F. and B* is not imaginary picture. It would not make the thing not to be
just if there were 1 000 Rs and 1 000 Rs with sufficient B* and "justness" of other kind.

We have here the settlement of many an inland and country
in many cases F. is even there before R. and is quite happy and comfortable R. was
with his B* and somehow or other "property" F. that it would be best for him to be
"receive the blessings of civilization" i.e. to work for R. and his B*.

India, Ireland, S. America, Japan, China, etc., etc.

ACCIDENTAL POSSESSION NO CLAIM

Police are not noticed in the Rob* and Friid, Parable, and made any of which was the
Accidental Character of the belongings of the several people. I mean the purely Accident
in which each of these had come there, and the monstrous way in which those debts
did not even turn into Rights of property.

But in society as it is, it is no easy to say that very much the larger part of property
has come into the present hands in ways quite as Accidental as

By Accidental I mean Acc to the person so far as the persons are generally concerned. The existence of
the island or other property is not accidental; but Robinson's being on the spot and
the other circumstances helping him are accidental, so far as he concerned, except
the)--({}-{ )-{ (1).)
The

So he allowed that this could not be left out of sight in considering this just claim; but no more accident can give a just claim to
anything.

\[\text{SUMMARY}\
\]

The so-called 'possession of property' are any given time in possession mainly by action.
But by whatever mode this came about, "property" has uniformly had a corrupting influence on the minds of the possessors, making them lazy and unproductive, but truly and consciously, each one longing for his neighbour's goods.

Money is used to minimize naturally manage the bounty of nature and the labour of men for their own base purposes, regardless of the common weal.

From such causes came the degradation and ruin of Babylon and Rome, Venice and Spain.

As in Babylon etc. the RoB class debased by consciousness destroys art and architecture. It makes taxes for beauty and heap together huge masses of rubbish, leaving or rather driving the 'common people' (1) to live in filthy dens.

For the purpose I have in hand, it is certain that I have shown that the Modern Constantinian Society of England shews the characteristics (violence and direct exagération and suppression) of injustice, and that these have their origin in a necessary consequence getting and holding of private property (see note 1).

The particular process of adulteration and, of otherwise adding the poor of their labour which the common and only minds of the rich admit is not part of my subject.

I will now very briefly describe one of the ways, which have been suggested, for changing our present Unjust Society into one in which there will be no private property and no opening or temptations to injustice.
CHANGE OF SOCIETY

I do not know of any better description of the new form of Society than that described in More's Utopia. I will refer you to that for a description of the organization. - I call it by that name rather than state or government, both of which suggest a class distinction from the people - the organization of society for all purposes, whether of Domestic Life, Labor, Learning, Philosophy, Marriage, War and Religion. The simplest of all is that of Trades and Occupations, - The process of carrying on the usual Trade Occupations in Utopia is really but a slight change and improvement of cooperation; But though the process is similar, the spirit that guides it is totally different, for the work goes on for the purpose of making things that are really useful and required by the community, and not as in ordinary modern co-operative societies which aim at profit, though that profit may be spread over a large number of persons.

As to what goods are required by the community that the community will settle for itself by means of any set of rational representatives whom it may select for this purpose. Nothing can possibly be easier with any decent organization than to find out for instance whether more boots and shoes are wanted than are being made and to act accordingly.

It is not moreover difficult to imagine a system by which representatives of all the trades should meet together to settle questions of trade.

It must be recollected of course that there being no classes, such representatives are really so being simply members of the body they represent, and very unlike our "members of parliament".

MODE OF CHANGE

Having put before ourselves the form of the new society much more clearly than I have done in my scanty sketch, a very few words will suffice as to our mode of change. Take away entirely the passing of private real property or stock from one hand to another by will or otherwise, and let the property pass to the "Commonweal" and there would soon be an end of private property.

II. Correspondence

1. - ELEANOR MARX-AVELING TO LAURA LAFARGUE

(Collection E. Bottigelli, Paris)

London
31.XII.04

My dear Laura,

I feel very guilty - and yet I am sure you would forgive my long silence if you knew how little time I've had for writing letters. But you do know - for you have been a good deal "driven" too. - I suppose you heard from Engels - he and Nym will never cease chaffing us I fear - how Edward and I waited outside Charing Cross while you were inside the Station. I was so vexed not to say goodbye to you! We have been hoping that something might "turn up" and that we should be able to run over to Paris for at least a few days - but nothing has turned up, and tho' the spirit is willing, the purse, as you well know, is very weak. However we haven't given up hope. Edward is a perfect Micawber in this respect, and still waits confidently for the "something" that is to set us up.

I know you'll be wanting to hear how things have gone at the Federation. - into all the details I need not go. You and Paul have had your Brousse - and we have simply had the same experience here that you have been, and are going through, with the
Possibilists. Apart from the disgraceful vilification of everyone to whom he personally objected as not being a “follower” of himself, Hyndman forced things to such a condition that it was impossible to go on working with him. – The personal question – inevitably personal questions will be mixed up in all such movements as these – is after all very secondary to the principal (Ed. A.) one, – that of whether we were to sink into a merely Tory-democratic Party, or to go on working on the lines of the German Socialists and the French Parti Ouvrier. – In the motion brought forward by Morris of confidence in Schre (whom Hyndman has been maligning most shamefully) and of want of confidence in Hyndman we had a majority, although – a most unusual course – the chairman voted, and Hyndman had brought together all his “party”. Having gained this point we next in a body, gave our resignation as members of the Federation Council. Our majority was too small to make it possible for us to really get rid of the Jingo Faction, and so, after due consultation with Engels, we decided to go out, and form a new organisation. This is to be called the Socialist League. Bax is anxious that we should issue a weekly paper. But Engels is dead against this, so we shall probably, for the present, content ourselves with a monthly journal. The General has promised, now we are rid of the unclean elements in the Federation, to help us; many others who have till now stood aloof will come to us also; we shall of course (through Engels) have the Germans with us, and we also count on the Parti Ouvrier. A short statement will be drawn up and sent by us to the various Socialist parties, at once to explain our secession, and to ask their support. Hyndman will now, no doubt, be able to form the alliance he has all along tried to make, and I suppose Paul saw the attack on himself and Guesde in last weeks “Justice” by that arch-humbug Adolphe Smith. Is he going to reply? If he thinks it worth while he should do so in our paper. – A propos, he ought (perhaps Engels has already written about this – if so forgive the repetition) to write to Champion and Frost to ask them to withdraw his name from the list of their contributors to “To-day”. Apart from all general questions he can’t write for two men who deliberately accused you or me of forging a letter. – By the way I “went” to Hyndman and his creatures about that. After trying, without exactly assenting it, to insinuate that the letter was forged, he was forced to withdraw his statement. I read your letter on the subject – and then told Mr. H. what I thought of him. – Oh dear! is not all this wearisome and stupid! But I suppose it must be gone through with. I comfort myself by recalling the long Schweitzer-Lassalle-Liebknecht quarrel in Germany, and the Broussais-Lafargue split in France. I suppose this kind of thing is inevitable in the beginning of any movement. – But enough of this. I am sure you, who know the Broussais, are sick of all this miserable bickering – and moreover understand it all without needing further details. A Propos. Could Vallès be induced to send me the “Gri” again? I only see the Bataille – ergo I am considerably fogged as to what is really going on. You will also have to send us all your other papers Défense des Travailleurs, etc. These you should send to our “office” – 27, Farrington Street E.C.

Now for such news as there is. The long expected Pumps baby has at last appeared. Tonight we are all to spend the evening with the interesting Rosher couple. To our horror Jollymeyer – who called here yesterday – told us “the Charlies” would be there too! I shall have to keep a sharp look out on Edward. He is so damned rude to Charlie. – Moore was expected here yesterday. We haven’t seen him yet – so I can’t tell you if he looks love torn or not. –

I was immensely surprised yesterday to receive a long and most friendly, not to say affectionate letter from Lina Smith! It is full of good wishes etc. etc. – She asks after you, of course. Poor thing she has a fearful deal of trouble. Aunt Sophie is in just the same state, and from a few words I gather her little girl is not so well as before. She does not say so, but I suppose she has those horrible fits again. – It is really very hard for poor Lina. – Of our dignified Cape relatives I hear and see nothing. With sent me a Xmas card, and that has been the extent of our intercourse.
I heard about Longuet and the little ones through Engels. When you write do not make it about them, there's a dear: Poor little things! I do so long to see them. I need one that I have not had a line from Longuet!

There is not much other news to give. We are all much the same as you tell us Edward and I dream of going to see you - but I confess I don't see how we're to realise our dream.

Meantime dear good-bye and a happy New Year to you both - Do write.

William

To you

2. - William Morris and Edward Aveling to Wilhelm Liebknecht
(Institute of Marxism-Leninism, Moscow)

THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE
27, Farringdon Street
London E.C.

Dear Comrade Liebknecht,
You will have doubtless heard of the new Socialist body which has been founded in this country and which has now an official organ, the Commonweal. The League holds the doctrines of Collectivist Socialism without compromise, and it is hoped will make rapid progress in this country.

We should be very grateful to you if you would send us any literary contributions to our paper; either short notes of passing events in your own country, or longer and more serious articles.

I may add that we shall have no difficulty in translating any articles so that you may write, if convenient to you in your own language.

I am Dear Comrade
Yours fraternally
William Morris
Edward Aveling

3. - William Morris to J. W. Browne
(Central Reference Department, Hammersmith, SSR. 722)

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall; Hammersmith
March 10th 1893

Dear Mr. Browne,

Many thanks for your kind donations of £5 duly received. I fancy all Faulkner did was to let a few injudicious words “slip out” as it were, all I mean that was injudicious but naturally at Oxford no sincere revolutionist (using the word in its true sense) could escape hot water. With all you say I only I fear it is rare that the two gifts of prudent reserve, and courageous enthusiasm are combined in one person.

Meantime of course as one studies the question more on the one hand, and on the other sees more of the workers, the more one is inclined (if one is honest and noticing) to fix any date or to hurry matters at all; because the economical march of events will be the thing which will help us in the long run. Preaching won't turn men into revolutionists; but men driven into revolutionary ideas may be educated to look to the right aims instead of wild folly - that's our real business in spite of any appearances to the contrary.

I conclude that you will join the League, so send you a paper to fill up.
Mind, I shall hope for some speaking and writing from you. Have you been to
Aveleys "lessons" yet? Thursdays 8.30 South Place Chapel, they are well worth attending on all grounds.

Yours faithfully
William Morris

4 – William Morris to Laura Lafargue
(Collection E. Bartigeli, Paris)

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
March 25, 1899

Dear Madame Lafargue,

Thank you very much for the poems and their translations you have sent me. One of them [the poems] I have seen before the Buried Alive. I think them very good: they breathe the spirit of Millets sad country pieces with the addition of revolutionary fervour.

I am sure your translations need no apology; they seem to me excellent and to have lost nothing of the meaning of the originals, while they are good English verse. Might I ask what you intend doing with them, and if it would be too bold of me to beg one or more of them for publication in the Commonweal?

With thanks again and best wishes
Believe me
Yours faithfully
William Morris
Bibliography of Works Cited

The abbreviations used to indicate works frequently cited are given in black square
before the relevant bibliographical entries.

I. WORKS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

A. PUBLISHED WORKS


As the 25 volumes mentioned above are not readily available, reference is made, whenever possible, to the following:


b) Printed edition, lacking much of the additional material: Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1969, 8°, pp. 332. (Except where otherwise stated, footnotes refer to the printed edition.)


(Important unpublished letters are included in R. Page’s Arm’s book, William Morris: the Man and the Myth, mentioned below in the general bibliography.) To which are to be added:


II. GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY


(“William Morris, a Fugitive”, Martin Lawrence, London 1934, 8°. p. 32)


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Bibliography of Works Cited


III. — Other Publications

Catalogue of a portion of the valuable collection of Manuscripts, early printed books, etc., of the late William Morris, of Kelmscott House, Hammersmith, which will be sold by auction by Messrs.苏西, Wilkinson and Hodge, . . . on Monday, the 5th of December 1898. . . . Dryden Press, London, 1898; 8°, p. 118.
Notes to the Text

Part III, Chapter IV

1. News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 3.
2. Commonweal, 28 May 1887, p. 173/1-II.
3. F. Engels to Laura Lafargue, 9 August 1887, Engels-Lafargue Correspondence, II, p. 57.
4. P. 220/1-II.
5. “Paul’s paper in the Commonweal had been sent by him to Bax. It was in reply to an article of Bax’s “On the Morrow of the Revolution,” in which the Code Napoléon was recommended as the “code” of the future. Morris, to whom Bax had given the paper, has translated and inserted it.” (Laura Lafargue to Friedrich Engels, 24 July 1887, ibid., II, p. 36). In the Correspondence, this letter, undated in the original, is incorrectly dated 24 April.
7. Commonweal, 16 July 1887, p. 227/1-II.
8. There is no doubt that Lafargue was carried away by his impetuosity, and here showed himself less patient than Marx himself: “The proletariat,” wrote the latter, “will use its political power to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie...” and he envisaged “measures... which appear economically insufficient and provisional, but which in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionising the mode of production” (The Communist Manifesto, p. 34).
9. Karl MARX: The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, p. 118. See also the warning given by Marx to the Paris Commune in The Civil War in France, p. 46.
10. See below, Chapter IX.
have not been interred with" (C.W., XVI, p. XXVIII).

64. *News from Nonesuch*, Nonesuch, p. 49.


68. *Ibid.*, p. 121. It is interesting to find the same idea in *The Roots of the Mountain*. This comparison is not lacking in point, because it shows that Morris's romances are more than just baseless fantasies and that the ghost-image of utopia is ever-present. The following passage brings out not only the vulnerability of men on the morrow of their liberation, but also the need for authoritarian action to help them to live again. Dallach, the slave freed by the Burgdalers, who has become Alderman of Rusedale, says to Face-of-God: "But now I am asking you to suffer a score or two of your men to abide here with me this summer till I see how this folk new-born again is like to deal with me. For pleasure and a fair life have become so strange to them, that they scarce know what to do with them, or how to live, and unless all is to go away, I needs must command and forbid..." (*The Roots of the Mountains*, C.W., XV, p. 393).


70. In fact, one more consequence, this time involuntary and unconscious, the "grumbler" is at one moment Ellen's grandfather (p. 139), at another her father (p. 169).

71. "Again I say, many blunders were made..." (*Ibid.*, p. 67).


76. See below, p. 607 n. 70.

77. "...They performed the ordinary executive functions of an administration admirably, and it is sufficient to point to their example to confute those who affect to laugh at the notion of men unacquainted with official red-tape being put in responsible position" ("The Morrow of the Revolution", *Commonweal*, 28 May, 1887, p. 173/1).


83. "Let me ask our comrades to picture to themselves the consequences of an aimless revolt unexpectedly successful for the time, we will even suppose that it carries with it a small number of men capable of government and administration, though that is supposing a great deal..." ("Our Policy", *Commonweal*, March 1886, p. 17/11; May MORRIS, II, p. 234).


87. *Ibid.*, p. 120.


93. "Even the crudest form of State Socialism (which I do not agree to) would have this advantage over the individual ownership of the means of production, that
Part III, Chapter V

2. “I do not consider myself a pessimist because I am driven to admit that with a condition of things is a long way ahead” (“Communism and Anarchism”, Correspondence, Commonweal, 17 August 1889, p. 261/1; May MORRIS, II, p. 318). “I admit this is a long way ahead” (Letters, p. 288).
5. F. ENGELS: The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, p. 198.
7. “It is true that many questions are begged, including that of the precise process whereby the state has withered away…” (Jesse KOCHMAN: The Author Purpose of William Morris in the Context of his Late Prose Romances, p. 97).
9. “We should read to the abolition of all government.” (10 April 1888, Letters, p. 288).
10. News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, pp. 70 and 74.
12. “Democracy while it lasts will never be free of this hero-worship, and all the trappings which the hero (poor devil) will unwisely and unwisely lead their worshipers into. Socialism alone will give us really independent of thought, which, again, can alone lead to harmonious action, instead of machine-made policy” (“Notes on Pacifying Events”, Commonweal, 8 May 1886, p. 41/1). “…” you know we Socialists refuse worship to any man however worshipful his gift may be, while we are bound to esteem every man who is genuine and kindly” (To Fred Henderson).
15. News from Nowhere, ibid., pp. 70-1.
18. Ibid., p. 53.
20. To Jane Alice Morris, 23 December 1888, ibid., p. 305.
22. Ibid., p. 41-2.
23. The Table Turned or Napoleon Atkinson, May MORRIS, II, pp. 564-5.
24. In his book, William Morris, his Life, Work and Friends (1967), Mr. Philip Henderson puts forward the bold hypothesis (pp. 228-9) that the poet may have been influenced, in his condemnation of repressive legislation, by Oscar Wilde’s essay, The Soul of Man under Socialism. The supposition is at least strange when one considers that this essay was first published in The Fortnightly Review in 1891. Morris had not awaited Wilde’s pleading before expressing himself with complete clarity on the point, and the opposite hypothesis would be less improbable.
25. News from Nowhere, ibid., p. 75.
26. Ibid., p. 76.
27. Ibid., p. 78. Cf. Engels: “In a society in which the motive for stealing has been done away with, in which therefore at the very most only lunatics would ever steal, how the teacher of morals would be laughed at who tried solemnly to proclaim the eternal truth. Thou shalt not steal!” (Anti-Dühring, p. 109).
28. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 290.
29. 2 April 1888, Letters, p. 283.
31. To the Rev. George Bainton, 10 April 1888, Letters, p. 286. In remarks of Morris’s recorded by Glasser, we read similarly. “I don’t think a Socialist community will require many governmental laws” (Bruce GLASIER: William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement, p. 64).
32. Ibid., p. 288.
33. The Roots of the Mountain, C.W., XV, p. 71.
34. “Communism and Anarchism”, Correspondence, Commonweal, 17 August 1889, p. 318.
35. To the Rev. George Bainton, 3 April 1888, Letters, p. 284. The same idea is to be found in a lecture delivered around 1893, What is What should be. What will be, of which only a few handwritten notes remain..., we shall no more talk of Socialism because it will be among us fully developed” (B.M. Ad. Add. Mss. 45.334-4 (13), May MORRIS, II, p. 356).
36. 10 April 1888, Letters, p. 288.
38. To Mrs. Morris, 5 April 1890, B.M. Add. Mss. 45.336. Cf. “… the few willow-trees left us by the Thames Conservancy” (A Dream of John Buil, Nonesuch, p. 266). “… a body up in London, who from time to time, in order to show that they had something to do, did some damage here and there…” (News from Nowhere, ibid., p. 184). See the enclosures of W. Scawen Blunt: “In all matters concerning the river he took a passionate and proprietary interest, cherishing a special grudge against the Thames Conservancy, a body which interfered with individual rights, and whose legitimate authority he denied” (My Diaries, p. 21); also the turbulent account of Mr. H. C. Jowett with the Conservancy left by A.M.W. Stirling (The Richmond Papers, p. 314-5), and, the account by his daughter May of homeric exchanges upon the river (May MORRIS, II, p. 620).
40. Ibid., p. 42.
41. Ibid. The draft mentioned does not appear in the English edition, and the quota-

42. See above, pp. 288–92.
43. "Notes on Passing Events", Commonwealth, 8 May 1886, p. 41/1.
44. Cf. THOMPSON, p. 897. Morris met Carruthers in 1884 when the latter joined the Social Democratic Federation. He wrote to Andreas Scheu on 6 October 1884: "A certain Carruthers joined us, a steady-going man I think, and not at all likely to belong to the paddle-your-own-canoe sort. He has been a close Socialist of a present: he has written a book called Commercial and Communal Economy in which there are many good things ..." (Letters, p. 215).
45. See below, Chapter X.
46. See above, Chapter I.
47. "The ... ordinary meeting of the neighbours, or Mote, as we call it, according to the ancient tongue of the times before bureaucracy" (News from Nuthus, Nonesuch, p. 82).
51. News from Nowhere, ibid.
52. "... A commune, or a ward, or a parish (for we have all three names, indicating little real distinction between them now, though time was there a great deal; In such a district, as you would call it ..." (ibid.); "Therefore to my mind in the new Society, we should form bodies like municipalities, county-boards and parishes, and almost all practical public work would be done by these bodies ..." (What Socialists Want, ibid.); "To my mind the essential thing in this view is the township, or parish, or local guild ..." (To the Rev. George Bainton, 10 April 1888, Letters, p. 288); etc.
53. Letters, ibid. Cf.: "... people would manage their own affairs in communities not too large to prevent citizens from taking a part in the administration necessary for the conduct of life" ("Statement of Principles", Commonwealth, 4 May 1888, p. 137/1).
54. "Looking Backward", Commonwealth, 22 June 1889, p. 195/1; May MORRIS, II. p. 506. – Cf.: "That decentralization seems to me to be necessary in order to give all men a share in the responsibility of the administration of things" (How Shall We Live Then? 1889, I.I.S.G., Amsterdam, p. 17).
55. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 292.
57. "Of course every competent citizen would have to take part in public business" (To the Rev. George Bainton, 10 April 1888, Letters, p. 287).
58. "... these bodies, the members of whom would be working at and living by their ordinary work" (What Socialists Want, ibid., p. 230).
59. "... the ordinary citizen will learn to understand at least some part of this organization" (Ibid., p. 231).
60. Ibid.
61. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 290-1.
63. "The commune of the Middle Ages, like the classical city, was unhappily too often at strife with its sisters, and so became a fitting instrument for the greedy noble or bureaucratic king to play on" (Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century, 1887, C.W., XXII, p. 388).
64. When Socialists Want, ibid.
65. "Dawn of a New Epoch, 1885", Signs, p. 206
66. Ibid., p. 201
67. Ibid.
68. To the Rev. George Bainton, 10 April 1888, Letters, p. 287
69. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 291-2
70. True and False Socialism, 1886, JACKSON, p. 314
71. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 291
73. Ibid.
75. To the Rev. George Bainton, 10 April 1888, Letters, p. 287. Elsewhere, Morris speaks of "federations of localities arranged for convenience of administration." (Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 291)
76. How Shall We Live Them?, ibid., p. 18.
77. "... of course those bodies would have to federate for national or international purposes." (When Socialists Want, ibid.).
78. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 291
79. To the Rev. George Bainton, 10 April 1888, Letters, p. 287
80. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 292
81. To the Rev. George Bainton, 10 April 1888, ibid.
82. What Socialists Want, ibid.
83. "Dawn of a New Epoch, 1885", Signs, p. 201
84. To the Rev. George Bainton, 10 April 1888, ibid.
85. "Communism and Anarchism", Correspondence, Communism, 4 May 1889, p. 117/1; May MORRIS. II, pp. 317-8
86. Manifesto of the English Socialists, 1st May 1893, p. 4; Labour's Turning Point, extracts from contemporary sources, edited by Eric J. Hobsbawm, p. 59.
87. "...the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production" (F. ENGELS. Anti-Dühring, p. 309; Socialism, Critique and Science, pp. 76-7).
88. To the Rev. George Bainton, 10 April 1888, ibid. Cf. "...as to the political side of the new society, civilization undertakes the government of persons by direct coercion. Socialism would deal primarily with the administration of things..." (Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 289); "...the administration of things which I hope will take the place of the government of persons..." (How Shall We Live Them?, 1889, I.S.S.G., Amsterdam, p. 17)
89. Justice and Socialism, 1885, Appendix I, p. 579
90. "New from Nonesuch", Nonesuch, p. 70
91. Ibid., p. 78
92. To the Rev. George Bainton, 2 April 1888, Letters, pp. 282-3
93. "New from Nonesuch", Nonesuch, p. 79. - Cf. "...the public power will lose its political character" (MARX and ENGELS. The Communist Manifesto, p. 35).
95. What is, What should be, What will be, 1893?, B.M. Add. Ms. 45 333-4 (113); May MORRIS. II, p. 356. The same idea is to be found in a lecture of 1893 entitled What Shall We Do Now? The text is lost, but we read in a local account: "...political power was only a means to an end, and when that end was gained, there would be no more politics. Politics were only for a period of struggle, and in the new society for which Socialists were working there would be nothing to fight about. In such a society there would necessarily be differences of opinion, but there would be no diversities of interest, and there would be no class interests, because there would be no classes." ("The Way Out", The Socialist, Burnley, 15 December 1893, p. 5/11)
who to use, an outsider, seem able to do anything they care to do, will have shown us the right use of carbon and sulphuric acid, and the sun will shine as bright through the boughs outside the factory windows in Lancashire as it does in the Kentish hop garden. I think those days will come, wild as the propery seems” (Report of a lecture, the text of which has been lost, published under the title of Mr. William Morris on Art Matters in the Manchester Guardian of 21 October 1882 and reprinted in 1963 as a leaflet by the William Morris Society, p. 3.


15 Bruce GLASIER, William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement 70.

16 News from Nonesuch, Nonesuch, p. 183, note.

17 Ibid., p. 64.

18 “Why should people collect together to use power, when they can have it at a price where they live, or hard by, any two or three of them; or any one for the matter of that?” (Ibid., p. 43).

19 Ibid., p. 167.

20 Useful Work versus Useless Toy, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 621.

21 News from Nonesuch, ibid., p. 183.

22 Ibid., p. 166.

23 Ibid., p. 43.

24 Ibid., p. 152.

25 Bruce GLASIER, ibid., p. 3.

26 A. COMPTON-RICKETT: William Morris, a Study in Personality, p. 9.


28 See, for example, the episode of the aeroplane in When the Sleeper Awakes, chap. XVI.

29 “The materialistic frame of mind was amusingly shown by the Fabian critics that the economic process by which the inhabitants of News from Nonesuch go were from France was never known: people didn’t seem in that happy country to be producing for exchange, and some active young minds were anxious about it. My Father often laughed over this. The “power-boats” in the story were also omitted. The writer of a sun and dried Utopia would perhaps have laboured a description of the process, but my Father was too wise.” (May MORRIS, II, pp. 384-5).

30 Victor DUPONT: L’Utopie et le roman utopique dans la litterature anglaise, p. 499.

31 Nikolaus PEVSNER: Pioneers of Modern Design, p. 25. The author regards it as completely inconsequential that Morris should have said that we must become masters of the machines instead of their slaves.


34 The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization, 1881, JACKSON, p. 246.


36 Art and the Beauty of the Earth, 1881, JACKSON, p. 165.

37 The Beauty of Life, Nonesuch, p. 544.

38 The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization, ibid., p. 270.


40 To Mrs. Morris, 19 March 1881, Letters, p. 148.


42 News from Nonesuch, Nonesuch, p. 168.

43 “If he thinks he would like ornament, for instance, and knows that the marbling cannot do it properly, and does not care to spend the time to do it properly, why should he do it at all?” (The Aims of Art, 1886, Nonesuch, p. 394).

44 The Lesser Arts of Life, ibid., p. 182.

Notes to the Text. Part III, Chapter VI

44 G.B. SHAW: "More about Morris", The Oxonian, 6 November 1949, p. 7/VII.
47 "Bourgeois versus Socialist", Commonwealth, 6 August 1887, p. 282/II.
49 Ibid., p. 248.
50 The Lesser Arts of Life, 1882, MACMILLAN, pp. 199-200.
52 Ray WATKINSON: William Morris as Designer, p. 52.
53 The Lesser Arts of Life, ibid., p. 217.
54 Evidence of May Morris, C.W.XIII, p. XXX.
55 Ray WATKINSON, ibid.
56 Paul THOMPSON, ibid. p.75.
57 Ibid., pp. 30, 98-9; Ray WATKINSON, ibid.
58 Paul THOMPSON, ibid., p. 36.
59 May MORRIS, I, pp. 49-50.
60 Quoted by H.V. WILES: William Morris of Walthamstow, p. 50.
61 Paul THOMPSON, ibid., pp. 142-3; H. Halliday SPARLING, ibid., pp. 41-2.
64 News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 19.
65 "The Development of Modern Society", Commonwealth, 16 August 1890, p. 260/II.
66 The Aims of Art, 1886, Nonesuch, p. 593.
67 How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, ibid., p. 581.
68 Manifesto of the Socialist League, Note C, pp. 10-1 – The text given by E. P. THOMPSON (p. 856) is unfortunately shortened.
69 The Depression of Trade, 1885, LE MIRE, pp. 129-30.
70 Ibid., p. 133.
72 The Revival of Handicraft, 1888, JACKSON, p. 224.
73 Useful Work versus Useless Toil, 1884, Nonesuch, pp. 620-1.
74 A Factory as it Might Be, 1884, ibid., p. 649.
75 How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, ibid., p. 580.
76 News from Nowhere, ibid., p. 91.
77 Art and Socialism, 1885, ibid., p. 637.
78 Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 306.
79 Art and Labour, 1884, LE MIRE, pp. 115-6. – In 1882 he had already written: "As to the machines the reasonable thing to say of them is that they are like fire, bad masters, good servants" (Letter to an unknown correspondent, 4 September 1882, May MORRIS, II, p. 584).
80 Some Hints on Pattern-Designing, 1881, C.W., XXII, p. 204.
81 Art, Wealth and Riches, 1883, JACKSON, p. 129.
82 H. Halliday SPARLING: The Kelmscott Press and William Morris, Master Craftsman, p. 41. He even said, somewhat surprisingly: "In cases where art could not be an integral part of the work if it turned out to be necessary work, it would have to be done by machines as nearly automatic as possible", and he included among the occupations to be automated: "mining, skindressing, scavenging – clerks work" (How Shall We Live Then?, I.L.S.G., Amsterdam, p. 15). It is a great pity that, in News from Nowhere, Morris does not give us any details of how the scavenger Boffin, the "golden dustman", carries out his task: it is true that his purpose in introducing this character was primarily symbolic.
83 What is, What should be, What will be, 1893, B.M. Add. Ms. 45 333-4 (13); May MORRIS, II, p. 356.
133. To Mrs. Burne-Jones, 26 March 1876, and to Mrs. Cameron, 26 March 1876, Letters, pp. 72-7.
134. To Jane Alice Morris, 7 December 1877, ibid., p. 102.
136. "dying is a good sport to me still" (To Jane Alice Morris, 28 August 1883, ibid., p. 189).
137. "we are hard at work gardening here: making dry paths, and a sublimely tidy box edging: How I do love tidiness!" (To Mrs. Burne-Jones, 17 January 1882, ibid., p. 157).
138. The Art of the People, 1879, Nonesuch, p. 533.
139. How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, ibid., pp. 584-5.
140. Wherefore, seeing they be all exercised in profitable occupations, and that few artificers in the same craft be sufficient, this is the cause that, plenty of all things being among them, they do sometimes bring forth an innumerable company of people to amend the highways if any be broken" (Thomas MORE, Utopia, p. 69).
141. News from Nonesuch, Nonesuch, p. 162.
142. Ibid., p. 132.
143. The Art of the People, 1879, Nonesuch, p. 533.
144. How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, ibid., pp. 585-586.
146. Ibid., pp. 44-5.
147. "Wherefore, seeing they be all exercised in profitable occupations, and that few artificers in the same craft be sufficient, this is the cause that, plenty of all things being among them, they do sometimes bring forth an innumerable company of people to amend the highways if any be broken" (Thomas MORE, Utopia, p. 69).
149. Ibid., p. 133.
150. Ibid., p. 144.
151. The Art of the People, 1879, Nonesuch, p. 533.
152. The Art of the People, 1879, Nonesuch, p. 533.
154. Ibid., p. 144.
155. The Art of the People, 1879, Nonesuch, p. 533.
157. The Socialist Ideal, 1891, JACKSON, p. 322.
165. The Revival of Handicraft, ibid., p. 220.
167. A Factory as it Might Be, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 655.

Notes to the Text: Part III, Chapter VII

Part III, Chapter VII

1. Dawn of a New Epoch, 1885, Signs, p. 192.
2. "... and held that people who do not do their fair share of social work are damned slackers" (Bernard SHAW, Morris as I Knew Him, May MORRIS, II, p. IX).
3. True and False Society, 1886, JACKSON, p. 315
4. How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 515
5. To the Rev. George Bainton, 4 April 1888, Letters, p. 285
7. “Why Not?” Justice, 23 April 1884, p. 21/1; May MORRIS, II, p. 128
9. A Factory as It Might Be, 1884, ibid., pp. 647-8
12. Ibid., p. 654.
13. How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 582.
16. See particularly The Two Paths, Lecture III, pp. 153-4
19. A Factory as It Might Be, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 647. In Useful Work versus Useless Tool, 1884, (ibid., p. 619), he similarly refers to “raising food from the surrounding countryside.”
20. Ibid.
23. A Factory as It Might Be, ibid., pp. 652-3.
25. “Why Not?” ibid. — Cf.: “… Our working hours would rather be merry ones of men and maids, young men and old enjoying themselves over their work” (How We Live and How We Might Live, Nonesuch p. 582).
26. A Factory as It Might Be, ibid., p. 649.
27. Technical Instruction, May MORRIS, I, pp. 209, 211, 220. See also Art and the Business of the Earth, 1881, JACKSON, p. 163.
28. MACKAIL, I, p. 373.
29. See, for example, this anecdote related by his daughter. “Mr. Thackeray Turpin says he remembers being in a room at Merton Abbey talking to Walter while Morris was working at a design for a chintz, when a fashionably dressed young gentleman called. Who he was I do not know, but Morris went on working while talking to him, and presently he said: “But Mr. Morris, can’t you get somebody to do the spotting for you?” and Morris replied, “Do you think I’m such a fool as to let another fool have the fun of doing the spotting when I have had the good of doing the design?” (May MORRIS, II, p. 623).
31. “His view was taken up by the crafts movement, with its belief that a designer should execute his own work. It therefore comes as a surprise to realise that in his own pattern-making Morris was little influenced by this theory. Apart from his own tapestry and a few early experiments in other techniques he executed none of his own pattern designs. He did not even produce the majority of them under his own supervision. All his wall-papers and many of his carpets, silks and chintzes were made by other manufacturers. It is true that in many cases the method used was hand production rather than machinery, but this did not in any way resemble the free handwork of medieval craftsmen. In most of his manufactures Morris used a pre-Victorian process, but it was always organised in the workshop on a serial basis, with different craftsmen responsible for different parts of the sequence and none of them making an individual contribution to the design. The only important exception was in embroidery, although a very limited discretion was also allowed to the glass painters and tapestry weavers” (Paul THOMPSON, The
It is true that his designs were carried out by hand, but not by his hands. He almost never executed any of his designs himself. He gave one tapestry to discover how it should be done; he wrote out some illuminated manuscripts, but that is all, except possibly for a few pieces of stained glass which he may have painted. All the rest, including the great mass of wall-papers, chintzes, embroideries, carpets, and so on, on which his reputation is based, were executed by others. Morris was not therefore a designer-craftsman at all in the sense established by his own writings; he was a paper-designer whose designs were executed by professional craftsmen operating according to the hated principle of division of labour” (Peter FLOUD, The Inauguration of William Morris, The Listener, 14 October 1954, pp. 811/II, 816/1).

33. Art in Practice. 1883, JACKSON, p. 129.
35. Capital, p. 489.
36. Ibid., p. 544.
40. Ibid., p. 11.
41. Art under Planetary. 1883, JACKSON, p. 140.
42. To Robert Thompson, 20 June 1884, Letters, p. 201.
43. Useful Work versus Useless Tool, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 817.
44. The Early Experiences of the North. 1887, LE MIRE, pp. 184-5.
46. “Art and Artisans”, Commendial, 10 September 1887, p. 291/II; May MORRIS, II, p. 479. Cf. MARX and ENGELS “In a communist society there are no painters but as many people who engage in painting among other activities” (The German Ideology, p. 432).
47. The Reward of Genius”, Commendial, 25 September 1886, pp. 205/II, 206/1; May MORRIS, II, p. 489. Cf. “it would not do for men to be absorbed entirely in such arts. It would tend to disease, to anti-social habits which would burden the Community with a new set of idlers, and (of the others were such fools) to the long run to a new set of masters” (How Shall We Live Then?, 1889, 11 S.G., Amsterdam, p. 16).
50. A Factory as It Might Be, 1884, ibid., p. 650.
51. Useful Work versus Useless Tool, ibid., p. 622.
53. How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 581. Morris wrote in 1883 to T.C. Horsfall: “I have guarded myself against the suggestion of wishing to get rid of all rough work. I would only get rid of as much as possible of all the nasty and stupid work, and what is left I would divide as equitably as might be among all classes” (MACKAIL, II, p. 981).
54. Bruce GLASIER. William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement, p. 82.
123. Useful Work versus Useless Toil, ibid., p. 620.
126. Ibid., p. 264.
128. Make-shaft, 1894, May MORRIS, II, p. 274. Edward CARPENTER, in an article published immediately after the poet's death, wrote: "It is very characteristic of Morris that his chief recreation was only another kind of work" (William Morris, Freedom, November 1896, p. 118/1).
129. "The Worker's Share of Art," Commonweal, April 1885, p. 18/II.
130. How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 580.
131. Notes from Nowhere, ibid., p. 167.
132. "Mark Twain says, apropos of Tom Sawyer's white-washing that work is leisure that we are compelled to do, and pleasure work that we choose to do" ("On Some Practical Socialists", Commonweal, 18 February 1888, pp. 53/1 May MORRIS, II, p. 307). May Morris relates, in one of her introductions, "The incident of white-washing the fence and Tom Sawyer's astute device in obtaining his labour so that his neighbours ended by struggling for the privilege of working for him, our poet in moments of naughty exaggeration declared to be worthy of Odysseus. More than once he read it at a Socialist concert as a 'little lesson in economics' - to our pure joy for our studies in Socialism were solemn to distraction and needed some lightening" (C.W., XXII, p. XX). Morris's admiration for Mark Twain was immense: "I was really surprised at your not liking 'Tom Sawyer'; especially as it is so very like Shakespeare, not to say Shelley," he wrote to F. S. Ellis on 8 October 1888 (Letters, p. 301).
133. Notes from Nowhere, ibid., p. 168.
134. The Art of the People, 1879, Nonesuch, p. 530.
135. "For example, the horse in his natural state delights in running, and the dog in hunting, while in the elementary conditions of savage human life, certain ceremonies, and adornments of weapons and the like, point to a sense of pleasure and dignity even in the process of the acquisition of food" (Socialism, in General and Outcome, pp. 301-2).
137. The Arts and Crafts of To-day, 1889, JACKSON, pp. 231-2.
138. Useful Work versus Useless Toil, ibid., p. 605.
140. Art under Plutocracy, 1883, JACKSON, pp. 140-1.
141. True and False Society, 1885, ibid., p. 315.
142. Ibid., p. 313.
143. Useful Work versus Useless Toil, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 615.
146. Useful Work versus Useless Toil, Nonesuch, p. 614.
148. "... Listen to the blackbirds singing, surely for your benefit, and I was going to say, as if they were paid to do it, but I was wrong, for as it is they seem to do their best" ("Under an Elm-tree; or Thoughts in the Countryside", Commonweal, 6 July 1889, p. 212/I, May MORRIS, II, p. 508).
149. As To Bringing Excellence, 1895, May Morris, II, p. 526.
152. MACKAIL, H. p. 336.


154. "... Under no conceivable circumstances would I give it up even if I could" (Lefroy, p. 186). CL. "Our daily and necessary work... which we would not forget if we could." (The Prospect of Architecture in Civilisation, 1881. JACKSON, p. 267).


158. The Later Acts, 1877, Nonesuch, p. 496.

159. The Wars of the Woodford Ides, C.W., XX, pp. 39, 65.

160. Note from Nov/ehere, Nonesuch, pp. 573-5. This passage underlines the error of interpretation committed by W. H. G. Armytage in his remarkable history of utopian experiments in England: "Liking his own work, he could not see why other people should not like theirs" he wrote (Heaven Below, p. 508).


163. Kropotkin himself envisaged this possibility in The Conquest of Bread, and George Woodcock, the historian of anarchism, was much put out at the paternalistic tone adopted by the Russian libertarian towards these anti-social individuals (G. WOODCOCK. Anarchism, pp. 192-3).

164. "... the hope of gain in honour and wealth with which the work is done, which causes pleasurable excitement, even when the actual work is not pleasant." (Note from Nov.Isphere, Nonesuch, p. 65).


166. As To Being Excellent, 1893, ibid, p. 523.

167. A Fantasy or It Might Be, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 652.


172. Ibid., p. 83.


174. See above, p. 655, n. 31.

175. K. MARX. The Critique of the Gotha Programme, p. 31. It is a pity that this fundamental work is unknown to those critics who persist in asserting that Morris was anti-Marxist and who present a curious picture of Marxism. For instance, Moniteur Victor Dupont, in the introduction to his bilingual edition of Nouvelles de valeur part, does not hesitate to write: "he well knows that orthodox socialism has never regarded productive labour other than as an obligation" (p. 53).

176. "Answers to Previous Inquiries," Commented, supplement of September 1885, p. 87/11. CL.: "... after a little, people would rather be anxious to seek work than to avoid it." (How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 582).

177. Nov. from Nov. Nonesuch, p. 86.

178. Ibid., p. 11.

179. Ibid., p. 12.

180. Ibid., p. 20/7.

181. Ibid., p. 43.

182. Ibid., p. 44.
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4. {
5. "The only interest in the4. The only interest in the permits of the future which will not continue to


8. Ibid., p. 24.

9. Ibid., p. 32.

10. Ibid., p. 33.

11. Ibid., p. 33.

12. Ibid., p. 41.

13. Ibid., p. 41.


17. Ibid., p. 42.


23. Ibid., p. 537.


26. Equitability. Ibid. 21. As for special needs for wealth in a more and

27. Speeches, 1885, May MORRIS. II, p. 419.
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64. The Daily Mail, 1891. C.W. XXII, p. 576.
38 Arc. Wealth and Riches, 1883, JACKSON, p. 399.
41 The Lesser Arts of Life, 1882, MACMILLAN, pp. 183-5.
43 Gothic Architecture, 1889, Nonesuch, p. 475.
44 The Arts and Crafts of To-day, 1889, JACKSON, p. 232. Cf. Soane, in Good and Outcome, p. 308.
45 The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization, 1881, JACKSON, p. 245.
46 News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 31.
47 Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 307-8.
48 The Lesser Arts of Life, 1882, MACMILLAN, p. 584.
49 RUSKIN, The Stones of Venice, I, VI, § 40.
50 The Art of the People, 1879, Nonesuch, p. 524.
51 The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization, ibid.
52 The History of Pattern-Drafting, 1879, MACMILLAN, p. 168.
53 The Gothic Revival, II, 1884, LE MIRE, p. 87.
54 Art, Wealth and Riches, 1883, JACKSON, p. 119.
57 Gothic Architecture, 1889, Nonesuch, p. 480.
58 The Influence of Building Materials, ibid., p. 402.
59 On the External Covering of Roofs, 1890, C. W., XXII, p. 409.
60 "They were all roofed with oak shingles, mostly grown as grey as stone, but me was no newly built that its roof was yet pale and yellow," (A Dream of John Ball, Nonesuch, p. 201).
61 The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization, ibid., p. 252.
62 The Lesser Arts, 1877, Nonesuch, pp. 514-5.
63 An Address given at the Distribution of Prizes to Students of the Birmingham Municipal School of Art, 1894, C. W., XXII, pp. 429-30.
64 The Lesser Arts, ibid., p. 515.
65 The Arts and Crafts of To-day, 1889, JACKSON, p. 233.
66 News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 9.
67 Ibid., p. 22.
68 Ibid., p. 154.
69 Ibid., p. 179.
70 Ibid., p. 159.
71 Ibid., p. 63. Cf. "... or would you like to come with me into the City and see some really fine building?" (p. 96).
72 Ibid., p. 31.
75 L'Organisateur, Oeuvres de Saint-Simon et d'Eugenie, t. XX, pp. 52-3.
76 Making the Best of It, 1880, C. W., XXII, p. 114.
77 W. R. LETHABY, Philip Webb and his Work, p. 94.
78 How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 584.
79 The Arts and Crafts of To-day, 1889, JACKSON, pp. 233-4.
80 Art, Wealth and Riches, 1883, JACKSON, p. 130.
82 Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 308.
83 "A Chat with Mr. William Morris", The Daily Chronicle, 9 October 1893, p. 3/IV.
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84 News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, pp. 13; see also, p. 131.
85 Margaret GRENNAN: William Morris, Medievalist and Revolutionary, pp. 110, 118.
86 The Life and Death of Jesus, C.W., II, pp. 97-8.
87 News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, pp. 47, 93.
88 Ibid., p. 23.
89 Ibid., p. 32.
90 Ibid., p. 183.
91 Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century, 1887, C.W., XXII, p. 390.
92 See in particular, THOMPSON, pp. 264-80.
93 Architecture and History, 1884, C.W., XXII, p. 296; May MORRIS, I, p. 124.
94 Address at the Second Annual Meeting of the SPAB, 28 June 1879, May MORRIS, I, p. 123.
95 10 July 1877, Letters, p. 93.
96 To Mrs. Burne-Jones, July 1881, ibid., p. 150.
97 The Beauty of Life, 1880, Nonesuch, p. 555. — Cf. "... our ancient historical monuments are national property..." (To The Times, 4 June 1877, Letters, p. 91).
98 To The Athenaeum, 10 December 1881, Letters, p. 154.
100 To The Times, 5 February 1891, Letters, p. 336.
101 To The Daily News, 17 April 1889, ibid., p. 312.
104 News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 30.
105 The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1884, May MORRIS, I, pp. 233-4.
106 MACKAIL, I, p. 233; W.R. LETHABY: Philip Webb and his Work, pp. 153-4; Letters, p. 315. Sir Sydney Cockerell writes in his Diaries: "He declared that it was the finest piece of architecture in England, and wanted to build a home like it. He had not seen it when he wrote The House of the Wolfings (B.M. Add. MSS. 52722 (32), 19-8-92).
107 To C. J. Faulkner, 17 May 1871, Letters, p. 41.
108 To an unknown correspondent, August or September 1871, ibid., p. 45.
109 To Mrs. Alfred Baldwin, September 1871, ibid., p. 46.
110 To Mrs. Burne-Jones, 13 February 1872, ibid., p. 46.
111 May MORRIS wrote: "I do not think he ever felt in his heart that the house he named Kelmscott House was our real home... writing from London to us at Kelmscott he often spoke of 'coming home'. No house in London could ever be invested with the passionate delight he had in our dear riverside home, the home of his dreams, with its poet's garden which, in these evenings of early Spring, is an earthly paradise of colour and scent and song." (C.W., XIII, p. XVI)
112 C.W., XXIV, p. 417. — It is interesting to note that this embroidery was the work of Yeats's elder sister: "My elder sister stayed on and became an embroderess under Miss Morris, and the hangings round Morris's big bed at Kelmscott House [sic], Oxfordshire, with their verses about living happily in bed when ‘all birds sing in the town of the tree’, were from her needle, though not from her design." (W. B. YEATS: Autobiographies, p. 178).
113 MACKAIL, I, p. 225.
114 Gossip on an Old House on the Upper Thames, 1894, May MORRIS, I, pp. 370-1.
115 "Night fell on us long before we got to Radcot, and we fastened a lantern to the prow of our boat, after we had with much difficulty got our boats through Radcot Bridge. Charles was waiting for us with a lantern at our bridge by the corner at 10 p.m., and presently the ancient house had me in its arms again." (To Mrs.
By this sweet stream
This far-off, lonely mother of the Thames?
So midst sweet sights and sounds a house most fair
They came to, set upon the river-side
Where kindly folk their coming did abide” (p. 137).

May Morris writes, in Foreword of this book: “...the King's son was on his adventures from the very door of Kelmeston Manor transformed into the pages of a simple-living knight, and the second page describes clearly the position of his home between river and upland, with the ford at the corner where the hackney in New from nowhere landed at their journey's end” (C.W. XVII, p. 130.

“At the conclusion of The Well at the World's End, the band of men wending up the Green way to the ancient fortress which is set with fire at the four quarters (a passage of great beauty) are on their road to the defence of the little town of Uppingham; and this is Kelmeston, and Morris gives a loving picture of the medieval manor-house which doubtless stood once on the site of our home” (May MORRIS, I, p. 315).

“New from nowhere, None such, pp. 188-9.
118. Ibid., p. 190. Cf. “I am sitting in the tapestry-room ... the beauty and quaintness of the surroundings” (To Mrs. Burne-Jones, October 1879, Letten, p. 132).

119. “New from nowhere, None such, pp. 189-90.

120. History of Pattern-Designing, 1879, MACMILLAN, p. 171.


122. “In conclusion, he entreated them to find some use for their ancient churches or to secularizing churches, using them for commercial purposes, schools, or something of that kind” (The Architect, 6 June 1888, p. 339/1).

123. New from nowhere, None such, p. 68.

124. Ibid., p. 173.

125. Ibid., p. 194.

126. Ibid., pp. 136-7.

127. Ibid., p. 150.

128. Ibid., p. 151.

129. Ibid., p. 152.

130. Ibid., pp. 30, 32. Similarly, in Morris's revolutionary comedy, The Table Turned or Napoleon Awakened (1887), the law courts are converted into a free market for the distribution of foodstuffs to the needy after the seizure of power. (May MORRIS, II, p. 555).

131. Ibid., p. 70.

132. Ibid., pp. 30-1.

133. Ibid., p. 42. - In fact, it is debatable whether the reference is to the National Gallery as we know it or to a later reconstruction. Morris speaks of “an old building built before the middle of the twentieth century”, which could justify the latter supposition; but, since the revolution happened in 1952, it can be supposed that Dick, who is clearly lacking in historical knowledge, simply means that it was pre-revolutionary.

135. Ibid., pp. 48-9. - It is intriguing to observe that Morris, who was always consistent, refuses to accept the opinion of Ruskin, who wrote: “I express my sincere ad-
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...mination of the very noble entrance and general architecture of the British Museum" (The Seven Lamps of Architecture, II, §167).

136 Ibid., p. 63.
138 Making the Best of It, 1880. C.W., XXII, p. 114.
139 The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1884. May MORRIS, I, p. 235.
140 News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 16. The influence of Labargue's article on "the morrow of the resolution" is plain here.
141 Ibid., pp. 62-3.
142 Ibid., p. 64.
143 Ibid., p. 104. — Cf. "As to the manufacturing towns they would be superfluous" (Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 314).
144 Ibid., p. 162.
145 Ibid., p. 68.
146 An Address delivered at the Distribution of Prizes to Students of the Birmingham Municipal School of Art, 1894, C.W., XXII, pp. 429-30.
147 News from Nowhere, Nonesuch p. 65.
148 Ibid., p. 165.
149 Ibid., p. 173.
152 Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 319.
153 Useful Work versus Useless Toil, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 619.
154 News from Nowhere, ibid., p. 69.
155 Art and the Beauty of the Earth, 1881. JACKSON, p. 169. — Cf. "I have more than ever at my heart the importance for people of living in beautiful places; I mean the sort of beauty which would be attainable by all, if people could but begin to long for it" (To Mrs. Burne-Jones, 1880, Letters, p. 139).
156 Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 312-4.
159 News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 9.
160 Ibid., pp. 22-3.
161 Ibid., pp. 25-6.
162 Ibid., p. 31.
164 Ibid., p. 45.
165 Ibid., p. 46.
166 Ibid., p. 39.
167 Ibid., pp. 63-4.
168 Ibid., p. 129.
169 Ibid., p. 61.
170 Ibid., p. 32.
172 Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 313-6.
174 Art: a Serious Thing, 1882. LE MIRE, p. 49.
175 The Beauty of Life, 1880, Nonesuch, p. 558.
177 An Address to the Kyre Society, Nottingham, 1881, May MORRIS, I, p. 204. Morris himself, at the time of the construction of his fine Red House in Sussex in 1859,
had drawn up the plans with such care that it was not necessary to tell a single

tree in the orchard. (Cf. MACKAIL, I, pp. 143-4).

178. "We must turn this land from the grimy backyard of a workshop into a garden
(Art and the Beauty of the Earth, 1881, JACKSON, p. 171).

179. "It is now a garden, where nothing is wasted and nothing is spoilt" (News from
Nonesuch, ibid., p. 68).


182. Making the Best of It, 1880, C.W., XXII, pp. 91, 116.

183. How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, Nonesuch p. 583.


185. Town and Country, 1893 (according to Le Mire; not 1894, as is claimed by
Mackail), MACKAIL, II, pp. 305-6.

186. "Why should any house, or group of lodgings, arranged in flats or otherwise, be
without a pleasant and ample garden, and a good play-ground?" ("Why Not?"
Justice, 12 April 1884, p. 2/1; May MORRIS, II, p. 129).

127-8.

188. ibid.

189. ibid.

190. News from Nonesuch, Nonesuch, pp. 68-9. It is fair to observe that these practical
considerations were not urged from the beginning. A little earlier he was demand-
ing the preservation of wild places in the name of romance and poetry: "Nay
I demand even that there be left waste places and wilds in it, or romance and
poetry – that is Art – will die out amongst us" (Art and Socialism, 1884, Nonesuch,
pp. 640-1); or in the name of historical piety: "nay, even to leave here and there
some piece of waste or mountain sacredly free from fence or tillage as a memory
of man’s ruder struggles with nature in his earlier days" (Art under Plutocracy, 1883,
JACKSON, p. 137).

191. ibid., p. 179. Cf.: "... the highway ran through wide sunny meadows and gar-
den-like tillage" (p. 22).


193. The Earthly Paradise, p. 3.

194. This nostalgia for the green London of pre-industrial times is quite frequently
found among Morris’s contemporaries. In particular, I should like to draw atten-
tion to the beginning of chapter IV of Barnaby Rudge, by Dickens, echoes of which I
feel I detect in more than one page written by our poet.

195. The Story of the Unknown Church, 1856, Nonesuch, p. 276.

196. MACKAIL, I, p. 143.


198. ibid., II, p. 86.


200. "There was an old-fashioned garden too, long neglected and drooping, but under
Mr. Morris’s care it soon resumed its ancient gaiety" (George Warele’s Memorial of

201. News from Nonesuch, Nonesuch, p. 69.

202. Making the Best of It, 1880, C.W., XXII, pp. 87-91.


204. To Mrs. Burne-Jones, 23 August 1882, Letters, p. 159.

205. The Hope of Civilization, 1885, Signs, p. 88.

206. For example: "... the land was quite unhedged ... the unhedged tillage ... I
was of course used to the hedged tillage" (A Dream of John Ball, Nonesuch, p. 200).

207. An Address to the Kyre Society, Nottingham, 1881, May MORRIS, I, p. 204.
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213. Address at the 12th Annual Meeting of the SPAB, 1889, May MORRIS, I, p. 155. — Cf. MARX and ENGELS: *The German Ideology*, p. 65: "... a subjection (to the division of labour) which makes one man into a restricted town-animal, the other into a restricted country-animal."


217. F. ENGELS: Anti-Dühring, pp. 320, 325.

218. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 316.

219. H. V. WILES: *William Morris of Walthamstow*, p. IX.

220. See particularly p. 64.

221. C.W., IV, p. XIV.


223. MACKAIL, I, p. 214.


225. The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1884, May MORRIS, I, p. 233.


236. Art, Wealth and Riches, 1883, JACKSON, p. 130.

237. Art and Socialism, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 641. — Cf. "Then we should have nature beautiful around us again, for surely then no disgrace of foulness in air nor water would be suffered" (*Art and the People*, 1883, May MORRIS, II, p. 403).


241. Art under Plutocracy, 1883, JACKSON, p. 137.


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256. _News from Noewther_, Nonesuch, p. 189.


259. This is what R. Ruyer did not fully understand when he wrote: "Unlike many utopists, Morris does not desire man’s mastery over nature, but rather a return to harmony between nature and man" (R. RUYER: _L’Utopie et les utopistes_, p. 254). On the other hand, although he did not at all have Morris in mind when he wrote this, G. Duveau expressed the problem very well: "There is a dreadful ambiguity in the concept of nature: 1) There is the haven of rest, the return to fundamentals, the earthy and soothing. 2) There is the hard fact, with which one must come to grips" (G. DÜVEAU: _Sociologie de l’utopie_, p. 193).


261. _Speech at a Meeting of the Kyklos Society, Kensington_, 1881, May MORRIS, I, p. 196.


263. _The Socialist Ideal_, 1891, JACKSON, p. 323.

264. _The Lesser Arts_, 1877, Nonesuch, p. 505.

265. _The Art of the People_, 1879, _ibid._, p. 517.

266. _Technical Instruction_, 1882, May MORRIS, I, p. 211.


268. _The History of Pattern-Designing_, 1879, MACMILLAN, p. 133.


270. _The Lesser Arts_, 1877, Nonesuch, p. 496.

271. _Making the Best of It_, 1880, C.W., XXII, p. 111.


273. Cf.: "... in my mind, it is not possible to dissociate art from morality, politics and religion. Truth in these great matters of principle is of one, and it is only in formal treatises that it can be split up diversely" (The _Art of the People_, 1879, Nonesuch, pp. 534-5).

274. _Making the Best of It_, _ibid._, p. 86.


276. _How We Live and How We Might Live_, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 583.

277. _The Lesser Arts of Life_, 1882, MACMILLAN, p. 218.

278. _Making the Best of It_, _ibid._, p. 113.

279. _The Lesser Arts_, 1877, Nonesuch, pp. 515-516.


283. _The Arts and Crafts of To-day_, 1889, JACKSON, p. 232.

284. _The Lesser Arts of Life_, _ibid._, p. 218.


286. "I would prefer for my part to live with the plainest white-washed walls and wooden chairs and tables" (Edward CARPENTER: _My Days and Dreams_, p. 217).

287. _Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones_, I., p. 213. Cf.: "Look you, 4 bare walls, with (by sense luck) an engraving on them" (Of the _Popular in Decorative Arts_, B.M. Add. Ms. 45 331-2 (1); May MORRIS. II, p. 70).


289. _A Dream of John Ball_, _ibid._, pp. 203-4.

292. P. BLOOMFIELD writes, with some reason: "... charming and important though they are, they have distracted attention from the fact that Morris was above all a prophet, a sage" (William Morris, p. V).
293. "Wall-papers are a poor makeshift," said this designer of them many a time" (May MORRIS, II, p. 616, note); see also May MORRIS, I, p. 43.
296. "... for fine arras tapestry was the one decoration for stately buildings in our Northern countries" (May MORRIS, II, p. 616).
297. See above, p. 405.
298. Textiles, ibid., p. 245. Cf.: "... nothing is so beautiful as fine tapestry" (To Thomas Wardle, 14 November 1877, Letters, p. 98).
300. "Mr. Morris on Tapestry", *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 November 1888, p. 6/1. Morris had also written, in 1882: "... it took the place in Northern Europe of the fresco painting of Italy" (The Lesser Arts of Life, ibid., p. 207).
301. News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, pp. 13, 93.
304. To The Athenaeum, 26 August 1895, Letters, p. 375.
305. "Mr. Morris on Tapestry", *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 November 1888, p. 6/1. The reporter adds: "Indeed Boucher met with scant mercy at Mr. Morris's vigorous hands, and was roundly abused, and modern Gobelins, with M. Bougereaux's (sic) cartoons, fared no better".
307. An Address delivered at the Distribution of Prizes to Students of the Birmingham Municipal School of Art, 1894, C. W., XXII p. 437.
309. Textile Fabrics, ibid., p. 287.
313. Making the Best of It, 1880, C.W., XXII, p. 93. Cf.: "... the floor of the nave was paved with a quaint pavement of glazed tiles..." (A Dream of John Ball, Nonesuch, p. 242).
316. Textiles, ibid.
317. An Address delivered at the Distribution of Prizes to Students of the Birmingham Municipal School of Art, 1894, C.W., XXII, p. 436.
319. CE. Ray WATKINSON. William Morris as Designer, p. 43.
322. YEATS: "The Happiest of Poets", *The Forsightly Review*, March 1903, p. 539. In his memoirs, Yeats gives another version of what Morris said: "I would like a house like a big barn, where one ate in one corner, cooked in another corner, slept in the third corner, and in the fourth received one's friends" (Autobiographies, p. 180).
323. News from Nowhere, ibid.
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324. Ibid., p. 31.
327. This taste for heavily ornamented furniture reappears in The Lesser Arts of Life, 1882, MACMILLAN, p. 220.
328. The Arts and Crafts of To-day, 1889, JACKSON, p. 232. Cf. William Morris's furniture with a touch of the Art Nouveau, a shelf of the same on the wall and four or five three-meter stools. I say that is better upholstery for a reasonable man than the upholstery of a modern drawing-room" (Of the Popular or Decorative Art, B.M. Add. Ms 43, 30:2, (1); May MORRIS, II, p. 70).
329. A Dream of John Ball, Nonesuch, p. 203.
331. C.W., XIII, pp. XVIII-XIX.
332. Bernard Shaw: Morris as I Know Him, May MORRIS, II, p. XX.
333. "... nor could Morris have endured any chair, table, sofa or bed, nor his hanging such as were then in existence" (Memorials of Edward Burn-Jones, 1, p. 213)."}

Notes to the Text: Part III, Chapter X

359. Ibid., p. 21.
360. Ibid., p. 44.
361. Ibid., p. 129.
363. Ibid., p. 22-3.
364. Ibid., p. 33.
366. Ibid., p. 169.
368. Ibid., p. 204.
369. News from Nonesuch, Nonesuch, p. 133.
370. Ibid., p. 144.
371. Ibid., p. 152.
372. Ibid., p. 1.
373. Ibid., p. 134.
374. Ibid., p. 129.
375. "... Of a fine web" (p. 7); "... of a very fine woollen stuff" (p. 129).
376. Ibid., p. 129.
377. Ibid.
378. "For their garments, which throughout all the island be of one fashion (saving that there is a difference between the man's garment and the woman's, between the married and the unmarried) and this one continueth evermore unchangeable, seeming and comely to the eye, no let to the moving and wielding of the body, also fit both for winter and summer" (Thomas MORE: Utopia, pp. 63-4).
380. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 311.
381. The Lesser Arts of Life, ibid., p. 225.
382. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, ibid.
383. News from Nonesuch, Nonesuch, p. 130.
384. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, ibid.
387. Ibid., p. 133.
388. Ibid., p. 13.
389. Ibid., p. 129.

Part III, Chapter X

1. Echo, 1st October, 1884, p. 2/III.
2. Ibid., 7 October 1884, p. 2/VI.
3. The Beauty of Life, 1880, Nonesuch, p. 552.
7. The Beauty of Life, 1880, ibid., p. 553.
8. Art, a Serious Thing, 1882, LE MIRE, p. 51.
11. Art, Wealth and Riches, 1883, JACKSON, p. 130.
12. Art under Plutocracy, 1883, ibid., p. 139.
15. ibid., p. 591.
18. On the Chartist origin of the phrase "the question of the knife and fork", see:
23. C.W., XXIII, p. 2.
31. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 55.
32. Art and the Beauty of the Earth, 1881, JACKSON, p. 159.
33. The History of Pattern-Designing, 1879, MACMILLAN, p. 149.
34. "Classic architecture never moved him. A Greek temple, he complained, was like a table on four legs: a damned dull thing!" (A. COMPTON-RICKETT, William Morris, a Study in Personality, p. 59).
35. The History of Pattern-Designing, ibid., p. 136.
36. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 302-3.
41. The History of Pattern-Designing, ibid., pp. 130, 151-4.
42. Gothic Architecture, 1889, Nonesuch, p. 480.
43. Architecture and History, 1884, May MORRIS, I, p. 130; C.W., XXII, p. 302.
44. The History of Pattern-Designing, ibid., p. 154.
47. E. Belfort BAX: Reminiscences and Reflections of a mid-and-late Victorian, p. 121.
49. "Morris was in one way the last Renaissance man, the last all rounder" (Lionel M. MUNBY: "William Morris' Romances and the Society of the Future", Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1962, Heft 1, p. 57).
52. The Gothic Revival, I, 1884, LE MIRE, pp. 55, 66. These passages are not included in the extracts published by May Morris, Cf.: "... since art first began, it had always looked forward, now it was looking backward" (Art and the Beauty of the Earth, ibid.).
53. The History of Pattern-Designing, ibid., p. 155.
55. Ibid., p. 488.
56. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 121.
57. The Beauty of Life, 1880, Nonesuch, p. 543.
58. The History of Pattern-Designing, ibid., p. 128.
59. Art under Plutocracy, 1883, JACKSON, p. 142.
60. Gothic Architecture, ibid., p. 489.
61. The Beauty of Life, ibid.
62. The Gothic Revival, I. ibid., p. 67; May MORRIS, I, p. 630. Cf. "The conquered North had gained nothing from Italy save an imitation of its worst extravagance, and all that saved the art of England from nothingness was a tradition of the earlier days still lingering among a people rustic and narrow-minded indeed, but serious, truthful, and of simple habits" (Art and the Beauty of the Earth, 1881, JACKSON, p. 161); "As to the art of the people; in countries and places where the greater art had flourished most, it went step by step on the downward path with that: in more out-of-the-way places, England lor instance, it still felt the influence of the life of its earlier and happier days, and in a way lived on a while, but its life was so feeble, and, so to say, illogical, that it could not resist any change in external circumstances, still less could it give birth to new life, and before this century began, its last flicker had died out" (The Beauty of Life, ibid., p. 544). In a few excellent pages, R. Furneaux Jordan (Victorian Architecture, pp. 60-2) shows that classical art has always been felt to be important in England, but has never completely stifled the inspiration of Gothic.
63. The Beauty of Life, ibid.
64. The Reveal of Handicraft, 1888. JACKSON, p. 227.
65. Art and the Beauty of the Earth, ibid.
66. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 304.
68. Art and the Beauty of the Earth, ibid.
70. Art and the Beauty of the Earth, ibid., p. 162.
71. The History of Pattern-Designing, ibid., p. 131.
74. C.W., XXII, p. XXVI.
75. MACKAIL, I, p. 219.
76. A. COMPTON-RICKETT: William Morris: a Study in Personality, p. 34.
77. C.W., XXII, p. XXXI.
78. MACKAIL, I, p. 47.
79. Ibid., p.116
80. Letters, p. 246.
81. MACKAIL, II, pp. 280, 333. C.W., XXIV, pp. XIV-XV; Sir Sydney Cockerell's Diaries, B.M. Add. Mss. 52 772 (37, 40).
82. May MORRIS, I, p. 390.
83. C.W., XXII, p. XXXI.
84. B.M. Add. Mss. 52 772 (23).
85. C.W., XXII, p. XXVII.
86. Bernard SHAW: Morris as I knew Him, May MORRIS, II, p. XXXIII.
87. Ed. BERNSTEIN: My Years of Exile, p. 206.
88. News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 46.
89. The History of Pattern-Designing, 1879, MACMILLAN, p. 168.
90. The Gothic Revival, I, 1884, LE MIRE, p. 66.
91. The Lesser Arts of Life, 1882, MACMILLAN, p. 190.
187. "Unattractive Labour"; Commonweal, May Supplement, 1886, p. 107-11. "...no great pressure of speed was put on a man's work, but he was allowed to carry it through leisurely and thoughtfully" (An aster Phalanx, 1902, p. 142.)

188. The Hope of Civilization, ibid., p. 88.


194. Feudal England, 1887. Signs, p. 82.


197. Art, Wealth and Riches, 1883. JACkSON, p. 123.

198. Art under Phalanx, 1883. JACkSON, p. 141.


201. Art under Phalanx, ibid., p. 142.


203. Art and Labour, 1884. LE MIRE, p. 102.


207. Architecture and History, ibid., p. 132.

208. Margaret R. GRENNAN, ibid., pp. 69-70.

209. Art and Its Producers, 1888. JACkSON, p. 211.


216. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 58.


218. "Notes", Commonweal, 6 August 1887, p. 249/1.


221. See above, Part II, Chapter I.


224. Holbrook JACkSON: Dreamers of Dreams, p. 36.

225. Introduction to his (Aubier) bilingual edition of Nouvelles de mule part, p. 53.


228. Margaret R. GRENNAN, ibid., p. 63.

244. MARX and ENGELS: The Communist Manifesto, p. 16.
245. "Notes on News," Communism, 11 June 1887, p. 188/11
247. What Morris himself called "the maudering side of mediæevalism" (To Andreas Schen, 5 September 1883, Letters, p. 186).
249. "The best work of art to create is a house, which will prove, to my thinking, a Gothic house" ("A Chat with Mr. William Morris", The Daily Chronicle, 9 October 1893, p. 3/IV).
250. Gothic Architecture, 1889, Nonesuch, pp. 490, 492
251. The History of Pattern-Designing, 1879, MACMILLAN, p. 172
252. 4 September 1882, May Morris, II, p. 585.
255. "Morris’s socialism had very little to do with the received tenets of its political professors. It was essentially aesthetic and in a sense reactionary. Violent though it was against the evils of modern capitalism, it was a lament for the past rather than a programme for the future. It had no modern constructive plan. His idea would have been a faithful reconstruction of the past." (Quoted by A. COMPTON-RICKETT: William Morris: a Study in Personality, p. 62.)
256. Thomas KIRKUP: A History of Socialism, p. 375
258. Letters, p. XXXVII.
259. To Robert Thompson, 24 July 1884, ibid., p. 206.
261. Address at the 2nd Annual Meeting of the SPAB, 1879, May Morris, I, p. 121
262. Art and Labour, 1884, LE MIRE, p. 96.
271. Saturnalia, in Goodall and Osmond, pp. 17-8, 84, 287.
272. The Depression of Trade, 1883, I, MII, p. 130.
273. Saturnalia, in Goodall and Osmond, pp. 214.
274. Architecture and History, 1884, May MORRIS, I, p. 120. — Cf. Karl Marx, writing to Arnold Ruege in September 1843: "... there is no question of a discontinuity of thinking between the present and the future, but of the fulfillment of the thinking of the past. It will be seen in the end that mankind is not taking on a new task, but achieving its old task in an understanding way" (Karl MARX: Texts, edited by F. Engels, in French by J. Kainz, who revised the first translation by A. Giselle, who appeared in *La Nouvelle Critique*, no. 60, December 1954, p. 13. This letter does not appear to have been published as yet in English).

275. A Dream of John Ball, Nonesuch, p. 287.
278. F. ENGELS: Ludwig Feuerbach, p. 58. — This similarity between the two passages is pointed out by THOMPSON, p. 836.
279. The Beauty of Life, 1880, Nonesuch, p. 550. In 1886 he said: "... history itself records on itself" (True and False Society, JACKSON, p. 310.)
280. Manifesto of the Socialist League, THOMPSON, p. 855. — I have restored the full text, in which E.P. Thompson made a slight cut, by referring to the original pamphlet, p. 11.
281. F. ENGELS: Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, p. 74; Anti-Dühring, p. 301.
282. In the rough plan for the work we read: "Dialectics as the science of total connections. Main laws: transformations of quantity and quality — mutual penetration of polar opposites and transformation into each other when driven to extremes — development by contradiction or negation of the negation — spiral form of development" (F. ENGELS: Dialectics of Nature, p. 269).

283. V. I. LENIN: Materialism and Empirio-criticism, p. 327.
284. Bernard SHAW: *Mori as I Know Him*, May MORRIS, II, p. X.
285. Introduction to his (Aubier's) bilingual edition of *Nouvelles de maîle part*, p. 50.
286. THOMPSON, pp. 763, 770.
287. Engels to Joseph Bloch, 21 September 1890, Karl MARX and Friedrich ENGELS: Selected Correspondence, p. 498.
288. The Arts and Crafts of To-day, 1889, JACKSON, p. 241-2.
289. The Lesser Arts, 1877, Nonesuch, pp. 502, 505. — Cf.: "... if we cannot have an ornamental art of our own, we cannot have one at all" *(Some Hints on Pattern-Designing, 1881, C.W., XXII, p. 180).

290. The Beauty of Life, 1880, Nonesuch, p. 553.
293. Technical Instruction, 1882, May MORRIS, I, p. 211.
294. The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1884, *ibid.*, pp. 239-40.
297. The Art of the People, 1879, Nonesuch, p. 517.
298. Address at the 2nd Annual Meeting of the SPAB, 1879, May MORRIS, I, p. 123.
300. The Arts of Art, 1886, Nonesuch, p. 602.
301. To Mrs. Burne-Jones, October 1879, Letters, p. 132.
302. Making the Best of It, 1880, C.W., XXII, pp. 105-8.
303. The Art of the People, 1879, Nonesuch, p. 527.
Notes to the Text: Part III, Chapter X
304 Of the Origin of Ornamental Art, 1886, L. E. M. T., pp. 136-57.
305 L. E. M. T., pp. 92-8 of the original duplicated edition. These pages, with slight additions, have been published as an article, under the title "Morris's reply to Whistler", in The Journal of the William Morris Society, no. 3, Summer 1963, pp. 3-10.
306 The Arts and Crafts of To-day, 1889, JACKSON, p. 249.
308 "Artist and Artisan", Commonweal, 10 September 1887, p. 291/II; May MORRIS, II, p. 494. — Cf. MARX and ENGELS, The German Ideology, p. 431: "The exclusive concentration of artistic talent in particular individuals, and its suppression in the broad mass which is bound up with this, is a consequence of the division of labour."
309 Art under Plutocracy, 1883, JACKSON, pp. 135-6.
310 Art and the Beauty of the Earth, 1881, ibid., p. 164.
311 An Address to the Kyre Society, Nottingham, 1881, May MORRIS, I, p. 198.
312 Report of a speech, the text of which has been lost, published under the heading Distribution of Prizes at the Macclesfield School of Art and Science, The Macclesfield Courier and Herald, 23 February 1889, p. 3/II.
313 To Andreas Scheu, 5 September 1883, Letters, p. 187.
315 Art under Plutocracy, 1883, JACKSON, pp. 134-5. — The same idea is expressed in almost identical words in Art and the People, 1883, May MORRIS, II, p. 386.
317 The Beauty of Life, 1880, Nonesuch, p. 542.
319 MACKAIL, II pp. 271-2.
320 Diaries of Sir Sydney Cockerell, B.M. Add. Mss. 52 772 (32); C.W., XVIII, p. XXXII.
321 To Philip Webb, 10 April 1873, Letters, p. 57.
322 Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 308.
323 The Lesser Arts, 1877, Nonesuch, pp. 514-5.
324 The Prospects of Architecture in Civilisation, 1881, JACKSON, p. 249.
327 Speech on Opening the 4th Annual Loan Exhibition, Whitechapel, 1884, ibid., p. 166.
328 Ibid., p. 165.
329 An Address to the Nottingham Kyre Society, 1881, May MORRIS, I, p. 209. — Cf. "What business have we with art at all unless all can share it?" (To The Manchester Examiner, Letters p. 165).
330 Art and Its Producers, 1888, JACKSON, p. 211.
331 "Artist and Artisan", Commonweal, 10 September 1887, p. 291/II; May MORRIS, II, p. 495.
332 The Lesser Arts of Life, 1882, MACMILLAN, pp. 175-6.
333 The Art of the People, 1879, Nonesuch, p. 528.
335 Art under Plutocracy, 1883, ibid., p. 135.
336 The Arts and Crafts of To-day, 1889, ibid., p. 241.
337 Art and the Beauty of the Earth, 1881, ibid., p. 164.
338 The Prospects of Architecture in Civilisation, ibid., p. 257.
339 Speech at the First Public Meeting of the Kyre Society, Kensington, 1881, May MORRIS, I, pp. 194-5.
340 The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1884, ibid., p. 227.
341 Making the Best of It, 1880, C.W., XXII, pp. 110-1.
342. The Woodcuts of Gothic Books, 1892, May MORRIS, I, p. 320
343. "The age is ugly - to find anything beautiful we must look before and after," Chat with Mr. William Morris", The Daily Chronicle, 9 October 1893, p. 3/II.
345. The Aims of Art, 1886, Nonesuch, p. 598.
347. The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1884, May MORRIS, I, p. 241
349. Ibid., p. 23.
350. Ibid., p. 125.
351. Ibid., pp. 63, 96.
352. Ibid., pp. 94-6, 97 ("our tall quaint-shaped glasses"). - In the utopia of Morrisian inspiration that appeared in 1907 and has been forgotten by the specialists, the socialist Robert Blatchford remarked: "How is one to forecast the fashions of Utopia in the matters of architecture and costume? To invent a new architecture and a new dress one needs to be a genius indeed. And notice that in "News from Nowhere" even William Morris takes refuge in a generalisation" (Robert BLATCHFORD: The Sorcery Shop, p. XIII).
353. The Aims of Art, 1886, Nonesuch, p. 598.
357. The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1884, May MORRIS, I, p. 241.
358. The Socialist Ideal, 1891, JACKSON, p. 323.

Part III, Chapter XI

1. The Hopes of Civilization, 1885, Signs, p. 89.
8. Art, Wealth and Riches, 1883, JACKSON, p. 121.
9. "Answers to Previous Inquiries", Commonweal, September Supplement, 1885, p. 87/II.
10. "Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution" (MARX and ENGELS: The German Ideology, p. 86).
12. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 18.
14. "Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations" (The German Ideology, p. 646).
15. News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 81. Dick, speaking to old Hammond about the visitor, says: "He is another kind of man to what we are used to" (ibid., p. 126).
Notes to the Text: Part III, Chapter XI

261/1, May MORRIS, II, p. 318.
17. The Day is Coming, 1884, Chants for Socialists, p. 3, C.W., IX, p. 181.
18. News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 76.
19. Ibid., pp. 74-5.
20. The Socialist Ideal, 1891, JACKSON, p. 322.
22. Ibid., p. 22.
23. Ibid., p. 162.
24. Ibid., p. 164.
25. Ibid., p. 191.
28. Ibid., p. 11.
29. Ibid., pp. 15, 20.
30. Ibid., p. 12.
31. Ibid., ch. XXII, XXIII, XXIV, passim.
32. Ibid., p. 52.
33. See above, Part I, Chapter II.
34. Art and Socialism, 1884, Nonesuch, pp. 629, 644.
36. The Art of the People, 1879, Nonesuch, p. 536.
37. Speech at a Meeting of the Kyrle Society, Kensington, 1881. May MORRIS, I, p. 194.
38. To Mrs. Burne-Jones, September 1883, Letters, p. 182.
40. How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 565.
41. Justice and Socialism, (rough notes for a lecture), 1885, Abramsky Collection; see Appendix I, p. 579.
42. The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened, 1887, May MORRIS, II, p. 565.
43. At a Picture Show, 1884, ibid., p. 412.
45. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 173.
46. The Tables Turned ..., ibid., p. 566.
47. The Condition of the Working Class in England, pp. X, XVIII.
51. The Tables Turned ..., ibid., p. 565.
52. Monopoly or How Labour is Robbed, 1887, JACKSON, p. 205.
55. News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 121.
56. How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, ibid., p. 567.
58. "A Talk with William Morris on Socialism", The Daily News, 8 January 1885, p. 5/VII.
60. The Depression of Trade, 1885, L.E. MIRE, pp. 131-2, 134.
61. May MORRIS, II, p. 5.
62. In order not to overload the argument, I shall be satisfied with recalling a few characteristic declarations, among many others: "... true political freedom is impossible to people who are economically enslaved" (The Hopes of Civilization, 1885, Signs, p. 103); "... the freedom that we claimed and got was the freedom of each to succeed at the expense of other people if only he were stronger and cleverer than
133. To Charles Faulkner, 16 October 1886, *ibid*.
134. Cf.: "And as in those days laws strained not to hold:
Folk whom love held not, or some common tie,
So her divorce was set forth speedily . . ." (*The Earthly Paradise, The Doom of Gudrun*, p. 283).
135. *Socialism, its Growth and Outcome*, pp. 299-300.
137. *Ibid.*, p. 53. Cf.: "But the intense emotion of individual sex-love varies very much in duration from one individual to another, especially among men, and the love which definitely comes to an end or is supplanted by a new passionate love, separation is a benefit for both partners as well as for society — only people will then be spared having to wade through the useless mire of a divorce case" (F. ENGELS: *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, p. 89).
138. B.M. Add. Mss. 50 693.
139. To Bernard Shaw, 18 March 1885, B.M. Add. Mss. 50 541 (5).
140. THOMPSON, p. 856.
141. See THOMPSON, p. 527.
142. To Charles Faulkner, 16 October 1886, *ibid*.
144. To Charles Faulkner, *ibid*.
145. F. ENGELS: *The Origin of the Family ...*, pp. 82, 90.
152. To Charles Faulkner, *ibid*.
153. Cf. THOMPSON, p. 581. We may note the delicate discretion with which the reconciliation of Dick and Clara is celebrated in the Hammersmith Guest House: "We had quite a little feast that evening, partly in my honour, and partly, I suspect, though nothing was said about it, in honour of Dick and Clara coming together again" (*News from Nowhere*, Nonesuch, p. 131).
154. *Socialism, its Growth and Outcome*, p. 4.
156. Cf. "A rich man was my father, but he skulked ere I was born,
And gave my mother money, but left her life to scorn:
And we dwelt alone in our village: I knew not my mother's 'shame'

(The Pilgrims of Hope, Nonesuch, p. 359).
171. Ibid., pp. 155-8.
172. Ibid., p. 77-8.
174. Monopoly: or How Labour is Robbed, 1887, JACKSON, p. 207.
176. I quote from Oswald Doughty's Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a Victorian Romantic, chiefly because it seems to set the tone: "his compensatory dream-love Ellen... For the Freudian wish-fulfillment dream, the imaginary, compensatory love for erotic frustration, are presented in News from Nouches as in so much of Morris's verse" (p. 469).
177. Perhaps the last word in this tiresome debate may well be provided by a letter, of which all the critics appear to be ignorant, sent by Hall Caine, an intimate of Rossetti's, to Bernard Shaw on 24 September 1928, and which I discovered in the British Museum. Here is an extract: "Rossetti had told me she (referring to Fanny Cornforth) had been his mistress. He had also told me she had long ceased to be. In another connection he had told me he had (as the result of a horrible accident) been impotent for many years" (B.M. Add. Ms. 50 531-34).
179. News from Nouches, Nonesuch, pp. 54-5.
180. To Aglaia Coronio, 25 November 1872 and March 1875, Letters, pp. 50 and 66. In 1886, when he was overburdened with work, he wrote these lines, heavy with significance, to Burne-Jones: "I wish I were not so damned old. If I were but twenty years younger. But then you know there would be the Female complication somewhere. Best as it is after all" (ibid., p. 248).
181. C.W., XV, p. XI. On this subject, see Jessie Kocmanova's excellent study, The Aesthetic Purpose of William Morris in the Context of his Late Poetic Romances, p. 111; see also, a preface of The Water of the Wondrous Isles, which has a similar situation, the pertinent reflections made by E.L. Cary, William Morris, Poet, Craftsman, Socialist, pp. 252-3; similarly cf.: "When infidelities occur... they are not left as apostasies from any god of love... The experience of his lovers is at the opposite extreme from the dizzying or swooning states described in common romantic poetry" (C.S. Lewis, Rehabilitations and Other Essays, pp. 41-2).
183. In a long letter written to May Morris on 23 February 1913, John Carruthers recounts the vicissitudes of the Norwegian tour he made in 1896 with Morris, already seriously ill, in vain attempt to prolong his life: "He even discussed the relative beauty of the lady passengers; there was one with hair of the colour the Italian painters loved: golden or auburn or whatever the proper adjective may be, and he was almost enthusiastic about it. He liked also to have his chair placed where the younger and prettier women were sitting and once when I had placed it otherwise he reproved me laughingly and made me change the position" (B.M. Add. Ms. 45 350).
184. Sir Sydney Cockerell, relating his memories to Philip Henderson, said, in the course of their conversation: "Unlike Rossetti, Morris was not a ladies' man. He was not at all prudish, but he would not have understood the modern tendency to explain everything in terms of sex" (Philip HENDERSON: "Visiting Sir Sydney", The Journal of the William Morris Society, I, 2, Winter, 1962, p. 13).
244. Cf. "...vegetarianism, in which I see no harm, if it doesn't swallow up more important matters." (To Jane Alice Morris, 16 January 1884, Letters, p. 149)

245. "Notes on Passing Events," Commanche, 25 September 1888, p. 314. Morris's views were quite justified, as is proved by these quotes from published works and letters. Years later in the reactionary paper The Nation "it is worthy of note that while the younger men in the Socialist movement are teetotalers, non-abstainers are vegetarians. Not only is it so in the rank and file of the party, but among the leading men. George Bernard Shaw, J. L. Joynes, H. S. Salt, and Mr. Burrows are advocates of all three of the above reforms, etc. " (11 November 1888, p. 3/VI).

p. 39.

247. The reference is probably to J. L. Joynes (cf. May MORRIS, II, p. 2).


251. MACKAIL, I, p. 224.


253. MACKAIL, I, p. 224.


255. Ibid., p. 94.

256. Cf. MACKAIL, I, p. 224; May MORRIS, I, p. 84; W. ALLINGHAM, A Stamp, p. 139.

257. E. Bellott BAX: Reminiscences and Reflections of a Mid-and Late Victorian, p. 115.

258. H. S. SALT: Seventy Years Among Socialists, p. 80; Glasier, op. cit., p. 83, recounts a similar anecdote.

259. THOMPSON, p. 815, n. 5.

260. "A large percentage of English working-class Socialists are total abstainers, while the majority of middle-class Socialists do not despise the delights of beer, wine or whisky." (Ed. BERNSTEIN: My Years of Exile, p. 209).


262. "Notes and Queries: Practical Socialism", Commanche, 29 May 1888, p. 71/II.

263. May MORRIS, I, p. 663.

264. News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 36.

265. Ibid., p. 44.

266. Ibid., pp. 95, 97.

267. Ibid., p. 131.

268. Ibid., p. 164.

269. Walthamstow Mus. J. 193, p. 28.

270. News from Nowhere, ibid., p. 34.

271. Ibid., p. 33.

272. May MORRIS, I, p. 663.


274. Ibid., p. 193.


277. "Norton notes in his journal of 26 March 1873: Leslie Stephen and Morris dined with us. They had never met before. Morris complained of feeling old; Monday was his 39th birthday; his hair, he said, was turning grey." (May MORRIS, I, pp. 73-4).


279. The Earthly Paradise, pp. 97, 142, 244. - Cf. The Aims of Art, 1886, Nonesuch, p. 308.
280 Ibid., p. 22.
281 Ibid., p. 542.
282 "Alas, she said, can death make folk so vile? What wonder that the gods are glorious then, who cannot feel the hates and fears of men?" (Ibid., p. 111.)
283 *Art under Plutocracy,* 1883, JACKSON, p. 154.
284 "*The Letter Art,*" 1877, Nonesuch, pp. 500, 513.
285 To Mrs. Alfred Baldwin, 26 March 1874, Letters, p. 61.
288 The *Intelligence Required to Get Rich,* Abramrosky Collection. CI. MARX: *Capital,* p. 299; also p. 292.
289 *Useful Work versus Useless Toil,* 1884, Nonesuch, p. 610.
290 *News from Nowhere,* ibid., p. 18.
291 Ibid., p. 148.
293 *The Roots of the Mountain,* C.W., XV, p. 232.
294 *News from Nowhere,* ibid., p. 54.
295 Ibid., p. 49.
296 Ibid., p. 62.
297 Ibid., p. 46.
298 Ibid., p. 18.
299 Ibid., pp. 126-7.
300 Ibid., p. 46.
301 *The Earthly Paradise,* p. 154.
303 *News from Nowhere,* ibid., p. 153.
304 Nonesuch, pp. 244-5. See above, p. 16.
305 Grimm figures in Morris’s list of favourite authors, and he adds this comment to his mention of the book: "...it is so crammed with the material for imagination, and has in itself such a flavour of imagination, that I feel bound to put it down" (Letters, p. 247). May Morris relates "Tell me a story—why won’t these children tell me a story? asks the poet in his home, and the girls search their brains to comply" (May MORRIS, II, p. 621).
306 *News from Nowhere,* ibid., pp. 93-6.
308 Engels himself is surely echoing Marx’s thinking when he defends "the poetry of the past" against Dühring’s reforming demands? (Anti-Dühring, p. 350).
309 Of the *Origins of Ornamental Art,* 1886, LE MIKE, pp. 142-3.
310 MACKAIL, II, p. 343.
314 Th. WATTS-DUNTON, "Mr. William Morris", *The Athenaeum,* 10 October 1896, p. 487/1; *Old Familiar Faces,* p. 241.
315 A. CLUTTON-BROCK: *William Morris, his Work and Influence,* p. 188.
319 R. RUYER: *L’Utopie et les utopies,* p. 6. P.N. Farbink (Samuel Butler, p. 87) sees *News from Nowhere* as a "childish charade".
320 A. COMPTON-RICKETT: William Morris, a *Study in Personality,* pp. 56-7.
322. New from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 16.
323. Ibid., p. 127 — Cf. : "When I was a little chap" was a phrase often used and these allusions to childhood always implied the remembrance of pangs of resentment" (MACKAIL, I, p. 8).
324. Ibid., p. 132.
325. Ibid., p. 135.
326. Ibid., p. 144.
327. Ibid., p. 175.
328. Ibid., pp. 189-90.
329. Ibid., p. 52.
330. One may well wonder whether Morris, writing New from Nowhere in weekly statements, did not simply forget his mention of them in an earlier chapter; or perhaps be another slip like that one he made over Ellen's grandparents, who suddenly became her father.
331. Bruce GLASIER, ibid., pp. 59, 60, 108.
335. Marxism, as Growth and Outcome, pp. 4-7. Cf. : "The bourgeoisie has torn open the family’s sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a new money relation" (MARX and ENGELS: The Communist Manifesto, p. 16).
336. The Depression of Trade, 1885, LE MIRE, p. 120.
337. Marxism, as Growth and Outcome, p. 8 — Cf. : "In its completely developed form the family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the enforced absence of the family among the proletarians...
340. To Charles Faulkner, 16 October 1886, Bodleian Library, MSS. Autogr. d. 21, 222-4.
341. Marxism, as Growth and Outcome, p. 299.
342. C.W. IV, p. XVIII.
343. New from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 58. — Cf. : "it was not their view... that each should do the work of Raphael, but that anyone in whom there is a potential Raphael should be able to develop without hindrance" (MARX and ENGELS: The German Ideology, p. 430).
344. Ibid., p. 53.
345. Bernard SHAW: Morris as I Knew Him, May MORRIS, II, p. XXXII — Shaw himself wrote in Fabian Tract no. 2 (1884): "That the State should compete with private individuals — especially with parents — in providing happy homes for children, so that every child may have a refuge from the tyranny or neglect of its natural custodians" (Edward R. PEASE: The History of the Fabian Society, p. 42).
346. Cf. May Morris's account: "... we were lucky children not to be saddled with parents full of theories — "experimental parents", if I may call them so without disrespect to the elders. I have heard my father speak of the children of X and Y and Z, who were lovingly subjected to experiments in diet or clothing or training or play, as 'poor little devils' with real pity in the voice. — "Children bring each other up", he often said, and as one of a large family, he knew it by experience" (C.W., VI, pp. XIII-XIV).
348. The Society of the Future, 1888, May MORRIS, II, p. 466. — Cf. : "The care and education of the children becomes a public affair; society looks after all children alike, whether they are legitimate or not" (F. ENGELS: The Origin of the Family,
Notes to the Text: Part III, Chapter XI

Private Property and the State, pp. 81-2.

349. News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 76.

350. To Charles Faulkner, 16 October 1886, ibid.; THOMPSON, p. 818.

351. Inquiries Column — Answers", Communism, October 1883, p. 92/1.


353. To Dr. John Glassie, 23 May 1887, (R. Page ARNOTT, William Morris, the Man and the Myth, p. 83.

354. Monopoly, or How Labour is Robbed, 1887, JACKSON, p. 195.


356. The Society of the Future, 1888, May MORRIS, II, p. 462. — Cf. — "People are educated to become workmen or the employers of workmen, or the hangers-on of the employers; they are not educated to become men" ("Thoughts on Education under Capitalism", Communism, 30 June 1888, p. 265/1, May MORRIS, II, p. 500); "...we teach people to fit them to become workmen and women desirable to be employed by the capitalists" (Makeshift, 1894, May MORRIS, II, pp. 477-8).

357. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 317.

358. Unfortunately we no longer have the text of this lecture on the problems of education which Morris gave in 1886. My quotation is from the only report of it that exists: "Our present system of education was simply the education of one set of people to become the machines by means of which the other set could carry on their life to the injury of the community in general. Even at the Universities the ideal of education was a commercial one; it was only and solely directed to the achievement of success in a man’s future commercial career” (The Architect, 17 September 1886, p. 177/1).


360. Monopoly, or How Labour is Robbed, 1887, JACKSON, pp. 195-6. Cf. — "With this aim in view the conditions under which true education can go on are impossible. For the first and most necessary of them are leisure and deliberation" (Thoughts on Education under Capitalism, 1888, May MORRIS, II, p. 500).


362. "An Appeal to the Just", Justice, 11 October 1884, p. 4/II.


365. Thoughts on Education under Capitalism, ibid.


368. News from Nowhere, ibid., p. 150.

369. "I think I may fairly say I learned next to nothing there, for indeed next to nothing was taught" (To Andreas Scheu, 5 September 1883, Letters, p. 185).


371. To Robert Thompson, 20 June 1884, ibid., p. 201.

372. News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 27.

373. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 319.

374. News from Nowhere, ibid., p. 60.

375. Thoughts on Education under Capitalism, ibid.

376. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 317.


378. News from Nowhere, ibid., p. 60.

379. Our Country Right or Wrong?, 1880, May MORRIS, II, p. 60.


381. Art and Labour, 1884, LE MIKE, p. 115. — Cf. — "I want...all persons to be educated according to their capacity, not according to the amount of money..."
Mr. J. S. Spink, Professor of French Literature at Bridford College, University of London, has sent a long note, unfortunately too long to reproduce here, for which I express my sorrows and grateful thanks. He indicates a number of points of resemblance between the pedagogy of Morris’s utopia and that of Rousseau (La Nouvelle Heloise and Emile): the lack of formal education and of the teaching of readiness; the restricted use of books; an insistence upon the ages of fifteen and twenty as crucial; a study of “the way things are made”, respect for temporal and social differences; unconstrained development; social criticism of contemporary pedagogy. Clearly, the resemblances are striking. However, Mr. Spink points out one fundamental difference: Rousseau believes in the value of feeling and interest in a word of spontaneity and isolates the child from corruption by its social surroundings. Morris, on the contrary, integrates the child as soon as possible into society (which has, of course, been totally transformed) and makes imitation the chief mechanism of development. Mr. Spink leaves it to me to draw conclusions. Despite the multiplicity of similarities, I do not believe that Rousseau exerted any direct influence upon Morris. The latter, as I remarked earlier, was completely ignorant of eighteenth-century French literature, and I have not found even a single indirect reference to Rousseau in all his works. The two writers had in common a deep trust in mankind and a hatred of the artificialities of “civilized” life, so it is not surprising that they should have arrived, each by his own way, at similar conclusions. But it is clear that their thinking and their motivation were, historically speaking, on very different planes.

Useful Work versus Useful Tool, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 608.

Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 318.

“...A library certainly ought to have books in it... but so ought each and every room in the house more or less” (Making the Best of It, 1880, C.W., XXII, p. 113).

News from Nowhere, ibid., p. 131.

Ibid., p. 19.

Ibid., p. 28.

Ibid., pp. 140-1.


News from Nowhere, Nonesuch, p. 141.

“On Some ‘Practical’ Socialists”, ibid.

“Not a conceited man, and curiously averse to mirrors. Morris was not in the habit of using their psychological counterparts; and it is impossible to surprise him in the act of posing himself in becoming attitudes.” (E.L. CARY: William Morris: The Craftsman, Socialist, p. 187) = CS. “He did not project, like Henley or Wilde, an image of himself, because having all his imagination set upon making and doing, he had little self-knowledge” (YALTS, Autobiography, p. 177). “Let us note here in passing that in the utopia of William Morris nothing deep materially or at existence because life is too active an entity to be fed with the pathetic, the...
William Morris: The Master Draughtsman

In the present context, we are dealing with an manuscript page that contains a text block, which appears to be a selection from a letter or an essay. The text is not completely legible due to the quality of the image, but it seems to be discussing aspects of William Morris's work and influence. Here is a transcription of what can be read:

In an essay attributed to William Morris, 

"...the whispering incisive turn ..." (Faithful England 1894, p. 168).

Morris writes: "As a form of art, no other art has been more perfect in its perfection, it immersed itself in the stream of consciousness, sometimes quite, sometimes not, appealing to the emotions, its elaborate realism and characterisation, with moderation..." (C.W., XXII, p. XXVII).

"...he scarcely could go in..." (Cockerell's Biographies, B.M. Add. Ms. 52772 (27)).

"In the contemporary theatre and in the modern actor's art Morris had not, and never left for, the slightest interval. Since the days of his early enthusiasm for Rossetti and Ruskin he hardly ever had gone to a play, unless on some rare occasion when he had occasion or was dragged off by a friend." (Mackail, II, p. 180).

"...most of the recent and..." (C.W., IX, p. 9; IX, p. IX-X; May Morris, I, p. 307; II, p. XX, 189, etc.; Nonesuch, p. 358; Leaver, p. LXV, 4, 9, 60, 61, 102, 171, 269; Mackail, I, p. 3, 7, 88, 72, 299-300; II, 334; Glaser, op. cit., p. 69-70; Thompson, p. 22; A. Compton-Rickett: William Morris, a Study of Personality; p. 48; H. M. Hyndman: The Record of an Adventurous Life, p. 357; Holbrook Jackson, William Morris, Conquered Socialist, p. 30; Memorials of E. Burne-Jones, L.p. 212; II, p. 311-2; The Journals of Thomas James Cadell-Sanderson, I, p. 213, 336; Asher Vallance, William Morris, his Art, his Writings and his Public Life, p. 426; Phillip Henderson, William Morris, his Life, Work, and Friends, p. 3, 168, etc.; Waddington, Miss. J. 36; B.M. Add. Miss. 52734 (163), 52772 (37); G.B. Shaw: Morris as Actor and Dramatist", The Saturday Review, 10 October 1896, p. 385-6; II, 386/I.

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"...though one think I don't like music, I assure you that the rocks and blackbirds have been a great consolation to me." (To Lady Burne-Jones, 27 April 1879, Letters, p. 382); "our rocks... have only got six nests, so that we haven't... the proper volume of sound from them." (To the same correspondent, 1889, ibid., p. 371); "There was no lack of birds in these upper waters, and in the twigs and bushes in summer time, we were never about and finding from the banks and arrows the streams, such a clean-made, neat-feathered, light grey little chap he is with a wild musical little note like all the moor-haunting birds." (To the same correspondent, 1889, ibid., p. 315); "As we went, the folk on the bank talked indeed, mingling their kind voices with the cuckoo's song, the sweet songwarbler and blackbird, and the ceaseless note of the corn-crake as he crept through the hot grass of the morning field." (Nonesuch, Nonesuch, p. 186-7); "...walls of tall reeds, whose population of reed-stalks and warblers were delightfully restlessly, tumbling and choosing..." (Ibid., p. 177), etc.


Notes to the Text: Part III, Chapter 31

449. Shakespeare, as Growth and Outcome, pp. 309-10.
450. A Farce as It Might Be, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 953.
452. Ibid., pp. 131-143.
453. Ibid., p. 96.
454. Ibid., p. 21.
455. "A Chat with Mr. William Morris", The Daily Chronicle, 9 October 1893, p. 3/III.
456. Art and the People, 1883, May MORRIS, II, p. 491. — "...science is allowed to live because profit can be made out of her" ("The Worker's Share of Art", Communist, April 1885, p. 18/I).
457. The Lesser Arts, 1877, Nonesuch, p. 513.
458. Socialist, as Growth and Outcome, p. 309.
460. Notes from Nonesuch, Nonesuch, p. 123.
462. K. MARX, Capital, p. 397.
464. On this point, see Thompson's penetrating analysis, p. 158.
468. Socialist, as Growth and Outcome, p. 309.
469. Notes from Nonesuch, ibid., p. 91.
471. "Why We Celebrate the Commune of Paris", Communeal, 19 March 1887, p. 89/II.
473. Notes from Nonesuch, ibid., p. 19.
474. Ibid., pp. 166-7.
475. Ibid., p. 29.
476. Ibid., p. 51.
477. Ibid., p. 38.
478. In fact, Morris shows a certain illogicality. Would such ignorance and lack of understanding of the nineteenth century be conceivable on the part of people who knew Dickens's novels so well? (See, for example, pp. 21, 126, 162).
479. Ibid., p. 180.
480. Ibid., p. 147.
481. Ibid., p. 182.
482. The Revival of Handicraft, 1888, JACKSON, p. 225.
483. Notes from Nonesuch, ibid., p. 45.
484. Ibid., p. 30.
485. Ibid., p. 152.
486. Ibid., p. 69.
487. Ibid., pp. 192-3.
488. Ibid., p. 83.
489. "Other stories have only scenery; his have geography" (C. S. LEWIS, Rehabilitations and Other Essays, p. 40).
493. In a letter to Erasmus on 3 September 1517, Thomas More calls his island Non- quama… On the etymological argument, see the excellent exposition by Victor Du-
point as the introduction (pp. 54-5) to his bilingual edition of Kant's *Idea of a *
*universal history*, the (ed. above) there may also be of interest here.

495. Notes from Marnie, Notesuch, pp. 91-2.
496. Ibid., p. 16.
497. Ibid., p. 32.
498. Ibid., p. 11.
500. Ibid., p. 20.
501. Ibid., p. 21.
502. Ibid., p. 148.

504. "He wrote in 1894—*at all probability England will go for—will go in*—"signally, though she is at present so backward" (To Walter Bingham), November 1884, Letters, pp. 204-7), and, in 1885: "The movement's progress is 
*all civilized countries*, some of which are *riper for the change than England's*; *adhesion would put the coping stone on the New System" (To Walter 

506. _Notes from Marnie_, ed., p. 175.
507. _Early England_ 1880, LE MIRE, p. 158; C.W., XVIII, p. 15 (second 

508. _The Day is Coming, Chants for Salvation_, p. 3, C.W., IX, p. 179.
510. _How We Live and How We Might Live_, 1884, Notesuch, p. 379.
512. Ibid., p. 32.
514. Mr. William Morris on Art Matters, 1882, p. 7.
516. _Our Country Right or Wrong?_ 1880, May MORRIS, II, p. 34.
517. _Art and Salvation_, 1884, Notesuch, p. 630.
520. _A Dream of John Bell_, Notesuch, p. 213.
521. To June Allan Morrisey, 11 February 1879, Letters, p. 111.
523. To Andrea Schene, 5 September 1883, ed., p. 188.
524. _Hammersmith Socialist Record_, February 1893, p. 1.
525. C.L._,* national version* (which is what people mean by 'patience') ("Note 
*on News", Commentarial, 21 June 1890, p. 119/1).
526. _Our Country Right or Wrong?_, 1880, May MORRIS, II, p. 53.
527. _How We Live and How We Might Live_, 1884, Notesuch, p. 381.
529. _The Table Turned, in Night's Awakened_, 1887, May MORRIS, II, p. 392.
530. To Andrea Schene, 20 August 1884, Letters, p. 212.
531. To W. Allingham, 28 November 1884, ed., p. 216.
533. _Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century_, 1887, C.W., XXII, p. 388.
536. _Notes from Nether_, Notesuch, p. 80.
537. Some non-necissarily fragments of such an analysis are to be found in _Thompson's_ book, _Jenny_, and more particularly pp. 437-9.
458. “France and Italy”, Communist, October 1885, p. 87/1.


460. A Socialist Poet at Art”, The Dublin Daily Express, 12 April 1886, pp. 3/VI.

461. “Socialism in Dublin and Yorkshire”, Communist, 8 May 1886, p. 83/II.

462. Socialism in Canada and Ontario, p. 190.

463. More from Newcastle, Nonesuch, pp. 72-3 — Morris develops the same idea in his essay A King’s Letter (1888), but he does so with respect to medieval serfs, and it is much more justifiable in a historical period preceding the birth of true national feeling (Nonesuch, p. 268).


466. Art and Labour, 1884, ibid., p. 113.

467. Anarchism and History, 1884, C.W., XXII, p. 513.

468. MARX and ENGELS. The Communist Manifesto, p. 32.


471. MARX and ENGELS. The Communist Manifesto, ibid.


473. Dawn of a New Epoch, 1885, Signet, p. 199. — Cf. — “... modern nationalities are mere artificial devices for the commercial war that we seek to put an end to, and will disappear with it” (“Looking Backward”, Communist, 22 June 1889, p. 195/I), May MORRIS, II, p. 507), “Nations, as political entities, would cease to exist” (To the Rev. George Bainton, 10 April 1888, Letters, p. 287).


476. How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 509.

477. News from Nowhere, ibid., p. 80.

478. Ibid., p. 42.

479. Ibid., p. 80.


481. A Dream of John Ball, Nonesuch, pp. 212, 263.


483. The Lesser Arts, 1877, Nonesuch, p. 515. — Cf. — “A really human morality becomes possible only at a stage of society which has not only overcome class contradictions but has even forgotten them in practical life” (F. ENGELS. Ant-Darwin, p. 108).

484. Art under Plutocracy, 1883, JACKSON, p. 139.

485. To the Rev. George Bainton, 2 April 1888, Letters, p. 283. — Morris is recalling, though slightly distorting, Marx’s definition of commodity fetishism: “There is a definite social relation between men that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things” (Capital, p. 83).

486. Art and Socialism, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 642.


500. “Socialist principles, whether they are right or wrong, profess to deal with a subject no less than the whole of human life” (“The Moral of Last Lord Mayor’s Day”, Communist, 20 November 1886, p. 265/1). — a system which not sees how labour can be freed from its present fetters, and organized unwastefully, so as to produce the greatest possible amount of wealth for the community and for every member of it, but which bears with it its own ethics and religion and aesthetics.”
(The Hope of Civilization, 1885, Sign, p. 115), "I assert first that Socialism is an embracing theory of life, and that as it has an ethical and a religion of its own, also it has an aesthetic" (The Socialist Ideal, 1891, JACKSON, p. 317).


572. Cf. "... social morality, the responsibility of man towards the life of man, in the new order of things, take the place of theological morality, or the responsibility of man to some abstract idea" (Useful Work versus Useless Talk, 1888, Nonesuch, p. 616).


575. True and False Society, 1887, JACKSON, p. 316.


577. See THOMPSON, pp. 333-5.

578. Cobden-Sanderson notes in his diary, under the date of 29 July 1889: "I... called on... the Morries. At the latter's I stayed to hear Mrs. Cunninghame Graham read a paper on 'The Religion of Socialism';" (The Journals of Thomas Jones Cobden-Sanderson, I, p. 283).


580. The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1884, May MORRIS, I, p. 240.


582. To the Rev. George Bainton, 6 May 1888, Letters, pp. 290-1.

583. Ibid., 2 April 1888, ibid., p. 282.

584. Ibid.: When asked by a journalist about his "religion of socialism", Morris declared: "All we ask is that people should hold that their actions are to be regulated by their responsibility to each other as social human beings; this is the religion of socialism" (William SINCLAIR: "Socialism According to William Morris", The Fortnightly Review, October 1910, p. 733).

585. A Dream of John Ball, Nonesuch, p. 245.


588. "Christianity and Socialism", Correspondence, Commonweal, 8 March 1890, p. 77f./MAY MORRIS, II, p. 302.


590. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 298-9


Part III, Conclusion


2. V. DUPONT: L’Utopie et le roman utopique dans la litterature anglaise, p. 506.


6. Ibid., p. 151

7. Ibid., p. 164.

8. Ibid., p. 175.


10. Ibid., p. 193.
Notes to the Text: Part III, Conclusion

11. Cf. the feeling for the beauty of the Earth in all its seasons... (May Morris, Notes, Walthamstow MSS. J. 191); the autumn country, which after all I love as much as the spring” (MACKAIL, II, p. 163). “I am a man of the North,” he said, “I am disappointed at the fine weather we are having here. I had hoped it would rain, so that I could sit indoors and watch it beating on the windows.” (W. Seaven BLUNT: My Diaries, p. 229).


14. Cf. the love of light, colour and clearness, which distinguish the medioeval” (Modern Painters, Pt. IV, ch. XV, §21); “these serene fields and skies of medioeval art... all the pleasure of the medioeval was in stability, definiteness and luminousness” (Ibid., ch. XVI, §1).

15. A short poem composed by him was embroidered into the hangings surrounding his bed at Kelmscott Manor, the last lines of which read: “And for worst and best: Right good is rest” (MACKAIL, II, p. 268).


17. Ibid., p. 126.

18. Ibid., p. 197.


20. Ibid., p. 86.

21. Ibid., p. 191.

22. Ibid., p. 177.

23. Ibid., p. 189.


26. Ibid., p. 68.


28. What is: What should be: What will be, 1893, ibid., p. 357.

29. Useful Work versus Useless Toil, 1884, Nonesuch, pp. 605, 613.


31. A Factory as It Might Be, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 651.


34. A Factory as It Might Be, ibid., p. 646.

35. Useful Work versus Useless Toil, ibid., p. 622.

36. Notes from Nowhere, ibid., p. 40.


38. The Aims of Art, 1886, Nonesuch, p. 591.

39. Notes from Nowhere, ibid., p. 68.


41. Notes from Nowhere, ibid., pp. 91-2.

42. Introduction to his bilingual edition of Nouvelles de nuit en part, p. 74.

43. Notes from Nowhere, ibid., p. 142.

44. Ibid., p. 197.

45. Communism, 1893, Nonesuch, p. 671.

46. Notes from Nowhere, ibid., p. 127.

47. Ibid., p. 128.

48. Ibid., p. 131.

49. Ibid., p. 140.

50. Ibid., pp. 94-6.

51. See above, p. 552.

52. MACKAIL, II, p. 133.

54. A Dream of John Ball, Nonesuch, p. 257
55. News from Nowhere, ibid., p. 182.
56. Ibid., p. 96.
57. Ibid., p. 169.
58. THOMPSON, p. 856.
59. The End and the Means, 1886, May MORRIS, II, pp. 420-1
60. Speech on Opening the Fourth Annual Loan Exhibition, Whitechapel, 1884, ibid., p. 419.
61. To the Rev. George Bainton, 2 April 1888, Letters, p. 284
62. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 320-1.
63. K. MARX: Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, p. 114
64. F. ENGELS to Otto von Boenigk, 21 August 1890, MEW, vol. 37, p. 407. (This letter does not appear to have been published in English and is here translated from the French text.)
66. The Lesser Arts, 1877, ibid., p. 500.
67. The Hopes of Civilization, 1885, Signs, p. 116
68. True and False Society, 1886, JACKSON, p. 298
70. The Society of the Future, 1888, May MORRIS, II, p. 454
71. "To Blackwell", Correspondence, Communalist, 18 May 1889, p. 157/; May
MORRIS II, p. 313.
72. Arts and Crafts of To-day, Preface, 1893, May MORRIS, I, p. 243
73. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 16.
74. What is: What should be: What will be, 1893, May MORRIS, II, p. 356
75. True and False Society, 1886, JACKSON, p. 311.
76. For example: "I cannot give you the details of such an arrangement; to man can
at this stage of the question; but I think I can make the principles clear on which
those details would be founded" (What Socialists Want, 1887, LE MIRE, p. 228.
77. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 289.
78. To the Rev. George Bainton, 10 April 1888, Letters, pp. 287-8
79. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 287-8.
80. See above, p. 477.
81. How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 567
82. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 288. Later the same year he said: "Well, I am
say very little that is not merely negative" (Communism, 1893, Nonesuch, p. 670.
83. As to Bribing Excellence, 1895, May MORRIS, II, p. 524
84. "To Blackwell", ibid., p. 314.
85. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, pp. 17-8.
86. A Factory as It Might Be, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 646
89. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 215.
90. The Society of the Future, 1888, May MORRIS, II, p. 455
92. The Society of the Future, ibid.
93. Useful Work versus Useless Toil, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 616.
94. Socialism, its Growth and Outcome, p. 289.
95. A Factory as It Might Be, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 646.
97. See above, Part III, Chapter II.
101. How We Live and How We Might Live, 1884, Nonesuch, p. 566.
Appendices

1. In my lecture of Oct. 1, I only got as far as this i.e. to the end of the part which shows that Modern Commercial Society shows all four characteristics of Injustice.
2. This letter was written by Morris and countersigned by Edward Aveling, which explains 'I may'.
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THE WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY

The purpose of the William Morris Society and Kelmscott Fellowship is to make the life, work and ideas of Morris better known to the world of today.

The many-sidedness of Morris and the variety of activities in which he engaged bring together in the Society those who are interested in him as a poet, designer, craftsman, printer, pioneer, socialist, dreamer, or who admire his robust and generous personality, his extraordinary vitality, his creative concentration and his courage. Morris aimed for a state of affairs in which all might enjoy the potential richness of human life. He provides a focus for those who deplore the progressive dehumanization of the world in the mid-20th century, and who believe, with him, that the trend is not inevitable.

The Society provides up to date information on topics of interest to its members, arranges talks, meetings, exhibitions and visits and encourages the republication of his works and the continued manufacture of his textile and wallpaper designs, and itself publishes commentaries on and studies of particular aspects of his work and of his achievement in general. The Society publishes a Journal.

The headquarters of the Society are now at Kelmscott House, Morris’ home for the last 18 years of his life. There also is the William Morris Centre (see overleaf).

Membership of the Society is open to all who support its aims and pay a subscription.

For further information please write to the Honorary Secretary.

Kelmscott House, 26 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London W6
THE WILLIAM MORRIS CENTRE

Kelmscott House, William Morris' home from 1878 to 1896, was the scene of the wide-ranging activity of his later years. Here he wove carpets and tapestries, plunged into political theory and its practical applications, conceived of the Kelmscott Press and composed his later prose stories. Conducted by the Trustees of the William Morris Society, the William Morris Centre is a place where Morris lives anew.

The Centre serves both the scholarly and the general interest in Morris and his associates. It is a place where the individual may respond to Morris at his own pace, a place for people rather than things, for discussions as well as study. The primary focus of the Centre is the informal community in residence there engaged in the study of Morris and his circle. Headed by a visiting fellow, appointed each year, the 'household' provides a place for the exchange of ideas. Study bedrooms are available for persons with appropriate projects, preference being given to applications from abroad so as to further the international aspect (applications for residence should be directed to The Administrator).

Also at the Centre is a small representative collection of material relating to Morris. Given time and financial support, the facilities will include records of all Morris' known works, slide and photographic collections, reading and projection equipment, as well as facilities for photography, film-making and videocassette recording and preparation of travelling exhibitions.

A central aspect of the William Morris Centre is the Colloquy series, day-long gatherings for discussions and exploration of the announced theme for the year's work at the Centre. Meeting in the rooms where Morris lived and worked, participants share both the ideas developed at the colloquies and the atmosphere originating from this fine Georgian house on the banks of the Thames.