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The Relevance of Morris's Socialism

By

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Abstract

Since William Morris has earned his reputation as an artist, the seriousness of his socialism is often underestimated. E. P. Thompson re-established the reputation of Morris as a socialist, but he did not totally appreciate Morris's past and the role of art and romanticism in his socialism. Therefore Thompson missed its essential character. This thesis examines Morris's socialism in the round, and argues that Morris's criticism of capitalism is relevant, not only because it provides us with the keys to tackle the crisis the modern global market has brought, but also because it sheds light on the fatal faults of the existing socialist regimes.

The essence of Morris's socialism is the emphasis on pleasurable work. Morris claimed work should be enjoyed as art, i.e. the expression of human pleasure in work, and no society would be genuine without abolishing toil and making every work attractive. Through the comparison with Marx and other socialists, this thesis maintains that Morris is practically the only socialist who stressed the importance of the qualitative aspect of work. Most other socialists focused only on the abolition of private property and the reduction of working hours, namely the quantitative aspect of work.

The relevance of his socialism also lies in the employment of utopia and imagination. Unlike orthodox Marxists, Morris created the image of future society in News from Nowhere, believing it important to urge workers to have vivid images of their own in order to change society. Morris's utopianism is not an adjunct to Marxism, but the specific area Morris emphasised. His romanticism, 'the capacity to make the past present', enabled him to understand sorrow and joy of ordinary people in the past and the present, and to pursue society where everybody is equal and an artist.

**Keywords:** socialism, work, pleasure, art, utopia, romanticism, News from Nowhere, Marxism, William Morris
List of Abbreviations


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Bibliography

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In memory of my husband
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Chapter One   Introduction

[1] The world we live in

We, who live in so-called developed countries, are surrounded by huge volume of goods and services, spoilt for choice in terms of quantity as well as variety. New types of cars, computers, women's clothes, household utensils — production seems limitless. Some goods are bought and consumed. Some are not. Still, in order to satisfy consumers' appetite, they must be produced.

Do we really need all of them? Do we have a space for them? “Do not worry”, some might say: Just get rid of the old ones to make space for the new. Of course we need these new things. They are prettier, more convenient, more powerful, and more energy-saving. Besides, our friends already have them! We know we bought the old ones for the same reason, but that was then and this is now. We have to keep buying, otherwise our economy will shrink.

The United Kingdom is said to produce more than 434 million tones of waste every year, 500kg per person.1 This includes lots of ‘old’ items discarded, although most of them are completely useable and lots of effort and energy had been spent on their production and exchange. In 2001 UK households produced the equivalent weight of 245 jumbo jets per

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1 According to Waste Watch, an environmental charity. It also says “this rate of rubbish generation would fill the Albert Hall in London in less than 2 hours”, http://www.wasteonline.org.uk, 26 September, 2006. This trend is very much the same in developed countries. According to the statistics of the OECD in December 2006, municipal waste (kg/cap) of its membership is: average among 30 countries 550, USA 740, UK 620, Germany 640, France 540, Denmark 670, and Ireland 750, http://www.oecd.org. Selected Environmental Data(1), 23 September, 2007
week in packaging waste. About 17.5 billion plastic bags are given away by supermarkets in Britain.²

Arguably armaments are the most wasteful of all kinds of production. Huge amounts of ammunition, whose sole purpose is destruction, has been produced and stored. At the end of World War II, two atomic bombs killed 214,000 people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki,³ but we now have nuclear weapons which could kill one million times more people than those who died in Japan.⁴ Enormous energy has been poured into the invention and production of nuclear weapons and a variety of other armaments. Some might say that they are not wasteful, because they are used for defense. Nevertheless they certainly serve a destructive purpose. Weapons do not only destroy buildings and the hardware of the 'enemy', but also contaminate fields and rivers, not to mention killing and injuring ordinary civilians.

According to a recent report by Handicap International, a co-recipient of Nobel Peace Prize in 1997, cluster bombs have been used for the last three decades in about 23 countries. They have caused at least 11,044 casualties, 98% of which were civilians. Most vulnerable are young males of under 18 years old, who collect water from wells for

² Ibid.
³ By the end of 1945, about 140,000 people in Hiroshima and 74,000 people in Nagasaki died immediately after the dropping of atomic bombs and because of injuries suffered by it. The sources of the numbers are Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum at http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp and Nagasaki Atomic Bombs Museum at http://www1.city.nagasaki.nagasaki.jp/na-bomb/museum, 26 September, 2006.
⁴ "By around 1985 the total destructive power of nuclear weapons accumulated by the five nuclear powers was estimated at 22,000 megatons. This is equal to 1,470,000 bombs of the type dropped on Hiroshima. Based on simple calculations, this volume is enough to kill about 200 billion people, or the present population of the planet more than 35 times", Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, ibid., 26 September, 2006.
example. Since most countries do not keep records of the casualties caused by the munitions, the available estimates are of limited value. Identifying the cause of injury is also difficult because of nature of this bomb. It can explode long after the conflict is over. Handicap International has collected evidence from confirmed cases. The real number of wasted lives could be much higher than reported since submunitions are left scattered in villages and towns: the explosive remnants of war.

Yet there are many more people who hardly have decent living places and clothes. They even lack staples such as flour and oil, while we afford and enjoy imported peas from Kenya and asparagus from Peru. Big supermarkets transport them by air, because they calculate that it is cheaper than buying them from local farmers. A seafood company in Scotland is planning to close its processing factory and send Scottish prawns to Thailand, so that shell-removal is carried out by cheap Thai workers. The prawns will then be sent back to Britain for sale. Somehow this is the modern mechanism of our society. The 'anarchy' of production has long been a concern of socialists; the apparent failure of the nineteenth century socialists to effectively challenge it should not lead us to ignore their critiques and suggested cures.

The Industrial Revolution radically changed our way of life and production. We have been spending huge amounts of energy on production and consumption since then. The amount was much increased after World War II, and has gathered momentum in these

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5 Fatal Footprint: The Global Human Impact of Cluster Munitions, Handicap International at http://www.handicapinternational.org, 2 November, 2006. This is the first comprehensive study of this lethal bomb.
decades. Because of our modern way of life, the climate cycle of this planet, which used to be measured by a scale of tens of thousands years, seems to be starting to change. We are witnessing the melting of the tundra in Siberia and the break-up of icebergs in Antarctica. Many scientists now fear that unless we act quickly we will not be able to pass to our children the planet in as beautiful and useful a condition as it is now.

Of course we need convenience and 'luxury' to live modern life. However, the feeling that this convenience and luxury is brought to us at the cost of others and the survival of the planet makes one uneasy. A Chinese cockle picker trapped by increasing sea water, made his last call to his family and said a heart-rending farewell on his mobile phone: The advanced technology enabled him this international call. However, the progress did not affect the situation he and his friends faced. They had been lured out from rural China to make a little money, which is still big money for their family back home because of the discrepancy of two economies. They were forced to live in wretched conditions. They worked in the rapidly darkening sea without proper equipment and died, only to offer cheap cockles for our tables. Their death is a poignant symbol of the chasm between the advanced technology and the backwardness of the quality of our society.

Living in such a period and wondering where to tackle the situation, I find William Morris's cry against "destroying the beauty of the very face of the earth" very relevant. Although he was old artist/socialist from another century, Morris was concerned with all the current

6 "We produce and use 20 time more plastic today than we did 50 years ago", wasteonline.org.uk, ibid.
8 'Art under Plutocracy' [1883], Works, vol.23, p.170
issues which weigh on us today – ecology, overproduction, inequality and exploitation.

Morris asked, “what kind of account shall we be able to give to those who come after us of our dealings with the earth, which our forefathers handed down to us still beautiful, in spite of all the thousands of years of strife and carelessness and selfishness?” Working in the late nineteenth century when capitalism was establishing itself, he questioned the value of commercialism:

Is money to be gathered? cut down the pleasant trees among the houses, pull down ancient and venerable buildings for the money that a few square yards of London dirt will fetch; blacken rivers, hide the sun and poison the air with smoke and worse, and it’s nobody’s business to see to it or mend it: that is all that modern commerce, the counting-house forgetful of the workshop, will do for us herein.

In another lecture, he deplored the flood of adulterations:

There is a great deal of sham work in the world, hurtful to the buyer, more hurtful to the seller, if he only knew it, most hurtful to the maker: ... [T]he public in general are set on having things cheap, being so ignorant that they do not know when they get them nasty also; so ignorant that they neither know nor care whether they give a man his due: ... the manufacturers (so called) are so set on carrying out competition to its utmost, competition of cheapness, not of excellence, that they meet the bargain-hunters half way, and cheerfully furnish them with nasty wares at the cheap rate they are asked for, by means of what can be called by no prettier name than

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9 Ibid., p165
10 “The Lesser Arts” [1877], Works, vol.22, p24
His own answer to this situation can be found in *News from Nowhere*, his utopian romance. In this story, for instance, England is described as "a garden, where nothing is wasted and nothing is spoilt, with necessary dwellings, sheds, and workshops scattered up and down the country, all trim and neat and pretty." It is not only the environment that is pretty and not wasted. More importantly, the people there are happy and help each other. Since there is no commerce and the money system has been abolished, there is no need to compete or deceive each other. Indeed, there are no classes. All people are equal and have opportunities to do what they want to do. Work has become leisure and everyone engages in it to fulfil their artistic, creative expression.

The image of a new world 'where nothing is wasted and nothing spoilt' is very refreshing in our heated world, but can it be more substantial than that? Some might think that it is just the dream of a middle-class artist. Indeed, the imagery of Morris's wallpaper in cozy Victorian-style rooms is often used to suggest that Morris was a sentimental middle-class artist. However, this artist was serious enough to commit himself to socialism at the age of 48 and remain active until his death at 62, and cared enough to write his utopian romances in the middle of his busy socialist activities. He campaigned around the country for the cause and delivered hundreds of speeches calling for the realisation of

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11 Ibid., p22
12 Nowhere, p75
13 I will discuss *News from Nowhere* in detail in Chapter Four
14 In the height of his socialist campaign from 1883 to 1890, Morris delivered more than 500 speeches according to Eugene D. Lemire (edited), (1969) *The unpublished lectures of William Morris*, Appendix I. In addition to these recorded speeches, there were numerous informal or spontaneous ones such as speeches on Sundays at the foot of Hammersmith Bridge.
his vision.

Critics might argue, all the same, that the world has evolved rapidly since Morris's time and is getting more and more complicated, that what he said is too naïve to help us understand and tackle our problems. Although G. D. H. Cole claimed "from the day when I first read News from Nowhere my socialist convictions have remained firmly fixed" in 1957,\(^{15}\) even he was dubious about the quality of Morris's proposals in News from Nowhere and reluctant to give Morris's work serious consideration.\(^{16}\) Cole thought that Morris's utopia where everybody becomes an artist was outdated because it would not meet the people's growing wants. Cole argued: "over a large part of the field, mass production will have to be continued for a long time”. He also added, "as far as we can see, there will be a shortage in the world of consumer goods to satisfy everybody's actual wants, it does not follow that the right course is to subordinate everything else to the quest for higher output".\(^{17}\) This was the attitude of the period. When Cole claimed this, many countries including Britain were recovering from the aftermath of World War II, and their economies were growing. Modern equipment was introduced and people were eager to have it. Indeed mass production enabled many people in developed countries to have more and more. The drive to possess more has been accelerated and we now face huge waste we can hardly manage.

Cole died in 1959 and did not see the result of the never-ending pursuit to satisfy

\(^{15}\) G. D. H. Cole(1973) *William Morris as a Socialist*, p1
\(^{16}\) "I was of course aware, even from the first, that News from Nowhere had to be taken as a personal vision of a good society and not as a prophecy of what could come about in my own day or indeed ever, in any complete achievement of mankind", ibid., p2, emphasis added
\(^{17}\) Cole(1973), op. cit., p6.
consumer appetites half a century later. So it is probably unfair to him to say this, still Cole's endorsement of mass production does not stand the test of time. The push for continuous mass-production has brought us to a dead-end. Contrary to Cole's criticism of Morris, Morris's call for a simple but an aesthetic life for all sheds new light on tackling the saturation of goods in developed countries and the shortage of basics in developing countries. Productive power should be used fairly for the well-being of all, even if it means downsizing and altering the lifestyles of privileged peoples or countries.

Of course I do not think that Cole endorsed mass production for its own sake. As a socialist, his intention must have been to bring economic equality to all and to calculate on meeting needs set by industrial production and consumption. Indeed this was the approach that most socialists took—except Morris. However, in the light of the crisis we now face, is this approach feasible? Imagine whether we could raise the living standard of the world's population, for instance, to the level of a British railway worker who generates waste of more or less 500kg every year. If we could ever manage to do it, it would strangle us and all other living things on this planet. Actually China and India are catching up with Western countries, consuming on a huge scale and the impact seems already enormous. It is obvious that "we can't go on like this".¹⁸

In order to question our way of living in this industrialized society, it is time to examine Morris's calls to attend to the qualitative aspect of work and life. At the same time, in order to free ourselves from the obsession of this highly-developed consumer society, we need the power of imagination to visualize what kind of world and society we want. This

¹⁸ See the discussion in: Paul Ginsborg (2005), *The Politics of Everyday Life*
is the other aspect of Morris's relevance. Morris offered his image of ideal society and encouraged others to do the same in order to bring a change. However, most socialists regarded (and still regard) it unnecessary or even harmful to dream it. They denied it as 'utopianism'. Morris was a rare socialist who valued the power of imagination, the power of dreams. I will examine these two aspects of the relevance of his socialism and show that their roots lie in his art: Morris's socialism developed from his experiences as an artist and a romantic – his 'twenty-year combat against competitive commerce on behalf of popular art'\(^\text{19}\).

In order to argue this, I will examine how we should treat the ideas of the past, then describe the method of this research and its structure. Before we start, let us look briefly at Morris's life up to his 'conversion'.


William Morris was born in 1834 in Walthamstow near Epping Forest, the son of a rich financier in the City. Morris provided a brief account of his early life which, whilst subjective, gives us an interesting insight into his development:

I wonder if any of them remember an old story, that was taught me when I was a boy, about a beggar and a rich man. I was naïve enough then, and it used to make me feel very uncomfortable, I remember, though I don't think it had the same effect on my

\(^{19}\) Letters, vol.2, p247
father, who was a city man and very "religious".20

The young Morris loved stories. He claimed to have read all Walter Scott's novels by the age of seven, and transported himself into the romantic past they depicted, enjoying riding in the forest on a pony with shiny armour. When he was thirteen, he was sent to Marlborough College. The college happened to be "a new and very rough school". His interest was not in the lessons at the college but its location. The college was: "in very beautiful country, thickly scattered over with prehistoric monuments and I set myself eagerly to studying these [monuments]".21 By his own account, he loved the past and romances even from early adolescence.

When he went to Exeter College, Oxford in 1853, he described the city in romantic terms – the atmosphere of a medieval town. Morris started studying "very vigorously ... history ... specially mediaeval history".22 Together with a new friend Edward Burne-Jones, he collected rubbings for medieval brasses around the town. It was during this period when Morris's passion for the romantic and beautiful became visible to others. "Much to [his] own amazement", 23 he wrote poems regularly and recited them to his friends. Burne-Jones wrote of Morris: "He is full of enthusiasm for things holy and beautiful and true, and, what is rarest, of the most exquisite perception and judgment in them."24

Morris is today best known as a designer, but he was first famous as a poet in his day.

20 Letters, vol.2, p327
21 Morris's own 'sketch of my uneventful life' [1883], Letters, vol.2, p227-8
22 Ibid., p228
23 Ibid.
24 Georgiana, Burne-Jones, Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones, vol.1, p96, quoted by EPT, p23
Since his college years, he had been a prolific writer. In 1856, for instance, he launched the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine with friends. Writing tales, poems, reviews and so on, Morris was a main contributor and financer for this magazine which ran for twelve issues. In 1858, he published The Defence of Guenevere, a collection of thirty poems. W. B. Yeats and Mrs. Gaskell were amongst his admirers. However, it was The Earthly Paradise that established his status as a poet. The first volume was published in 1868 and the last, fourth volume in 1870. It became famous for the lines of the first poem, ‘An Apology’, “Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time / Why should I strive to set the crooked straight? / Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme /.... To those who in the sleepy region stay / Lulled by the singer of an empty day”. When he was arrested because of his socialist campaign later in 1887, the media referred him as “the author of The Earthly Paradise”.

Morris and Burne-Jones were rebellious youths seeking fairness in society and spiritual enlightenment in life. Influenced by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in art, they sought to free themselves from the ‘authoritarian’ (neo-classicism) of the Royal Academy, joining ‘the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood’ with Rossetti, Millais and others. It was a declaration of a “Crusade and Holy Warfare against the age” of utilitarianism. At that time John Ruskin was teaching in Oxford. His idea, especially that ‘art is the expression of man’s pleasure in labour’ had a great influence on Morris. Morris later said that Ruskin was ‘his master’ before his conversion to socialism. A trip to Northern France to see the beautiful Gothic

25 For the detail, see Fiona MacCarthy(1994) William Morris: A Life for Our Time, p97-101
26 Ibid., p142-148
27 For Morris’s frame of mind and the family situation as the background of the poem, see ibid., chp.16.
28 Works, vol3, p1
architecture of the medieval cathedrals also left a strong impression on Morris. Although Morris had originally intended to enter the church when he went to University, he finally decided to make art his career.

As Burne-Jones flourished as painter, Morris's shortcomings became the springboard for him to explore the wider area of arts and crafts. When he married Jane Burden in 1859, his friend Phillip Webb built the 'Red House' for them. With friends, Morris made furniture and set about the interior decoration of the house. Through making the Red House, the concept of art in everyday life was shaped. He did not regard art only as sculpture and painting. He expanded it to what he later called "the Lesser Art", i.e. decorative arts. To Morris's mind, everything surrounding us should be an object of art. Therefore ordinary people who created them were or should be artists. In this sense, art was the process through which artists were created.

The Red House also prompted the establishment of Morris's design business in 1861. The Firm, as it was known, specialised in designing and making stained glass, tapestries, wallpapers, and furniture. Morris himself was involved in all stages of production, from designing to dyeing and weaving. He was a skilled handicraftsman and proud of it. This was his dialogue with nature. He later said: "everything made by man's hands has a form, which must be either beautiful or ugly; beautiful if it is in accord with Nature, and helps her; ugly if it is discordant with Nature, and thwarts her". The activity of creating beautiful things gave him a pleasure in work, which was the core of his life. While he was

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30 The title of his speech delivered before the Trade's Guild of Learning in 1877
31 'The Lesser Arts', Works, vol.22, p4
happy with his own work, he ached at seeing the squalor of London and the misery of the
great majority.

In 1876 Britain exploded in a heated discussion about the 'Eastern Question', prompted
by the massacre of Christians in Romania by the Turks. When the British government
was about to declare war on Russia, in support of Turkey, Morris felt he could not stand
aloof on this issue. Although he disliked politics, he participated in anti-war meetings,
taking a public role in the organization of anti-war campaigning – a surprising move since
he was, after all, a famous poet and entrepreneur. He became the treasurer of newly
founded organization, the Eastern Question Association (E. Q. A.), collecting petitions
and lobbying Parliament. Moreover he met workers during this campaign and felt their
energy.\(^{32}\) He issued a statement "To the Working-men in England"\(^{33}\) encouraging them
to take the lead in the campaign. However, this early experience ended in bitter
disappointment with Liberals such as Gladstone and parliamentary politics. He wrote to
his wife in February, 1878:

there was as stormy meeting of the E. Q. A. yesterday, full of wretched little
personalities, but I held my tongue – I am out of it now; I mean as to bothering my
head about it: I shall give up reading the Papers, and shall stick to my work.\(^{34}\)

Morris's attention turned to another issue. Britain was in turmoil at that time. Old
buildings were being pulled down to make space for the new economy. Prestigious old
buildings also had to serve their role in making profit under schemes of 'restoration'.

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\(^{32}\) See the letter to \textit{The Daily News}, Letters, vol.1, p324  
\(^{33}\) William Morris(1950) \textit{The Letters of William Morris to His Family and Friends}, Appendix 2  
\(^{34}\) Letters, vol.1, p450  

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Beautiful features of old buildings were being stripped and destroyed along with the handcraftsmanship that made them. Alarmed by the situation, Morris organized the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (S. P. A. B., or Anti-Scrape) in 1877.

Morris did not think that modern workers could 'restore' old buildings. The nature of work had changed so much in the nineteenth century. He said in 1879:

[T]he workman of to-day is not an artist as his forefather was; it is impossible, under his circumstances [of current commercial system], that he could translate the work of the ancient handicraftsman."35

Anti-Scrape activity became his life-long mission.

Morris was a successful owner of the design firm, but he was not happy with the reality that only the rich could afford art. He did not want to make art for a few. He felt "nothing can be done till all rich men are made poor by common consent."36 The degradation of art under commercialism always tormented him. He could not see the way out and often it made him feel helpless. This is well shown in his letter in 1882 to Georgiana Burne-Jones, Edward's wife:

While I work I have the cause always in mind, and yet I know that the cause ... is doomed to fail, at least in seeming; I mean that art must go under, where or how ever it may come up again. ... it does sometimes seem to me a strange thing indeed that a man should be driven to work with energy and even with pleasure and enthusiasm at work which he knows will serve no end but amusing himself.37

35 'Address at the Second Annual Meeting' in 1879, May Morris, vol.1, p123
36 A letter to his fellow artisan and business partner Thomas Wardle, Letters, vol.1, p454
37 Letters, vol.2, p95
This helplessness, however, paralleled his passionate campaign for art. Early lectures of significance were delivered around this time - 'The Lesser Art' in 1877 and 'The Art of the People' in 1879 and many others. In 'The Lesser Art', he deplored the degradation of decorative art and the living situation of ordinary people by commerce: "how can I ask working-men passing up and down these hideous streets day by day to care about beauty?" However, "the decoration of workmanship" should be "the expression of man's pleasure in successful labour". So he called to the audience to help him "in realizing this dream, this hope." As a practical artist, he came to believe that a change of society was inevitable, in order to bring an equal society where everybody might enjoy life, work and art. Indeed, Morris later described these years as "[s]ocialism seen through the eyes of an artist".

His despair finally reached saturation point, leading him to take another step. Despite his earlier disappointment in politics, he started to attend meetings organized by the Democratic Federation at the end of 1882. He joined the organization in January 1883 and declared himself a socialist in front of the audience at University College Hall, Oxford, much to the fury of the organizer. This middle-age conversion of the famous author of 'The Earthly Paradise' and owner of 'a highly select shop in Oxford Street' stunned the public and young socialist workers alike. Refuting an unkind comment on this Oxford

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39 'The Lesser Arts', Works, vol.22 p16
40 Ibid., p23
41 Ibid., p27
42 Letters, vol.2, p230
43 'Art under Plutocracy' [1883], Works, vol.23
44 An Austrian refugee, Andreas Scheu's note illustrates the atmosphere in one of early meetings: 'Banner, who sat behind me, passed me a slip of paper, 'The third man to your right is William Morris.' I had read of but never seen Morris before, and I looked at once in the direction given.
lecture by the Pall Mall Gazette, he wrote:

[M]y life ... of twenty years has been one of combat against competitive commerce on behalf of popular art. ... [A]n artist, a workman, and an employer of labour, who began his career with mere enthusiastic admiration of medieval art, should have been driven into active Socialism by his experience of practical dealings with men of all classes ... 45

Morris rightly sensed that joining a political movement was not going to be plain sailing. 46 More than ten years of his campaign for socialism were filled with splits and sectarian bickering. First, the authoritarian attitude of the founder of the Social Democratic Federation, Henry M. Hyndman 47 and disagreements about the use of parliamentary tactics drove him to form a new organization with Ernest Belfort Bax, Edward Aveling, Eleanor Marx and others. They set up the Socialist League in December 1884. Morris became the editor of its journal, Commonweal. He was well aware he was an amateur in this field. He wrote to a comrade in February 1885: “I feel miserably uncomfortable at having any leadership put upon me, but hope I shall be able to learn to do whatever is necessary.” 48

He did learn. He read economics, including Karl Marx’s Das Kapital, which had not been his area before. He energetically campaigned for socialism and met workers all around

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45 Letters, vol.2, p247
46 “if we wait for perfection in association in these days of combat we shall die before we can do anything”, ‘Art under Plutocracy’, delivered at University College Hall, Oxford in 1883, Works, vol.23, p191
47 “it would seem as if he[Hyndman] could take no place in the organization save that of master”, Letters, vol.2, p363
48 Letters, vol.2, p385
the country. At the same time he wrote stories such as *The Pilgrims of Hope*\(^4^9\) based on the Paris Commune, and *A Dream of John Ball*\(^5^0\) based on Watt Tyler's revolt in 1381, hoping that workers could share the thought and emotions of these dead people. Georgiana Burne-Jones was concerned about his art and health, but he answered:

> You see, my dear, I can't help it. The ideas which have taken hold of me will not let me rest: nor can I see anything else worth thinking. How can it be otherwise, when to me society ... seems mere cannibalism; nay worse, ... is grown so corrupt, so steeped in hypocrisy and lies .... One must turn to hope, and only in one direction do I see it – on the road to Revolution: everything else is gone now.\(^5^1\)

Britain in the late 1880s was simmering with protests for shorter working hours and an end to unemployment. A demonstration of the unemployed was quashed by the police in February 1886 – so-called "Black Monday", and in November 1887 – "Bloody Sunday", which Morris himself led. Morris understood and supported the workers' demand for employment, but he always maintained the essential problem of society was not the quantitative aspect of work but its qualitative value.

The socialist movement in Britain was then in its cradle. On the Continent many attempts for revolution had been already made since 1848. These culminated, in France, in the organization of the first workers' commune – the Paris Commune in 1871. In contrast, the British workers' movement had become nearly invisible after the failure of the Chartist movement. 'Socialism' was a dangerous European idea associated mainly

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\(^4^9\) Written in 1885-6. For more details see MacCarthy, op. cit., chapter 15

\(^5^0\) Written in 1886-7. See ibid.

\(^5^1\) October, 1885, Letters, vol.2, p480
with political refugees from France, Germany and Austria. The Democratic Federation was only founded in 1881 by Hyndman, one of the first to read Marx, as a radical rather than a socialist party. Two years later it declared for socialism changing the name to the Social Democratic Federation. Even then Morris later argued "the British working-classes knew nothing of Socialism, and, except for a few who had been directly influenced by the continental movement, were, on the surface and by habit hostile to it." There were only a handful of socialists. Morris himself described the pioneers of socialism as "a few working-men ..., a sprinkling of the intellectual proletariat ..., one or two outsiders in the game political; a few refugees from the bureaucratic tyranny of foreign governments; and ... an unpractical, half-cracked artist or author."

The pioneers were not able to lead the simmering workers movement very well. They experienced one split after another. In 1887 those who favoured parliamentary tactics defected from the Socialist League and re-joined the Social Democratic Federation. Then in the League, arguments with anarchists became irreconcilable in 1890. Morris's editorship of Commonweal, the journal of the League, was taken and eventually he withdrew from the League, forming the Hammersmith Socialist Society. For Morris, who sought fairness, peace and fellowship, this infighting was quite unbearable. He lamented to his comrade, John Bruce Glaser: "there seems to be a sort of curse of quarrelling upon us. ... I find that living in this element is getting work rather too heavy for me. It is lamentable that Socialists will make things hard for their Comrades."
However, the arguments with the anarchists gave Morris an insight into the vision of future society. He understood the temperament of anarchists and shared their hatred of ‘state socialism’. He hoped that people would be free to develop their possibilities in every direction. Still, what he wanted was not anarchy but what he called society. The difference, Morris thought, was that society had some rules to accommodate the diverse interests of its members. He condensed this vision into his story, News from Nowhere and published it in the middle of the split between the anarchists and Morris’s group. In his utopian society, people were free and yet integrated into the fabric of society. Engels, the ‘authority’ of the socialist movement at that time, criticized ‘Utopian Socialism’, but Morris dared to use this style and visualized the details of a future society. It became his best-known story.

During those busy days of his campaign, he continued to work for Anti-Scrape and the Firm. He also worked as an examiner at South Kensington Museum. He wrote many poems and romances and established Kelmscott Press to publish beautiful books. This heavy workload gradually took its toll. His health had failed considerably by 1895. In September 1896, he wrote a short letter to Georgiana: “Come soon. I want a sight of your dear face”, and to Glasier: “I am very ill but am trying to get better.” He died in October that year.

55 Friedrich Engels, Socialism: Utopian and Scientific in 1880
56 Current Victoria and Albert Museum
57 Letters, vol.4, p391
58 Ibid.
So, how should we approach the ideas of the man who died in the nineteenth century? Why does the thought in the past matter to us at all? We might appreciate past thought out of intellectual curiosity, but in that case their relevance is not necessarily an issue. Yet when we seek to challenge the status quo with a particular set of ideas, the relevance of those ideas is important. The relevance might be assessed in three ways: 1) in terms of the quality of the ideas one seeks to apply, 2) the currency of the concerns addressed, and 3) the generality of the solution. A thought is relevant, only when it has a transcendent quality beyond the thinker's time, when we apply it to a period which shares comparable problems, and when it can be applied outside of the historical parameter of its formation.

I will discuss the first element in detail in this thesis, but first let me explain the third element. When we examine an idea of the past and contemplate its relevance, we should recognize the age when the idea was formed. A particular idea was the result of a particular human beings' concrete activities and thinking. S/he lived through, was delighted or suffered, agreed with, or challenged the ideas which he/she discussed with their contemporaries. No one can escape from their age's influence, positively or negatively. They might have tried to transcend their age and some might have succeeded, yet their roots were in their period. We should recognize the particularities of the thinker's time to clearly understand their ideas.

However, if we think every idea is time-bound and only relevant to problems at that time,
there is no interest in history and the history of ideas. Nor is there interaction. Yet we talk to past theorists just as we reflect on our own condition when we read classic novels. In this way, the present develops through the past. Some or most elements might have changed, but history is continuously carried out by human beings. Humans continuously reflect on history and the history of their ideas – shaping the present by engaging with the past. Doctors say that amnesia patients are not able to make plans. If we cut ourselves off from the past, there is no present where we can stand to consider the future, we become amnesiacs.

Then how should we strike a balance between respecting the historical locations of thinkers and appreciating the enduring value of their ideas? Since the late 1960 there has been a methodological debate in the history of ideas. David Boucher and Paul Kelly’s useful summary suggests an important aspect of the debate, which touches on these issues and helps provide a solution. One aspect of the debate focuses on the specificity of political questions. There are two broad positions. Some philosophers argue that political questions are not time-bound and “perennial questions [are] addressed over two and a half thousand years”.\(^59\) For instance, George Sabine argues: “[p]olitical problems and situations are more or less alike from time to time and from place to place.”\(^60\) On the other hand, so-called New Historians – followers of R. G. Collingwood like Quentin Skinner – contend that “there are no perennial problems in philosophy, only individual answers to specific questions.”\(^61\)

\(^{59}\) David Boucher and Paul Kelly(2003) *Political Thinkers: From Socrates to the Present*, p15

\(^{60}\) Ibid.

\(^{61}\) Ibid.
The usefulness of the debate, as Boucher and Kelly argue, lies in showing the possibility of a middle line. Too much generalization of 'timeless questions' can be distorting. A lack of historical sensitivity is likely to lead to the misinterpretation of famous philosophers of the past. Not even a genius can escape the restrictions of time entirely, and we should not ascribe to earlier thinkers ideas that belong to our own age. Moreover if we forget the philosopher's location, we might risk placing "too heavy a reliance upon epistemic authority, the tyranny of the expert" as Boucher and Kelly put it.\textsuperscript{62} Such epistemic authority adds weight to our preferred arguments. Aristotle's work was used in this way during the thirteenth century to the seventeenth century when he was always cited as 'the philosopher'.\textsuperscript{63} However, dissolving all thought into individual answers to specific questions is also too crude. We can and do examine Aristotle's ideas without necessarily looking for ready-made answers to questions.

In reality, the two sides of the argument are not so far apart. For instance, Paul Ward argues that "the political and social theories of men always concern the problems of their own culture and age, and are to be understood only in that context". However, he also adds "there are tides in the affairs of men, ebbs and flows of human events, which have been recurrent since human life began".\textsuperscript{64} Similarly Leo Strauss, "the most stalwart adherent to the idea of perennial issues", notes "we cannot reasonably expect that the fresh understanding of classical political philosophy will supply us with recipes for today's use.... Only we living today can possibly find solutions to the problems."\textsuperscript{65}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{62} Ibid., p17
\footnotetext{63} Ibid.
\footnotetext{64} Ibid., p16
\footnotetext{65} Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
The difference is possibly exaggerated by the debate about a related issue probed especially by Skinner\textsuperscript{66}: how to recover the intention of the author. If this is the primary task of the historian of ideas, the historical context becomes central. However, context is important but not central to the purpose, if the purpose is to engage in a "conversation" with the past writer, which is the approach I take in this study. I will discuss it more in the next section.

Boucher and Kelly neatly summarize the argument: "most historians of political thought agree with both Collingwood and Skinner that, while we do not learn directly from the past the solutions to our own present practical problems, we do nevertheless gain something of practical value."\textsuperscript{67} I agree. And this is the position that is adopted in this study.

Yet, 'something of practical value' is still vague. What is that something? In order to consider how to proceed, Quentin Skinner's analysis of the 'historical juncture' suggests an interesting aspect. He believes that the role of historians is to excavate the historical juncture and "provide uncovered information and leave people to ruminate". Although my areas of interest in history are apparently different from his, the approach is informative. In the last chapter of \textit{Liberty before Liberalism}, 'Freedom and the historian', Skinner asks himself "what is supposed to be the practical use ... of our historical studies."\textsuperscript{68} To him that is the question "all professional historians ought, ... to stand ready to answer, at least to the satisfaction of their own consciences" and in order to

\textsuperscript{66} See 'Meaning and Understanding in the history of ideas' for discussion, Quentin Skinner, in \textit{Meaning and Context} (1988), p29-67
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., emphasis added
\textsuperscript{68} Quentin Skinner(1998) \textit{Liberty before Liberalism}, p107
dismiss the accusation of "antiquarianism".69 Skinner's own answer to the question is to provide people with "information relevant to the making of judgments"70 and prevent them from "becoming too readily bewitched".71 Why do we become too readily bewitched? It is because, he argues, there is a set of concepts that "we now employ unselfconsciously and, to some degree, even uncomprehendingly".72 He suggests:

If this is so, ... then one of the ways – perhaps the only way – of improving our understanding will be to go back to the historical juncture at which this way of thinking about politics was first articulated and developed.73

In this sense, Skinner thinks the intellectual historian's role to be a kind of archaeologist – "bringing buried intellectual treasure back to the surface ... and enabling us to reconsider what we think of it."74

It does not mean that he thinks of using the past to solve problems in the present. His purpose is to help readers "appreciate how far the values embodied in our present way of life, and our present ways of thinking about those values, reflect a series of choices made at different times between different possible worlds."75 So he provides readers with relevant information and "then leave[s] them to ruminate."76 When we consider the notion of 'historical juncture', Skinner's expression, 'the intellectual historian as a kind of archaeologist' is interesting. If that buried intellectual treasure is nothing to do with us in modern times, it might serve little purpose except admiring its 'beauty' as a model of

69 Ibid., p108, emphasis added
70 Ibid., p118
71 Ibid., p116
72 Ibid., p110
73 Ibid., emphasis added
74 Ibid., p112
75 Ibid., p117
76 Ibid., p118
intellectual pursuit (although, like Skinner, I see nothing wrong in admiring and enjoying intellectual works of the past). Still, when our unselfconscious way of thinking is rooted in the past, we should set out to examine "the historical juncture" and excavate the past in order to understand the present.

I must make it clear that Skinner's own understanding of 'junctures' is philosophical: he is concerned to show how concepts used today are not only contestable by the standards of the past, but that modern philosophers should be reminded of earlier conceptualizations of philosophical ideas in order to prevent political philosophy from ossifying. Skinner's own work has focused in particular on Machiavelli and Hobbes—uncovering junctures in ideas of liberty and the state. His interest, then, is philosophical. However, the idea of the juncture might be adapted to shifts in political/social history. And I will apply it to the juncture in capitalism, when feudalism was abandoned and attempts of modern globalization were born. This is the issue of the second element of relevance I mentioned earlier, i.e. the similarity of the two times—the nineteenth century and our time.

When we face the reality of the twenty-first century and want to change it, we cannot help thinking how the situation has come to this point. One could go back to various points of history depending on the subject of analysis. It is possible to analyse the post-WWII period in order to look into radical changes of consumer habits, for instance. My concern here, however, is to turn to capitalism, i.e. the juncture when capitalism became a subject of analysis. (I believe that many problems caused by the 'globalization' of our time have a root in that time, but I will explain this connection later). At any rate, the nineteenth century is, borrowing Skinner's term, the 'historical juncture' for us.
society grew in that century and most of our sense of value was formed there, although we employ it 'unselfconsciously'. Let me explain it from the sense about money we now regard as a matter of course.

We seldom question our present way of thinking, i.e. the way that we put a price tag on almost everything. Everything, including the most precious human ability of creation, is made into commodity and measured by its price. Successful businessmen might give a tip, "keep making profit. As soon as you think it's enough and stand idle, you will relapse".

Calculating everything in terms of money was not a popular or accepted way of thinking until the nineteenth century. Shylock – a character who embodied this kind of calculation – is represented as a deviant to the norm in the sixteenth century. The phenomenon spread with the rise of capitalism. Before capitalism, other values prevailed. Loyalty, honour, religion were respected, and crude greed for money was despised. 77 Commerce was not the usual business of people. Ordinary people, mostly peasants, just managed to produce products to sustain their families and to supply the prestation. 78

They made necessary household products or clothes for their use, and if possible they might have exchanged products with neighbours. It was not a commercial activity but a

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77 Ferdinand Tönnies analysed the collapse of medieval spiritual ties and the rise of modern society in 1887. He described the individualistic nature of modern society: "Nothing happens in Gesellschaft that is more important for the individual's wider group than it is for himself. ... Nobody wants to do anything for anyone else, nobody wants to yield or give anything unless he gets something in return that he regards as at least an equal trade-off", Community and Civil Society(2001), p52

78 'Prestation' is a payment of money, a toll or duty, or the rending of a service of peasants to feudal lords in the medieval period.
simple exchange of goods. Only after the rise of medieval cities, peasants who lived in the surrounding areas of the cities had opportunities to sell. When they could afford to produce anything more than subsistence, people sold their surplus products and gained extra money. Until then, products must have been appreciated among neighbours for their own usefulness and/or beauty. They were not more highly valued or disregarded because of the relationship of supply and demand or other speculative motives.

Of course that period had its own problems and I have no intention of romanticizing it. We just need to know that our recent sense of values has emerged from the collapse of pre-modern values. Society has changed its appearance and, possibly, certain natures as well. We have to bear this in mind. Still, there are some more interesting parallels between Morris's time and ours.

In his time, Europe was at the height of imperialism. Seeking natural resources, cheap labour and markets, Britain had been competing with other empires and colonizing many countries in Asia and Africa. India was colonized and Afghanistan was invaded. People in the colonies were forced to abandon their old style of living and accept the new economic system as cheap labourers. They were thrown under the juggernaut of capitalism. Profits made in colonies were siphoned out and many people were left in the most acute poverty. The tragedy did not end in colonized countries. Because of cheap cotton from India, for instance, the Manchester cotton industry was hit hard. Many were made bankrupt and workers were thrown into poverty. Workers and their families had

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79 As to the rise of cities in the Middle Age and the origin of the 'burgers' – bourgeoisie, see Henri Pirenne (1952) Medieval Cities: Their Origin and Revival of Trade, especially p213-p234

80 Edward Howell reported on a depression in the 1880s: "reduction of 5% in wages, ...14,000,000
no choice but to go elsewhere, seeking other low-waged jobs in equally miserable conditions.

Now we do not have colonies – most became independent after the World War II. The governments of developing countries have the same rights as their developed counterparts in the United Nations. Nowadays it is not empires that invade other countries. Under the banner of ‘Free Trade’ and ‘Free Market’, big corporations and financial institutions in powerful countries go everywhere in the world and hunt opportunities to get cheaper resources, labour, and markets. Since the 1970s governments, such as President Reagan’s and Margaret Thatcher’s have negotiated in world-wide organizations like WTO to ensure market deregulation. Calling for ‘trade liberation’ and ‘flexible labour markets’, they strip off protections of local industries and workers in developing countries if there is any protection. They secure free space for their corporations to manoeuvre.

Domestically, governments promote privatisation and deregulation. Public sectors which have been the pillars of welfare system are privatised. Transport, telecommunications, electricity, water, and even prisons are privatised, because, neo-liberals claim, they will be run more efficiently. Whether or not the privatised railways, prisons, or others are efficient is debatable. One thing that is certain is that the owners of private companies make sure they are efficient in making profit and satisfying shareholders. This inevitably includes curtailing working conditions and trade union

spindles were stopped and about 50,000 hands reduced to idleness” in his leaflet, The Crisis in the Cotton Trade (1892, Liverpool). As to the fluctuation of the Manchester cotton industry in relation to India and other countries, see also http://www.spinningtheweb.org.uk, the site supported by Manchester public libraries and others. 1 October, 2007
People in weaker countries have to accept this privatization and deregulation as well. Thanks to the deregulation in 1990s, British transport companies, for instance, went abroad and bought bus companies in New Zealand, Australia and others. They often take controversial management decisions and press one-sided policies towards trade unions which were not practised in the original companies. Governments in developing countries have to accept the terms laid by the IMF or the World Bank. If they do not implement 'Structural Adjustment', they do not get necessary investments. However, many incidents show that foreign investment often behaves for its own interest not for the interest of the recipient countries. The privatization of New Zealand Railway is a typical example. A consortium led by an American company, Wisconsin Central Railway, bought the Railway (and renamed it Tranz Rail). After selling lands that it owned, the company lost interest and went back to America. The infrastructure of the railway had to be bought back by the state and the rest had to be offered to the market.

81 See, for example, about a series of enactment of ‘The Employment Law’ by the Thatcher government in 1980s, Bob Crow(2005) ‘Privitization and workers’ rights’ in Argument against G8, p153
82 Typical examples are Stagecoach and First. The Stagecoach Group plc is not only operating in USA and Canada, but also in New Zealand since 1992. See http://www.stagecoach.co.nz/, 11 February, 2007
83 See how First Student , the subsidiary of the First Group in USA, behaved to the right of organization, Crow, 2005, p160, and ITF News on 7 Feb, 2007 at www.itfglobal/news-online, 1 March 2007
85 As to how free ‘free trade’ is, see Susan George(2005) ‘Trade’ in Argument against G8, p112
86 Later the company was purchased by another privatized railway, Canadian Railway. As to the history of Wisconsin Central Railway, see Canadian Railway’s site, http://www.cn.ca/about/company_information/history/en_AboutWisconsinCentral.shtml, 17 May, 2007.
It is easy to imagine that with each transaction trade unions struggled for securing working conditions.

Yet, this is not colonization or imperialism, because it is not forced by arms, but implemented by the 'free will' of developing countries and ornamented with a 'good intention' of the IMF and the World Bank. In the entrance lobby of the World Bank, a motto is hung rather modestly – "Our dream is a world free of poverty". However, even the inventor of the phrase ‘Washington Consensus’, John Williamson, admits that the results of its policies have been "disappointing, to say the least, particularly in terms of growth, employment and poverty reduction". The gap between the rich and the poor has widened further. This is called globalization and neo-liberalism. It does not look the same as imperialism after the experiences of the colonies' fights for independence and democracy, but harsh competition for profitability is the same motive as ever. Money instantly pours into a potential country for profit and suddenly outflows after having thoroughly exploited the opportunity. We saw many examples such as the Asian currency crisis in the late 1990s. Owing to much advanced technology, the trend is accelerated and rather 'purified' in making profits as if money itself has a will. People are dehumanized and become mere tools or materials for producing profits.

These are the 'hegemonal values' of our age. Endless competition for profits and the consumption fueled by it is now reaching the point that several billion years' climate of our

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87 For the campaign to take the railway back to public ownership, see RMT Union's leaflets 'Take back the Track' at http://www.rmtunion.org.nz/topics_trac.htm, 11 February, 2007
earth is changing. It is now the time for us to 'stand back' from our present, as Skinner puts it:

This awareness [of how our current values were formed] can help to liberate us from the grip of any one hegemonal account of those values and how they should be interpreted and understood. Equipped with a broader sense of possibility, we can stand back from the intellectual commitments we have inherited and ask ourselves in a new spirit of enquiry what we should think of them.89

When we stand back and contemplate the problems of our time, we can still employ the criticism of capitalist society by the nineteenth century thinkers.

There were many thinkers who analysed and criticized capitalism and called for socialism along with Morris. Marx and Engels were probably most prominent among them. However, Morris's socialism has a particular relevance at the juncture compared with other socialists, especially orthodox Marxists. At the turn of the century, followers of Marxism led the working class in the Continent and Britain, and eventually built the Soviet Union – the first state in history built by workers and farmers. Sadly for working people, however, it and the states modeled on it became new kinds of authoritarianism. Perhaps, as a result, socialism, too, has been written off. Far from living free in happy communes, people were spied on by the government and made suspicious of each other. Most of the 'socialist' states crumbled from within at the end of the twentieth century. Among many problems of those regimes, one of the worst was that they did not free workers from forced labour and exploitation. Under a five-year programme or other planned by the central government, a considerable amount of work was imposed on workers. (A

89 Skinner, op. cit., p117, emphasis added
Russian word 'norma' became notorious to neighbouring Japanese workers, meaning a heavy volume of 'standard' work they had to deal with at any cost within a certain number of hours – it is still used as one of a few words imported from Russia). Work was still repulsive in that society.

We cannot directly attribute the failure of these states to Marx's theory, of course. The relevance of Marx's idea and the analysis of the breakdown of the Soviet bloc present enormous problems. The point here is that Morris's contribution to the debates about capitalism can help us in our analysis of globalization. The core of his socialism was his proposal about work, our essential activity for being human. He insisted that even if working hours were reduced, socialism would not be realized "[a]s long as the work is repulsive"90. He was practically the only socialist thinker/activist who demanded that in socialist society "all labour, even the commonest, must be made attractive",91 and suggested how this might be achieved.

He also believed in the necessity of working class revolution to change society and borrowed his analysis of capitalist economics from Marx. Morris's call for gaining pleasurable labour is all the more relevant in the light of the collapse of the former socialist states. In thinking about labour and the possibility of making all labour art, Morris challenged the organization of capitalist societies, as well as its unjust system of production and exchange. Morris's criticism shed light on the simple negation of the market system in favour of the planned economy by a central government in the Soviet

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90 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil' [1884], Works, vol.23, p
91 Ibid., p111
bloc. Morris's socialism helps us to 'ruminate' on our present values with 'a new spirit'. This is what I described as the first element - the quality of a thought. We can consider it 'relevance' in a narrow sense. Confronting nineteenth century capitalism directly as a practical artist, Morris was able to get to the bottom of the problem. Since he saw the question in essence, his argument is relevant. This nearly forgotten idea of a marginal British socialist is worth excavating.

[4] The method of the research

Then how do I examine Morris's socialism? In my examination, I will try to reconstruct the full range of his socialist thinking. Yet, this reconstruction is not biographical, so I will always keep the focus of my task to answer the questions set in the previous section.

Some writers approach the evaluation of a philosopher's thought by considering the value or contemporary relevance of separate ideas. For example, Benedetto Croce adopted this approach in his study of Hegel: What Is Living and What Is Dead in the Philosophy of Hegel. Following a similar course, Jon Elster evaluates Marx by considering 'What Is Living and What Is Dead in the Philosophy of Marx'. Here Elster lists as dead parts: scientific socialism, dialectical materialism, teleology and functionalism, Marxian economic theory, and the theory of productive forces and relations of production. On the other hand, the dialectical method, the theory of alienation, the theory of exploitation, Marx's theory of technical change, and his theory of class

92 Jon Elster(1986) An Introduction to Karl Marx
consciousness, class struggle and politics are elements judged to be alive. What exactly he means by these categories is probably a matter of discussion, but setting that aside, is it possible to break up Marx's thought into these sections and evaluate them individually?

In his youth Marx was a law student and part of a philosophy-group called the Young Hegelians. He developed his idea of communism over time. His thought evolved through his life, and this is often the case for others as well. Still, since it was the thought of one human being, all his ideas were interconnected. Some were directly related, and others were probably suggested by the intentional or accidental revision of earlier ideas. Can we judge them right or wrong item by item? I guess we could if we treat them as mathematical theorems, but I am not sure the same goes in the case of political thought. Elster's approach suggests we can take lessons directly from the past – not just ruminate on junctures. I do not take this approach.

I will examine Morris's thought as a whole. Although my focus is on his political thought, I will consider his artistic and literary pursuits as well. Thought is the result of an interaction with reality. How reality is seen, problems identified and solutions decided is determined by one's whole existence. Morris's socialism cannot be understood in isolation from his appreciation of art. It was his love of art that led him to the criticism of a society. Through art, he came to realize that art was an expensive pastime for the rich and that the majority of people lived in sordid conditions with no money or time to spare for art.

93 Ibid., p186 - 199
Morris himself summed up his position in 'How I became a Socialist':

[T]he study of history and the love of practice of art forced me into a hatred of the civilization which ... would turn history into inconsequent nonsense, and make art a collection of the curiosities of the past which would have no serious relation to the life of the present.94

To him, art and life were inseparable. He thought those who wondered whether art and cultivation should go before the knife and fork or vice versa missed the point. The roots of art “must have soil of a thriving and unanxious life.”95 We cannot get a grip on his socialist idea without understanding what art meant for Morris.

Since political thought is the production of a human's philosophical struggle with ever-developing reality, it is important and more interesting to reconstruct the ideas as a whole and enter into a conversation with him/her than to evaluate work item by item as Elster does. By questioning and conversing – why did you think so?, why did you choose this? – we will be able to make their idea clearer.

The reconstruction of Morris's idea as a whole does not at all mean that we affirm or deny it in its totality. Morris's ideas are open to criticism.96 The evaluation of ideas does not necessarily result in a judgment about rightness or wrongness. Some parts can be left just as matters of taste and idiosyncrasy. What I am aiming at is a conversation with Morris. Imagining Morris's situation as closely as possible, and asking him why/how he

94 'How I became Socialist' [1894], Works, vol.23, p280
95 Ibid., p281
96 Krishan Kumar notes: “A frequent criticism of Morris’s utopianism is that in his various accounts of the new society it is always ‘a beautiful bright morning ... of early June’” in his footnote, Nowhere, p7
made his choices, I will try to talk with him. By 'talk' I mean that I try to avoid dogmatizing or simplifying texts. Morris and I talk as equals and I am free to ask him why he thought as he did. Morris's non-authoritative attitude to speech and writings\textsuperscript{97} will make this easier.

So this is a conversation between Morris, who faced his reality with his personality, and a contemporary researcher who faces her own time and problems. In order to tackle my time, I will converse with Morris about how he struggled with his time. Neither of us can escape from our own realities. This does not mean that we are trapped in our time. Something universal lies on the conversation. A general statement without concreteness sounds hollow. As Stephen Ingle says in a discussion about the poetry of Philip Larkin, personal despair strikes our heart with universality: "precisely because we recognize the universality of Larkin's despair ... this poetry does indeed rise above the contingent, speaking the truth of our own experience".\textsuperscript{98} Through the conversation with Morris, I hope something universal – relevant will result.

In order to reconstruct Morris's thinking, I will draw on his correspondence,\textsuperscript{99} his diary written at the height of the socialist activities,\textsuperscript{100} his lectures about socialism and art, stories and poems as material. In order to elucidate Morris's thought, I also examine the

\textsuperscript{97} See, for instance, 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil', Works, vol.23, p112

\textsuperscript{98} Stephen Ingle(2002) Narratives of British Socialism, p9

\textsuperscript{99} Thanks to the painstaking efforts made by Norman Kelvin, we now have the comprehensive collection of Morris's letters. Although there is evidence to believe that some very private letters were destroyed after Morris's death, Kelvin's collection is very useful source to know Morris's life and personality.

\textsuperscript{100} He kept his diary because he thought it might be useful later on, but somehow failed to publish it. Thanks to Florence Boos, we now have William Morris's Socialist Diary (1985), edited and annotated by Florence Boos (London, Journeyman)
ideas of his contemporaries and modern socialists and the texts of Morris's researchers.
I will take the same approach towards them as to Morris and 'talk' with them.

[5] The structure of the thesis

As I explained, I will argue in this thesis that Morris's critique of capitalism and his utopian solution – his conception of work as art, in particular – is relevant. In order to show this, I will: 1) review Morris's relationship to art and romanticism through consideration of the work of E. P. Thompson, 2) examine his conception of work, in relation to 'authority' of Marx, and 3) evaluate Morris's vision as described in News from Nowhere.

In order to appreciate the unique relevance of Morris's socialism, it is essential to understand his past as an artist. However, the evaluation of Morris's past as an artist and romantic is always very controversial. Making this evaluation is an important key for this study. To do so, I will examine E. P. Thompson's book first, since Thompson established a particular view of the relationship which has been very influential and which I wish to challenge.

Thompson's extensive book William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary established Morris's reputation as a socialist. Thompson closely examined Morris's transition from artist to socialist, yet his interpretation of Morris's past is problematic. He sees the romantic Morris as passive and sentimental. Morris, he argues, gained "an active view
of history” after his conversion to socialism in 1883. He says “[Morris’s] favourite terms [such as] ‘beauty’ and ‘pleasure’ carry the associations gained in Morris’s early romantic revolt” and they “were the hardest to shake off.”

For Thompson it is important to show that when Morris tried to shake off ‘regressive’ romanticism, he gained a Marxist view such as class struggle and became a brave revolutionary. Though Thompson amended his tone in the postscript to the second edition in 1976, and argued that Morris transformed British romanticism as a result of his conversion, he still maintained that it was Morris’s jettisoning of the romantic heritage that enabled him to do so. Thompson is interested in the result of Morris’s conversion, not in the process. To me this approach is flawed, because we cannot grasp the uniqueness and relevance of Morris’s socialism if we ignore this process. Examining Morris’s speeches before and after his ‘conversion’ to socialism in 1883, I will show that it was Morris’s romanticism and love of art that made him choose socialism. His love of medieval art underpinned his repulsion towards the degradation of art and society. He hated the flood of adulteration and loved the craftsmanship of the past. The system, where human beings could not enjoy their work and life, was fundamentally wrong, he thought. Therefore he wanted to bring about society where work became pleasure and everybody was an artist in one way or other.

Against Thompson, I argue that Morris did not try to ‘shake off’ his romantic attachment to

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101 EPT, p239
102 Ibid., p685
103 See, for instance, ibid., p779, “certain critical and controlling Socialist concepts ... were integrated with [Morris’s Romantic critique], and in such a way as to constitute a rupture in the older tradition, and to signal its transformation”
'beauty' and 'pleasure', but held these values high in his socialism. For Morris, work was to be pleasure and an activity which produces beauty. This is the key to understanding Morris's socialism. Therefore my next task is to examine his concept of work and its relationship to art.

Since Morris himself worked as a handicraftsman, his approach seems to be more concrete and relevant than other socialists, including Marx, the authority in this field. Morris thought and felt art should be the expression of people’s joy in work. It was painful to him that this 'man's everyday companion' turned into toil and agony to workers under capitalist society. Although his understanding of essential labour seems at first similar to Marx's unalienated labour, through the comparison of their writings, I identify important differences between the two men’s concepts. And this difference is crucial to understand the relevance of Morris's socialism. Among socialists who were mainly concerned with private property and the regulation of the length of working time, Morris was one of few socialists who emphasised the importance of the qualitative side of work. Morris believed that true society could not be built without pleasurable work.

The true society he dreamt of was depicted in News from Nowhere. Because of its leisurely atmosphere and medieval appearance, the story is often regarded as an old-fashioned utopia and seldom examined seriously as socialist theory. However, Morris condensed his vision, including pleasurable work in it.

Laurence Davis criticizes News from Nowhere as old-fashioned and 'perfectionist' –
seeking a "perfect ethical harmony" which threatens "individual freedom".\textsuperscript{104} Morris's utopia is illiberal, in Davis's view, because it imposes a set of norms and assumes standards to which all must aspire. So he proposes rejecting it along with Morris's sense of beauty - medievalism. I do not think Morris's utopia illiberal, but Davis's work raises interesting ethical questions about the nature of Morris's ideal society. Through Davis's argument, I will explore such issues as perfectionism, the concept of liberty in the past and present, individuality and equality and Morris's medievalism, and tease out the significance and relevance of Morris's utopian society.

Morris's relevance does not only lie in the contents of \textit{News from Nowhere}, but also in the way Morris presented it. Many socialist thinkers tended to think that the plan of a future society was the business of the people in the future and did not therefore elaborate upon it. Unlike them, Morris detailed his own image. He thought that each one of us should have our own vision of the ideal society to keep the urge for change strong. That is the reason why Morris used the genre of utopianism to spread his socialism, resisting orthodox anti-utopia socialism. I will examine the choice of this imaginary style. Morris wanted ordinary people to contemplate the juncture, therefore he used his imagination to fly over history back-and-forth, giving them and us 'information' on which to 'ruminate' easily and vividly. I will also show that this choice of utopianism can be traced to his romanticism.

Morris defined romance as "a power of making the past part of the present".\textsuperscript{105} Morris's

\textsuperscript{104} Laurence Davis(2001), 'Isaiah Berlin, William Morris, and the Politics of Utopia' in \textit{The Philosophy of Utopia}

\textsuperscript{105} 'Address at the twelfth annual meeting' for S. P. A. B. [1889], May Morris, vol. 1, p148
romanticism is the key to his socialism. If we ignore this aspect, we will miss its essence and be unable to grasp its relevance. However, E. P. Thompson seems to miss this point. Let us, then, see how Thompson treats Morris's socialism and romanticism.
Chapter Two
Did Thompson Articulate ‘the Juncture Only Morris Could Offer’?


(1) As we saw in the previous chapter, William Morris became a socialist late in his life. He identified art as a motivating force: "the study of history and the love and practice of art forced me into a hatred of the civilization which, ..., would turn history into inconsequent nonsense".\textsuperscript{106} He described himself as "careless of metaphysics and religion, as well as of scientific analysis",\textsuperscript{107} and especially "ignorant of economics". He had not read Adam Smith, Ricardo or Karl Marx,\textsuperscript{108} but he had read J. S. Mill’s ‘Chapters on Socialism’ in the \textit{Fortnightly Review}.\textsuperscript{109} "Against Mill’s intention", Morris was convinced of the necessity of socialism. He joined a socialist organization, the Democratic Federation, and started to work as a practical socialist to realize a society "in which there should be neither rich nor poor, neither master nor master’s man, neither idle nor overworked, neither brain-sick brain workers, nor heart-sick hand workers".\textsuperscript{110}

As Morris was already extremely famous as a poet and designer, his "conversion" has always been controversial and his commitment to politics has sometimes been played

\textsuperscript{106} ‘How I became a Socialist’ [1894], Works, vol.23, p280
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} After his conversion to socialism, Morris “tackled Marx”, ibid., p278
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., p277
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
down. Fiona MacCarthy argues that his first biographer, J. W. Mackail, the son-in-law of
Morris's life-long friend, Edward Burne-Jones, was "cagey on politics" and portrayed
Morris's dedication to socialism as an aberration. Similarly Morris's secretary at the
Kelmscott Press, Sydney Cockerell, advised May Morris not to include many of Morris's
political writings when she arranged to publish her father's comprehensive works of 24
volumes.\textsuperscript{111}

About half a century after Morris's death, R. Page Arnot issued a short pamphlet in an
attempt to 'vindicate' Morris from the claim that he was 'a gentle Socialist'.\textsuperscript{112} Arnot
vehemently criticized the 'canonisation' of Morris and rejected the view that Morris was
not a Marxist as a "myth".\textsuperscript{113}

However, it was only after E. P. Thompson published a lengthy, detailed study of Morris\textsuperscript{114}
in 1955, that many Morris researchers started to accept Morris's socialism. Thompson
was probably stimulated by Arnot's book, his second chapter: 'How Did Morris Come to
Be A Marxist?', but Thompson's study was much more extensive. It was indeed the first
full-scale study of Morris's socialism. Thompson revised the text in 1976 and published
it with the postscript.\textsuperscript{115}

Where to place Thompson as a historian in general may be debated, but as far as his
status as Morris's biographer is concerned, it is unsurpassed in Morris circles. When G.\

\textsuperscript{111} MacCarthy, op. cit., introduction, px and xi
\textsuperscript{112} R. Page Arnot(1934) \textit{William Morris: A Vindication}
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p5
\textsuperscript{115} This postscript was published with the title of 'Romanticism, Utopianism and Moralism: The Case
D. H. Cole gave a lecture to William Morris Society in 1957, he referred to Thompson's book as “an excellent piece of work, ... in the great attention ... to Morris as a Socialist and to the part he played in the Socialist movement”.116 Another recent example is David Goodway's assessment: “E.P. Thompson’s *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* is one of the most important books ever to have been written about Morris. Crucially, it reclaimed Morris for a socialism which is both revolutionary and highly original”.117 This assumption, Goodway adds, is “familiar and acceptable to Morrisians”. Apart from scholars like Goodway, many Morris enthusiasts also know Thompson as the author who established Morris’s reputation for politics.

Thompson remains a pivotal figure in evaluating Morris's socialism. Therefore, if we want to examine Morris's socialism, E.P. Thompson’s study is a vital starting point. Thompson himself says that his book "came to be recognized as a 'quarry' of information",118 and it stimulated discussion.

Although Thompson's contribution to the study of Morris's socialism is profound, there are arguments about Thompson's way of approaching Morris’s political thought. For Cole Thompson's book had "one serious weakness":

[Thompson] was legitimately eager to clear Morris of the charge ... of having been merely a sentimental socialist – an artist sentimentally misled into an inappropriate application of his essentially aesthetic ideas. ... So far, I agree; but Thompson allowed himself to be misled into making Morris out to be, not only a Marxist – which

116 Cole, op. cit., p16
118 EPT, p768
up to a point he was — but also one who would have been in full sympathy, had he been living now, with the Communist interpretation of Marxism — one-party dictatorship, so-called 'democratic centralism' and all; and this, I feel sure, rests on a misconception of Morris's fundamental attitude. It was entirely contrary to the spirit of Morris's thought and feeling ... 119

Mark Bevir also claims that "[a]gainst Thompson as well as Arnot, we should insist Morris's economic theory was not Marx's, and his Marxism rested on a historical sociology centred on the class struggle and informed by a concern for good art, not an economic theory."120 Bevir continues that "[i]t is understandable but unfortunate that much of the work that affirmed the Marxist nature of Morris' thought was polemical in style. The result has been to obscure the continuing influence of romanticism and Protestantism on his socialist politics".121

Florence and William Boos also argue: "the most vexed issue surrounding Morris's socialism" must be "his relation to Karl Marx". "Morris's latitude lends some persuasion to the claim" — that "[a]narchists and Marxists have both made ... to identify William Morris's political views with their own".122

Indeed, as Bevir says, there are "far too many interpretations of Morris", which are

119 Cole, op. cit., p16
121 Ibid., p185
122 Florence and William Boos(1986), 'The Utopian Communism of William Morris' in History of Political Thought, vol.24, no.3
"distorted by their authors' concern to pin a particular ideological label on him."\[123\] In this chapter, therefore, I will review Thompson's analysis of Morris's conversion to socialism, and learn how to reconstruct Morris's thought without pinning any particular ideological label on it. Through this discussion, I will give the context for an analysis of his concept of work and art, and *News from Nowhere*—Morris's famous and sometimes controversial utopian story.

In the aforementioned postscript in 1976, Thompson reviewed the literature published since the first edition of his book in 1955. In this review, he re-examined a 'juncture between Morris and Marxism' and through this, came to a conclusion about Morris's distinctive contribution—relevance—to socialist thought. In order to understand the nature of the argument about Morris's socialism, it is useful first to look through his postscript. It is followed by the outline of the structure of this chapter.

(2) Thompson develops his position through critique. One evaluation of Morris's socialism was Stanley Pierson's. Pierson's opinion is "the Socialism of Morris was regressive—a relapse into the subjectivism and idealism from which Marx has attempted to rescue earlier Socialist reformers; in short Morris reverted to 'Utopianism'". Thompson criticizes Pierson and says Morris's "Socialist concepts were not 'superimposed' upon Morris's Romantic critique, but were ... integrated with it" and, constituted "a rupture in the older [Romantic] tradition".\[124\]

\[123\] Bevir, op. cit., p176  
\[124\] EPT, p779
Thompson also examines the view of Paul Meier. Meier "offers Morris to us as an orthodox Marxist".\textsuperscript{125} According to Thompson, Meier "presses the claim that Engels's subterranean influence can be sensed throughout Morris's writings;"\textsuperscript{126} and, "Morris's Socialist concepts must always be derivative from 'Marxism'". Thompson questions this view and says that this narrows "the notion of Marxism to a kind of family tradition" and underestimates "the vigour of the [Romantic] tradition which Morris had transformed".\textsuperscript{127} In contrast to Meier, Thompson claims that "Morris's 'conversion' to Marxism offered a juncture which Marxism failed to reciprocate".\textsuperscript{128}

The third argument Thompson considers is John Goode's. Although Goode intends to rescue "Morris's creative work" from the reduction "to a marginal role",\textsuperscript{129} he insists that Morris's story of future society, News from Nowhere, "may neither be described ... as 'Scientific' nor as 'Utopia'". It is "not so much a picture of enacted values", but expresses the author's "exhaustion and even pessimism". In other words, it is "a conceptual antithesis in the mind of an exhausted activist".\textsuperscript{130}

Goode then adds that Morris's achievement is that he "discovers forms which dramatize the tensions of the revolutionary mind". Thompson regrets this as "a somewhat cerebral account" \textsuperscript{131} and, criticizes it because "he leaves the problem of Utopianism unexamined".\textsuperscript{132} Goode is, Thompson notes, "like myself in 1955, running away from the
acceptance of Utopianism as a valid imaginative form, because of a fright given to us by Engels [Socialism: Utopian and Scientific] in 1880" and, misses "that one part of Morris's achievement lies in the open, exploratory character of Utopianism".  

It is Miguel Abensour whom Thompson values most. One of Abensour's conclusions is that "a new kind of utopian writing may be found among European Socialists after 1850" and "Morris is the most notable exemplar". Thompson welcomes this view, saying "it is the insight which, at a submerged level, structured this [Thompson's] book when it was first written, but which I finally failed to articulate". Agreeing with Abensour, Thompson says that "Morris was a Communist Utopian, with the full force of the transformed Romantic tradition behind him". Thompson concludes "that what may be involved, in 'the case of Morris', is the whole problem of the subordination of the imaginative utopian faculties within the later Marxist tradition: its lack of a moral self-consciousness or even a vocabulary of desire, its inability to project any images of the future". Thus, Thompson vindicates "Morris's Utopianism" and rehabilitates it as "a valid imaginative form to project images of the future". For Thompson this is "one part of Morris's achievement". By the word 'one part', Thompson implies that the rest of achievement lies in Morris as 'Marxist'. In other words, this utopianism is the relevance of Morris and the element which indicates the unorthodoxy of Morris's Marxism.

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133 Ibid., p797
134 Ibid., p798
135 Ibid., p789
136 Ibid., p791
137 Ibid., p792
138 Ibid., p792
Thus Thompson vindicates ‘the open, exploratory character’ of Morris’s utopianism in his postscript. When we think about Morris’s utopianism, it is natural to connect it to his romanticism as its background. Although Thompson appreciates Morris’s utopianism, his evaluation of Morris’s romanticism is not so clear-cut. When Thompson refers to it, he says there is a “rupture” from the older traditions. Thompson almost always uses the term with the word “transformed”. It seems important for Thompson to understand that romanticism was transformed by Morris. Thompson writes that the "Romantic critique is easily described as ‘regressive’ or ‘nostalgic’ because it is grounded upon an appeal to pre-capitalist values: and this is most specifically so in Morris, with his imaginative location of value in medieval, Old Icelandic, Germanic contexts”, but Morris was able to transform that tradition because he had “attained to a dialectical notion”.139 After all, “what romance means”, says Thompson quoting Morris, “is the capacity for a true conception of history, a power of making the past part of the present”.140

(3) These arguments are very intriguing. How did Morris transform romanticism and what does this transformation suggest about the relevance of his work? Why did William Morris, poet, handicraftsman and retailer, who had been interested in the Knights of the Round Table and medieval romances since his boyhood and, later by Carlyle and Ruskin’s critiques of industrial Britain, become a socialist? Why did he dedicate himself to socialism and campaign for it all over Britain in the 1880s when it was regarded as one of the most dangerous ideas? One cannot help thinking about what it was that drove

139 Ibid., p783
140 Ibid., p809
Morris to socialism and how he transformed the romantic tradition, as well as about the character of his utopianism and the nature of the 'juncture' which only Morris could offer.

Regrettably, it is difficult to find answers to these questions in Thompson's book. Indeed, while Thompson claims to have almost reached Abensour's conclusion - 'a new kind of utopian writing' - in 1955, this is not clear from his text. He does not discuss much about Morris's utopianism, especially *News from Nowhere* in the main text. It seems that Thompson significantly revised his view of Morris between 1955 and 1976. Thompson in the postscript could have criticized Thompson in the main text if he had wanted to, but he did not. Vital problems in the text remained unanswered. As a result, his view in the postscript is left undeveloped. Therefore, in order to answer the questions such as 'what was the juncture which only Morris could offer and Marxism failed to reciprocate?', we need to go back to see how Thompson analysed Morris's transition in the main text. I will examine Thompson's analysis by highlighting this revision and what he overlooked, and suggest Morris's relevance and distinctive contribution on socialist thought.

Firstly I will consider Thompson's opinion that Morris developed "from a passive to an active view of history". Although Thompson writes about Morris the romantic and analyses his poems, he represents this as a passing phase. He thinks that Morris gained an active view of history only after he contacted the working class and read Marx in 1883. By exploring Morris's lectures on art and labour during the transition period, I will argue that labeling Morris's view before his conversion to socialism 'passive' is simplistic. By looking especially at Morris's speech of 1877, 'The Lesser Arts', I will show his insight into art and labour and his determination to change the status quo — art
destroyed by 'Commerce'.

Secondly, I will look at Thompson's view that Morris hesitated before plunging into socialism. Thompson claims that Morris had to force himself across 'the River of Fire'.141 In other words Thompson sees that Morris's break with the past was fundamental and needed something like a baptism. I will demonstrate that it was not Morris who hesitated and that his call was to his middle-class friends. Thompson's misunderstanding comes from his suspicion of Morris's romanticism. In Thompson's view, romanticism is always regressive, so Morris could not have plunged into socialism until his romanticism was transformed. Against this view, I will show that Morris's romanticism was the motive force that lead him to socialism.

Thirdly, I will examine Thompson's remarks about News from Nowhere and highlight his reluctance to embrace this utopian romance. Although in his postscript he acknowledges the open and exploratory character of Morris's utopianism, Thompson downplays it in the main text and represents it as "indications" of "alternative values". He approves its 'scientific' parts, but its colour of medievalism represents for him a typical example of Morris's romantic past, which should be shaken off. He does not appreciate the power of this imaginative story as a whole.

Therefore, lastly, I will examine the background and the reasons why the main text and the postscript are inconsistent.

Since Thompson says that he "analyses Morris at the point of transforming a tradition" in his chapter 'The 'Anti-Scrape', let me start from that chapter.

[2] Morris's love of art and labour – passive or active?

(1) In the chapter 'Anti-Scrape' Thompson looks into Morris's passion for protecting old buildings. Morris founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings ("Anti-Scrape") in April 1877. Provoked by the destruction of the Minster of Tewkesbury by Sir Gilbert Scott, Morris argued that "an association should be set on foot to keep a watch on old monuments, to protest against all 'restoration' that means more than keeping out wind and weather".

Thompson says "It may seem an unlikely road to Communism by way of [protecting] Great Coxwell Barn. Nevertheless it is true that Morris's work for the Anti-Scrape contributed as much to bring him on the final stage of his journey as any other influence". In Anti-Scrape, Morris "was forced again and again to examine and set into words his deepest preoccupation – the relation of the arts to society". He "was brought directly into conflict with the property sanctions of capitalist society". Thus, the activities "quickened and deepened his insight into the destructive philistinism of capitalist society".

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142 EPT, p783
143 'The letter to The Athenaeum' [1877], May Morris, vol.1, p107
144 EPT, p231
145 Ibid., p233
Thompson also says that “it was his work for the Anti-Scrape which urged him forward from a passive to an active view of history”.\footnote{Ibid., p239} Thompson does not explain what a passive view of history is or what an active view is, but it is appropriate to assume that by “active view” Thompson implies socialism or Marxism, because he deals here with Morris’s transition to it. Then, it is proper to assume that by the term “passive view” he suggests Morris’s romanticism before he declared for socialism. Was it really passive and, if it was, how did it become possible to change to “active”?

(2) Before examining this issue, let me first review how Thompson views the influence of ‘Anti-Scrape’ on Morris’s socialism. Thompson introduces Morris’s “Anti-Scrape” address in 1884, just after Morris declared for socialism. He says that “Anti-Scrape” brought Morris historical insight and an “astonishing rebirth of hope”.\footnote{Ibid., p235} This address certainly shows Morris’s insight into history – its twists, contradictions and its power moving ever forward – in a very eloquent way.

Living in the time of new information about ancient cultures, Morris pointed out the “dishonesty” of historians, who described cultures before the Greek and Roman periods as “mere accidental confusion”. Morris argued:

*The mist of pedantry slowly lifted and showed a different picture; inchoate order in the remotest times, varying indeed among different races and countries, but swayed always by the same laws, moving forward ever 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.

Morris then adds almost triumphantly how this realization of history encouraged him to hope:

how different a spirit such a view of history must create it is not difficult to see. ...... that is the new spirit of history; knowledge ... has brought us humility, and humility hope of that perfection .... 148

As this address shows, there is little doubt that these Anti-Scrape activities, which started from 1877, stimulated Morris's transition to socialism, but the question is how we analyse its process and the driving forces which led to this conclusion.

Thompson says that although Morris became a positive thinker, "the charge of nostalgic medievalism or sentimental pedantry [is] still sometimes levelled ignorantly at his [Morris's] name". 149 This assertion implies that Thompson inwardly equates Morris's thinking before his "conversion" with "nostalgic medievalism" and disapproves of it.

Thompson stresses the result of Morris's "conversion" to socialism. His main concern is to show his "positive" side after the "conversion".

Can we analyse the process and its driving factors in this way? We should approach Morris's path objectively. Besides, the criterion that Marxism in general is "active" and romanticism is universally "passive" is stereotypical. We should examine them in their

148 'Papers Read at the Seventh Annual Meetings of the S.P.A.B.' [1884], May Morris, vol.1, p126
149 EPT, p239
own terms, not comparatively. If Thompson is trapped in that way of thinking, it would be
difficult to comprehend what immanent powers provided Morris into his insight of history
in 1884.

Thompson mainly examines lectures in 1884 or 1889 for this chapter. However, we
cannot brand Morris's view "passive" without examining his lectures in 1877 to 1883,
because that was the time before he declared for socialism. Let me analyse a lecture
'The Lesser Arts' delivered in 1877, almost six years before his declaration for socialism.
Is it "passive"?

(3) In this lecture delivered to the audience of the Trade's Guild of Learning, Morris
specifically spoke of "Lesser Arts" or "decorative arts" executed by handicraftsmen.
'Lesser Arts' are different from "the greater arts commonly called Sculpture and Painting".

Morris said, without these decorative arts, "our rest would be vacant and uninteresting". However, "the arts sundered into the greater and lesser" and "both [the artist and the
workman] have suffered". The workman has to work "in the teeth of difficulties thrown
in their way by what is called Commerce, but which should be called greed of money". Although these arts should be "the expression of a man's delight in beauty", in reality
art is "dead blank" and the world is full with "short-sighted, reckless brutality of squalor
that so disgrace our intricate civilization".

150 'The Lesser Arts' [1877], Works, vol.22, p5
151 Ibid., p9
152 Ibid., p14
153 Ibid., p14
154 Ibid., p16
Morris did not want art "for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few".\footnote{Ibid., p26} He strongly believed "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 earlier days";\footnote{Ibid., p11} therefore he called the audience to join him and realize it, no matter if "the journey seem barren enough at first, nay not even if things seem to grow worse for a while".\footnote{Ibid., p15}

(4) One of the most critical parts in this lecture is Morris's notion of labour through the lesser arts. Therefore, let us have a close look at what Morris said about art:

These arts,..., are part of a great system invented for the expression of a man's delight in beauty: all peoples and times have used them; they have been the joy of free nations, and the solace of oppressed nations; religion has used and elevated them, has abused and degraded them; they are connected with all history, are clear teachers of it; and, best of all, they are the sweeteners of human labour, both to handicraftsman, ... and to people in general...: they make our toil happy, our rest fruitful.\footnote{Ibid., p8}

This is art to Morris. It is the crucial expression for human beings and makes labour sweet. It is not additional, but constitutive of labour. Morris thought that the lesser arts and art in general were essential for human life as expressions of people's joy. They were almost synonymous with life itself. Therefore he further asked his readers if "[a]ll
that good fruit which the arts should bear, will you have it?"

(5) This anger was directed at "Commerce" which promoted cheap wares and greedy competition. Let me quote again the passage about adulteration:

I know that the manufacturers (so called) are so set on carrying out competition to its utmost, competition of cheapness, not of excellence, that they meet the bargain-hunters half way, and cheerfully furnish them with nasty wares at the cheap rate they are asked for .... England has of late been too much busied with the counting-house and not enough with the workshop.\footnote{Ibid., p22}

He was angry because the workshop and honest handcraftsmen were disregarded. It is this love of art that made him hate the greedy "counting-house". Let us listen again here to what Morris said about it, which sounds familiar to us living in this century:

"Is money to be gathered? cut [sic] down the pleasant trees among the houses, pull down ancient and venerable buildings for the money that a few square yards of London dirt will fetch; blacken rivers, hide the sun and poison the air with smoke and worse, and it's nobody's business to see to it or mend it: that is all that modern commerce, the counting-house forgetful of the workshop, will do for us herein."\footnote{Ibid., p24}

Because of the greed for profit, the production of cheap nasty wares was widespread. "There is a great deal of sham work in the world, hurtful to the buyer, more hurtful to the seller, if he only knew it, most hurtful to the maker".\footnote{Ibid., p16} The majority of people could not
get simple decent decorative art but only afford false wares for necessity and, only a few rich people had a chance to enjoy "art". This unfair distribution of art among people was unbearable to Morris. He well knew that poor people were preoccupied with survival and could not afford time to think about it. He bitterly questioned, "how can I ask working-men passing up and down these hideous streets day by day to care about beauty?"  

(6) Let me look further into his approach to working-men from a different angle. It might sound strange to us now, but Morris was against "restoration". He thought restoration impossible because "the workmen of to-day is not an artist as his forefather was; it is impossible, under his circumstances, that he could translate the work of the ancient handicraftsman". Morris was well aware that handicraftsmen in his days could not be artists. Their craft skills had already been destroyed. The "circumstances" surrounding working-men had been totally changed by 'Commerce' and the 'counting-houses' of the nineteenth century.

Morris reiterated this issue in the Anti-Scrape address in 1889. He said "craftsmanship is absolutely dead". It was "not by their own faults, but by the conditions of society in which they live". Therefore, "all the knowledge and mastery over nature, which modern civilization has given us, cannot change the executant, whom our system forces to be a machine, into being a free artist directed by necessary tradition. ... do not try to

162 Ibid.
163 'Address at the Second Annual Meeting' [1879], May Morris, vol.1, p123, emphasis added
164 'Address at the twelfth annual meeting' [1889], May Morris, vol.1, p152
165 Ibid., p153
make your machine do the work of a man, because that is impossible". Although the expression that workers were turned into "a machine" is new here, we can see that basic idea had been expressed in his address in 1879.

(7) There were many artists in his time who loved art, but many of them held elitist views, simply looking down upon ordinary people who could not afford money and time for arts. However, Morris felt the situation to be painful for people whether or not they were aware of the pain. To Morris, art did not exist for art's sake but for the people to enjoy.

It is because the issue of art is, for Morris, the issue of labour and, therefore, a general matter to human kind. Art and labour are inseparable. Following the passage "without these [lesser] arts, our rest would be vacant and uninteresting", he added that without them "our labour mere endurance, mere wearing away of body and mind". He also said in another lecture entitled "The Art of the People" in 1879, "I do not believe he [man] can be happy in his labour without expressing that happiness;... most kind gift is this of nature, since all men, nay, it seems all things too, must labour;".

Since he was a practical handicraftsman and designer, Morris approached the issue of labour through his practice of art and, generalized lesser arts to labour. Art and labour are synonymous to him and, labour, which is the essential power of human kind, must be enjoyed with pleasure. Therefore, the situation that arts and labour were not enjoyed by people was utterly unbearable to Morris. This deprivation of happiness from people,

166 Ibid., p156
167 "The Art of the People" [1879], Works, vol.22, p42
especially from ordinary people, stung him every minute. Being unable to bear such unfairness to human kind, he longed for a fair society.

(8) He expressed this longing and offered an image in the last part of this lecture as follows:

That art will make our streets as beautiful as the woods, as elevating as the mountain-sides: it will be a pleasure and a rest,...; every man's house will be fair and decent, soothing to his mind and helpful to his work: all the works of man ... will be in harmony with nature, will be reasonable and beautiful:168

This might sound like a "passive" picture of a medieval village, but this was Morris's image of the future then and throughout his life. It was also the image that inspired News from Nowhere. Morris said this image of society, where "every man will have his share of the best",169 might be a dream. However, he believed in that dream and the future, therefore he concluded the lecture asking people to "help me in realizing this dream, this hope".

(9) Is this thinking passive? It is surely coloured by Morris's romanticism and contains sorrow as well as anger. Thompson quotes from the same lecture; "rather than art should live this poor thin life among a few exceptional men, ...... rather than this, I would that the world should indeed sweep away all art for a while ... rather than the wheat should rot in the miser's granary, I would that the earth had it".170 This does not at all mean that Morris submissively gave up art. It was not a choice between approval or

168 'The Lesser Art' [1877], Works, vol.22, p27
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid., p26
rejection for Morris. He accepted the necessity of art's collapse before its rebirth. It was painful for Morris, but that sorrow does not lack hope for the future and the will to participate in making history. On the contrary, it is important to recognize that even this anger and sorrow was motivated by his understanding of the nature of human labour and directed towards remedying Victorian England. It was the driving force urging Morris to keep going.

In fact, Morris was determined to bring his dream about. He expected “the journey seem[s] barren enough” and “things seem to grow worse for a while”.\textsuperscript{171} Nevertheless, he believed “there are some few at least who are heartily discontented with things as they are, and crave for something better, or at least some promise of it” and if they “set their hearts” together “it will come to pass one day or other”.\textsuperscript{172} Surely this determination and faith in the future was far from “passive”.

Morris had courage to act at this stage. It was nurtured in him already. In other words, his romanticism and love of art made him believe in the future. 'Nostalgia' for the past was the mainspring for Morris’s critique. Romance, then, is not something to be jettisoned. Unfortunately Thompson failed to see this.

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., p15
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., p13
[3] Did Morris hesitate to cross the 'river of fire'?

(1) Let us carry on now to the next chapter, 'The River of Fire', where Thompson analyses Morris and describes him as "standing on the brink of 'river of fire', hesitating before the plunge". Thompson refers to Morris's lecture 'The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization' in 1881. Between the birth of the new art and us, "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".

Thompson continues "in all his lectures he was moved – as in his addresses to the Anti-Scrape - by his increasing understanding of the movement of history, of the fact of class division and the class struggle". For Thompson the key words are the understanding of class division and class struggle. He also emphasizes "[h]owever revolutionary his theoretical insight into the problems that most concerned him [Anti-Scrape and practice of the arts], he was likely to fall into hopelessness or nostalgia if he did not have practical confidence in the possibility of overthrowing capitalism, practical contact with working class". For Thompson the danger is that Morris might have fallen back into 'passive' romanticism without "practical confidence" and "practical contact with working class".

This "contact with the working class" certainly played quite an important role in Morris's transition. However, when Thompson says this is the point where "Morris broke so

173 EPT, p247
174 'The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization' [1881], Works, vol.22, p131
175 EPT, p253
176 Ibid., p258
decisively with both Ruskin and Arnold*, I cannot help thinking that Thompson only
circles around the same place. We know that Morris sought concrete activities and
contacts with the working-class and therefore differed from Ruskin and Arnold in that way,
but why did Morris seek interaction with the workers? Without asking this question, we
cannot uncover why Morris was able to cross “the river of fire” in contrast to other
intellectuals who criticized the hypocrisy of Victorian England but never challenged the
system.

It is worth noting here the attitude of liberal intellectuals like John Ruskin and Mathew
Arnold. Alarmed by the sickness of emerging capitalism, they offered remedies in their
own way. Yet they shied away from revolutionary change. Whilst they pitied the
working-class, they did not identify with it. In contrast, Morris felt the working-class’s
misery and pain as his own. Arnold offered what Morris called “rose-water” for the
misery, but did not think of overthrowing the system altogether.

On the other hand, Morris mentioned decisively in his letter in 1878 to Thomas Wardle,
his fellow artisan and business partner, “nothing can be done till all rich men are made
poor by common consent.” Then, he added, “I suppose he [Arnold] dimly sees this, but
is afraid to say it, being ... somewhat infected with the great vice of that cultured class he
was praising so much – cowardice, to wit." Morris preferred that every one became
equally poor rather than some were wealthy and rich.

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177 Ibid.
178 Letters, vol.1, p454
179 Ibid., p454, emphasis added
Again, why did Morris feel this way and seek the interaction? — Our question must be set in this way. To answer this, we have to examine the lectures that Thompson merely lists or quotes briefly but fails to analyse in depth.

(2) Let me take an example of Thompson's quotation from the lecture 'The Lesser Art'. Morris says:

> if some half-dozen men at any time earnestly set their hearts on something coming about which is not discordant with nature, it will come to pass one day or other; because it is not by accident that an idea comes into the heads of a few; rather they are pushed on, and forced to speak or act by something stirring in the heart of the world..."^{180}

Thompson is not wrong about the meaning of this passage when he says that Morris "had sensed that movement of ideas and their influence in history was more than a mere accident of individual discontent".\(^{181}\) Nonetheless, I cannot help thinking that this is a rather plain interpretation for the colourful expression of Morris's understanding of history. When Morris said "something stirring in the heart of the world ", he sensed the never-ceasing movement of nature, which came from somewhere deep in the universe and urged human beings to carry on as a part of the movement. Therefore, a further question should be put: Where did this sense of history come from?

This could be examined from two aspects. One is his romanticism and the other is his

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\(^{180}\) 'The Lesser Art' [1877], Works, vol.22, p13, emphasis added  
\(^{181}\) EPT, p258
understanding of human labour. Let me examine the first point.

The expression "something stirring in the heart of the world" has a strong sense of the continuity of history and a desire to put history in its right direction. How was this sense cultivated? His romantic exploration of the world and history undoubtedly nurtured this sense of history. Morris had written many poems and prose romances since his university days. Among his early romances, there is a short story entitled 'A Dream'. Two lovers, who were separated because of their own mistakes and distrust, meet again and again in a path of history only for a few moments with an interval of a hundred years. Involving the people of each time to witness their fate, they finally achieve what they wanted and peacefully dissolve into time. 182

This is a small fantasy, still it shows his sense of the perspective of time — its leaps and continuities. When this was blended with his appreciation of art and labour, what kind of insight would have been formed?

Morris regarded art as the expression of the happiness of man. Through his own practice of handicrafts, he saw labour as man's essential power. He thought that this power was given by "Mother Nature" to human beings. This is not a matter of an individual man in a particular stage of history. By thinking through labour and Nature, Morris was able to approach labour and man in general universally. Human labour should be a happy exercise of man's ability.

182 William Morris(1907) 'A Dream' in The Early Romances of William Morris, p158-172
In this way Morris grasped the essence of labour, which runs throughout history. This power of human labour, which is the forefront of all energy of the universe, has been moving forward, seeking its full realization. This is the other reason why Morris spoke of "something stirring in the heart of the world".

When this sense of labour and romanticism fused into one to be supported by study of Marx's *Das Kapital*, Morris reached to his unique insight into history, expressed in the Anti-Scrape address in 1884, as a "moving forward ever towards something that seems the very opposite" and the creation.

(3) As Morris wrote in his preface to Ruskin's *The Nature of Gothic*,\(^\text{183}\) he took the idea that "art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour" from Ruskin. However, for Ruskin art is a subject for criticism, but for Morris art is concrete practice. Without this 'faithful everyday companion' life is inconceivable for Morris. In this sense it is a matter of life and death for Morris. Therefore, Morris could not avoid seeking a solution to the deterioration of art and as a result entered politics in order to change society.

Thompson focuses on politics and gives long, detailed accounts of British imperialism and its effect on Morris. Of course, the cruel realities of the growth of capitalism in Britain, which Morris was witnessing every day, were one of the key elements that led Morris to socialist activism. However, we should not forget that his hatred of these brutalities became sharper because of his essential grasp of man's relationship to labour. This should-be "faithful daily companion" turned into "the Curse of labour" to workers in his

\(^{183}\) 'Preface to the Nature of Gothic by John Ruskin' [1892], May Morris, vol.1, p292
Morris saw how labour was forced by "Commerce" and cursed. As I partly quoted in the section [2], he asked "what can they do working in the teeth of difficulties thrown in their way by ... Commerce?" in 1877.\textsuperscript{184} In another lecture in 1879, 'The Art of the People', he denounced the condition under which the emerging system of capitalism carried out its labour:

Be sure that ...the blindness and hurry of civilization as it now is, [has] to answer a heavy charge as to that enormous amount of pleasureless work – work that tries every muscle of the body and every atom of the brain, and which is done without pleasure and without aim – work which everybody ... tries to shuffle off in the speediest way that dread of starvation or ruin will allow him.\textsuperscript{185}

Machines and factories in the nineteenth century were much simpler than the ones Chaplin visualized in his film 'Modern Times', yet for workers or craftsmen who had produced one item from the beginning to the end by themselves, the process forced by machines must have been totally different and very painful. It was the reality of the division of labour in 'modern' England, as Adam Smith observed its effect: "the business of making a pin" was "divided into about eighteen distinct operations" in order to improve its productivity.\textsuperscript{186} Workers must have literally felt they were just a cog of a machine.

However, as their early revolt of Luddism against machines in 1810s failed, workers had

\textsuperscript{184} 'The Lesser Arts' [1877], Works, vol.22, p14
\textsuperscript{185} 'The Art of the People' [1879], Works, vol.22, p44, emphasis added
\textsuperscript{186} Adam Smith, \textit{An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nation}, 1776, Book 1, Chapter 1, 3rd paragraph, http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smWN.html, 6 November, 2004
no choice but to work in factories to survive. Many workers did not afford time to think this over and probably became numb with pain because of the day-to-day struggle to eat. Yet it was intolerable to Morris who loved work and art and wanted to share the pleasure of art with people.

(4) Thompson quotes Morris's letter to Georgie Burne-Jones in 1882, "The more and more obvious death of art before it rises again, are heavy matters to a small creature like me, who cannot choose but think about them, and can mend them scarce a whit".187 Thompson suggests that Morris would have remained in that mood if he had not had contacts with the working class. However, it is possible that Morris did remain in that mood. The condition of art, being destroyed in front of his eyes, was unbearable. It could not be easily shaken from his mind. It is almost an obsession as showed in the phrase "who cannot choose but think about them". Since his despair was immense and his urge to change the situation was strong, he went out to seek concrete contacts to get a solution. This does not suggest that Morris's mood necessarily changed to one of optimism. It is not so simple. The depression and the desire to cling to a glimmer of hope were both with him.

Morris thought that the "death" of art was inevitable and if there was a chance of its "rebirth", it had to be after "the world, ... wipe[s] the slate, and be clean rid in her impatience of the whole matter with all its tangle and trouble".188 Morris believed those who could carry out this destruction were the working-men. Although he had bitter

187 EPT, p258
188 'The Lesser Arts' [1877], Works, vol.22, p10

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despair deep in his mind, he still wanted to cling to some hope. Working men were his last hope.

In fact, in the 'river of fire' lecture in 1881, Morris mentioned that it was the working-class men that he had to rely on in the following way:

If any of us have had the courage to be discontented that Art seems dying, and to hope for her new birth, it is because others have been discontented and hopeful in other matters than the arts; I believe most sincerely that the steady progress of those whom the stupidity of language forces me to call the lower classes in material, political, and social condition, has been our real help in all that we have been able to do or to hope, although both the helpers and the helped have been mostly unconscious of it.189

Here, Morris was crossing the boundary of art and, at the same time asserting that the working-class was the key to change the status quo. This shows how central art was to Morris's socialism. He instinctively felt that whoever had the energy to "wipe the slate" and prepare for the "rebirth" of art was not his fellow middle-class men but the working-class. Why did he feel this way?

When thinking about products of art, he extended his thought to the people who made them. This thinking about people who produce was always with him when he saw the result of production. This is well shown in his famous expression "[h]istory (so called) has remembered the kings and warriors, because they destroyed; Art has remembered

the people, because they created”. He made it clearer as “the labour I am thinking of is the labour that produces things”.

So, whereas Thompson wants to argue that Morris was enlightened by his contacts with the working class, Morris was given hope that they would provide the motive force to see through art’s rebirth, through commerce’s destruction.

(5) Of course, we cannot overlook the actual contacts he made with working people through the ‘Eastern Question Association’ from 1876 to early 1878. His involvement in ‘Eastern Question Association’ marked his first political activity. Opposing the Government’s war policy to support the Turkish government, Morris participated in meetings against the war and met workers. In his letter to the Editor of The Daily News in October 1876, he suggested that “the nation is dumb, if it were not for the 2,000 working men who met last Sunday at Clerkenwell.”

The workers’ enthusiasm and the heat of the meeting must have inspired him. Seven months later, as the Treasurer of the Association he issued a manifesto, “To the Working-men of England”. In that manifesto, he appealed to “[f]ellow citizens”, saying “if you have any wrongs to be redressed, ... if you long to lessen these inequalities which have been our stumbling-block since the beginning of the world, then cast aside sloth and cry out against an Unjust War, and urge us of the middle classes to do no less”. In this

190 ‘The Art of the People’ [1879], Works, vol.22, p32
191 ‘Art and Labour’ [1884], in The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris (1969) edited by Eugene D. Lemire, p95
192 Letters, vol.1, p324
193 William Morris(1950) op. cit.,The Letters of William Morris to His Family & Friends, Appendix 2,
way, he believed that it was "the Working-men" who should take the initiative.

(6) Let me go back to Thompson's claim that Morris hesitated "before the plunge". We should not be dazzled by the vivid image of the "river of fire" but should carefully examine it. Was it Morris who hesitated in front of the devouring "river of fire"?

Let me quote Morris's passage in full:

We of the English middle classes are the most powerful body of men that the world has yet seen.... 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 that birth of the 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.194

It is "the English middle classes" to whom Morris was addressing in this lecture. He was calling for the middle classes to dive in. He was well aware that "we of the English middle classes" were living in the age of cataclysm. "Something alive and devouring" was moving. Old society was collapsing in front of their eyes from its foundation. It was the time for a change. Every one of them was tested by the era: whether to take the risk and rise to the challenge. The working-class had no choice but to fight to change. Their life

p388-9, emphasis added
194 'The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization' [1881], Works, vol.22, p131
was misery anyway. The middle classes could remain in cosseted cozy rooms, keep their eyes shut and ignore what was happening. "Is that really what you want?!" – this is the message of Morris to the middle classes. So "river of fire" was not a barrier as Thompson implies, but a necessary point of change.

Morris made up his mind to cross the river, as shown in the last phrases. He was, or at least tried to be, "made fearless by desire of truth and insight of the happy days to come beyond", although his preoccupation in 1881 was the state of the decorative arts. His mind was made up as early as 1877 when he called for help in realizing his dream. The lesser arts became a medium for his reflection on society and on history and through them he was able to work towards a set of practical measures for social change. The question for him was, I believe, not lack of the courage to take the plunge, but how to clarify the problems, find a way to address them and persuade others – being honest about the nature of the struggle.

At the time of delivering this lecture in October 1881, Morris might have been gradually making up his mind to act alone, giving up the possibility of many other middle-class friends' coming with him. The bitter realization of this might explain the undertone of his colourful remark of the "river of fire".

(7) Thompson fails to observe that the call was aimed at the middle-classes, but regards Morris as "in 1879 and 1880, even as late as 1881, standing on the brink of the 'river of fire', hesitating before the plunge"195 and "was continually reconnoitering the banks of the

195 EPT, p247
'river of fire'. Where does this misunderstanding come from? Thompson seems to presuppose that the gap between Morris's romanticism and socialism must have been deep and it must have taken a considerable time for Morris to make up his mind. Thus, he underestimates Morris's sense of mission and courage. Considering that he emphasized that Morris transformed romanticism even after he “vindicated” utopianism in his postscript, this underestimation, I suppose, comes from his conception of romanticism.

As Thompson argues, romantic criticism of Victorian England was backward-looking and hankered for a return to the values of the medieval world. Karl Marx illustrated the difference between the two epochs in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*:

The bourgeoisie ... 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 remaining 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 into 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 substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.\(^{197}\)

\(^{196}\) Ibid., p257  
\(^{197}\) Karl Marx[1848] *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, at www.marxist.org/archive, Section One, ‘Bourgeoisie and Proletariat’, 13\(^{th}\) paragraph, 6 November, 2004
Romantic criticism could be said to be criticism against this 'naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation' of capitalism from the 'feudal, patriarchal, idyllic' point of view. Since the romantics looked back to pre-capitalist values, their criticism was nostalgic. Was it therefore "regressive" as Thompson puts it? "Romanticism" is quite a broad and protean movement, as Marilyn Butler argues. It is dangerous to judge it without examining individual tendencies. How can we define Morris's romanticism?

Morris did not explain his romanticism. He rather used the terms, romantic and romance. He clarified the terms in the address to the annual meeting of the Anti-Scrape to defend old buildings from being pulled down. When he says a building is pretty and romantic, it means it is "beautiful to the eye, and recalls to the minds the interest of the life of times past." As for romance", he continues:

"What does romance mean? I have heard people mis-called [sic.] for being romantic, but 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."

As the passage shows, for Morris romance is tightly connected with the past. Or, to put

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198 Marilyn Butler(1981) *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries*

199 Morris does not seem to have specifically attached to particular romantics. Nor does he review their work. What we have is Morris's recommendations to the *Pall Mall Gazette* for the best hundred books. For modern poets, he named Blake, Coleridge, Shelly, Keats and Byron, but left out Wordsworth. Although he named them, it was clear from his secretary's note that he was not keen on Shelly and Byron, but liked Keats. As authors of modern fiction, he named Defoe, Scott, Victor Hugo, Dickens, Dumas the elder and George Borrow, but did not mention Emily Bronte. He especially recommended Scott and Dickens. See *Works*, vol.22, pxv, xvi and xxx.

200 'Address at the twelfth annual meeting' [1889], May Morris, vol.1, p147

201 Ibid., p148, emphasis added
it more precisely, it is the power of imagination to bring back the past, at least some part of the past, into the present. Let us recall Morris's own attachments to the past. He read Scott's novels and played as a knight riding on a Shetland pony with a miniature suit of armour. When he was at Marlborough College, he spent much time wandering the prehistoric monuments scattered around the area. When he went to Exeter College in 1853, Oxford was at the beginning of a transformation, but still retained an atmosphere of the medieval town. He learned and absorbed its beauty and romance. Although the Pre-Raphaelites movement was already in its decline, with Edward Burne-Jones, Morris joined 'the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood'. They declared a "Crusade and Holy Warfare against the age" of utilitarianism. Morris's love of history was combined with anger against rising commercialism in the period.

The love of the past and his anger with modern capitalism lived through Morris. In that address to Anti-scrape, he clarified his position about progress:

I say, then, that to disregard these two things [beauty and romance] does not indicate progress, is not practicality, but degradation. It is degradation and not progress to destroy and lose these powerful aids to the happiness of human life for the sake of a whim or the greed of the passing hour.

He opposed not progress, but degradation under the name of 'progress' or 'practicality'.

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202 MacCarthy, op. cit., p9-10
203 Ibid., p37
204 "His rooms ... were gradually filled with rubbings from medieval brasses, imprints on paper taken from the brass memorials to knights and their ladies set into the floor of many early churches", ibid., p61
205 Edward Burne-Jones's words, J.W. Mackail, op. cit., vol.1p63
206 'Address at the twelfth annual meeting' [1889], May Morris, vol.1, p148
Interestingly, Morris also considered romance as synonym of 'humanity'. Talking about clear and simple language by Blake and Coleridge in another lecture, Morris said:

> With that literature in which romance, that is to say humanity, was re-born, there sprang up also a feeling for the romance of external nature, ... joined with a longing to know something real of the lives of those who have gone before us.  

Morris added that he found good examples of that union in Walter Scott's novels. Morris regarded that the longing to recreate the lives of people past was a natural and human emotion to us.

So we could characterize Morris's romanticism as a human love of history against the inhuman greed of capitalism in his time, as well as the power of imagination to recreate the best part of the past.

(8) Morris's love of Walter Scott's stories help us to understand Morris's romanticism further, although Thompson seems to ignore Scott's influence on Morris, while he spends several pages discussing the influence of Keats. Scott is often regarded as the doyen of late British romanticism. In the list of the best hundred books for *Pall Mall Gazette*, Morris specially mentioned Scott: "I yield to no one, not even Ruskin [his 'master' before his practical socialism], in my love and admiration for Scott".  

"Admiration for Scott" might sound 'regressive'. However, as Marilyn Butler rightly says, although Scott was "an avowed Tory in real-life politics, Scott in his writing is less clearly

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207 'The Beauty of Life' [1880], Works, vol.22, p59, emphasis added
208 Ibid., pxvj
sectarian”.209 "His sympathy with man and his respect for man's emotions and idealism are typical of the same era [the late Enlightenment]", and "the plight of individuals whose lives were caught up in an impersonal mechanism" is the centre of his novels.210 Indeed, 'Ivanhoe', for example, is not only the story of chivalry, but also the story about the plight and pride of the persecuted Jewess, and of the Celt, who was occupied and deprived of own language. Perhaps what Morris loved about it was the sense of rebellion and anger against injustice at its centre.

As I quoted in the section [1], Thompson says "[r]omantic critique is easily described as 'regressive' or 'nostalgic' ...: and this is most specifically so in Morris, with his imaginative location of value in medieval ... context".211 It is true that Morris liked the medieval period and criticized the capitalist system by using the standard of the medieval mode of labour - craftsmanship. In this sense, he could be said to be "nostalgic". However, because of his love of the medieval production system, he had a radical desire to destroy the modern system. [I will discuss what part of the medieval production system Morris loved further in Chapter Four.] In fact, he often wished its destruction over the status quo, as "the world, ... , will one day wipe the slate".212

He spoke even more radically in a letter to Georgiana Burne-Jones in July 1881, when he heard the harsh sentence given to Johann Most, editor of a German socialist paper, who was charged with incitement to murder: "just think of the mixture of tyranny and hypocrisy with which the world is governed! These are the sort of things that make thinking people

209 Butler, op. cit., P109
210 Ibid., p111
211 EPT, p783
212 'The Lesser Arts' [1877], Works, vol.22, p10
so sick at heart that they are driven from all interest in politics save revolutionary politics: 
... I must say matters like this and people's apathy about them shake one's faith in gradual progress". 213

This impulse for radical change had been inside Morris alongside what Thompson calls his 'nostalgia'. It might sound a contradiction, but it is important to recognize the mixture. Simple dualism between romanticism and revolutionariness does not help to understand complex realities.

Reality is always full of complexity. Let me illustrate how people form a new idea. History, as Hegel remarked, is cunning and does not at all proceed straightforwardly. No one can criticize a new event with a brand new idea, but use their former or old thinking at first to tackle it. Some jump into the new developments of the capitalist system and abandon old ideas without thinking much. Some dislike the new, but stop short there and then defend the old idea. Some confront the new development and create a new way of thinking to address the reality. When someone can do this, it shows that his/her old thinking has a quality or potentiality of something breaking through within the old idea. I think that Morris’s romanticism had that quality.

Thompson says "it is difficult to see how Morris could have transformed that tradition if he had not attained to a dialectical notion". 214 It is true that Morris showed the dialectical insight at the "Anti-Scrape" address in 1884, as I quoted in [2], but the dialectical notion

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213 Letters, vol.2, p51
214 EPT, p783
was not the cause of Morris's "transforming" romanticism. If we think dialectically, then something Morris had already attained helped him to step forward; and by stepping up into a new level Morris sublated his old thinking into a higher level. As a result, he was able to see history more clearly, as Thompson puts it with "a dialectical notion". In this sense, romanticism was not transformed, but transcended into a part of a new synthesis – Morris's socialism.

(9) Thus, the more closely we examine these lectures delivered in his transition period, the more we could see Morris gradually widening his boundary. However, Thompson makes light of these lectures on art and ignores them. Why does Thompson do so? It seems that Thompson's main concern is whether Morris accepted and asserted established Marxist concepts such as class struggle. It is as if Thompson looked through a magnifying glass of Marxism and picked out suitable parts of Morris's lectures to illustrate a correspondence.

When Thompson says "Morris's conversion was a true conversion. ...... It was in every sense a qualitative change in understanding and in action, for which all his life had prepared the way", I agree in the sense that Morris poured all he had gained from his former life into creating a new life. However, when Thompson's assertion is combined with disregard of Morris's actual former life and thought, I cannot help thinking that Thompson only cares for the result of Morris's conversion to socialism and not the process.

215 EPT, p271 emphasis added

(1) If Thompson understates the process, the conclusion itself is also simplified. Morris's pursuit - socialism - can be understood as a dry stereotypical theory, in which the vivid image of a future society, where people work, stroll, love and care for each other, and which Morris tried to visualize in News from Nowhere, is downplayed. In my view this story is one of the most important keys to understand the originality and relevance of Morris's socialism. How does Thompson review Morris's future image of society, News from Nowhere in the main text? I will examine his view in this section.

News from Nowhere is a story of a socialist's time travel into the future. Tired of never-ending arguments with anarchists, William Guest, the socialist, one day woke up in the twenty-second century England. Guided by fine, carefree people born long after the revolution, William travelled around London and up to Oxfordshire. He saw and discussed how people lived in harmony and enjoyed work and life. Although he knew that his dream would soon vanish and that he had to return to his own time to fight his way to the revolution, William was ready to go back because he saw future society with his own eyes.

Since this story was written during Morris's last days of the Socialist League in 1890, it is surprising that Thompson scarcely mentions it on the pages about this period. When he does touch upon News from Nowhere, he refers to it as mere episodes. We only find, in the chapter "Necessity and Desire", a six-page section on this "Scientific Utopia which no
one but Morris could write*. 218

(2) There, Thompson treats News from Nowhere in relation to science and utopia and says:

The science lies not only in the wonderful description of 'How the Change Came', [i.e. the description of revolution], the mastery of historical process, the understanding of the economic and social basis of Communism; it is present also in the element of realism ...... And yet it is still a Utopia, which only a writer nurtured in the romantic tradition could have conceived ... 217

Then he adds, as this is "a Utopia", "News from Nowhere must not be, and was never intended to be, read as a literal picture of Communist society." 218 He emphasises this, saying "of course Morris knew life would not be exactly like this in any real society". 219

It seems that for Thompson the "scientific" part of News from Nowhere was a "wonderful description", but the other part – the image of the future society – is "still a Utopia" written according to romantic tradition. Therefore it should not be taken seriously as "a literal picture of Communist society". What Thompson means by "scientific" in comparison with "utopian" here is not so clear. Why is Thompson so eager to pick up its "scientific" parts, avoiding evaluating it in total as something that "no one but Morris could write"? Is it appropriate to simplify News from Nowhere as science and utopia and only approve its "scientific" part?

216 EPT, p695
217 Ibid, emphasis added
218 Ibid., p695
219 Ibid., p697
In fact Thompson is so keen to see the science of *News from Nowhere* that he interprets it in a special way in his postscript. Referring to the expressions in *News from Nowhere*, he says they are "indicative". He says: "[Morris's] use of moral criteria and his assertions of 'ideal' ends and of prior values, is indicative also: it indicates a direction towards which historical development may move, suggests choices between alternative direction, ... ", but, warns Thompson "these indications are never absolute and 'utopian' in that sense: ... The indications are placed within a firm controlling historical and political argument."  

Isn't this "a somewhat cerebral account" of a work which offered a vivid image of future society and intrigues us to imagine our own utopia? For Thompson, romances should be firmly controlled by "historical and political argument". What lies behind this particularity about science is the fact that he still does not come to terms with the utopian character of *News from Nowhere*. This is confessed in his words "these indications are never ... 'utopian' ". He only approves utopia under the restriction of a valid imaginative form. 

In fact, Thompson draws on Raymond Williams's opinion, "I would willingly lose *A Dream of John Ball* [another time travel story, but one set in the past] and the romantic socialist songs and even *News from Nowhere* ..., if to do so were the price of retaining and getting people to read such smaller things [political writings] as *How we live ... Useful Work versus Useless Toil* ... " Thompson endorses Williams's point: "this is not very far from my own judgment". 

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220 Ibid., p803  
221 Ibid., p803  
222 Ibid., p793
If this story has the same as or less importance than Morris’s political writings, one might naturally ask why Morris dared to write and publish it serially in the Socialist League’s journal, *Commonweal* at a critical moment when a split threatened. Isn’t it enough to write political essays like ‘The Society of Future’ rather than *News from Nowhere*? Was it just a fancy to console Morris when he lacked a solid practical base?

(3) Of course, this is Morris’s particular image of future society and should not be treated as something “absolute”. Morris did not mean it as a dogma. He always made that clear whenever giving his opinion. For instance, in the lecture, ‘Useful Work versus Useless Toil’ in 1884, he said that in the society of the future “all labour, even the commonest, must be made attractive” Then he added “[t]hese must be considered as being given without any intention of dogmatizing, and as merely expressing my own personal opinion”. For Morris, dogmatism was the last thing socialists should do. As he wrote in a letter to a friend in October 1885, “you know we Socialists refuse worship to any man however worshipful his gifts may be…”

In this sense, *News from Nowhere* is a personal picture of future society. At the same time, however, it was a literal image to Morris. He also wanted to tell “what it is I desire of the Society of the Future, just as if I were going to be reborn into it”. He wanted every worker to have his/her own image of a dream society and showed his as an example.

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223 Delivered in 1888, May Morris, vol.2
224 ‘Useful Work versus Useless Toil’ [1884], Works, vol.23, p111
225 Ibid., p112
226 Letters, vol.2, p472
Morris's sentences in a Letter to Readers in Commonweal in May 1889, of which the main purpose was to highlight the difference with anarchism, gives us a further hint. He wrote, "[a] crude and incomplete State Socialism ... very naturally repels many from socialism altogether".228 Instead of a dry, unattractive image of socialism, he wanted to show something with flesh and blood to stir people's desire.

This is especially necessary because Morris seeks to inspire a wish for something that people cannot get in their everyday life. In 1893, in his lecture entitled 'Communism' he argued "some of us ... once believed in the inevitableness of a sudden and speedy change".229 Now he realized, this would take a much longer time. The duty of socialists was to deal with the mass of working people. They had to make them "intellig[ent] enough to conceive, courag[eous] enough to will, power[ful] enough to compel".230 The mass of people had to "understand themselves to be face to face with false society",231 "long for it [socialism] above all things" and, "try to realize it for themselves".232

Morris's own contribution to stirring in people's minds "an ardent desire for a society of equality", was News from Nowhere written in the language of utopia. Political writings or lectures were not enough for Morris in this respect.

News from Nowhere had this stirring power. For example it attracted many miners in

228 Letters, vol.3, p62
229 'Communism' [1893], Works, vol.23, p269
230 Ibid., p266
231 Ibid., p269
232 Ibid., p270
Northumberland, where Morris had visited to encourage a strike in a campaigning tour in 1887. Why else were copies of *A Dream of John Ball* and *News from Nowhere* found in so many miners' houses even when most of the furniture had been sold off in the Great Slump of the 1930s?233 Surely these two prose romances have a quality that the devastated workers and families still wanted to treasure and keep.

(4) However, Thompson seems to disapprove of Morris's romantic taste in utopia. He writes in the chapter 'Necessity and Desire':

several of his favourite terms - and, in particular, 'beauty' and 'pleasure' - carry the associations gained in Morris's early romantic revolt. In this area of artistic theory the illusions of his youth clung most closely and were the hardest to shake off. His view of 'beauty' was coloured to the end by the romantic search for the "ideal".234

Thompson says in his postscript "Morris carries directly through into his Socialist thought some of the terms of the Romantic critique of Utilitarianism".235 These terms are, then, just an "illusion" and should be "shaken off" in Thompson's view.

Morris's image of the ideal society might have an atmosphere of a medieval village. Yet, it is not a recurrence of the medieval time ruled by feudal lords, but a classless commune. In this sense, it is not "regressive" at all. Utopia is an image that each one of us has to have in our heart if we crave a more humane society, although the specific image of each utopia naturally differs because we have grown up differently.

233 MacCarthy, op. cit., p548
234 EPT, p685, emphasis added
235 Ibid., p783
I think we should release this power of imagination. Still, Thompson is too "timid" to release it and ties it with a string called "a valid imaginative form" or "choices between alternative direction". In such a way, how can we enjoy "the open exploratory character of Utopianism"? Isn't this "a juncture which Marxism failed to reciprocate" and only Morris could offer?

[5] What we learn from Thompson's approach

(1) Let me summarize the three points I have examined. First, when Thompson claimed that Morris shed his passive view and came to realize an active view of history after his conversion to socialism, he failed to see the positive aspect of Morris's critique of commerce expressed in the lectures written before 1883. By 1877 Morris had already developed an insight into human labour and the problems of the capitalist system. Morris thought that labour was the expression of a man's delight in beauty, but the current system of commerce prevented 'workers of today' from enjoying it. Therefore he called for an overhaul of the system. Certainly at that time Morris's main concern was art and he often felt helpless because he was aware of the monstrous power he had to face, but his insight and eagerness to realize dramatic social change was already in place. Thompson's dichotomic approach — 'passive' or 'active' — cannot reveal the mainspring of Morris's romantic impulse to socialism.

Secondly, I showed that contrary to Thompson's suggestion, it was not Morris but his middle-class friends who hesitated to cross 'the River of Fire'. Morris was gradually
making up his mind to enter into politics, though he disliked it. His contacts with workers were certainly significant in confirming his belief. But at the same time it is important to see that Morris already acknowledged in that 'river of fire' speech that the working class was the leading force for social change. He was able to see this because of his pursuit of art. Thompson's misinterpretation comes from his assumption that Morris must have been hesitating a long time because he was trapped in 'regressive' romanticism. It is wrong to suppose that romanticism is uniformly regressive. We cannot analyse Morris's socialism if we assume so. In Morris's case his sense of romance – he defined it as 'humanity and the power of imagination' – led him to socialism. It was the power of reflecting on people's joy and sorrow in the past and in the present and of identifying with them. This is not something to be jettisoned or transformed. It is foundational to Morris's socialism.

As Thompson makes light of Morris's romantic past, his treatment of utopia is also ambiguous. For Thompson it is only the 'scientific' part of News from Nowhere that deserves a reference. For the rest, it should be treated as an 'indication' and kept 'within a firm controlling historical and political argument'. In this way Thompson in the main text practically denies utopia as an area of imagination and exploration of future society. For Thompson, Morris's utopianism seems to be a still embarrassing aspect of his revolutionary thought. However, it is his utopianism that makes Morris's socialism original and relevant to us. When we ignore it, we can hardly analyse Morris's socialism as it is. This was the third point I made.

Morris's utopianism, romanticism and admiration of medieval art are always problematic.
for Thompson and he does not give us an explicit judgment on them. When Thompson says Morris "transformed Romanticism", he does not at all explain what factors of romanticism were transformed and what the nature of new "transformed Romanticism" was. One supposition is that Thompson tried to argue that it was transformed by Marxism. Engels defined Marxism not as utopian, but scientific socialism. So, if Thompson wanted to argue Morris' romanticism was transformed by Marxism, he had to contextualize it with his text – the part about *News from Nowhere*, where he distinguished its 'science' from 'utopia'. Recognizing the difficulty, he does not elaborate.

Therefore I have a suspicion that this adjective "transformed" is used to avoid giving his definite evaluation of Morris's romanticism. Thompson still feels uncomfortable with accepting the term 'romanticism', thinking it "regressive and nostalgic", although he accepts Abensour's conclusion – Morris as "a new kind of utopian" writer. Instead of trying to contemplate the gap and reviewing his opinion about Morris's romanticism, Thompson seems to choose a muddy solution and persuade himself that Morris transformed the romantic tradition (which was regressive), therefore making it compatible with Marxism.

Although he does not explain, it is probable that Thompson conceives shaking off medievalism as the main element of 'transformation'. For Thompson, Morris's medieval taste is the most regressive, nostalgic, passive and inappropriate quality of his revolutionary socialism. This is shown in the following sentences: Morris's "imaginative location of value" was "in medieval ... context".\(^{236}\) This '[Morris's] view of 'beauty' was

\(^{236}\) Ibid., p783
coloured to the end by the romantic search for the 'ideal'
... were the hardest to shake off'.\textsuperscript{237} So when he became a revolutionary, Morris must have abandoned this taste — according to Thompson's assumption. However, is it possible to remove that particular aspect from Morris? If Morris had shaken off his taste for the Middle Age after 1883, then, he probably would not have created \textit{A Dream of John Ball}, the story of the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. His utopian story \textit{News from Nowhere} would have lost its colour and smell as we have now, and ended up as a totally different story if it had ever been written. We would have also lost his prose romances\textsuperscript{238} which are still enjoyed by world-wide readers. This assumption is obviously bizarre.

It is understandable that Thompson felt uncomfortable about Morris's romanticism coloured with his medieval taste, since the medieval period looks certainly dark and regressive. However we should start accepting the fact that Morris loved certain features of the period and explore, without preconceptions, why and which aspects of medieval life Morris admired. If we wipe out this medieval tinge and 'purify' his socialism with ideas 'acceptable' to 'Marxism', we will not be able to understand what Morris wanted to convey and 'ruminate' on it. Thompson in the postscript sensed this danger and accepted 'Utopianism' through criticism of Goode. However, he did not pursue this issue further as we saw.

Then, one question remains: Why was Thompson in the main text different from his postscript? Which elements made him feel the problem in accepting utopianism, even

\textsuperscript{237} Ibid., p685
\textsuperscript{238} The House of the Wolfings [1888], The Roots of the Mountain [1889], The Story of the Glittering Plain [1891], The Wood beyond the World [1894], The Well at the World's End [1896]
though it was only 'as a valid imaginative form'? Thompson does not say there is a
difference, but mentions such reflections as "in the end, I turned away from out of piety
towards politics-as-text and timidity before the term, 'utopian'' or "like myself in 1955,
[Goode is] running away from the acceptance of Utopianism as a valid imaginative form,
because of a fright given to us by Engels in 1880". However, "piety", "timidity" and "a
fright" are disappointing words for an able academic like Thompson. Rather than
referring to the influence of Engels, shouldn't Thompson examine his own conception of
utopia or romantic imagination in 1955?

What happened to Thompson after 1955? We must turn our attention to the year 1956.
It was a watershed for socialists and their sympathizers. Two incidents in the Soviet
Union and its "satellite" shocked the world.

Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary of Communist Party of the Soviet Union, delivered
a special report on the death of Stalin to the closed session of the party's 20th Congress in
February that year. Khrushchev revealed Lenin's letter anxious about Stalin's quality as
the party leader and, above all, appalling crimes of "physical annihilation" committed by
Stalin. Stalin "brought about annihilation and the expulsion from the party of workers
who were loyal but inconvenient to Stalin." Not only his opponents in the Political
Bureau and the Central Committee but also ordinary workers fell victims to "mass arrests
and deportations ...., execution without trial" under the name of "enemy of the people".241

239 Ibid., p792
240 Ibid., p797, he refers to Engels's Socialism: Utopian and Scientific
trussel.com/hf/stalin.htm and other sites, 29 September, 2004
This report was later made public and Stalin's bloody purges were made known worldwide. To those who had never doubted Stalin as the most dedicated advocate for communism, "Khrushchev's secret report" must have had a profound effect.

In October the same year, people in Hungary stood up for reform and freedom. Hungarian people had been discontented with miserable living conditions and the control of the secret police. On 23rd October students marched in the streets of Budapest and many workers joined in. Fighting broke out later at night between protesters and the secret police. During the following fortnight many workers councils and national councils were formed. They wanted free election, the abolition of the secret police, freedom of speech, and self-management of workplaces through workers councils.

The Soviet Union invaded Hungary twice. At the second invasion in November, soldiers were often illiterate or non-Russian speakers from central Asia. Many Soviet soldiers believed they were in Berlin to crush a new Nazi revolt. Moscow literally crushed the people's revolt by their tanks.

This oppression of working people by the country, which claimed and was believed itself as the fatherland for workers, was another serious blow to many people who believed in communism.

Thompson wrote about what happened in the British Communist Party around that time

242 "Some of the rank-and-file Soviet troops have been telling people ... that they had no idea they had come to Hungary. They thought at first they were in Berlin, fighting German fascists", Peter Fryer, Hungarian Tragedy, chp.9, 1956, online version, http://www.vorhaug.net/politikk/hungarian_tragedy/, 21 July, 2007
I was involved in producing a duplicated journal of discussion within the Communist Party, The Reasoner. Reasoning was disliked by the leadership of the Party and the editors were suspended from membership. Since this suspension coincided with the repression of the Hungarian Revolution (October-November 1956) – and the exodus of some 10,000 members from the British Communist Party – it was decided that our offensive activities might best be continued outside that structure and with the aid of other comrades, The New Reasoner was founded in 1957. This quarterly journal continued for two and a half years. It then merged with Universities and Left Review to form the New Left Review.\(^{243}\)

The exodus of 10,000 members illustrates the size of this shock wave. Each member who was sincere enough to admit the facts in 1956 must have questioned and reflected what communism was to them. This must have been especially the case with Thompson who was producing a “reasoning” journal. This is why Thompson, who revised and published the postscript in the New Left Review in 1976, was able to admit “in 1955 I allowed some hectoring political moralisms, as well as a few Stalinist pieties, to intrude upon the text.”\(^{244}\)

(2) Thompson does not say which parts of the text are so. However, considering the differences between Thompson’s main text and the postscript on the issue of utopianism and romanticism, we can easily imagine that before 1956 Thompson thought Morris’s

\(^{243}\) Cited by Duncan Hallas in his obituary of Thompson in October 1993, http://www.marxists.org/glossary/people/th/h.htm#thompson-ep, 11 November, 2004

\(^{244}\) ETP, p769
romantic tradition embarrassing. Wearing the authority of orthodox Marxism, perhaps unconsciously, Thompson looked down on the artist Morris, as some socialists in the 1880s did.

This criticism might be harsh on Thompson, since he faced the reality of the Soviet Union and made a sincere decision to change the situation. All the same, the fact remains that Thompson in the main text was trapped in a fixed idea as I have discussed in the former sections. Although he tries to shake off this weakness, he does not review his points substantially. He only steps onto the threshold to review Morris's significance and "vindicate" utopianism as an imaginative form.

It is really regrettable that Thompson did not pursue his revision further. He refers to Morris's remark on a possibility of a "quasi-socialist machinery" to uphold capitalist society and says, "[u]topianism suddenly reveals itself as more realistic than 'science', the exploratory historical imagination overlaps its own circumstances and searches the dilemmas of our own time." When Thompson says this, a new interpretation looks almost within his reach. However, he does not detail this account and maintains the control of 'utopianism' even in the postscript as we saw it.

Thompson writes in the end of his postscript "[w]hen, in 1956, my disagreement with orthodox Marxism became fully articulate, I fell back on modes of perception which I'd learned in those years of close company with Morris, and I found, perhaps, the will to go on arguing from the pressure of Morris behind me". This must be true and, Morris's

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245 Ibid., p80, emphasis added

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relevance that Thompson instinctively felt must help him keep going. However, Thompson ignores and fails to articulate what he felt.

Thus, Thompson's claim, "[w]hen [Morris's] arduous quest ended in Socialist conclusions, he was able ...... to re-appropriate that (Romantic) 'power of making the past part of the present' and extend it into an imagined future. ...... The trajectory was completed", disappears in a thin air as he fails to explain the trajectory and originality of Morris.

(3) Owing to this critical weakness, Thompson misses important points. In order to pursue Morris's relevance on the basis of lessons from Thompson's study, I will discuss them from two perspectives; the importance of recognizing the continuity of history and thought and, the creativeness of socialist theory.

Let me explain the first point. Socialism or Marxism did not emerge in this world from out of nothing. It was born on the accumulated endeavours of many conscientious individuals who had dreamed of a better society for human beings, although their thoughts and actions had been limited by their age. Marx's achievement in socialism was unmistakably epoch-making and his individual effort was profound. Yet, even Marx could not have achieved what he did, if he had not been born in his time and had not studied his predecessors' efforts in philosophy, utopian socialism, economics and the young working-class movement.

In other words, Marx was able to offer his theory, because he worked in such a way as

\[^{246}\text{Ibid., p809}\]
Morris put it: "memory and imagination help him as he works. Not only his own thoughts, but the thoughts of the men of past ages guide his hands; and, as a part of the human race, he creates." Marx spoke or acted "by something stirring in the heart of the world".

Likewise, Morris had gained the fairest, bravest spirit of romanticism in his time. Therefore he was able to confront "the river of fire". In other words, romanticism had a potentiality which bloomed and fruited in Morris.

Being dazzled by Marx's leap from his predecessors and his extensive work about economics and politics, many socialists tend to disregard this continuity. This, in turn, can make them arrogant towards other ideas and put socialism at risk of authoritarianism, which is the next point I would like to highlight – and discuss in my conclusion.

(4) Thompson does not pay much attention to which factors stimulated Morris to seek socialism, but focuses on finding appropriate Marxist terms such as 'class struggle' and 'class division' in Morris's writings and lectures. In such a way, socialism would become an ossified thinking and there would be no room for a further contributions to socialism.

If Marx's or Engels's texts alone are approved as official, socialism becomes a rigid way of thinking. When their words are used without regard to the reality they faced, they become a dogma. This is the suffocation of socialism. Morris's image of socialism is

247 ‘Useful Work versus Useless Toil’ [1884], Works, vol.23, p100
248 ‘The Lesser Arts’ [1877], Works, vol.22, p13
different. He wrote to his friend that socialism was "the true road to individual Development" in 1885. Freed from the restrictions of the feudal ties and unfairness of the class system in capitalist society, human beings could develop their own potentiality indefinitely. It may sound quite utopian, but it was Morris's dream and he visualized it in *News from Nowhere*, where everybody was beautiful and an artist because of the accumulation of generations' happy lives.

Thompson says he turned away from the examination of Morris's utopian idea "out of piety". Choosing piety to someone or something rather than an objective examination of thought betrays a dangerous psychology. A matter of piety might look trivial, but we should be vigilant because this mindset helped foster and breed "the cult of the person of Stalin".

Sadly such an attitude is shown by other researchers who try to "prove" Morris was a Marxist. Paul Meier's book is another example. In his *William Morris: The Marxist Dreamer* published in France in 1972, Meier energetically traced the origins of Morris's writings to Marx or Engels. Their particular influence on Morris's writing was, Meier argues, developed from: *The Communist Manifesto, Capital, Theses on Feuerbach, Critique of the Gotha Programme, The Holy Family* and *Dialectics of Nature*. Most of them were not published in English in Morris's life time. *Theses on Feuerbach* was translated only in 1903, *Critique of The Gotha Programme* in 1919, *The Holy Family* in excerpts in 1923, and *Dialectics of Nature* was not published at all until 1925. Their

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249 Letters, vol.2, p482
250 The Khrushchev Report
unavailability encouraged Meier's view that Morris got his ideas from Engels: how else could he have arrived at his conclusions? Meier's conclusion did not reflect Morris's independent thought about the status of art.

Let me quote Meier's guess about *Critique of the Gotha Programme*:

[O]nly William Morris, in the wake of Marx and Engels, was able to expound the very theory, ... 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". ... Despite my sincere admiration for his [Morris's] 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 his [Morris's] theoretical level on his own.252

"But", Meier wonders himself, "here is where the mystery begins", because *The Critique* was not published yet:

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 ...? At the present stage of research, there is no material evidence to settle

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He also doubts "the role of Bax". It "does not appear to have been decisive". "It is curious" says Meier, "in his [Bax's] own later writings, ... the theory of two stages is not mentioned". On the other hand, it is "interesting to note that Morris, in works written by himself alone, develops this theory".

Furthermore, Engels did not seem to care for 'teaching' Morris the contents of the Critique. As Meier himself quotes in his book, Engels's letter in September 1886 suggested so:

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?

Since Morris did not have a chance to read the Critique, and is unlikely to have been taught its contents by Bax or Engels, it is natural to assume that Morris somehow developed the idea of 'the two-stage theory' by himself. Nevertheless, Meier's conclusion is, as we saw, that Morris was not able to reach to 'the level of The Critique' by himself. For Meier, Morris's life-long pursuit and study on how to realize true art seems to be redundant. Even Thompson questions Meier's supposition: "Meier presses the

253 Ibid., p283
254 Ernest Belfort Bax (1854-1926), Morris's friend, who established the Socialist League with Morris, widely regarded as a British leading Marxist theoretician
255 Ibid., p283
256 Friedrech Engels and Pau & Laura Lafargue (1959), Correspondence, vol. 1, p370
claim that Engels's subterranean influence can be sensed throughout Morris's writings; indeed, he presses this very far, and further than I can possibly follow him.\textsuperscript{257}

Is it important to prove whether or not Morris in fact read Marx's particular writings? Our pursuit should be to analyse and determine both men's thought adequately. Indeed, after pointing out the tendency to pin "a particular ideological label" on Morris, Mark Bevir says "after all, which ideological label we choose to pin on him is of little importance compared with whether or not we describe his thought adequately."\textsuperscript{258} This attitude is all the more vital for the study of Morris's thought, because there are apparent differences about work in future society between Morris and Marx. I will examine these similarities and differences in the next chapter. It will give us keys to explore what Thompson calls "a juncture which only Morris could offer and Marxism failed to reciprocate".

\textsuperscript{257} EPT, postscript, p781
\textsuperscript{258} Bevir, op.cit., emphasis added
Chapter Three
Work in Future Society – What Morris Offers Us

[1] How to approach Morris's idea of work in the future

(1) Outline of the Chapter
In this chapter, I will examine Morris's concept of work, which is the core of his socialism. In order to show its uniqueness, I will compare his idea of work with Marx's, because Marx's contribution to the study of labour in capitalist society is clearly substantial and influential. Morris himself studied the French translation of Das Kapital in 1884, just after he declared for socialism. I will analyse their similarities and differences through a clear reading of their works and an examination of Marx's influence on Morris. By doing this, I will illustrate my claim that Morris's idea of the quality of work is unique and profound.

Morris's love of art was the power which drove him to socialism. He wanted work to be art in future society. Therefore, he sought concrete images of work and art in the future. His opinion about work in the future was practical and detailed. Despite my and perhaps many others' presupposition, I found Morris's contribution to be more creative than Marx's as far as the quality of work is concerned. I will reconstruct it and then argue that Morris's romanticism led him to a new dimension in socialist ideas.

There are many similarities in Morris's appreciation of work with young Marx's pursuit. Morris regards human labour as the essential power of human beings and understands it in relationship with Nature. For instance Morris writes "they[men], the latest-born and
maybe the most terrible force of nature, how could they choose but take up the links of the chain and work as nature worked about them".259 Young Marx also considers labour vital to human’s "essential being" and regards humans as nature’s inorganic body.260 Ruth Levitas is surely right to argue that “Morris’s critique of the capitalist labour process parallels that of Marx”261.

On closer examination, however, there are differences between Morris and Marx’s mature approach to labour. The ‘parallel’ does not imply a common starting point or, indeed, conclusion. Levitas herself argues that “Morris’ political writing is more concrete than that of Marx… Morris’s always specific and concrete approach leads him to a suspicion of abstract phraseology, to the question always of what is meant in practice”.262 How and why was Morris more concrete?

In order to investigate this problem, I will first examine Marx’s concept of labour. Taking examples from Marx’s works including the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, I will show that despite Marx’s early study of unalienated labour, he does not elaborate the concept in a future society. Moreover, analysing it from its economic aspect, Marx in his maturity seems to focus on work as an element of productive force. This is quite different from Morris. The realisation of pleasurable work is his key motif.

I will also argue that the dissimilarity reflects the differences in Morris’s and Marx’s

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260 Karl Marx, *Estranged Labour* in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*
262 Ibid., p.611
backgrounds. To acknowledge the difference is not to suggest a ranking, but merely to point out the particular contribution Morris makes to socialism. Admittedly, because of the established eminence of Marx, one sometimes hesitates to point out that Morris’s argument was more clear than Marx’s at certain points. It might sound silly to say that the artist Morris could be better than the doyen Marx. However, since they are different individuals from different backgrounds, it is quite possible that the ‘untrained’ opinion is as good as the ‘educated’ one. If there is any achievement on one side, stating it plainly does not at all mean that we elevate or denigrate either one of them.

In the course of the discussion and to highlight Morris’s original contribution to the debate about work in socialism, I will also explore what other socialists say about work in a future society, looking at views of two of Morris’s contemporaries: Paul Lafargue and Edward Carpenter. And then, I will examine a modern socialist, Andre Gorz.

Through these comparisons, I will lay the foundation for the reconstruction of Morris’s image of future society, especially his proposals about work. He wanted a society where everybody enjoys work and produces beauty. This might sound naïve, but it was based on his practice as an artist and his study of history. It was also based on his deep love of art and human beings. In fact he was one of the few socialists who offered elaborate ideas of work in future society. I will examine how concrete and detailed his proposals were. Through the examination I will show that this was only possible because Morris’s socialism was romantic.

(2) The Period He Lived
Before examining Morris's idea of work, let us briefly look at the era in which he lived and formed his ideas. Marx died in 1883, and Morris thirteen years later. The year 1883, coincidentally, was the year when Morris declared himself a socialist. During the period through which Morris had lived and fought as a socialist, Britain was seized with a problem of massive unemployment. Losing their jobs and houses in the countryside, many workers and their families fled to the big towns in a desperate search for work. Although the country's economic power was increasing immensely, the discrepancy between the population and available jobs was even bigger. Many of them were left unemployed.

Towards 1887, the problem was simmering in London. G. B. Shaw, a member of Fabian Society and Morris's friend, wrote of the situation of early winter in 1887: "the [unemployed] men themselves, under all sorts of casual leaders, or rather speech-makers, took to meeting constantly in Trafalgar Square ... The shopkeepers began to complain that the sensational newspaper accounts of the meetings were frightening away their customers and endangering the Christmas quarter's rent."^263

The problem did not go away, but culminated in so-called "Bloody Sunday" in November, 1887. James Allman, a member of the Socialist League and an unemployed worker himself, one day passed Trafalgar Square and saw the unemployed gathering 'without leaders or purpose'. He started organizing meetings with other fellow socialists:

The first meeting was held next morning, the speeches being delivered from one

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^263 Fabian Tract no.41, p7-10, quoted in EPT, p483
of the seats and beneath the shadow of a black banner upon which the words 'We will have work or bread' were inscribed in large white letters. The result of this meeting was a series of daily assemblages in the same place... Day by day the sansculotic workless multitude met, marched and spoke, and daily their numbers increased.264

The Metropolitan Police did not allow this to continue and prohibited the gathering in the Square. On Sunday, 13th November 1887, a big demonstration was organized. Workers approached the Square from different directions. Morris marched from Clerkenwell with Shaw and other members. They did not know that the mounted police as well as armed military hid around the Square to prevent demonstrators from entering. Taken by surprise and unprepared, workers were bloodily dispersed. It was a severe lesson for workers. Morris wrote several days later, "I don't suppose that it will go on crescendo till it leads us straight into revolution: we are not educated enough for that. But it is an educational episode itself."265 He included this episode, however, in his News from Nowhere.266 Socialists were living in such a situation when workers were at the mercy of the new market system.

264 Commonweal, November 26th, 1887, quoted in EPT, p484
265 Letters, vol.2, p714
266 Old Hammond answered to the question the protagonist, Guest, that “this massacre put an end to the whole revolution for that time?” as “it began it!”, Nowhere, p121
[2] Similarities and differences between Morris and Marx

(1) The ‘Parallels’ between Morris and Marx

As we saw, Ruth Levitas acknowledges that ‘Morris is more concrete than Marx’. She says “it is still difficult to envision how [Marx’s proposal, i.e.] ‘from each according to his ability to each according to his need’ would play out as a social system, and how this would relate to the free development of each and of all.” However, she does not investigate Marx’s vagueness further. She stops short and in conclusion affirms “[b]oth [Marx and Morris] are concerned with the development of abilities, capacities or capabilities”. Although both might be ‘concerned with the development of abilities’, Marx does not elaborate the path while Morris repeatedly details the process. It is important to examine their differences and idiosyncrasies to understand them better.

In order to understand their similarities and differences, let me start by examining their ‘parallels’. Marx’s elaborate study helped Morris understand the economic aspect of capitalism. There is no doubt about the influence of Marx on Morris as far as economics of the capitalist system is concerned. After his declaration for socialism, Morris had a special French version Das Kapital bound for him in 1884 and worked hard to digest it. Although Morris said “I must confess that, whereas I thoroughly enjoyed the historical part of ‘Capital’, I suffered agonies of confusion of the brain over reading the pure economics of the great work”, he studied it closely.

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267 Levitas(2004), op. cit., p609
268 Ibid., p613
269 ‘How I became a Socialist’ [1894], Works, vol23, p278
The influence was shown, for instance, in his lecture 'Dawn of a New Epoch', where he explained two classes: "those who monopolize all the means of the production of wealth save one; and those who possess nothing except that one, the Power of Labour" and why society divided in this way.\(^{270}\) Or more substantially, he devoted seven chapters about scientific socialism as outlined in *Das Kapital* in 'Socialism from the Root Up'.\(^{271}\) Morris tried to summarize it in easy terms. In his diary Morris wrote: "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".\(^{272}\)

This study gave him insight and strengthened his analysis of capitalist society. Therefore in February 1885 he recommended *Das Kapital* to an inquirer to read at once. And he did so because "up to date [Marx] is the only completely scientific Economist on our side".\(^{273}\) Morris was well aware at the same time that "[s]ocialism does not rest on the Marxian theory",\(^{274}\) but did not devalue economics study. In other words, for Morris economics as study is only a part of a whole socialist idea.

There is also a similarity about the 'two stage theory' between both men. How should we analyse this? Paul Meier insisted Morris could never think it out by himself as we saw in the end of the previous chapter. Was this really impossible for Morris? Let me examine this idea and see if there is any difference between Morris and Marx.

\(^{270}\) 'Dawn of a New Epoch' [1885], Works, vol.23, p125-6
\(^{271}\) William Morris and E. B. Bax [1886-8], in *POLITICAL WRITINGS, Contributions to Justice and Commenweal* (1994), p574-600
\(^{272}\) 16 February, 1887, in *William Morris's Socialist Diary* (1985) edited by Florence Boos, p32
\(^{273}\) Letters, vol.2, p393-4
\(^{274}\) Letters, vol.2, p729
The two stages of communism in the *Critique* and Lenin's quotation in *The State and Revolution* are famous among Marxists. Indeed, the former Soviet Union declared that it had entered into the higher level of socialism, i.e. the 'communism' stage in 1960s. The Soviet Union had carried out the race to increase the productive forces with the United States under the slogan 'Catch up and Overtake', and triumphed with Gagarin's first space flight in human history in 1961. This declaration triggered a discussion about how to measure it. Since Marx's two stage theory is well known now, when one encounters a similar opinion, one tends to think it must not be original. However, we have to be aware of the fact that Marx and his theory were not so well known even among socialists during his lifetime.

Apart from naming it "the theory of two stages", I would imagine that thinking of a transition is not so difficult, especially for those who concretely pursue revolutionary change. Indeed, it is quite possible for Morris or even someone else to think of the development of socialist society from a basic phase to the complete level. Let us examine Morris's process of thinking. In the lecture Meier quotes, Morris sets his measure for 'true society' - everybody does "his due share of work and no more, and ha[s] his due share of wealth and no less, and that no labour [i]s wasted". Then he summarizes two views about the future of society:

According to the first, the State ... will be the sole possessor of the national plant and stock, the sole employer of labour ... Everybody will have an equal chance of livelihood, and ... there would be no hoarding of money or other wealth. This

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view points to an attempt to give everybody the full worth of the productive work done by him, after having ensured the necessary preliminary that he shall always be free to work.

According to the other view, the centralized nation would give place to a federation of communities who would hold all wealth in common, and would use that wealth for 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. ... This view intends complete equality of condition for everyone, though life would be, as always, varied by the differences of capacity and disposition.276

His conclusion is:

These two views ... 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 transitional period, 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.277

As his words suggest, there must have been an argument about the definition of socialism and communism. Probably the former was the group represented by the Fabian Society, which wanted to alleviate problems of capitalism. And possibly the

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276 'True and False Society' [1887], Works, vol.23, p236-7, emphasis added
277 Ibid.
Social Democratic Federation was in his mind as well. The organization worked to bring change through Parliament, and Morris was afraid that it would result in 'State Socialism'. Against 'State Socialism', stood the anarchist idea, which claimed the total abolition of the centralized state and its replacement by a federation.

This was the context in which Morris developed his idea. Being a practical socialist, Morris "never dream[s] of building up by our own efforts in one generation a society altogether anew". Still he is clear about his goal. Society must ultimately provide what people need, regardless of their capacities. Also, people must learn to enjoy themselves and not to envy others, by gaining their sense of fellowship and equality. In order to achieve this, he thinks a transitional period necessary. It seems to me that this is the natural flow of his thinking.

As Meier said, this gradual completion of communism is similar to Marx's 'two stage theory' in the Critique of the Gotha Programme. Deeply concerned by a Draft of the German Socialist Labour Party Programme, Marx wrote its critique and showed his idea of a communist society in 1875. This is one of his rare descriptions of the policy of future society. In it he deals with two stages of communist society, i.e. one "emerging from capitalist society" and the other one "developed on a basis on its own".

Marx describes the higher phase of communist society by suggesting "the narrow

278 Facing a crisis of the Socialist League, Morris wrote to John Bruce Glasier on 19 May, 1887, expressing his concern that when the League would admit a resolution by Croydon branch, their "parliamentary friends" would not stop there, but its consequence would be a proposal of "a programme involving electioneering in the near future" and "a programme of palliative measures [i.e. state socialism]". He also said that these would be "the stepping stones of the S. D. F. [the organization who adopted parliamentary tactics]", Letters, vol.2, p656.

279 Ibid., p236

280 Later called 'The Social-Democratic Party'
horizon of bourgeois right [can] be crossed in its entirety and society [can] inscribe on its banners 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!' Both Morris and Marx think that people work according to their capacity and get what is worthwhile for their work in the first stage, and that they get what they need regardless of their work in the second stage.

(2) Different Approaches behind the 'Two Stage' Theory

However, when we look closer into their views, there are differences between them. Marx approaches the transition from the system of distribution of labour and its products, and offers the 'labour-certification' system as the result. Let us see his description of the first stage of future society, which is still "economically, morally, and intellectually ... stamped with the birthmarks of the old society":

[T]he individual producer receives back from society -- after the deductions have been made -- exactly what he gives to it. What he has given to it is his individual quantum of labor. ... He receives a certificate from society that he has furnished such-and-such an amount of labor (after deducting his labor for the common funds); and with this certificate, he draws from the social stock of means of consumption as much as the same amount of labor cost.281

Marx argues that this is "the same principle in the exchange of commodity equivalents: a given amount of labour in one form is exchanged for an equal amount of labour in another form", although "content and form are changed". But "one man is superior to

281 Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Critique of the third paragraph at http://www.marxists.org/archive, 29 April, 2005
another physically, or mentally, and supplies more labour in the same time, or can
labour for a longer time, ... this equal right is an unequal right for unequal labor." Marx adds "these defects are inevitable in the first phase of communist society." 282

This is a rare concrete proposal of Marx on how to organize labour and distribution of its product in the transitional society. Facing the Russian Revolution in 1917, Lenin studied this 'labour-certificate' system with a view to applying it in practice. He was aware that it was still unequal right for unequal labour, 283 but died before he had an opportunity to try it out. Whether his successors were aware of the transitional nature of the 'labour-certificate' system is questionable, even if the system had been implemented at all. Therefore we do not know how practical the system might be. All we know is that Marx's proposal deals with the qualitative aspect of labour — a certificate to confirm "an amount of labor" — and the economic side of future society.

Morris approaches 'transitional society' in a similar way, but his main concern is how people overcome old values and associate with fellow beings as equals. He raises a question — "what constitutes the due share of the wealth created by labour", and examines the issue with respect to 'needs' and 'capacity'. As to the needs, he says:

[M]en'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, ... be easily satisfied. 284

282 Ibid.
284 'True and False Society', Works, vol.23, p233-4
As to whether society should provide more to those who are able to work most productively, he says:

"In a state of society in which all were well-to-do, how could you reward extra services to the community? Give your good worker immunity from work? The question carries with it the condemnation of the idea, and moreover, that will be the last thing he will thank you for. ... Provide for his children? ... [T]hey are provided for in being members of a community. ... Give him more wealth? Nay, what for? What can he do with more than he can use? He cannot eat three dinners a day, or sleep in four beds. Give him domination over other men? Nay, if he be more excellent ... he must influence them for his good .... One reward you can give him, that is, opportunity for developing his special capacity; but that you will do for everybody, and not the excellent only.\[285\]

An interesting aspect of his argument is Morris's attempt to imagine the rationality and psychology of future people - how they will get rid of old "habits of mind" and learn that "it is to the interest of each that all should thrive". In this he departs markedly from Marx's economic angle.

Incidentally, Morris uses simple terms to describe his idea. It is because he wants the majority of ordinary people to understand his ideas. Indeed he mentions in the beginning of this lecture, 'True and False Society': "as a matter of principle, it is not difficult to understand or long to tell of [the socialist view], and does not need previous study or acquaintance with the works of specialists or philosophers", because "it is a

\[285\] Ibid., p234
matter which concerns everyone, and has to do with the practical everyday relations of his life." 286

It is intriguing that he dismisses 'acquaintance with the works of specialists or philosophers'. On another occasion Morris made it clear that he did not trust those who call themselves 'experts'. In his letter to The Daily Chronicle when the local authorities planned to damage the native hornbeam wood of Epping Forest, he wrote:

We are told that a committee of "experts" has been formed to sit in judgment of Epping Forest; but, Sir, I decline to be gagged by the word "expert," and I call on the public generally to take the same position. An "expert" may be a very dangerous person, because he is likely to narrow his views to the particular business (usually a commercial one) which he presents. ... [W]e do not want to be under the thumb of either a wood bailiff, whose business is to grow timber for the market, or of a botanist whose business is to collect specimens ...; or of a landscape-gardener whose business is to vulgarise a garden or landscape ... What we want is reasonable men of real artistic taste to take into consideration what the essential needs of the case are. 287

Morris' primary concerns and interests are always in common human beings. Therefore, he uses plain language and shows how ordinary people think, though ironically, this desire encouraged his use of archaic expressions in his poetry. Furthermore, behind his argument, there exists a belief that future people will expand their capacity to work and

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286 Ibid., p215
287 Letters, vol.4, p268 emphasis added
enjoy work.

(3) Marx’s Concept of Work in the Critique

So Morris and Marx take different approaches to ‘the two stage society’. Where does this difference come from? The key to this question lies in the issue of labour. In order to examine the difference further, let me start with Marx’s concept of labour. Marx says in the Critique of the Gotha Programme that the realization of the second stage is only possible:

“after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished; after labor has become not only a means of life but life’s prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly.”

Marx did mention the disappearance of the division of labour and the all-round development of the individual, but the majority of Marxists tend to narrow this argument. They emphasize the increase of the productive forces or wealth in order to reach a higher level of communism. However, this is a quantitative argument and it is only a part of the affair. We should not overlook the qualitative issue of the productive force. The productive force is a concept which expresses the overall energy the people exert when they create something. Therefore its qualitative aspect is in essence the aspect

288 Marx, Critique of the Gotha Program, op. cit., ‘Critique of the third paragraph’
of human labour. If we forget living human beings when we discuss productive forces, the argument loses its energy.

If we consider the qualitative aspect of Marx's thought, we have also to ask how Marx imagined he would sublate the division of labour and achieve the all-round development. The question is not at all easy to answer. One response might be the education that society provides to every person. Another is the psychological motivation of the worker, because "the all-round development" could not be achieved without an earnest desire and determination to bring it about from within the workers. How do we encourage it?

Marx does not elaborate. As Levitas says, it is "difficult to envision how" he intended to acquire it. Marx only touches upon the aspect that "labour has become not only a means of life, but life's prime want." What does Marx mean by that expression? It is difficult to guess what exactly he means. Considering his study of 'Estranged Labour' in his youthful Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, I would construe it in the following way: In the future

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289 This vagueness of Marx has tormented many researchers who want to understand what he meant. Jonathan Wolf writes, "Marx the creative thinker was hugely optimistic, sometimes mistaken in his arguments and assumptions, often infuriatingly vague about the details, and in consequence has little to tell us now about how to arrange society", in Why Read Marx Today?, p3. R.N. Berki also says, "in the first instance the problem of communism would appear, as it has done to well-nigh every commentator, ..., as the problem of the paucity of the explicit references to the 'good society' in Marx's writings. Here first point to note though is that this is only a relative paucity. ... What is true, of course, and in part the cause of our optical illusion is that Marx has a great deal more to say explicitly about capitalism than about communism", in his Insight and Vision: The Problem of Communism in Marx's Thought, p14. Berki even goes on saying "there is some indication in the texts that Marx actually wanted to convey the message that communism was essentially unintelligible", ibid., p17.

290 Critique of the Gotha Program, op. cit., emphasis added
commune, labour has become a purpose of life itself, an immanent desire of human beings to express themselves. Humans as "a part of nature" face it as their "inorganic body", and enjoy a dialogue with it – as Marx puts it in the *Manuscripts*. At last human beings regain unalienated labour at a higher level and find enjoyment in it. 'Work' in the sense that it constitutes a duty driven by external necessity is overcome. If this interpretation is correct, I think Marx finds here one of the most important keys to the realm of freedom.

However, Marx's expression "life's prime want" could be interpreted in other ways. It could be interpreted solely as a social duty. The mindset of workers is naturally influenced by society, or by leading groups of society. When working for the common good is regarded as a virtue and plays an influential role in society, workers might deny their own 'want' and think of the common good as an external necessity during labour. They might even feel pleasure in it. William Casement refers to this type of 'pleasure' when he writes about labour of "the socialist tradition". He says "the laborer experiences true enjoyment in its performance", which is driven "from recognition that one is laboring for the good of the community, that to perform labor is to bring one into harmony with one's fellow man."291

Of course working for the common good is not an entirely bad idea. Sacrificing oneself for one's fellows is itself a noble deed. However, if this is over-emphasized and combined with a neglect of regaining unalienated labour, it is a problem. What

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291 William Casement (1986), ‘William Morris on labor and Pleasure’ in *Social Theory and Practice*, vol. 12, no. 3, p357
would happen, if this sense of working for the good of the community is used like 'a moral obligation' to improve productivity? Workers would be encouraged to work hard although they do not enjoy their work. This is not the realm of freedom at all. In the worst case, it becomes an integral part of a totalitarian state: guided by those who still have old values to seek individual fame and employ competition among workers to achieve it. Workers can be mobilized and cajoled to be the 'workers' hero'. In a film, 'Man of Marble' made in 1971, Polish director Andrzej Wajda vividly pictures this kind of labour in a story about the rise and fall of a worker who wins a brick-building competition.

The ambiguity of Marx's sentence allows various interpretations. Marx does not elaborate labour in the Critique as he did in Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts. His language is clipped. If Marx had written how future people would feel about labour, his ideas might have been clearer. What about his other writings? Let me take The German Ideology written from 1845 to 1846.

(4) Production Force and Work

When Marxists regard the increase of the productive force as almost the only key to lead us to the realm of freedom, they usually turn to The German Ideology for support. Criticising the ideological view of history, Marx discusses history developing around productive forces and ownership. Of course Marx writes that the development of productive forces is "a material premise of communism". But, it is difficult to follow Marx because he does not explain why it is only a premise and not sufficient for

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292 Karl Marx, The German Ideology, section title, emphasis added
Marx gives his description of ideal society of freedom a pastoral touch:

in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner.293

His view is similar to the utopian socialist, Charles Fourier, one of the first socialists who introduced the idea of variety in labour to socialism.294

Why does he think this realm of freedom will become possible? The key is "[t]he social power, i.e., the multiplied productive force". In the end of this section he writes:

[W]ith the abolition of the basis of private property, with the communistic regulation of production (and, implicit in this, the destruction of the alien relation between men and what they themselves produce), ... men get exchange, production, the mode of their mutual relation, under their own control again".295

The change of ownership and productive relations is important, but a crucial question lies beyond it. After private property is abolished and society controls production,

293 Ibid., ‘Part I Feuerbach, A, Private Property and Communism’ at http://www.marxists.org/archive, 29 April, 2005
294 See Morris (and Bax)’s introduction about Fourier’s socialism in ‘Chapter 13 The Utopists’ in Socialism From The Root Up. Morris regards Fourier’s community “as the unit of co-operation, in which all life and all industry, agricultural and other, should be carried on”, and thinks that “[Fourier]’s most valuable idea was the possibility and necessity of apportioning due labour to each capacity, and thereby assuring that it should be always pleasurable”.
295 Ibid.
how do people arrange their work? Does work become enjoyable to people? These questions are important to Morris, but how are they answered by Marx? Since Marx illustrates the individual's one day with hunting, fishing and other activities, we know he regards the sublation of the division of labour and its transformation as a matter of importance. However, he does not examine the qualitative aspect in any detail.

Admittedly, he adds in parentheses "the destruction of the alien relation between men and what they themselves produce". However, according to his own writing in 'Estranged Labour', man's "relationship to the products of his labour" is only "one aspect": "But estrangement manifests itself not only in the result, but also in the act of production, within the activity of production itself." There are also two other aspects, namely man's estrangement from "species-life" and "from (other) man", but the second aspect, "[t]he relationship of labour to the act of production within labour" is the essence of alienated labour. Marx writes passionately about this:

This relationship is the relationship of the worker to his own activity as something which is alien and does not belong to him, activity as passivity, power as impotence, procreation as emasculation, the worker's own physical and mental energy, his personal life — for what is life but activity? — as an activity directed against himself, which is independent of him and does not belong to him.297

What does Marx think of sublation of alienated labour and how to achieve it, when he writes in the passage of The German Ideology? Unfortunately we do not know.

296 Karl Marx, 'Estranged Labour' [1843], in Karl Marx Early Writings (1992), p326
297 Ibid., p327
However, Marx's attitude to medieval labour and its products expressed in *The German Ideology* might give us an indication. Marx describes:

"every medieval craftsman was completely absorbed in his work, to which he had a contented, slavish relationship, and to which he was subjected to a far greater extent than the modern worker, whose work is a matter of indifference to him."\(^{298}\)

When we consider the feudal system where the hierarchy was rigid, the description of 'a slavish relationship' of the medieval craftsman sounds appropriate. However, when we compare it with Morris's approach, the difference is significant and instructive.

Morris was interested in the period because of his art, i.e. he saw it as a period when art thrived. He sees in medieval workers' products "fancy, imagination, sentiment, the joy of creation, and the hope of fair fame."\(^{299}\) It is impossible for Morris to analyse their products without making an aesthetic judgment, because "there was soul in them, the thoughts of man".\(^{300}\) Morris cannot help thinking about the beauty of the product and what this beauty suggests about the engagement of workers in work. To Morris, work gave workers "the opportunity of expressing their own thoughts to their fellows by means of that very labour",\(^{301}\) even though, politically, they lived "under grinding tyrannies".\(^{302}\)

To Marx, the labourer's work and the results of their work are the subjects of analysis.

\(^{298}\) Marx, *The German Ideology*, op. cit., C, 2. The Division of Material and Mental Labour.

\(^{299}\) 'Art and Socialism' [1884], Works, vol.23, p202

\(^{300}\) Ibid., p197

\(^{301}\) Ibid., p193

\(^{302}\) 'The Art of the People', Works, vol.22, p33
The labourers are not the subjects of his interest. Here, Marx analyses work from the point of view of production, not from the point of view of the producer. I will explore his analysis of work in *Das Kapital* later, but as far as guild workers' work described here is concerned, Marx's expression "a contented, slavish relationship" is somewhat distant. Granted that Marx writes about alienated medieval labour, his phrase is still very cool. He does not imagine living labour of medieval guild workers but only thinks of work as a concept. The concept here is, judging the word "slavish", inclined to something that must be done, i.e. duty.303

If Marx does think medieval work only as duty, he does not apply his dialectic in analysing it. Guild workers certainly worked under the limited system of the guilds. Their work could not be entirely free. They had to produce what masters directed them to do. Morris admits this. Yet, as they did not work as 'a cog of a machine', but created a complete item, they could feel a mixed pleasure of work. That pleasure is energy to come out and be realized its entirety. It is a disguised and twisted unalienated labour. If it does not have such quality in essence, however faint it might be realized over time, how do human beings regain unalienated labour in a higher level?

303 G. A. Cohen interprets this "servile relationship" from a different angle. He says "[i]t is Marx's idea that they [pre-capitalist workers] enjoy fulfillment only because their powers and wants are limited, their human nature stunted" in *History, Labour, and Freedom: Themes from Marx*, p199. In this writing he examines 'Marxian pronouncements about future society' with the concepts of 'the freedom of detachment' and 'engulfment' which means the absence of that freedom. This is interesting philosophical study of Marx's labour, although I do not agree his conclusions such as "there is no exploitation of labour because there is no labour to be exploited, not toilers to be governed but only physical process to be administered" in future society, p204, emphasis added.
Marx's Concept of Work in *Estranged Labour* and *Das Kapital*

In 'Estranged Labour' in 1845, Marx writes about labour in a different way:

"It is therefore in his fashioning of the objective that man really proves himself to be a species-being. Such production is his active species-life. Through it nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of labour is therefore the objectification of the species-life of man: for man reproduces himself not only intellectually, ... , but actively and actually, and he can therefore contemplate himself in a world he himself has created."³⁰⁴

Marx further writes about the alienation of labour as follows:

"that labour is external to the worker, i.e. does not belong to his essential being; that he therefore does not confirm himself in his work, but denies himself, feels miserable and not happy, does not develop free mental and physical energy, but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind."³⁰⁵

Here we can feel young Marx's anger against the situation. Labour is the essential life activity and should bring the worker happiness and a sense of achievement. Nevertheless, it has turned into something external to the worker that makes him/her miserable. Marx and Morris share this anger. For both, the change in the quality of the essential human power is the root of the problem.

However, as we saw, Marx in 1875 did not explain labour. Does his understanding of

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³⁰⁴ Marx, *Karl Marx Early Writings*, op. cit., p329
³⁰⁵ Ibid., p326
labour change in his later days, or is it just a matter of the style of writing?

In his mature work, Marx's tone changes. In his masterpiece, Das Kapital, he describes labour as "a commodity, whose actual consumption ... is ... a creation of value", or "the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description". He further elaborates the labour-process in the next chapter. Let me quote it at length:

"Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to Nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature. He develops his slumbering powers and compels them to act in obedience to his sway."

This is the description of the essential nature of work – how the human relates to nature and exercises his/her slumbering power. This expression overlaps with what Marx wrote in 'Estranged Labour', still his approach is from the economic aspect. Its restrained tone about labour is apparent, compared with more passionate tone of early philosophical writings. It is intentional. Marx intends to write it as the analysis of

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306 Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* [1867] vol.1, part 2, chap.6, 'The Buying and Selling of Labour-Power' at http://www.marxists.org/archive, 14 April, 2005

307 Ibid, vol.1, part3, chapter 7, 'The Labour-Process or the Production of Use-Values', emphasis added
capitalist society where everything is turned into a commodity. Probably he needs a surgeon’s coolheadedness to dissect it, and wants to systematize it objectively.

Of course one can still detect Marx’s anger against the miserable situations of workers behind his writings. When he writes “the labourer ..., must be obliged to offer for sale as a commodity that very labour-power, which exists only in his living self”308 there is a deep sorrow of Marx that human beings have to sell their most essential power. Furthermore, in the chapter ten, ‘The Working Day’, he cites numerous Factory Inspectors’ poignant reports pointing out exploitation. He writes about “the tendency to the extension of the working-day, the were-wolf’s hunger for surplus-labour”.309 Throughout Part Three, he describes the brutal “historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production”. A statute in 1547 ordains “if anyone refuses to work, he shall be condemned as a slave to the person who has denounced him as an idler” and if the slave escapes, he is “branded on forehead or back with the letter S”.310 Marx denounces it as history “written in the annals of mankind in the letters of blood and fire”.311 Marx’s humanism remains the basis of his ‘anatomy’ of capitalist society.

Still, the approach of mature Marx312 is economic. As far as “labour” is concerned,

308 Ibid., vol.1, part2, chapter 6
309 Ibid., chapter 10, section 3, ‘Branches of English industry without legal limits to exploitation’
311 Ibid., chapter 26, ‘Primitive Accumulation’
312 The shift of Marx’s approaches is well known. Jonathan Wolff says, “Marx’s early writings contain much more [than the two ideas – theories of history and of economics]. His ambition, and interest, was immense, and in these writings we see Marx discussing topics, such as religion, barely mentioned later. Although Marx seemed to lose interest in some of the topics he raised this doesn’t mean that we should too”, op.cit., p10.
Marx's description is academic and somewhat dry. We need more imagination to visualize what Marx analyses. Maybe it is inevitable because Das Kapital is the detailed work of economy, which Marx chose as his life work.313

Since Marx's approach is economic, he treats labour as an element of the productive force. In other words he deals with it from the quantitative point of view. There is a risk that one reads his masterpiece like a text book without sharing young Marx's passion towards unalienated labour. It may explain why later Marxists emphasized the quantitative aspect of work, at the cost of the qualitative aspect.

(6) Marx left the detail open

Another difference of the two men is that Marx leaves the detail of future work deliberately open. In his afterword to Das Kapital, Marx rejects the idea of delineating the details of future society, laughing that a French reviewer wanted him to write "recipes (Comtist ones?) for the cook-shops of the future".314 Quoting another review, Marx says that his aim is "to show, by rigid scientific investigation, the necessity of successive determinate orders of social conditions, and to establish, as impartially as possible, the facts that serve him for fundamental starting-points".315 He does not

R.N. Berki says "[as Marx develops his own distinctive approach of investigation of capitalism] he seems to believe, and this is the core element of what we are calling here the Marxist insight, that in modern times 'science' itself supplies the basis of radical criticism and revolutionary aims”, op.cit., p.19

313 In addition to the works cited here, The Grundrisse (Outline of the Critique of Political Economy) [1857-8] would be useful to study how Marx's concept of work had developed and transformed. Marx's work also helped many understand modern capitalism. See, for instance, steel factory worker turned journalist, Harry Braverman's Labor & Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century, an elaborate work with "a sophisticated understanding of Marx's dialectical method and with a clarity" as introduced by John Bellamy Foster.

314 Das Kapital, op. cit., 'Afterwords on the Second German Edition', paragraph 17

315 Ibid.
regard thinking about future society as his proper business. Future people will think in quite a different way from the way we think. Therefore, Marx reasons that it is a waste of time to think in detail about the organization of future society. It is better to concentrate on criticising the status quo, and to give people the basic idea of what they should not build. After all, negation of the status quo is the only way to achieve a new synthesis: socialism.

On the other hand, there is always a gap between what exists (in antithesis) to what will be (in synthesis). Even assuming that contradiction and class conflict will finally lead to the sublation of work, the process is likely to be very complex. In an area of human history, we cannot bring about change simply by criticizing the status quo. There are many aspects to consider to create anew. Can we just leave the task to future generations? Of course they must have a role, but we need to have a clear image in order to keep us going. We must make it clear at least about such a crucial matter as labour.

To Morris, visualizing future society is crucial to the success of the revolution. He wants to stir concrete desires in workers to help bring about change. In his 'True and False Society' lecture he says: "I must try to get you to see it, since seeing it is the first step towards feeling it".316 One of the reasons why Morris outlined his future society as a romance, was to make his ideas amenable. Unafraid of being seen to be 'utopian' or charged with being too specific about unforeseeable future, he wants to help workers to become eager to see their own ideal society.

(7) Background of the Difference

Let me summarize the argument. First, Marx does not elaborate the nature of work in future society. Indeed, he refrains from giving details about future society in general. For Morris visualizing future society is crucial to stir workers' desires to change. Second, Marx chooses labour as the subject of his analysis and he analyses labour from its economic aspect. Morris, however, pays attention to the process of labour. It is the subject of like and dislike, and he cannot help loving them. Where do these differences come from?

Marx's anger at alienated labour might have been always with him, and the driving force to analyse capitalist society. However, there is an apparent difference between Morris and Marx in the emphasis they place on the quality of labour. The difference is pronounced in mature Marx, but apparent even in his early writings. It is the difference of what labour concretely meant to both men.

To the craftsman Morris, labour is always a tangible 'hands-on' activity. On the other hand, to Marx, labour is the subject of analysis. In other words, the concrete labour of Marx himself is brain work. It is Marx's great achievement that he was able to contemplate human labour in this way without experiencing concrete labour. All the same, it is theoretical, not practical like Morris.

It is well-known that Marx presented us with a material dialectic by studying Hegel's abstract concept. Marx structures his material dialectic, criticising Hegel on the
grounds that it is impossible in the real world for the Absolute Spirit to realize itself and produce the world. However, Marx’s materialist view does not simply negate Hegel’s dialectic to replace spirit with matter. Marx appreciated Hegel’s dialectic as presenting mental labour. This led Marx to generalize the dialectic as the structure of labour. He writes in the Critique of Hegel’s Dialectic and General Philosophy: “The importance of Hegel’s Phenomenology and its final result – lies in the fact that Hegel conceives the self-creation of man as a process, objectification as loss of object, as alienation and as supersession of this alienation”.317 In this way Hegel “sees labour as the essence, self-confirming essence of man”. However, it is in the form of mental labour, because “[t]he only labour Hegel knows and recognizes is abstract mental labour”.318

Marx criticizes Hegel that he only recognizes “abstract mental labour”. Marx sets tangible labour with body and mind against Hegel. When Marx described labour in ‘Estranged Labour’, he must have applied Hegel’s dialectics, the grasp of “the self-creation of man as a process” into tangible relationship with Nature and man. Confronting Nature, human beings think and exercise their power, change Nature, and get its products. As a result of this process, human beings change themselves physically and mentally, and face Nature again. Thus labour was living activity to Marx at this stage. Nevertheless, mature Marx seems to have forgotten this pulsating activity with passion and the sorrows of human beings, and did not analyse it from within as a process, but from its outside, i.e. productive force.

317 Marx, Karl Marx Early Writings, op. cit., p385-6
318 Ibid., p386
Perhaps, because Marx himself was a philosopher, he came to think of labour as a mental activity, even whilst criticizing Hegel's view. Whatever the case, labour is the most subjective and creative activity for human beings to engage in, it is essential to exercise it with body and soul. This is why Morris was so dedicated and repeated again and again about the necessity of realizing pleasurable work.

[3] Comparison with other socialists

(1) Morris's Contemporaries

Let me now turn to the comparison with other contemporaries. In the 1880s, there was not only the new phenomenon of mass unemployment, but also degraded working conditions for the 'lucky' workers who got jobs. Socialists noticed two phenomena: unemployment and overwork. They responded in two ways. One example was the response of Edward Carpenter (1844-1929), who opposed Morris's secession from the Social-Democratic Federation at first, but understood it later and joined Morris in the Socialist League. The other example was the response of Paul Lafargue (1842-1911), who was Marx's son-in-law and introduced Marx's work in France.

Carpenter's claim was "the acknowledgment of the Right to Work". Distressed by the situation of the unemployed, Carpenter says: "The man who stands at the dock-gates asking not for alms but for a pittance of work, and stands there, ill-clothed and ill-fed, for hours and hours in the rain and cold, if so he may win bread for his little ones, is ... the
Christ knocking at the door of modern society, knocking at the door of our hearts."319

The other side of the coin was overwork. Once employed, workers including women and children had to work long hours with little time for meals and sleep. It was perhaps natural that socialists were concerned to decrease this toil. Therefore Lafargue argued for a 'right to be lazy'. He saw many workers, especially women and children, working from five o'clock in the morning to eight o'clock in the evening with "the morsel of bread".

In response he writes "[o]ur epoch has been called the century of work. It is in fact the century of pain, misery and corruption."320 Frustrated by the workers' acceptance of overwork and inability to rebel, he chides them: "if the miseries of compulsory work and the tortures of hunger have descended upon the proletariat ..., it is because the proletariat itself invited them", and calls them to abandon "the right to work". "It[the proletariat] must proclaim the Rights of Laziness, ... working but three hours a day, reserving the rest of the day and night for leisure and feasting."321

Although their claims appear contradictory, Carpenter and Lafargue share the anger at the miserable state of workers. They are forced to overwork and stick to their jobs when jobs are available. At the same time, they are easily thrown onto the streets when capitalists overproduce and the profits have gone. They are just leaves floating on 'the

319 Edward Carpenter(1917), Towards Industrial Freedom, P32
320 Paul Lafargue(1883), The right to be lazy, P17
321 Ibid., p28
Both Lafargue and Carpenter want workers to take the initiative by claiming their 'rights'. They both advance their claims through an analysis of the market—the market that forces workers either to overwork or go unemployed. However, they draw two different conclusions from their analysis.

(2) ‘Right to work’ and ‘right to be lazy’

Carpenter’s claim, the acknowledgment of the right to work, does not at all mean that he wants workers to work under their current condition. Seeing factory workers coming out from the gate, he writes:

“It was not necessary for me to go inside. Standing there I could see only too clearly the conditions which prevailed within the factory...; they were written on the listless tired faces, the lightless eyes, the monotone expressions, the pallid skins, the peaked features, the perkily sexual physiognomies.”

He does not want such work in modern society. What he wants is “that work itself must be so transformed as to become a pleasure.” His concept of labour is clearly influenced by Morris. Indeed, Carpenter says as much: “as William Morris so constantly maintained ... ‘work’ in the new sense would be a pleasure – one of the greatest pleasures undoubtedly of life.”

Confronted with poverty and warfare in the twentieth century, Carpenter keeps saying that life should be made good and beautiful and work must be transformed as to become a pleasure. He sincerely regrets that the importance of beauty that has been dwelt on

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322 Carpenter, op. cit., p29
323 Ibid., p64
324 Ibid., p50
325 Ibid., p86
by a few Artists and Socialists, like Ruskin and William Morris ... has generally passed unnoticed by the multitude".  

Carpenter organized a community of seven acres on a patch of ground in Millthorpe, Chesterfield, growing wheat and selling flowers and fruit in nearby markets. Morris once visited him at his village to talk about the split of the Social-Democratic Federation in 1884. In his community Carpenter tried to experiment with pleasurable work and alternative living, but he was not so clear about the condition of workers as a whole and how it might be changed. He suggested "a changed mental attitude towards life" and imagined a society where "people come to value beauty in our daily life". But he was not clear that a revolution was necessary to bring the change.

In this sense, he was not practical socialist. And he did not feel the urge to contemplate the detail of work after revolution. To Morris – who lived his last fifteen years as a practical socialist and wanted to realize the change – the details of post-revolutionary society were a matter of importance. Nevertheless, like Morris Carpenter kept holding up the flag for 'pleasure in work'. Carpenter lived much longer than Morris. Seeing prodigious changes in the turn of the century through to the World War I, he grieves in his book in 1917:

Here we are, the human race, planked down upon this planet with (at the present day) most marvellous powers of industrial production at our command, amply sufficient, if decently used, to supply every one with all the necessaries of life ... and

326 Ibid., p58  
327 Letters, vol.2, p353  
328 Carpenter, op. cit., p14
lo! ... we deliberately leave nine-tenths of our brothers and sisters to live in squalid and abject poverty, while the rest of us employ our precious time and energies in mad and destructive warfare!\textsuperscript{329}

Lafargue’s claim to shorten the working time was probably the majority view among socialists in his time, although he was radical enough to insist to “be lazy” and argue for a shortening of work to “three hours a day”. To him, work is nothing but miserable toil. The pleasure of life starts only after work with leisure and feasting of “juicy beefsteaks of a pound or two” and “broad and deep bumpers of Bordeaux and Burgundy”.\textsuperscript{330}

For Lafargue, working hard is “a disastrous dogma”: “A strange delusion possesses the working classes of the nations where capitalist civilization holds its sway. ... This delusion is the love of work, the furious passion for work”.\textsuperscript{331} He fixes his eyes on the long miserable work, i.e. the quantitative aspect of work, and does not question the quality of work. Again it must be natural for him and other nineteenth century socialists to question working hours, because they saw workers literally dying of exhaustion because of long working hours. It must be quite difficult to see the issue of the qualitative aspect of work through this problem of long working hours, if one does not have an exceptional insight of work through the experience of pleasurable work.

In the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century workers followed Lafargue’s logic. They campaigned for the reduction of the working day. ‘Eight Hour Working Day’ was

\textsuperscript{329} Ibid., p50
\textsuperscript{330} Lafargue, op. cit., p50
\textsuperscript{331} Ibid., p9
their demand. Two World Wars were fought and “marvellous powers of industrial production” have increased its capacity beyond the imagination of Victorian people. But the expansion did not decrease working hours, but lengthened and intensified it. The first ILO meeting legitimized the 8 hour working day or 48 hour working week in 1919, but workers had to continue to struggle to force employers to implement it.

Morris understood the need to regulate working hours, but thought that it was not a fundamental solution to the problem of labour. Still, Carpenter’s call, ‘remember Morris and make work pleasurable’ seems to have been lost behind these struggles for the reduction of working hours. The majority of socialists are unconcerned with the qualitative aspect of work, and care only for the quantitative aspect on the premise of work as tedious. The modern socialist, Andre Gorz, is one. He showed his dislike of the productive force, or work, and requested a restriction of work. Bidding ‘Farewell to the Working Class’ in 1980, he offered a solution of ‘a dual society’. Could this be a solution?

(3) Andre Gorz’s Dual Society – modern socialism

Gorz claims that Marx’s material dialectic parallels Hegel’s, and only “Hegel’s spirit is replaced by the activity of producing the world.” Then he criticizes Marx: “Their [the productive forces'] development will not only fail to establish the material preconditions of socialism, but are an obstacle to its realisation”. He continues that productive power has increased “the impotence of proletarians themselves” rather than let the

332 Tom Mann(1886), *What a compulsory 8 HOUR WORKING DAY means to the workers*
333 Andre Gorz(1982), *Farewell to the Working Class*, p19
334 Ibid., p15
proletariat create a society. "The class that collectively is responsible for developing and operating the totality of the productive forces is unable to appropriate or subordinate this totality to its own ends by recognizing it as the totality of its own means."335 "Work has become", he concludes, "a nondescript task carried out without personal involvement."336

Gorz thinks this inevitable, because Marx focuses on the productive forces and working-class. To remedy Marx’s shortfalls he proposes to build a "dual society" rather than work for class revolution to change ownership. The dual society comprises two spheres – the sphere of autonomy and the sphere of heteronomy. In the first, people have the luxury to enjoy "individual autonomy outside of work".337 However, in the second "sphere of heteronomy" necessary work must be carried out. "A disjuncture between" the two spheres, which is carefully defined and codified, is "the very preconditions (sic) of a sphere in which autonomous individuals may freely cooperate for their own ends."338

Could this "dual society" be the solution? How does work become in "the sphere of heteronomy"? He describes that "neo-proletariat" in our time "cannot feel any involvement with 'its' work or identification with 'its' job."339 If it is a dual society, this sense of alienation would remain in the sphere of heteronomy. Then, is this society really the realm of freedom?

335 Ibid., p29
336 Ibid., p67
337 Ibid., p80, emphasis added
338 Ibid., p111
339 Ibid., p70
Gorz details the sphere of autonomy as compensation: "The sphere of individual sovereignty ... is based, ..., upon activities unrelated to any economic goal which are an end in themselves: communication, giving, creating and aesthetic enjoyment, the production and reproduction of life, tenderness, the realisation of physical, sensuous and intellectual capacities, the creation of non-commodity use-values". Indeed, if people could not enjoy these, it would be a very bleak society. Yet why should it be one dimension of the dual society? Why shouldn't it be the whole society in the future?

The reason why Gorz could not imagine this lies in his conception of work. To Gorz, work is just "the heteronomous production of exchange value" and something one has to do to live although he/she does not want to do it. Real life starts outside of work. Thus, for Gorz, enjoying work is out of the question.

Gorz interprets the working class as "collectively capable of taking over and managing the forces of production", then denies the working class altogether. Gorz claims that emphasizing the productive force is Marx's misconception. However, Gorz himself is trapped in a way of seeing things through the productive force, thinking the worker only as the vehicle of the productive force. The significance of the worker exists in the reality of labour: workers create. It is true that work under capitalism is

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340 Ibid., p80
341 Ibid., p82
342 Ibid., p14
"no longer the worker's own activity". However, it does not mean that work is not in essence a creative activity. Labour should be the activity of life. "Labour should be a real tangible blessing in itself to the working man, a pleasure even as sleep and strong drink are to him now", as Morris puts it. What we should confront is the situation that workers deny themselves in their labour under capitalist society.

Regarding the current character of labour as unchangeable, Gorz only tries to limit it and patch it up with "the sphere of autonomy". In this sense, Gorz stands in the same line as Lafargue, who called for shortening working hours and increasing leisure for workers. The difference with Lafargue is that Gorz focuses on describing the detail of "the sphere of autonomy". This is a matter of natural concern for Gorz because he lives in the modern world of much increased productivity, which offers so many choices to people.

As if stunned by the gigantic 'productive force' that modern human beings have summoned, Gorz seems to feel helpless to tackle this huge 'evil' itself and escapes into his 'autonomy'. Working hours should be surely shortened. However, what we have to change is the character of labour, and society in total. This is what Morris repeatedly called for. Without facing the problem in this straightforward and radical way, we will not get to the solution.

Work should be the essential activity for human beings. Because of this, when we

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343 Ibid., p67
344 ‘Art and Socialism’ [1884], Works, vol.23, p201
discuss workers in particular, we should consider human beings in a whole. Besides, when Gorz says farewell to the working class and emphasises "non-class" as the core of revolution, the examples of this "non-class" are actually workers. "[T]hose who have been expelled from production by the abolition of work, or whose capacities are under-employed as a result of the industrialisation of intellectual work" are workers. I suspect that this notion of Gorz's is the reflection of some 'leaders of the working class' in developed countries. Some of them tend to adopt an easy path and exclude these unemployed or under-employed from their category of workers to be organized.

Gorz tries to fill the gap that Marx left unfilled. However, he chooses the wrong direction and expands the gap rather than narrows it. He starts from what he thinks the precondition of Marx; the productive force. He admits work as duty because it is a necessary evil for him. By doing so, he widens Marx's rift, i.e. regarding labour only as the element of the productive force. However, the point is to go back to Marx's "unalienated labour" in order to fill the gap. Therefore, we now turn back to what Morris had been calling for.

[4] Morris's socialist society develops around work as art

(1) Art – torch of hope

As we saw in the previous section, Morris differs from Marx in several ways. Whilst Morris shares Marx's idea that the transitional period is needed to achieve the higher
level of socialism, Morris is more interested in people's emotions or psychological well-being rather than the question of the economic system of distribution, work and its products in the period. Morris tries to persuade his audience by showing how future people get rid of old habits and learn new ways of thinking to develop their capacity. Morris sees the producer's happiness and sorrow through their works, as is shown in his attitude to medieval labour, while mature Marx analyses labour as an element of the productive force. Marx's approach is academic, but Morris is passionate about labour and its products.

Again it should be stressed that these differences are not a matter of the superiority or inferiority of either man. Nevertheless, Morris's insight is valuable, since labour is the most creative and subjective activity for human beings.

Morris's interest is always in human beings: body and soul. He talks about 'manliness'. In order to live 'manly' lives, human beings have to regain true human labour, i.e. pleasurable labour. This regaining of pleasure in labour is his beacon of hope. It keeps him going, and he believes it would mean the same to fellow workers in the nineteenth century if only they see it properly.

Through the close study of the history of art, he finds people's hope buried in the labour under the past class system:

The past art ... , was the outcome of instinct working on an unbroken chain of tradition: it was fed not by knowledge but by hope, and though many a strange and wild illusion mingled with that hope, yet was it human and fruitful ever: many
a man it solaced, many a slave in body it freed in soul; boundless pleasure it gave
to those who wrought it and those who used it: long and long it lived, passing that
torch of hope from hand to hand...\textsuperscript{346}

Morris must have felt it as his mission to hand this ‘torch of hope’ to the future
generation. In the current system, only a few could accidentally enjoy the pleasure of
work, but the people of the future would turn that hope into reality and fulfill the dream
of humankind.

Therefore Morris makes it clear that the abolition of capitalist ownership alone is
insufficient for ‘communism’. “Of course with the longing for equality went the
perception of the necessity for the abolition of private property” says he, but this is only
the starting point for him. “My socialism began where that of some others ended”.\textsuperscript{347}

The character of labour is crucial to him. Indeed Morris says:

Some Socialists might say we need not go further than this [the abolition of
class-robbery]; ... I yet demand compensation for the compulsion of Nature’s
necessity. As long as the work is repulsive it will still be a burden ... What we
want to do is to add to our wealth without diminishing our pleasure.”\textsuperscript{348}

Morris sensed the neglect of fellow socialists on this matter, and warned them of the
danger. I suspect this criticism was aimed at Marx’s The Communist Manifesto,
which was written in 1848 and available in English edition by 1850. The Manifesto

\textsuperscript{346} 'The Prospect of Architecture in Civilization' [1881], Works, vol.22, p133
\textsuperscript{347} 'How Shall We Live Then?' , in An Unpublished Lecture of William Morris, Paul Meier(1971),
p22, International Review of Social History, vol.16
\textsuperscript{348} 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil', Works, vol.23, p107, emphasis added
was the beacon of Marx's work and treated as such especially among those who regarded themselves as revolutionary socialists. Morris must have read it.\textsuperscript{349} In section two, ten measures are listed for communists to take as 'a means of entirely revolutionising the mode of production'. Items such as the abolition of property, equal obligation for all to work, and free education were among them.\textsuperscript{350} However, there is no mention of the qualitative aspect of work. Since the book was such a monumental declaration, Morris must have strongly felt the lack of it and challenged it.

Morris declares "all labour, even the commonest, must be made attractive".\textsuperscript{351} Furthermore, after he claims that "their work should be of itself pleasant to do", he elaborates it as:

"If we could but convince them that such a strange revolution in Labour as this would be of infinite benefit not to them only, but to all men, ... if we could but convince them, then indeed there would be chance of the phrase Art of the People being something more than a mere word".\textsuperscript{352}

He is well aware that this notion is unfamiliar to the majority of his fellow people, but to Morris, revolution is in essence the transformation of the quality of labour.

\textsuperscript{349} Morris referred to it in \textit{Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome} [1893], p231
\textsuperscript{350} The whole list is: 1) Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes, 2) A heavy progressive ... income tax, Abolition of all right of inheritance, 3) Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels, 4) Centralisation of credit ... by means of a national bank..., 5) Centralisation of the means of communication and transport..., 6) Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State ..., the bringing into cultivation of waste-lands..., 7) Equal liability of all to labour, 8) Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture, 9) Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country ..., 10) Free education for all children, Abolition of children's factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production
\textsuperscript{351} 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil', Works, vol.23, p111
\textsuperscript{352} 'Art and Socialism', Works, vol.23, p201 emphasis added
This is in the sharp contrast with other socialists. For instance, Gorz says "it is not possible to make every type of socially necessary labour enjoyable or enriching for those called upon to carry it out." Gorz, Lafargue, and many other socialists, in fact the majority, think making all work attractive impossible. They start from the idea that work is a necessity and a burden. Therefore they seek to restrict work. Artist Morris starts from the idea that work is art and joy. Therefore he searches the way to make it a pleasure for everyone. Morris is practically the only socialist who built this concept as the pillar of changing the world. Therefore, the relevance of Bloody Sunday for Morris was not that it was a march of the unemployed but that it was a potential trigger for the unemployed to sweep away the system that denied pleasure in work.

It is most regrettable that his remark has been long forgotten. Many so-called socialist countries in the twentieth century sweated hard building up their productive force with no attention to pleasurable work. Becoming rigid authoritarian states in some way or other, most of them collapsed and abandoned their system. Morris's message; "unless we find some means to make all work more or less pleasurable, we shall never escape from the great tyranny of the modern world" is all the more relevant in the light of the failure of those states.

(2) Everybody enjoys work and becomes an artist

Let me turn to what Morris says he needs in future society. He writes:

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353 Gorz, op. cit., p98
354 'Dawn of a New Epoch' [1885], Works, vol.23, p138

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The sunlight, the fresh air, the unspoiled face of 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 thoughtful – all things which serve the pleasure of people, free, manly, and uncorrupted.  

This is wealth to Morris. This is "what Nature gives us and what a reasonable man can make out of the gifts of Nature for his reasonable use". In other words, this is what human beings can get through their labour. Although the image might be similar to Gorz's 'sphere of autonomy', Morris believes this would be only possible through pleasurable labour. To Morris, socialist society is impossible without it. In this ideal society, people want to work and enjoy doing it:

"[A]fter a while people would rather be anxious to seek work than to avoid it; that our working hours would be merry parties of men & maids, young men and old enjoying themselves over their work, than the grumpy weariness it mostly is now."  

Of course he knows that it takes time. "[F]or a while", "necessary change may make life ... rougher for the refined, and ... duller for the gifted":

"Yet, when the day comes that gives us visible token of art rising like the sun from below – when it is no longer a justly despised whim of the rich, or a lazy habit of

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355 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil', Works, vol.23, p103
356 Ibid., emphasis added
357 'How We Live and How We Might Live' [1885], Works, vol.23, p21
the so-called educated, but a thing that labour begins to crave as a necessity, even as labour is a necessity for all men.... Little by little it must come, I know."

This is "the new birth of art." Labour becomes art, as he says in a lecture in 1891:

[W]hen people once more take pleasure in their work, when the pleasure rises to a certain point, the expression of it will become irresistible, and that expression of pleasure is art, whatever form it may take.

Thus, everyone becomes an artist in this society.

(3) All labour must be made attractive

Because of this love of work and art, Morris discusses his proposal about future society and its labour in detail. He says that work should be made attractive "by the consciousness of usefulness, by its being carried on with intelligent interest, by variety, and by its being exercised amidst pleasurable surroundings" and also the working day "should not be wearisomely long."

He elaborates this process. Like Marx in *The German Ideology*, and Fourier before him, Morris thinks "variety of work" is important for people to find work pleasurable: "To compel a man to do day after day the same task, without any hope of escape of change, means nothing short of turning his life into a prison-torment. ... A man might easily learn and practise at least three crafts, varying sedentary occupation with

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358 'Making the Best of It' [about 1879], Works, vol.22, p117, emphasis added
359 'How We Live and How We Might Live', op. cit., p21
360 'The Socialist Ideal' [1891], Works, vol.23, p262
361 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil', Works, vol.23, p116
outdoor". In order to make it possible, society prepares education for both young people and adults, which "concerns itself in finding out what different people are fit for, and helping them along the road which they are inclined to take."362

There are people other than Morris who proposed the importance of combining jobs. For example, Peter Kropotkin, anarchist and a friend of Morris, also emphasised the combination of outside and indoor work: "Have the factory and the workshop at the gates of your fields and gardens, and work in them. ... Not those factories ... of industrial hell, but those airy and hygienic ... factories".363 However, Morris does not only stress the importance of combining outside and inside work, but also insists on variety in these tasks. An idea of learning "easily" at least three crafts might be typical of Morris, but his uniqueness is that he believes the development of diverse directions of individual abilities.

So Morris emphasises variety in work, but when Morris says "all labour, even the commonest, must be made attractive", does he really mean "all labour"? Some might wonder whether it is really possible to wipe out all obnoxious work. Indeed Morris himself mentioned "repellant" work in 'Socialism from the Root Up' in 1888. The article says even in communism "there would be a certain amount of necessary work to be done which would be usually repellant to ordinary persons".364 It proposes that the greater part of it would be done by machinery, and for the rest volunteers would be called on. According to this policy, even the workers are volunteers and they have

362 Ibid., p113
363 Peter Kropotkin (1993), Fields, Factories and Workshop, p417
364 'Socialism from the Root Up' in POLITICAL WRITINGS (1994), op. cit., p614
only "minimum responsibility" on their work, work itself could not be attractive. Is there, then, any ambiguity on Morris's part?

The article was written for Commonweal, the journal of the Socialist League, together with Belfort Bax. Undoubtedly the passage was the result of a compromise with Bax. In 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil', Morris asks if there is "any work which cannot be but a torment to the worker, what then?" and states clearly "let us see if the heavens will fall on us if we leave it undone". This is his attitude in 1884. He reiterates this point in many other lectures such as 'How Shall We Live Then?' in 1889: "I cannot see why we should bother ourselves with occupations which are unnecessary."

Let us also hear from old Hammond in News from Nowhere. Answering questions to William Guest from the nineteenth century, Hammond says "all work is now pleasurable; either because of the hope of gain in honour and wealth ... which causes pleasurable excitement, even when the actual work is not pleasant; or else because it has grown into a pleasurable habit, as in the case with ... mechanical work; and lastly (and most of our work is of this kind) because there is conscious sensuous pleasure in the work itself; it is done, that is, by artists."

There would be some trials and errors in a transitional period when people find what kind of jobs are useless and unpleasant. However to Morris the goal is clear. "Nothing should be made by man's labour which is not worth making, or which must be

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365 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil', Works, vol.23, p119
366 'How Shall We Live Then?', op. cit., p230
367 Nowhere, p95, emphasis added
made by labour degrading to the makers",368 because labour is "life". What labour gives as "the reward" is "creation" as old Hammond put it.

Indeed, in the future society of News from Nowhere no one suffers repellant 'necessary' work. People even enjoy road-mending. Laughing and talking merrily, handsome clean-built men are exercising their strength. It is like a boating party at Oxford. Beside them, there are spectators of women and children who keep their beautiful clothes and a basket of cold pie and wine.369 This is Morris's answer and conclusion to the compromise with Bax in 'Socialism from Root Up'.

(4) Women's work

So Morris proposes that all labour must be made attractive and pleasurable in future society, but what was his opinion specifically about women's work? There is some criticism about Morris's view of women as 'old-fashioned and masculine', as Krishan Kumar argues in his note to News from Nowhere.370 Morris refers to women as the spectators in the road-mending, and in another part describes women elegantly cleaning halls and preparing breakfast for guests. Was he a Victorian chauvinist?

First of all, when he says "[n]othing should be made by man's labour which is not worth making, or which must be made by labour degrading to the makers", he means all humankind's labour. Morris uses the term 'man' to apply to both sexes. It is shown in a letter to his colleague Glasier: "For my part being a male-man, I naturally think

368 'Art and Socialism', Works, vol.23, p205
369 Nowhere, p49
370 Ibid., p16
more of the female-man than I do of my own sex.\textsuperscript{371} There is no sway in his stance and he makes it clear in \textit{News from Nowhere} as "[t]he women do what they can do best, and what they like best."\textsuperscript{372} "[T]he idea of the woman being the property of man, whether he were husband, father, brother,... has of course vanished with private property."\textsuperscript{373}

However, he has a personal and particular opinion on what are suitable jobs for women. An interview in the magazine, \textit{The Woman's Signal} in 1894, illustrates his view. In the interview Morris says:

\begin{quote}
I consider ... that a woman’s special work – housekeeping – is one of the most difficult and important branches of study. People lift their eyebrows over women mastering the details of higher mathematics; why, it is infinitely more difficult to learn the details of housekeeping. Anybody can learn mathematics, but it takes a lot of skill to manage a house well. Don’t let the modern woman neglect or despise house-keeping.\textsuperscript{374}
\end{quote}

Morris does not look down on women and impose housekeeping on them. He expects the criticism of 'reaction' and challenges it through Old Hammond's mouth, "perhaps you think housekeeping an unimportant occupation, not deserving of respect."\textsuperscript{375} He regards dwelling is the most important area of art and says

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{371} \textit{Letters}, vol.2, p545
\item \textsuperscript{372} \textit{Nowhere}, p62
\item \textsuperscript{373} \textit{ibid.}, p83
\item \textsuperscript{374} \textit{William Morris}(2005), \textit{We Met Morris}, p94
\item \textsuperscript{375} \textit{ibid.}, p62
\end{itemize}
"architecture would lead us to all the arts".\textsuperscript{376} Therefore maintaining dwellings in a clean, beautiful and comfortable condition is substantial to him. He also regards cooking as important and says he himself enjoys cooking. This is pleasurable work and women are fitted for it in his opinion. Therefore, his principle 'pleasurable work' is applied here too.

He is well aware that his opinion is personal. When pursued further by the interviewer and asked "do you think, Mr. Morris, that women are only fitted to be housekeepers?", he replies:

By no means; women's talents vary, just the same as those of men. There are many things which women can do equally as well as men, and some a great deal better. I think that people ought to do what they clearly have the ability for doing.\textsuperscript{377}

Still, it seems that his idea of "the work most suitable to them" does not surpass the period as far as gender differences are concerned. Considering the period, of course he is fair and egalitarian. He wants a woman to "be adequately paid for her work, as the same as a man should". I agree with him that men and women are biologically different. He points out that women's structure is "more nervous and less muscular", and adds:

"I do not say, mind you, that woman is inferior to man, because she isn't; but she certainly is different, therefore, her occupation, broadly speaking, should be

\textsuperscript{376} 'The Beauty of Life' [1880], Works, vol.22, p74
\textsuperscript{377} Ibid., p93
However, this difference could be expanded or shrunk according to changes of periods. Even in the Victorian period, progressive women started to take occupations previously regarded as men's jobs. Actually the female interviewer asks him, "may not the difference be largely the result of habit and training, rather than fundamental?" His reply is:

"I cannot say, of course, what strength of muscle and strength of limb women may acquire by training, but I fail to see that the physiological differences between the sexes can be done away with." 379

The physiological differences are also variable. Women's mindset has changed tremendously according to the change of the periods. Thanks to modern training which some women take, we see more women now than in the past whose muscles are stronger than the average man's. Tools and machines also help women take otherwise male-oriented jobs. Sometimes individual differences are larger than the gender difference, although there are certain areas where the difference of the sexes cannot be transcended.

For the Victorian man Morris, the difference is much larger than for a person in the twenty-first century. As far as gender is concerned, Morris's view is quite conservative. Or to be fair to him, he cannot escape from a certain limitation of the

378 Ibid., p92
379 Ibid., p92
period. Still, his image of ideal women is not conventional in Victorian terms as we will see in the next chapter.

(5) The roots – his romanticism

Since Morris's image of future labour is clear, he could "afford to wait" for the productive force to increase to an appropriate standard. Even the transitional period is not so bad for him, because people have hope and learn pleasurable work during the period, leaving old customs behind.

His expression of transitional society is especially poetic, aiming at giving hope to workers:

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. ... If that must be, we will accept the passing phase of utilitarianism as a foundation for the art... If the cripple and the starveling disappear from our streets, if the earth nourish us all alike, if the sun shine for all of us 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 the past corruption, and till art arises again amongst people freed from the terror of the slave and the shame of the robber.380

These are the words of an artist. He expresses equality as "the sun shine for all of us alike". This equality could mean lowering of the current living standard for some of

380 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil', Works, vol.23, p116-7
the privileged. However, as long as a basic life is guaranteed equally ("if the earth nourish us all alike") and people can appreciate "the glorious drama of the earth", they can "afford to wait". Pleasure of life and work is already there in this transition period.

Of course in the transition period, the wealth of society is not high enough and the full bloom of art has not yet arrived. Therefore, people have to be patient for a while. In this sense, although Morris uses the word "sacrifices", it is totally different from the sacrifices of hard work, which the people in the former Soviet Bloc had to suffer. When socialists focus only on the quantitative aspect of work and the increase of the productive force, there is a danger that the transitional period is regarded just as a means to serve the end. "The higher phase of communism" might be regarded technically as the purpose. People must work hard without pleasure until that phase is achieved, while Morris could "afford to wait" and enjoy the transition. The relevance of Morris's qualitative approach is apparent regarding the transitional period too.

Morris's love of art and romanticism enable him to propose this. As we saw in the previous chapter, Morris said 'romance' was 'humanity' and 'a power of making the past part of the present'. Thinking over the sufferings of the people in the past and their creative works, he wanted to live and create beautiful things as the expression of the pleasure of work, be fair and truthful to others and to himself, and be brave to fight it through. Without his romanticism, he would not have been interested in socialism at all.
At the same time, his romanticism made his socialism original by emphasizing pleasure and creativity. He says a worker "must have a voice" when producing a piece. In order to have a voice worth listening to, "give him time to read and think, and connect his own life with the life of the great world".\footnote{\textit{Making the Best of It}, Works, vol.22, p116} Creativity is unthinkable without the power of this imagination. The most clear example of Morris's imagination is his fantasies. It must be wrong to read his romances as illustration of his socialism. However it is also true that with his personality of imagining and writing many fantasies he sought socialism.

Admittedly Marx wrote famously about imagination. He writes how man "develops his slumbering powers [of labour] and compels them to act" and explains:

\begin{quote}
[A] bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination \textit{before} he erects it in reality.\footnote{Marx, \textit{Das Kapital}, op. cit., chapter 7, section 1, The Labour-Process or the Production of Use-values, emphasis added}
\end{quote}

This is an important insight of purpose-oriented human labour, but perhaps Marx's imagination is not wide enough. It could be drawn articulately in a blueprint. Morris's imagination, however, flies freely into the past and the future and weaves joys, tears and hopes into a fantasy. With this power of imagination, he imagined how people in the future would live their lives. In his imagination he lived their lives. It must have been unbearable to him to imagine the degradation of work and workers in his time to continue. His urge to stop it was stronger because of his power of
imagination.

Thus, Morris dared to walk into the area where "some socialist might say we need not go further" and the area which even Marx left unclear. E.P. Thompson did not elaborate what the 'juncture' which "Morris offered" and "Marxism failed to reciprocate" was, but Morris's detailed study of work in the future must be one of the most important junctures "which Marxism failed to reciprocate".
Chapter Four
The Nature of Morris’s Utopian Society

[1] Utopian society in *News from Nowhere*

We saw in the previous chapter that Morris explored spheres which most socialists left uncharted, making it clear that all labour must be made attractive in socialist society. He was not satisfied with only declaring that statement in political writings and lectures, but wanted to share it with fellow workers in a living image of future society — *News from Nowhere*. Morris started to write *News from Nowhere* in January 1890 as a serial for *Commonweal*, the journal of the Socialist League. Although he was forced to resign from its editorship by the majority of anarchists in May that year, he continued to write the series. The story was published as book in 1891, and since then it has become his best-known story. Subtitled "an epoch of rest: being some chapters from a Utopian Romance", this romance describes his idea of socialism in the form of utopia. Morris’s ideal is condensed in it.

In this chapter, I will analyse the nature of Morris’s socialist society expressed in *News from Nowhere*. First I will briefly look at the story. Then, through the examination of Laurence Davis’s argument that Morris is a perfectionist and his medievalism is inconsistent with individuality, I will discuss whether Morris’s vision is illiberal. I will therefore explore issues of liberty, individuality and equality in Morris’s utopian society, his sense of balance between autonomy and fellowship, Morris’s ‘medievalism’, and
appreciation of locality. Finally I will examine the significance of his adoption of the genre of utopia. Let me start with an account of *News from Nowhere*.

Tired with never-ending argument with anarchists about the future of the fully-developed new society, the protagonist William Guest, Morris's alter ego, goes to bed one night, mumbling to himself that he wants to see the future of socialism—"if I could but see a day of it!" Much to his surprise, when he wakes up next morning he is somehow in the middle of future society.

Twenty-second century England\(^ {383} \) has turned into socialist society. Classes and any contentions have long been abolished. In the past "the one aim of all people" was "to avoid work"\(^ {384} \), but work is not toil anymore. It has become leisure to people who express themselves through their activity. They enjoy variety in work both on their own and in groups. Guest's guide, waterman Dick, for instance, participated in building Hammersmith Theatre and made its great door. When Dick goes to haymaking, he gives his job to a weaver-mathematician Bob, who needs outside work for a change. The work is all done voluntarily and the wage system has not just been abolished but forgotten. In fact when Guest tries to pay for Dick's 'service' of rowing, Dick is only interested in the coins because he thinks they are some kind of antique.

\(^{383}\) Morris did not specifically say which year William Guest was in. There are some references that interpret the period as the twenty-first century. I take it as the early twenty-second century, judging from the following descriptions: (1) Dick says "the great battle [for the change] ... was fought ... in 1952" (*Nowhere*, p44), (2) Old Hammond says "we have changed within the last two hundred years" (ibid, p59), and he also says (3) "[w]e have been living for a hundred and fifty years, at least, more or less in our present manner" (ibid., p82)

\(^{384}\) Ibid., p186
Guest is told by Old Hammond in Bloomsbury that socialism was the result of long and bitter struggles. A massacre in Trafalgar Square\textsuperscript{385} in 1952 finally triggered the revolution. Organizing themselves, the workers started a general strike and ended the class system. Starting from the scratch, people had “cast away riches and attained to wealth”.\textsuperscript{386}

Guest is surprised at the cleanness of the Thames and the beauty of stone-built Hammersmith Bridge on his first day of this new society. Indeed, England is “now a garden, where nothing is wasted and nothing is spoilt, with the necessary dwellings, sheds, and workshops scattered up and down the country, all trim and neat and pretty.”\textsuperscript{387} Among small comfortable houses, there are some handsome buildings for common use. However, even some ‘ugly’ old buildings are kept. The Houses of Parliament, for instance, are saved from being pulled down by “an antiquarian society” and used for “a sort of subsidiary market, and a storage place for manure”.\textsuperscript{388} After the revolution, Hammond tells Guest, “the difference between town and country grew less and less” and the suburbs of smaller towns “melted away” into the general country.\textsuperscript{389} London, however, keeps its character as the big city with Piccadilly Arcade, the National Gallery, the British Museum and other buildings.

Generations of happy lives have made people variously beautiful. In the nineteenth century, endless hard work without hope made people ‘back-bowed, haggard and

\textsuperscript{385} As to Morris’s own experience of the Bloody Sunday in Trafalgar Square in 1887, see Chapter Three, section 2
\textsuperscript{386} ibid., p209
\textsuperscript{387} ibid., p75
\textsuperscript{388} ibid., p34
\textsuperscript{389} ibid., p72-4
ill-favoured'. Not only penury but also luxury and laziness made the people ugly. But in *Nowhere*, people enjoy pleasant work and love each other. It makes them young and healthy.

Centralization is "discouraged" and people live in small communities. Generally people live with family, but some prefer to live in guest houses with others. Many dine together. They discuss and decide their common affairs gathering in the field in summer and in the Mote-House in winter. There is no concept of education in the sense of a system of learning. Yet children gain many skills, languages and knowledge by engaging voluntarily in a variety of activities.

There is neither prison nor criminal court. Old Hammond explains to Guest why they do not need prisons, "In a society where there is no punishment to evade, no law to triumph over, remorse will certainly follow transgression." Problems "that besets the dealings between the sexes" exist and transgressions occur from time to time. Jealousy and unhappiness because of a love triangle sometimes leads to violence. Yet, the solution is not imprisonment.

Through the trip up the Thames to Oxfordshire, Guest meets a variety of people, including a new woman, Ellen, the most unfamiliar type to Victorian Guest. She is active and eloquent. Interested in the past, she says to Guest: "[y]ou might tell me a great deal and

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390 ibid., p70
391 ibid., p85
392 ibid., p59
make many things clear to me, if you would", 393 as if she senses that Guest has come from the past.

Guest's happy time with Ellen and others does not last long, however. When Guest is about to join a festive dinner held in an old church, his dread becomes real, as he becomes invisible to these joyous folk. Ellen seems to focus on him for a second, but shakes her head with a mournful look as if saying 'you have to go back'. He wakes up in dingy Hammersmith. Overwhelmed by despair, he wonders if Nowhere has been only a dream. He says to himself, however, "if others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream." 394

How should we understand Morris's vision? Since *News from Nowhere* is written as 'some chapters from a Utopian Romance' and bears a leisurely atmosphere, Morris's ideal society is often regarded as an old-fashioned utopia, or a 'residue' of his romanticism. Society in Nowhere certainly looks medieval, since the people wear "somewhat between that of the ancient classical costume and the simpler forms of the fourteenth-century garments", 395 and its best buildings "embrace the best qualities of the Gothic of northern Europe with those of the Saracenic and Byzantine". 396

A.L. Morton praises *News from Nowhere* as the first modern utopia, 397 but the claim is

393 Ibid., p202
394 Ibid., p220
395 Ibid., p16
396 Ibid., p26, however, Morris adds the garments and the buildings are more creative and not the copies of those models.
397 "After so many Utopias that are mere fantasy, or pedestrian guesswork, ... one which is scientific ... cannot but be outstanding importance", A.L. Morton's introduction to Nowhere, in *Three Works by William Morris* (1968), p29
made defensively, i.e. in an attempt to deny Morris's medievalism. Morton admits "a popular view of News from Nowhere is that it advocates a return to medieval methods in which everything is made by hand. "[I]t is true that Morris ... does stress this side [of handcrafts], ... [and] ... there is at times an embroidering and elaboration of this theme which may even upset the balance of the whole".\textsuperscript{398} E. P. Thompson also says "[t]here is a very widespread opinion, ... that his chief motive in becoming a Socialist lay in an Utopian desire to return to a society of handicraftsman – a feudal society... . This view has been fostered in many minds by a reading of News from Nowhere ...\textsuperscript{399}

Curiously the two pioneers of the study of Morris's political thought continued the same line of argument, in an attempt to defend Morris's modernity, i.e. by explaining that Morris did not deny the use of machines/modern technology. In other words, their concern lies in the forms of production in News from Nowhere. It is true that Morris did mention the need for advanced machines in News from Nowhere\textsuperscript{400} and in his lectures.\textsuperscript{401} But should the relevance of Morris's utopian society be approached from the angle of the system of production? Considering Morris's claim that work should be pleasure and art for every member of society, approaching utopianism with reference only to the system of production might impose unreasonable constraint on the purpose of his utopianism. Morris's intention not to get involved in explaining the production system or technology was clear in the paragraph about 'force vehicles':

"I understood pretty well that these 'force vehicles' had taken the place of our old

\textsuperscript{398} Ibid., p27
\textsuperscript{399} EPT, p649
\textsuperscript{400} Old Hammond explains to Guest that all work which would be irksome to do by hand is done by immensely improved machinery, Nowhere, p100
\textsuperscript{401} See, for instance, ‘Useful Work versus Useless Toil’ [1884], Works, vol.23
steam-power carrying; but I took good care not to ask any questions about them, as 
I knew well enough ... that I should never be able to understand how they were 
worked".402

Laurence Davis's work on Morris's modernity raises some interesting questions in this 
regard. Davis also describes News from Nowhere as an old-fashioned utopia, but his 
approach is ethical, i.e. about values and the meaning of work in Nowhere. He says 
Morris assumed "criticism of capitalism should be grounded in pre-modern social and 
cultural values", and argues that "Morris's medievalism severely diminishes the force of 
an otherwise radical critique of art and labour under advanced capitalism".403 His 
argument is "Morris's critique of modernity ought to be rejected", because it neglects "the 
positive features in the transition" to the modern era and because "it demeans the life 
choice".404

Davis's point of view becomes clearer in 'Isaiah Berlin, William Morris, and the Politics of 
Utopia'. In this article, Davis discusses Isaiah Berlin's claim that utopianism is a form of 
political thought that threatens individual liberty. By examining Morris's utopia, Davis 
says that Berlin's concern is legitimate because Morris seeks "perfect ethical harmony" in 
his utopia and that harms "individual freedom". He characterizes Morris's utopianism as 
'old-style'. Modern utopianism, he argues, is "the vivid exercise of ethical imagination" 
and "may facilitate broadminded democratic debate about difficult social problems even 

402 Nowhere, p168 
403 Laurence Davis(1996) 'Morris, Wilde, and Marx on the Social Preconditions of Individual 
Development' in Political Studies, vol.44, no4, p720 
404 Ibid., p725
more effectively than mainstream varieties of political thought.\footnote{405 Laurence Davis(2001), op. cit., p57}

Davis accepts the notion that Morris rejected modernism in favour of medievalism. In this sense, he falls into the same trap as Morton and Thompson in my view: i.e. he assumes a linear development from the Middle Ages to modern times and Morris's denial of progress. However, because of his angle of approach, we could elucidate the nature of Nowhere in a different way through Davis's criticism: Is Morris a 'perfectionist' in Davis's sense and does Nowhere threaten individual freedom? This chapter will argue against Davis's contention.

Morris sought equality, but did not ignore individuality. On the contrary he believed in people's diverse abilities. In order to appreciate the diversity of human beings, he thought it necessary that society should play a minimum role of guardianship to prevent a return to any form of slavery. Morris's notion of liberty might be different from Berlin's, but he also valued people's free will and pluralism. The issue will be discussed with the differences and similarities of Morris's time and our time, in other words with the problems of modern society – capitalism. Morris's medievalism, which Davis says should be rejected, is also examined. I will argue that Morris was attracted to medieval labour because he found the sprit of association and free expression in guild workers' work. This is the core of Morris's socialism. Morris's attitude towards the past, especially ordinary people in the past, is also the key to his romanticism. His romanticism led him to the genre of utopianism. Davis suggests that modern utopianism should be "the vivid exercise of ethical imagination", and that Morris's is old. I will show the relevance of his
utopianism, discussing how Morris's imagination flew from the past to the future and how he treasured this genre in spite of usual criticism by orthodox Marxists. Now, let me start from the suggestion that Morris's 'perfectionism' threatens individuality.


Citing Berlin, Davis thinks it is impossible to “produce a perfect solution in human affairs” and any determined attempt to do so “is likely to lead to suffering”. Davis is sure that Morris “did not believe that socialist principles could be imposed on people by force”. But he believes that Morris “does, in fact, suppose that the coming of communism will bring an end to all lasting public disagreement about fundamental matters of principle.”

To Davis, it seems impossible to eradicate all differences among people. Therefore he supposes Morris's 'perfectionism' must "harm individual freedom".

When Davis argues that perfectionism inevitably results in restrictions on individual freedom, he implies by perfectionism 'perfect harmony' and the eradication of tensions and differences. However, there is another way we can define the term. I would agree that Morris can be categorized as a "perfectionist", if we use the term in a way Christine Sypnowich defines it: "Perfectionists hold that society should be committed to the improvement of human beings." In her view, perfectionism is not necessarily connected with the imposition of a universal good. Sypnowich argues that

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406 Ibid., p64  
407 Ibid., p66  
"[p]erfectionism ... need not commit us to a monological concept of perfection. There is considerable space between neutrality about the good and 'ethical intolerance' of all conceptions of the good but one's own." ⁴⁰⁹

There are perfectionists who also claim to be pluralists. Sypnowich cites Joseph Raz ⁴¹⁰ as an example. Another was Morris's contemporary, J.S. Mill. Mill was undoubtedly a 'perfectionist' in Sypnowich's sense. His concern was to secure the qualitative improvement of society and he even contemplated socialism as the social system best suited to such improvement. ⁴¹¹ Yet, Mill also defended individual liberty and strongly opposed the imposition of values. The balance between improvement and liberty was difficult to strike, but Mill believed it possible. For example, he even claimed "the public should tolerate gambling" although "he could not bring himself to permit gambling houses." ⁴¹²

To explore this issue of 'perfectionism' and pluralism, let us see the people in News from Nowhere first. Do people in Nowhere live 'harmonious' monotonous lives? Certainly they uniformly look like the images from Edward Burne-Jones's pictures and seem to live in a leisurely way in the countryside. Yet, if we look closer, we can see Nowhere's

⁴⁰⁹ Sypnowich, Ibid., p15 ⁴¹⁰ 1939~, Balliol College, proponent of Perfectionist Liberalism ⁴¹¹ Mill argued that it was the time to examine the problem of private property with the candor "from the point of view of the working classes", since they "have next to no property on their own" by "the accident of birth", Chapter on Socialism, chapter 1: 'Introduction'. His conclusion was gradual improvement [to socialism] because socialist society requires moral and intellectual quality — "Socialism..., however valuable as an ideal, and even as a prophecy of ultimate possibilities, is not available as a present resource, [and] a work of considerable time", ibid., chapter 4: the Difficulties of Socialism, at http://www.la.utexas.edu/research/poltheory/jmill/cos/cos.int.html, 10 December 2004 ⁴¹² John Stuart Mill: A Selection of his Works edited by John Robson (1966, Toronto, MacMillan), p127, quoted in Sypnowich(1999) op. cit., p14
complexity. Life is characterised by variety. To begin with, people's appearances and temperaments change from place to place. Dick says "[t]here are parts of these islands which are rougher and rainier than we are here, and there people are rougher in their dress; and they themselves are tougher and more hard-bitten that we are to look at. But some people like their looks better than ours; they say they have more character in them. ... Well, it's a matter of taste."413

Their interests are also different, although many people seem to share their interest in handicrafts in one way or other. There are people "who are fond of crowds". They gather to Piccadilly from all around the country and enjoy 'shopping'. In spite of the abolition of 'education system', some people prefer an 'academic' life. So Oxford retains its character in "its best traditions" and encourages "the Art of Knowledge".414

Attitudes towards society also differ. Ellen's grandfather, for instance, grumbles at the way of his society and longs for the past, therefore lives alone with Ellen rather than together with other people.415 People including Ellen disagree with his view of the nineteenth century and sometimes argue with him. Still, they do not impose anything on him and leave him to enjoy his grumbles. Another example is Philippa, the sculptress, and her attitude towards what we might call 'public events'. She and her friends do not join with the majority in a ceremonious hay harvest, preferring to keep building the house of their dreams. Dick frankly questions "I was rather surprised at this time of the year;
why are they not haymaking with you?" People teasingly call them "Obstinate Refusers".

Since citizens in Nowhere behave differently as they prefer, people gossip about neighbours. Their criticism is sometimes deserved and sometimes not, as Hammond admits. People might "judge their neighbours' conduct, sometimes, doubtless, unfairly." However, they keep these opinions to themselves and do not interfere with each other. They accept the differences. For instance, trying to persuade "Obstinate Refusers" to join in haymaking, people have "some friendly bickering". But when they fail to persuade them, they just laugh at their obstinateness and leave "Refusers" doing what they like. They are well aware that the decision is the Refusers'. In other words, they respect others' free will. Perhaps, the reason why society in Nowhere looks harmonious and without tension as Davis suggests is because disagreements can be resolved peaceably in this way - but this is a precept of value pluralism.

There are two important elements which stimulate this tolerance. First, people have changed. Second, so has society. In the case of the personal criticism Hammond mentioned, the criticism does not bring any discrimination. People are free to criticize each other's conduct, but "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". Since they do not need to compete - as capitalism demands, their behaviour has changed. When they criticize, it is purely because different people have different temperaments and tastes, not in order to seek advantage. There are few jealousies or hidden agendas. In

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416 Ibid., p61
417 Ibid., p180
418 Ibid., p61
this sense, we could say that not only the behaviour but the nature of human beings itself has changed. I will explain this aspect fully in section five.

As to the second point, the episode of the 'Refusers' tells us the situation of that society. Dick explains to Guest; "[the fact that they won't go haymaking] doesn't matter at all, because there are plenty of people to do such easy-hard work as that; only, since haymaking is a regular festival, the neighbours find it amusing to jeer good-humouredly at them". As he says, there are enough people to carry out work, which turns into the pleasure of exercising their ability. Society has already accumulated a certain amount of wealth with which people can enjoy life. In other words society has the capacity to allow people to do what they like. Thus, people in Nowhere enjoy their own lives. This is Morris's image of ideal society. We cannot characterize it as 'harmful to individual freedom'. Let us turn, then, to Morris's theoretical insight informing this ideal society.

[3] Society as 'guardian'

*News from Nowhere* starts with a bitter argument in 'the League' between six people including four anarchists and a friend of the story teller. Interestingly, there was a real basis for that dispute in the Socialist League in 1889. An anarchist member wrote a letter to *Commonweal*, calling for a free discussion in an attempt to introduce the clauses of the anarchist congress at Valencia. Morris took the discussion upon himself and

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419 Ibid., p180
420 Spanish socialists were modifying their organization into a 'Communist-Anarchist' one which was agreed at the Congress of Valencia. On 13th April in 1889, *Commonweal* carried the letter from
argued against anarchist ideas.\textsuperscript{421} Although this dispute ended with the removal of Morris as editor and finally his withdrawal from the League, the discussion shows the essence of Morris's concept of ideal society, which is expressed in the story of Nowhere. To Morris, the fundamental nature of future society was clear. It should be “Communistic society” with “the complete equality of condition for all people”.\textsuperscript{422} He understood anarchists’ hatred for state socialism. “State Socialism” was “crude and incomplete”, and socialists should not stop there. But, Morris pointed out, anarchists were “a little vague” beyond that. Carefully phrasing his words in order to avoid dogmatization—“further than this [rejection of state socialism] all must be speculative”\textsuperscript{423}—he delivered his understanding of the nature of society. He tried to persuade his anarchist colleagues that they needed was society not anarchy.

He started his argument with the necessity of acknowledging people’s diversity. Some might think it a strange way to persuade anarchists, but Morris was not so sure that anarchist friends really understood the impact of diversity on society. Morris wrote in that letter:

> The bond of Communistic society will be voluntary in the sense that all people will agree in its broad principles when it is fairly established, ... But while we are

\textsuperscript{421} Prior to this open letter, the rift of the League became already obvious by the end of 1888. Morris wrote a letter to his comrade, J.B. Glasier: “there seems to be a sort of curse of quarrelling upon us. The Anarchist element in us seem determined to drive things extremity and break us up if we do not declare for Anarchy: which I for one will not do”, Letters, vol.2, p841

\textsuperscript{422} Letters, vol.3, p62

\textsuperscript{423} Ibid.
advocating equality of condition — i.e., due opportunity free to everyone for the satisfaction of his needs — do not let us forget the necessary variety of temperament, capacity, and desires which exists amongst men about everything outside the region of the merest necessaries. ...

As a person who simultaneously pursued various tasks such as lectures, campaigning, writing stories, printing books, making handicrafts and so on, Morris assumed that most people's interests were diverse. Davis suggests Morris sought 'perfect harmony' at the cost of individual freedom. However, Morris's starting point was not 'perfect harmony', but the diversity of people's interest, as this argument shows.

Since Morris was aware that people's tastes were so different, he even warned the audience on another occasion when he delivered his vision of the future at a meeting of the Hammersmith Branch:

"[O]ne thing I must confess from the beginning, ... is 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; whereas the theories of the analysis differ little from each other,... I want to tell you what it is I desire of the Society of the Future, ... I daresay that you will find some of my visions strange enough."¹⁴²⁵

As this paragraph shows, what he wanted was to describe a picture of society desired, not logically considered. Why on earth would people desire uniformity? Probably it would only happen if they are all hypnotized.

¹⁴²⁴ Ibid., p63-4, emphasis added
¹⁴²⁵ 'The Society of the Future' [1888], May Morris, vol.2, p455, emphasis added
Morris accepted the diversity of individuals. Whether or not people had many possibilities in diverse directions was not so obvious in the nineteenth century. We have seen in the chapter on labour that many workers simply did not have an opportunity to develop themselves other than to eat and sleep. However, their ability would bloom in every direction in fair and equal society. Morris believed and anticipated this. This is why he needed to consider what unites these free citizens.

Morris’s premise was people’s idiosyncrasy. In that sense we could say that Morris had an anarchistic temperament. The decisive point on which he differed with them was that he considered that community required an institutional framework. In a transitional society, the hope for better life and the sense of making new society together would unite people. What is the case in “fully-developed” socialism? Once people achieve a certain standard of living, will they do anything they like and will society unravel? Morris’s letter continues:

> Whenever a dozen thoughtful men shall meet together there will be twelve different opinions on any subject...; and if those twelve men want to act together, there must be give and take between them, and they must agree on some common rule of conduct to act as a bond between them, or leave their business undone. And what is this common bond but authority – that is, the conscience of the association voluntarily accepted in the first instance. ... I am not pleading for any

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426 Morris himself wrote in his letter in 1887, “I am not an Anarchist as I understand the word, though I dislike the pedantry of the Collectivist leaders.”, Letters, vol.2, p669

The differences of ideas and tendencies between anarchists and socialists are not as black and white as we might imagine. The demarcation is intertwined in many aspects. As to similarities and differences between Morris and other anarchists such as Kropotkin, see the study by Ruth Kinna, ‘Morris, Anti-Statism and Anarchy’ in William Morris: Centenary Essays

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form of arbitrary or unreasonable authority, but for a public conscience as a rule of action.\textsuperscript{427}

This 'conscience of the association voluntarily accepted in the first instance' is what unites society. Morris set a framework in this way. As long as people act within that framework, everybody can act freely according to their temperament and taste. The framework is very basic. Morris described it as "the guardianship" in another letter in 1888: "[there is] 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 practiced in any community."\textsuperscript{428}

He reiterated this political aspect of the new society more formerly in chapter 23 of 'Socialism from the Root Up'. The new society is comprised of "an organized body of communities" and "a delegated federal body" which unites communities.\textsuperscript{429} The function of this federal body is "the guardianship of the acknowledged principles of society." Again, the principle is that "no community could be allowed to revert to the exploitation of labour of any kind", because this is "the very foundation" of this society. Since it is the guardianship from exploitation of labour, it is also the method of "ensuring to the individual, as a unit of society, the utmost possible freedom for the satisfaction and development of his capacities."\textsuperscript{430} In this way, Morris's concern is people's freedom and development, and the framework provides the means of achievement.

\textsuperscript{427} Letters, vol.3, p63-4, emphasis added
\textsuperscript{428} Letters, vol.2, p769, emphasis added
\textsuperscript{429} 'Socialism from the Root Up', \textit{POLITICAL WRITINGS}, op. cit., p612
\textsuperscript{430} Ibid., p613, emphasis added
Morris's use of the word 'authority' might concern some. It certainly alarmed his anarchist colleagues in the Socialist League. However, this 'authority' is designed to regulate the operation of principles — it is not a 'framework' for law. Its function is constitutional and would not be enforced unless someone tried to return egalitarian society to 'slavery in any form'. In a way it is a loose boundary which keeps a group of independent individuals as society. Morris explained it in the above mentioned letter to *Commonweal*:

"If freedom from any authority means [as anarchists insist] 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..."  

If the principle is at risk and a reverse is sensed, people will fight with all their might. Even if it is not in such a critical situation, society needs "some kind of authority". What will society do, when opinions about whether to build a new bridge are divided and all possible arguments have been exhausted? "Our Anarchist friends say it must not be carried by a majority". Then, should it be carried by a minority? It does not make sense. "Is there any divine right in a minority? I fail to see it, although I admit that the opinion is held by the absolutists."  

Thus, Morris defended majority decision-making in 1889, since he thought society needed basic principles.

However, Morris apparently contemplated that basic framework further and agreed in a sense with the anarchist opinion in *News from Nowhere*. Old Hammond explains to

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431 Letters, vol.3, p63, emphasis added  
432 Letters, vol.3, p87
Guest, that when opinions in the Mote are divided about the proposal for a new bridge, the vote is not cast. The proposal is discussed three times. If the division is still wide, the minority gives way, but if it is close, the majority "submit[s] to sitting down under the status quo". In the communities of ideal society, people rule themselves by discussion and consensus rather than by the majority decision-making.

Hammond admits their methods are not perfect. But if society does not want 1) the dictatorship of 'aristocracy of intellect' or 2) the revival of private property system for "the freedom of the individual will", some methods have to be adopted. Remembering the argument of the anarchist friends, Guest interrupts Hammond and suggests a third possibility: "that every man should be quite independent of every other, and that thus the tyranny of society should be abolished". Hammond bursts into laughter, saying everybody in Nowhere might agree with that. Its impracticality is obvious, when they have to carry out some work which can only be done by more than one person. This is the 'authority' Morris talked about. Although he used the term 'authority', it is apparent that his society advocates anti-authoritarianism and individuality.

Morris believed that "[w]here all men are equal", that authority "would be so completely at one with the Social Conscience that there would be no dispute about it as to principle, and in detail ... the few would have to give way to the many". In this society, the state (as we understand it) has already withered away, so has the government. Only the 'authority' or the federation exists as "guardian". When there is a match between the

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433 Nowhere, p91
434 Ibid., p92
435 Letters, vol.3, p87
authority' and peoples' conscience and there is no dispute, perhaps we could say that the system of the state is extinct.436

[4] Issue of liberty in the past and the present

I have shown how Morris appreciated people's diversity and argued that this led him to develop a framework to accommodate these free people. Davis might be right to say that Morris prioritized certain values — enjoyable labour and equality — but he is mistaken in thinking that in doing this Morris failed to take proper account of individual desires. Why might Davis believe that guardianship compromises "individual freedom"? Where does this difference come from? I sense the difference lies in what is meant and imagined by these terms; freedom or liberty. Therefore, let me further examine Morris's position on liberty in comparison with the twentieth century discussion. Davis says Morris abandoned "individual freedom" along with "modernity". When he says this, he positions himself in the modern world, where so many choices present themselves to us, or at least seem to be offered.

So many choices — trivial everyday matters from which train to take to go to the office, or which type of coffee to buy from the vending machine, to how to protect our personal information when using credit cards. Or more substantial questions from where we live, or what job we take, to what we live for. We are constantly pushed to decide something.

436 Morris wrote, "at last those principles would be recognized by every one always and intuitively, when the last vestiges of centralization would die out." 'Dawn of a New Epoch' [1885], Works, vol.23, p139-40, emphasis added
Not a moment should be lost, otherwise we risk the right to choose. The item we bought through the internet has to be returned within a certain number of days if we do not like it. We are entitled to do everything—within the law—we can afford to do. We cannot buy a pirated CD however cheap it is and however tempted we are, because it violates someone else’s copyright. But we can say anything we like because we have freedom of expression, and we must bear others’ criticism because they have the same right.

In this world of ours, conflicts of interests between individuals seem to be countless. It is beyond comparison with Morris’s time. In this century of a matured global market, huge corporations and big powers tend to devour the weak. In such a world, the emphasis on individual rights to protect the weak seems to be critical. You cannot expect, however, the same approach to individual rights from Morris who lived in the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, there is a problem of the concept itself. ‘Liberty’ or ‘freedom’ is difficult to pinpoint. It has a wide range of interpretations and philosophers have been arguing about its definition for centuries.437 Let me take Berlin’s well-known discussion in the twentieth century. He takes the view that there are two types of liberty: negative and positive. According to H.J. McCloskey, Berlin’s negative liberty is interpreted as ‘not being interfered with’ and positive liberty is ‘self-determination’.438

Berlin prioritizes ‘negative’ over ‘positive liberty’. He writes in ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’:

"Pluralism, with the measure of ‘negative’ liberty that it entails, seems to me a truer

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and more humane ideal than the goals of those who seek in the great, disciplined, authoritarian structures the ideal of 'positive' self-mastery by classes, or peoples, or the whole of mankind". 439

Considering his appreciation of Berlin's view, what Davis means by 'liberty' must be this 'negative liberty' – not being interfered with and having the right to choose. It is true that Morris was not keen on arguing how to secure this right to choose from interference. He thought it was necessary for society to offer people opportunities to choose, but he was more interested in offering abilities to choose. In other words, he was interested in the quality of choices, rather than providing a wide range of choice itself. Although he valued creativity – being free to express oneself – Morris was not an advocate of 'positive liberty' in Berlin's sense of conforming to a common good in a higher ideal. Therefore we could describe Morris's concept of liberty as 'not negative'.

Furthermore, when we consider the issue of offering opportunities, a wide range of choices does not necessarily widen our freedom. That wideness might impose a different restriction on us. When the choice set is very large, as often is the case in our time, it is impossible to gain knowledge to reach informed choice. While the set is small, we can choose one more effectively. This is a paradox of our time, which nineteenth century thinkers would have never known.

Let me briefly look at the nineteenth century discussion about liberty. In the nineteen century, "a 'classical' or 'orthodox' concept of liberty" was 'negative liberty'. Liberty was

439 Isaiah Berlin(1995), 'Two Concepts of Liberty' in Liberty, p216
regarded "good for its own sake" and "if a man's action causes no harm to others, he ought to be left free". However, as capitalism was progressing, there arose a discussion between old liberals and more 'modern' radical liberals, e.g. J. S. Mill. The issue between them was: "How much and in what respect the government ought to restrict the legal power" of the parties concerned? In the liberal concept, is legislation to limit working hours a restriction on freedom, for example? Orthodox liberals such as Sidgwick insisted "the widest possible freedom of contract", presuming that "a sane adult can be trusted ... to promote his interests, if secured against interference and deception".

However, as W. L. Weinstein summarizes, "[a man's] power depends upon his social and economic position and the pressure of his needs". When his bargaining power is weak, "even if he knows his interest, he may still be victimized." Therefore, 'modern' liberals such as T.H. Green criticized the 'negative' conception of liberty. Weinstein points out that "Green rightly attempted to correct [their] faults". Although Green's definition of liberty is too loose for Weinstein, he endorses Green's view that "[orthodox liberals] simply did not take seriously enough all the elements in the ring round the concept of 'liberty' [such as living conditions and education] and too much emphasized merely being free."

Quite different from our time, most of ordinary people in Morris's time had little choice to exercise. Facing such a reality, progressive philosophers were trying to point out these

440 Weinstein, op. cit., p145
441 Ibid., p148
442 Ibid., p149
443 Ibid., p153
problems. This is the issue Morris wrestled with.

When we step back for a while from the complex appearance of our time, however, and compare it with the reality of the nineteenth century, how much has changed? Profit-mongering and the devouring of the weak by the strong are still here with us. Work is far from pleasure but just a means to earn living for most of us. Those who were not born rich have to sell the ability to work for survival. And often we have to choose our survival at the expense of others. Every thing is judged by the amount of money one has. Although a wide range of choices seems to be offered to us, in reality it all depends on whether we can afford them. We owe the variety of choices to advanced technology, and we feel free to take them without being hampered by any sense of obligation, filial piety to parents for example, which might have deterred people from making alternative choices. Since we can see the variety, our pain at not being able to afford to exercise it might be more acute. Inequality between 'the class of rich people who live on the labour of others' and the ordinary working people is still the fundamental problem in this capitalist society.

Morris did not embrace the ideas of the 'positive liberals'. His aim was not merely to improve people's living standards but to change the society of inequality and unfairness from the bottom. Morris says of Mill, "I learned from Mill against his intention that Socialism was necessary."444 Considering Mill's sympathetic treatment of socialism, Morris's remark i.e. 'against his intention' was rather harsh. It could create the wrong impression. Morris explained further '[Mill] put the arguments, as far as they go, clearly and honestly, and the result ... was to convince me that Socialism was a necessary

444 'How I Became a Socialist', Works, vol.23, p278
change, and it was possible to bring it about in our own days." Mill advocated change through the legal system. He claimed the haste of 'revolutionary socialism' would reduce all others to the same miserable state as the poor instead of raising the bad condition of the poor working classes. Morris rather preferred "all rich men are made poor by common consent." Morris differed from Mill in his theory as well as in temperament.

Radical change was just a beginning to him. His eyes focused beyond providing freedom, which he regarded as a matter of course. He wanted to see individuals developing their ability freely. Therefore, although he did not spend much time thinking about how to secure negative liberty in the sense of the twentieth century, we cannot claim that Morris disregarded liberty.

Let me return to Berlin's 'Two Concept of Liberty', for a moment. Berlin argues that the most dangerous belief is to believe "there is a final solution". He points out that "every rationalist metaphysician, from Plato to the last disciple of Hegel or Marx" are trapped in "the notion of a final harmony in which all riddles are solved, all contradictions reconciled", but empirical observation tells us otherwise. He says "choices between ends equally ultimate, and claims equally absolute" "must inevitably involve the sacrifice of others". Thus Berlin warns of the danger of 'the faith in a single criterion'. This is why Berlin values pluralism.

445 Ibid.
446 Letters, vol.1, p454
448 Ibid., p213
449 Ibid., p213-214
How does Morris stand in this regard? Morris hated dogmatism and knew his idiosyncrasy. He encouraged others to have their own visions, as shown in his lecture 'the Society of the Future'. He said "I... will simply talk to you of some of my own [vision], and let you make the comparison yourselves". Since Morris's ultimate goal is socialist society or communism to use his term, he criticized capitalism and commercialism severely. This does not mean, however, that he regarded his vision of socialism or his way of criticism as the only one. In this sense, we can claim that Morris is also a pluralist.

[5] Individuality and equality

There is a notion that although the rise of capitalism was harsh and cruel on people, it also brought about the sense of individuality; modern people were freed from the restrictive fidelity of feudal lords and from patriarchy. These are "the simultaneously repressive and liberating aspects of advanced capitalism" as Davis puts it. It is true that with modernity we gained free will to decide our own affairs; and this awakening to the self is surely one of the important achievements of the age.

Yet it is also true that that self-awareness can turn into self-seeking and that individualism can make people ruthless, callous competitors. It is perhaps 'history's cunning' that

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450 See, for example, the letter to James Fredrick Henderson who sought Morris's advice for his poem. The letter says "you know we Socialists refuse worship to any man however worshipful his gifts may be". Letters, vol.2, p472
451 See the lecture 'The Society of the Future', "you will find some of my visions strange enough".
453 Davis (1996) op. cit., p730
brings with this liberating aspect modern competition. Some people only care for profits and prosperity, riding roughshod over others' happiness. In the nineteenth century many individuals were made redundant and literally had their lives ruined. This is still going on in the twenty-first century in some corners of the world. And there are cases, especially amongst the young generations in so-called developed countries, where those who cannot cope with this competitive world have lost interest in real relationships and withdraw into their own worlds. Modernity has helped to expand individual choices, but at the same time it has crushed individuals, leaving people in the desert of individualism.

Morris did not like individualism, but he treasured individuality. The diversity of people's 'temperament, capacity and desires' was one of the most important values for future society to him. He wrote to an inquirer in 1884:

"[F]ar from Socialism being likely to crush out Individuality it will on the contrary give a chance to the development of individuality which is at present really crushed out by the pitiless necessities of profit mongering. ... Socialism proposes to get the benefits of each man's (sic) diverse talents developed for the use and advantage of the common good by means of pleasure, leaving it free to men to do what their reason impels them to do."\(^{454}\)

When people do "what their reason impels them to do", can society be free from confusion? How did Morris think it would be? Davis thinks that this society is destined to fail because Morris's vision "lacks a sense of the irreducible complexity of social and

\(^{454}\) Letters, vol.2, p289
political life".\textsuperscript{455} He takes an example of abortion to illustrate his point: A woman wants an abortion to hide her extramarital affair from her husband and her decision conflicts with the views of pro-life campaigners. The conflict might become serious, and "the dream of a world based on reason and good will rather than coercive power [would] have been destroyed."\textsuperscript{456}

This example completely misunderstands the nature of Morris's utopian society. Here the woman would not try to hide her new love or "beg the forgiveness of her husband" in the first place. She talks to her husband, perhaps before it is too late. She as well as he has to question whether to continue their life together. Whichever conclusion she and he reach, and however painful it is, the husband respects her conclusion, as Dick accepted Clara's decision. They know the wife is not the husband's property and marriage only lasts when both love each other. In other words, in that society women's action is not restricted by the 'old moral' of 'the faithful wife' and they have no fear about how to live if they leave their husbands.

In fact Morris wrote to a colleague on 'the subject of the family' and argued that the present marriage system was maintained by the same means as the wage system. Consequently when "economical freedom" was achieved, "real society asserts itself in the teeth of authority by forming genuine unions of passion & affection."\textsuperscript{457} Of course this is not necessarily a causal link – it describes a parallel change. In other words, the abolition of the wage system is not the key to free love, but a necessary condition for its

\textsuperscript{455} Davis(2001) op. cit., p70
\textsuperscript{456} Ibid., p72
\textsuperscript{457} Letters, vol.2, p584
flourishing. On the basis of 'economical freedom', Morris summarized his views on free love thus:

1st The couple would be free
2 Being free, if unfortunately distaste arose between them they should make no pretence of its not having arisen
3 But I should hope that in most cases friendship would go along with desire, and would outlive it, and the couple would still remain together, but always as free people.\(^{458}\)

The last part suggests one of the reasons why Morris continued to live together with his wife, Jane, after her desire for him had cooled.

Second, the case of abortion itself is less likely to arise perhaps because people plan pregnancy more carefully and moreover because children are cared for socially. When the problem arises at all, the mother and the father of the baby do not have any worry about finance or who is responsible for raising the child. Old Hammond in News from Nowhere says maternity is "highly honoured amongst us" and "all the artificial burdens of motherhood are now done away with."\(^{459}\) Therefore it is most likely that the couple would have the baby. I hope they would. Whichever decision they take, it is their business and others respect it.

In this way, the scenario is quite different from the one Davis portrays, which is based, perhaps, on the analysis of existing liberal democracy. He assumes people are divided

\(^{458}\) Ibid.
\(^{459}\) Nowhere, p64
by a righteousness bred of self-interest and competition, but people's sense of value changes. It might take time, but gradually people would shake off the old ways of thinking that everything is calculated. They would learn to appreciate life and interaction with others without deception or hidden agendas.

Of course, troubles would remain there nevertheless. Life is full of complexity as Davis puts it. Hammond says "[w]e do not deceive ourselves, indeed, or believe that we can get rid of all the troubles that besets the dealings between the sexes." But at least they are aware that they should not "pile up degradation on that unhappiness by engaging in sordid squabbles about livelihood and position, and the power of tyrannizing over the children". It does not matter as far as people live honestly and try to solve their problems. Even an accidental death caused by a love triangle is dealt with calmly by future people in Nowhere. Although they are very sad, people know that these affairs are unavoidable and that they have to take care of the living.

In Morris's society there certainly exists heartbreak or disappointment and even violence as a result of lost love. However, there is no restriction on action in conformity with social customs. Morris's argument is that no one would attempt to impose their 'good' on others - i.e. there is a new sense of reason which is fundamental to liberation. Morris abandoned 'moral' standards as criteria for action. Morris's only standard was 'the principle of society' or 'social conscience' that disallows 'slavery in any form'. Unfortunately we do not know how Morris would have responded to Oscar Wilde's

460 Ibid., p59
461 Ibid., p59
imprisonment in 1895 because Morris was fatally ill by then. If he had been well, he might have commented on it. Morris's inclination was different from Wilde, therefore he did not agree with Wilde's choice. Yet, Morris leaves people to do "what their reason impels them to do". The idea of punishing people because of "acts of gross indecency with other male persons" would have disgusted him. In this regard, we could say that Morris is a modern.

It might be of some interest here to mention Morris's revision of the term 'moral' conscience. At the start of his dispute with anarchists Morris used the term "moral conscience" to describe 'the conscience of the association' necessary in future society. On reflection, he corrected the word to "social conscience" as "a typographical error of importance". Clearly he did not like the expression, perhaps sensitive to the oppressiveness and hypocrisy of Victorian morality.

Let me turn back to the question of the individuality from a different angle. Morris saw equality as essential for the foundation of individual development. As Sypnowich points out, Morris's 'perfectionism' is tightly bound to his egalitarianism. She argues that his "aesthetic revulsion to nineteenth-century society ... shaped Morris's egalitarianism", and points out that "Morris's idea of social injustice assumed a conception of value". In the eyes of the egalitarian, "all [human beings are] equally

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462 Dick in Nowhere was horrified about the idea of putting 'transgressor' into prison and shouted "[p]risons, indeed! O no, no, no!", ibid., p46
463 Letters, vol.3, p85
464 Morris wrote "[t]he aim of Communism seems to me to be the complete equality of condition for all people", Letters, vol.3, p62
465 Sypnowich, op. cit., p12
466 Ibid., p13
entitled to a life of autonomy."\textsuperscript{467} However, they also recognize that lack of choice and “poor choices .... could undermine one’s autonomy”.\textsuperscript{468} In this way, Sypnowich assumes that perfectionism and egalitarianism, or value and equality, are linked. And Morris’s concern was, she quotes, 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.”\textsuperscript{469}

She concludes that “[o]n the egalitarian conception of perfectionism, coercion is the wrong response to such [distorted] choices; society should instead seek to remedy the social conditions that prompt them, and keep an open mind about the various forms value might take”.\textsuperscript{470} Probably, the question is “not whether perfectionism, but whither” as Sypnowich puts it.

I agree with her that Morris’s egalitarianism played an important role in the formation of his socialism and that he was optimistic “about equality producing the conditions for leading better lives.”\textsuperscript{471} In this sense equality is the foundation of people’s diverse developments. It is by no means intended to level or make uniform interests or desires. What future people have in their houses, for instance, differs; equally how they determine their own ends differs. Morris believed “where all men are equal” they can pursue their abilities almost unlimitedly. When society eventually eradicates the evil of inequality and provides equality to all members, he assumed, people could develop their selves in any

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{467} Ibid., p14-5  \\
\textsuperscript{468} Ibid., p14-5  \\
\textsuperscript{469} ‘How I became a Socialist’, Works, vol.23, p281  \\
\textsuperscript{470} Sypnowich, op. cit., p17  \\
\textsuperscript{471} Ibid., p17
\end{flushleft}
direction they choose.

We live in the intricate world of the twenty-first century. The Cold War confrontations of East and West have gone, but the end of this conflict has highlighted much more complex ethical-religious divisions in many regions. It is difficult for us to think that these problems might be solved by equality. The capitalist system has adapted itself to new circumstances and seems to have outlived the period of 'proletarian revolutions'. Yet while it is easier to see the essence of the problem when living under the primary form of capitalism, it is also the case that religious and ethical differences are often rooted in economic divides. If we could remove the fundamental problem of the rich and the poor and provide complete equality, how much conflict would remain in the world?

Like Sypnowich, "we should trust Morris's optimism about equality producing the conditions for leading better lives." Morris's image of 'better lives' does not only mean better living conditions and environment, although that is also an important part of Morris's society. The change is more fundamental. The nature of human beings changes with the destruction of capitalist society. It is not only in the area of skills and knowledge, but also a new sense of value, character and psychology. Morris's communists have individuality but they are not self-centered. Dick might look naïve to some, but he treats the total stranger with great care, and is determined to protect him from the storm of questions, putting Guest's interest first.

472 Since Nowhere is the place "where nothing is wasted and nothing is spoilt", Morris is regarded also as the forerunner for the protection of environment or nature and against consumer society.
We live in this unequal society. One way or other, we can not escape from competitive capitalist thinking. It is ingrained in us. However, Morris believed people were basically good and rational, as shown in his letter to an inquirer:

As to your question as to Socialism will make men honest; I should rather say that it will not prevent them from being honest as the present system does. When society is made up of slaves and slaveholders and the parasites of the latter, as it is now-a-days, honesty is impossible for the average man.\textsuperscript{473}

Therefore, if equal opportunities were given to all members of society, he believed, they could develop the best aspect of their human nature.

In that society of good-natured people, the only remaining big problem is the one ‘between the sexes’ as we saw. Morris did not think this could be overcome. He knew too well that “we [had to] face the unhappiness that comes of man and woman confusing the relations between natural passion, and sentiment, and the friendship”.\textsuperscript{474} Since there is no material want or moral code, love is purer and the bonds which bring individuals together and keep them together are not tested by anything but the strength of their feelings. Morris must have wanted people to free themselves to love for the sake of love. They were unconstrained. They were free.

\textsuperscript{473} Letters, vol.2, p789
\textsuperscript{474} Nowhere, p59
Morris did not think that this is the problem only for women, contrary to Filio Diamanti’s claim. Diamanti reviews News from Nowhere and comments as “women still suffer for ‘love’ even in an ideal society, another proof that utopias for men may still be dystopias for women” in ‘The Treatment of the “Woman Question” in Radical Utopian Political Thought’ (2001), p135 in The Philosophy of Utopia
[6] A part and whole

Although Morris valued individuality, "[s]ocialists are ... ambiguous ... about pluralism", as Sypnowich points out.\textsuperscript{475} Indeed, they tend to prioritize the common good over individual values. How then are 'individuality' and 'the good of all' connected in Morris's thought? This is the perennial question for those who want to change society for the better and "sacrifice" themselves to a greater or lesser extent in the process. How does Morris see the relationship between one's sense of independence/autonomy and sense of togetherness or belonging? Does he risk the former for the sake of the latter? This is the question of "the relationship of a part to the whole" as Regenia Gagnier puts it.\textsuperscript{476}

She questions "[s]ocially, how did individual needs and desires relate to the needs and desires of others? This was the problem of freedom versus equality".\textsuperscript{477} Then she agrees with Morris, citing his comment: "That variety of life is as much an aim of true Communism as equality of condition, and that nothing but an(sic) union of these two will bring about real freedom."\textsuperscript{478} So, we have to unite or cope with both elements: individual needs and needs of others, or "a part and the whole". Morris thought that this union was possible and that it would be fundamental in a future society which realizes "real freedom". Is it really possible? I think it possible, providing each individual has "the sense of purpose and feeling of unity that characterized fellowship" as Ruth Kinna puts it.\textsuperscript{479}

\textsuperscript{475} Sypnowich, op. cit., p15
\textsuperscript{476} Regenia Gagnier(2005), 'Morris's Ethics, Cosmopolitanism, and Globalisation, in The Journal of William Morris Studies, vol.16, no2&3
\textsuperscript{477} Ibid., p9
\textsuperscript{478} 'Review of Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward' [1889], POLITICAL WRITINGS, p425
\textsuperscript{479} Ruth Kinna(2006), 'William Morris and the Problem of Englishness' in European Journal of Political Theory, vol.5, no1
other words, "a part" understands and internalizes "the whole" without losing his/her identity or temperament.

Kinna's citation from Morris's 'Dawn of a New Epoch' helps us appreciate this:

There must be no contention of man with man, but association instead; so only can labour be organized, harmoniously organized. But harmony cannot co-exist with contention for individual gain: men must work for the common gain if the world is to be raised out of its present misery; therefore that claim of the workman (that is of every able man) must be subject to the fact that he is but a part of a harmonious whole: he is worthless without the co-operation of his fellows, who help him according to their capacities: he ought to feel and will feel when he has his right senses, that he is working for his own interest when he is working for that of the community.480


So far, I have argued that when Davis describes Morris as "perfectionist", he seems not to consider the significance of equality and capability in Morris's position. First, equality is the key to perfection. It is the foundation of society, which every member "voluntarily accept[s] in the first instance".481 Second, people are able to develop their abilities

480 'Dawn of a New Epoch' [1885], Works, vol.23, p133
almost without limit, once exploitation is abolished and opportunities are open to all.

The third issue Davis overlooks, and which I am going to examine in this section, is Morris's aestheticism. Davis characterizes Morris's aesthetic as medieval and suggests that this is imposed on future society, in a way which indicates constraint. Like Sypnowich, I disagree. Although socialists are ambiguous about pluralism, Sypnowich suggests Morris is an exception. Following her, I suggest that Morris's perfectionism is 'egalitarian' and therefore open to various senses of value.

So, how do we judge Morris's aestheticism? Davis says "Morris's medievalism severely diminishes the force of an otherwise radical critique of art and labour under advanced capitalism". It is because "[i]t blinds him to the tremendous value placed by people of the modern era on the freedom to shape their own personalities".\(^{482}\) Morris might not seem to appreciate modernity, but is Morris's love for the Middle Ages entirely anti-modern? Davis might think that people's celebration of haymaking, for example, indicates a pre-liberal way of life. I do not think it necessarily pre-liberal. It indicates a celebration of a new way of life which provides a firm foundation for individual expression.

The medieval period seems to us surely very dark, as it did to many of Morris's contemporaries, but we must analyse objectively why and what elements of the period Morris loved, before deciding that it "diminishes" Morris's critique of art and labour.

Davis points out Morris's indifference to Renaissance geniuses as the evidence of his

\(^{482}\) Davis(1996) op. cit., p720
neglect of individuality. It is true Morris hardly mentioned Leonardo da Vinci or Michelangelo, although he touched upon "the outburst of the expression of splendid and copious genius which marks the Italian Renaissance".483 This is not because Morris was unconcerned with individuals, but because he was interested in ordinary people and their works rather than individual geniuses. The art that Morris was interested in was the art of daily life. Morris pointed out in a lecture at the Wedgwood Institute that most of the objects that filled museums (except pictures and sculptures) were the common household goods of the past. He says they are "priceless treasures that can teach us all sorts of things, and yet, ... they are for the most part common household goods, wrought by 'common fellows' as people say now".484

In Morris's view a great painter had no greater claim to status or respect than a weaver as long as they are creative.485 Indeed, he argues "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".486 Morris was opposed to the system which allowed the emergence of a few geniuses at the cost of individual well-being which turned the majority into "the mechanical workman, who does not note the difference between bright and dull in his colours, but only knows them by numbers".487

483 ‘Art under Plutocracy’ [1883], Works, vol.23, p177
484 ‘Art and the Beauty of Earth’ [1881], Works, vol.22, p162
485 "[F]rom the poor weaver who chuckles as the bright colour comes round again, to the great painter anxious and doubtful if he can give to the world the whole of his thought or only nine-tenth of it, they are all artists – that is men", ‘The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization’ [1881], Works, vol.22, p146
486 ‘Art and Its Producers’ [1888], Works, vol.22, p346
In his essay ‘Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century’ Morris makes clear that his interest is in workers and their work. He focuses on “the irrepressible life and labour of the people, of those who really did work of society in the teeth of the arbitrary authority of the feudal hierarchy”.\(^{488}\) So he studied the history of the guilds. Towns developed into “the strong organization that feudalism could not crush”. Why did “the men of the towns” remain free and refuse to barter “their hard earnings for the sake of position” – to be elevated like barons and bishops? To Morris it was “the spirit of association which had never died out of the peoples of Europe”.\(^{489}\)

Morris pointed to the rules of Flanders cloth-weavers as a concrete example of “the spirit of association”:

No master to employ more than three journeymen in his workshop: no one under any pretence to have more than one workshop: the wage fixed per day, and the number of hours also: no work to be done on holidays. If piecework (which was allowed), the price per yard fixed: but only so much and no more to be done in a day. No one allowed to buy wool privately, but at open sales duly announced ... Workmen not belonging to the commune not admitted unless hands fell short.\(^{490}\)

After serving as apprentice and then journeyman, the apprentice could become a master with three looms. To keep the quality of products, the due standard was settled. No works should be done “in a frost, or in a bad light.” When it failed the test of examination, the piece was send back to the maker and he was fined. Morris added:

\(^{488}\) ‘Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century’ [1890], Works, vol.22, p380
\(^{489}\) Ibid., p382
\(^{490}\) Ibid., p385
Furthermore, the work to be done must be shared amongst the whole of those who can do it, who must be sure of work always as long as they are well behaved and industrious, and also must have a fair livelihood and plenty of leisure\textsuperscript{491}

If this is true, medieval people were surprisingly advanced in the protection they offered to workers, considering these were the working conditions in the fourteenth century. Even now in the twenty-first century, there are places which are not up to this standard. Are we trapped in a prejudice that the past must be worse than the present? Morris thought the nineteenth century people were:

We shall find plenty of people to-day to cry out on this as slavery: but to begin with, history tells us that these workmen did not fight like slaves at any rate; and certainly a condition of slavery in which the slaves were well fed, and clothed, and housed, and had abundance of holidays has not often been realized in the world's history. Yes, some will say but their minds were enslaved. Were they? Their thought moved in the narrow circle maybe; and yet \textit{I can't say that a man is of slavish mind who is free to express his thoughts, ... least of all if he expresses them in a definite form which gives pleasure to other people, what we call producing works of art; and these workmen of the communes did habitually produce works of art}.\textsuperscript{492}

The point about holidays reminds us of Morris's remark, quoted in Chapter Three, – that workers need proper leisure to keep their minds creative and imaginative. As an artist who specialized in handicrafts, Morris saw art or free expression of pleasure in the works

\textsuperscript{491} Ibid., p386
\textsuperscript{492} Ibid., p386-7, emphasis added
of the guild workers. Perhaps this led him to inquire about the condition of guild workers. He thought the Flanders example provided confirmation of their achievement.

These two elements, i.e. work as free expression of thought and the spirit of association, were what Morris liked about labour in the medieval period. Whether they really existed in that period is a different matter. The point here is that was what Morris thought, found and held as his ideal. But even if Morris was wrong in historical fact, his conception of the past pointed to an interest in the qualitative aspect of production, not to a desire to impose a particular aesthetic. As Peter Stansky says "Morris's 'medievalism' was not a kind of romantic costumery: he advocated a return to what he considered the sounder procedures of an earlier time for both idealistic and practical reasons." By studying the works of ordinary workers in the Middle Age, Morris formed his ideal that everybody could and should be artists in co-operation in future society.

Of course Morris knew the period's dark side. He warned: "Do not misunderstand me; I am not a mere praiser of past times. I know that in those days ... life was often rough & evil enough, beset by violence, superstition, ignorance, slavery". He was well aware that he could not "turn our people back into Catholic English peasants and guild-craftsmen". Yet, he could not help thinking what would have developed if those two elements had steadily grown:

If the leading element of association in the life of the medieval workmen could have cleared itself certain drawbacks, and have developed logically along the road ..., it

493 Peter Stansky(1985), Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s and the Arts and Crafts, p5
494 'Art and the Beauty of the Earth' [1881], Works, vol.22, p163
495 Letters, vol.2, p306
could scarcely have stopped short of forming a true society founded on the equality of labour.\textsuperscript{496}

However, he had to add "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."\textsuperscript{497} For, on one hand, the workers, like workers in the nineteenth century (and in our time), "suffered heavily from their masters", i.e. non productive part of society, who sought war and bureaucracy. And on the other, "the association of the time, instinct as it was with hopes of something better, was exclusive".

We tend to think that history is progressive – the Middle Ages could not be better than now, as far as freedom and individuality are concerned. But is it really the case? Isaiah Berlin suggests a more nuanced view. Comparing Walter Scott and Thomas Babington Macaulay, Berlin writes:

[Macaulay] believes ... that the seventeenth century was less fortunate than the eighteenth, and the eighteenth century much less lucky than the nineteenth. ... We are progressing. Everything fits; everything advances; ... we are scientific, we know more now than we used to know before. Our ancestors did not know how to become happy, we know it better. ... and our descendants will know it better still.

If Scott is right, this cannot be true. If there are values in the past which are more valuable than those of the present, or at least in competition with them, ... whether in space or in time, which is as attractive as, if not more so than, the drab civilisation

\textsuperscript{496} 'Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century', Works, vol.22, p388, emphasis added
\textsuperscript{497} Ibid.
in which you are living, but nevertheless irreproducible.\textsuperscript{498}

Berlin believes that Scott "shattered the monopoly" that every new era is better than the old. He painted "very attractive and delightful and hypnotic pictures of these [past] ages". By doing so, alongside the values of his own time, he "placed another set of values, equally good if not better, in competition with them."\textsuperscript{499} This is the reason why Berlin regards Scott a romantic.

If this is 'the root of Romanticism', we could call Morris's view on the medieval work romantic. Conversing with works in the past and digging out the rules of guild workers, he found his value; the spirit of association and work as the free expression of man's thought. He held these values high in contrast with the sordid work of capitalism, and called for its realization. It was derived from the past, but it was not obsolete. Nor is it now. On the contrary, it makes us think about the quality of our work and society. In other words, it is modern.

Let me examine this issue of modernity from one more aspect, namely Morris’s art and design. Peter Stansky argues Morris was "a founder of the modern approach toward art and architecture",\textsuperscript{500} and "how we view the world and how it should look changed in the 1880s under Morris's influence".\textsuperscript{501} But unfortunately "the English ... were not fully able to benefit from the revolution in design they had themselves brought into being."\textsuperscript{502}

\textsuperscript{498} Isaiah Berlin(1999), The Roots of Romanticism, p137  
\textsuperscript{499} Ibid., p136  
\textsuperscript{500} Stansky, op. cit., p44  
\textsuperscript{501} Ibid., p10  
\textsuperscript{502} Ibid.
Morris's identification with the Gothic Revival is well known, but at the same time, Stansky points out, "Morris saw the defects of building in Gothic style" and "his wish was to move out of historical style, particularly the eclecticism [of the Victorian age], into a more ahistorical style".  

Nikolaus Pevsner, Stansky continues, argues that Morris's ideas of new design was transmitted "to the German Werkbund, and ultimately to the Bauhaus" through Hermann Muthesius, a German cultural attaché to London. Another researcher Herwin Schaefer also claims Morris and his followers reinstated "England's contemporary design" from "tawdry manufactured artware in the earlier Victorian period with the idea of unpretentious, styleless country house". Indeed, although Morris designed the Green Dining Room in the Victoria and Albert Museum, he liked simpler design for himself with white walls and wooden floors. He wrote "[a]rt was not born in the palace; rather she fell sick there, and it will take more bracing air than that of rich men's houses to heal her again.

The Art and Crafts movement that Morris inspired developed in the Werkbund, the Bauhause, the Wiener Werkstaette and Japan's 'Mingei' (folk art) movement. Their simple, practical, and beautiful designs stand out beyond temporary fashion and in a very

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503 Ibid., p44
504 Ibid., p9. Nikolaus Pevsner traced modern design from 'the Morris Movement' to Art nouveau in Pioneers of Modern Design: from William Morris to Walter Gropius in 1936
505 Muthesius wrote Das Englische Haus. He was also quoted as describing the Red House 'the first to be conceived and built as unified whole, inside and out, the very first example in the history of the modern house', MacCarthy(1994), an explanatory note to the photograph, two pages after p.364
506 Stansky, op. cit., p9
507 See 'Making the Best of It', Works, vol.22, for the detailed description about and the exterior and the interior of house and garden.
508 Ibid., p113
modern way. Of course, as Stansky rightly says, "[a] number of his designs look old-fashioned to us — and so they should, as they were done ... more than a hundred years ago". At the same time we could say that his spirit of seeking ahistorical principles of design contributed significantly to modern art.

[8] Appreciation of locality and internationalism

Let us take Morris out of the frameworks of twentieth century liberal theory, and consider if there is any other evidence that Morris valued pluralism. What stands out is his appreciation of local difference. We saw that Morris thought future society would be comprised of two bodies, "the township or community and the Federal Power". Between these two poles "there would be various federations which would grow together or dissolve as convenience of place, climate, language, & c[ulture] dictated." This description shows that although Morris claimed to be an internationalist, he also appreciated cultural differences: of language, location, climate and of the temperaments of peoples nurtured by these differences.

509 Stansky, op. cit., p44
510 Stansky discusses that the Century Guild often understood as ‘proto-Art-Nouveau’ was “inspired in its theory by Ruskin and in its practice by Morris”, ibid.,p70. He also says “[C. F. A.] Voysey took many of the elements of the Century Guild, and preserved some of its more attenuated characteristics along with continuing Arts and Crafts traditions. Voysey shared with Mackmurdo, and indeed with Morris, a belief in the necessity to be involved with the total design. This concept was present elsewhere, in such later groups as the Werkbund, the Wiener Werkstaette, the Bauhause, but it had its first modern statement in England in the Arts and Crafts movement”, ibid., p114
511 ‘Socialism from the Root Up’, POLITICAL WRITINGS, p612
512 Letters, vol.2, p770
The attitude of the people in Nowhere towards Guest also shows how they treat a stranger from a different culture. They think of him as coming from a foreign country, which is apparently far 'behind' their level of living. Nevertheless, they do not have any prejudice. They are just curious about the difference. They are also considerate to this bewildered visitor and give him time to adjust to his new surroundings.

If socialist society is realized worldwide and all prejudice against nationality and ethnicity eventually disappears, will the human race speak one language? If all of us become similar and lose our differences of nationality or locality, the world would be a very boring place. "The workers have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got" says the Manifesto of the Communist Party, refuting the criticism of communism. It is important to make it clear that workers have common interests and that they should not be dragged into war for the profit of ruling classes under the pretence of defending the nation. With respect to the importance of making the message of internationalism at that period, and on the premise of equality among all peoples in the world, however, we could say that workers have countries and localities. We cannot deny long-accumulated differences of language, culture, temperament. These won't disappear. And why should they? It is fascinating to imagine what mixture of cultures would emerge long after future people (with no remnant of prejudice against others) enjoy each other's company. At any rate, people in Nowhere have their localities and their characters.

In Nowhere, the concept of "relations with foreign nations" does not exist and "the whole system of rival and contending nations has disappeared". Guest argues that this implies "the obliteration of national variety". And when he asks about the Nowhere's dull
uniformarty, Old Hammond replies somewhat snappishly:

"Cross the water and see. 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."\(^{513}\)

Hammond concludes, there was no need to coerce people "into certain artificial and mechanical groups, and call them nations, and stimulate their patriotism".\(^{514}\) People are not 'artificially' organized into a political boundary. In other words, these differences are cultural, not political. In fact, politics has ceased to exist in Nowhere. Morris wrote one very short chapter about politics, only to declare "we have none."\(^{515}\)

Politics has been using nationalism to mobilize people into 'holy war'. It was the case in the twentieth century in Japan. It is most unfortunate that the uniqueness or beauty of a culture is connected with the idea of the supremacy of a race or religion and used as a reason to invade other countries. It makes one cautious about praising one's own culture. How wonderful it would be to be able to show and enjoy our differences without any prejudice or misunderstandings about superiority or inferiority.

Six months before *News from Nowhere* appeared in *Commonweal*, Morris led the English delegation and attended the International Socialist Working-Men's Congress in Paris.\(^{516}\) Morris did not like the procedures and politics of the Congress and felt that "opportunities should be given for the delegates to meet each other in social and conversational

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\(^{513}\) Nowhere, p88

\(^{514}\) Ibid.

\(^{515}\) Chapter 13, 'Concerning politics', ibid., p87

\(^{516}\) During this Congress, the Second International came into being, Letters, vol.3, p21
meetings". Still, he reported: "A great many of the delegates have continually found themselves sitting at the same table for the meal after the session in the pleasantest and most fraternal manner in the cheaper restaurants round about the place of meeting". Although delegates were mainly from Europe and America, this opportunity must have given him an idea of the variety described by Hammond.

[9] Something survives beyond time

I have examined Morris's concept of liberty, equality, individuality and society through Davis's criticism. Now let me turn to the issue of utopianism. Morris's utopianism sprang from his romanticism, i.e. his attraction towards the past, especially ordinary people's lives in the past. His imagination flew from the past to the future and created his utopia. In this section I will examine the nature of his interest in the past and his utopianism itself in the next section.

The nature of his imagination of the past is typically shown in his approach to the peasant uprising. Morris wrote A Dream of John Ball in Commonweal from 1886 to 1887. The narrator from the nineteenth century one day wakes up in a field of a village in Kent, a village simmering in the middle of Wat Tyler's revolt of 1381. He meets villagers who are preparing for the battle and has a long talk in a serene moonlit church with John Ball about their future.

517 'Impressions of the Paris Congress', POLITICAL WRITINGS, p440
518 Ibid, p435
519 France, Germany, UK, Belgium, Austria, Italy, Russia, Switzerland, Denmark, Roumania, Spain, Poland, Hungary, USA, Portugal, Greece, Holland, Sweden, and Norway
Morris could not help mentioning a speculation: "what would have happened ... if the stout yeomen of Kent and Essex ... had had wits not quite so simple as to trust the young scoundrel of a king, ... but had carried out the peasants' war to its due conclusion". Yet he knew well that this was little else but "pleasant fooling". Instead of dreaming what would have happened, he chose to re-create their images – not only that of the hero John Ball's but also the ordinary peasants' and families'. He describes them gathering and singing a ballad of Robin Hood at a pothouse, or waiting for their fathers to come back safe from the battle. They know tomorrow's advance to London is a precarious business. They could lose everything. Still they are determined to stand against the imposition of the heavy poll tax. Those ordinary people, as well as John Ball, stand out from the story and face us with an inquiring look. For Morris, they were not a faceless mass, but living individuals who had their own joy, sorrow, anger and hope, like each one of us in this century. They were all individuals – but with common dreams.

His identification with them is the reason why Morris wrote "John Ball was murdered ... many hundreds years ago, but indeed in a sense he lives still". He did not want these people to die in the second death of oblivion. The narrator ponders the change beyond the change: facing the crowd at the crossroad, "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 not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name". As long as we remember them and carry the torch they burned, they live with

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520 'Art and its Producers', Works, vol.22, p347
522 William Morris(1968), 'A Dream of John Ball', in Three Works by William Morris, p53
us still. By telling the tale of their battle, Morris tried to show us how "the plant called man"\textsuperscript{523} lives beyond the boundary of its time.

Michael Holzman writes about the story in the following terms: "What Morris has seen that John Ball could not have seen is precisely the historical development of the forces against which John Ball was struggling.... That knowledge was not merely the gift of living in the nineteenth ... century, but it was also the consequence of the studies".\textsuperscript{524} Certainly Morris showed the development after the uprising and put it in a historical perspective in the story. However, I think he misses the crucial point, analyzing Morris only from the point of accumulated knowledge and 'the historical development of the forces'. What is important here is not the knowledge, but how one might appreciate history and share human hope beyond time.

Through the discussion with John Ball, Morris also tried to show the reality of the nineteenth century to his contemporary workers through the eyes of medieval people. They would see and feel it differently, as contemporary workers see the medieval period differently from their own. Morris points out the difficulty of seeing the present: "though we can see what has been, we cannot so easily see what is; ... it is especially hard for people in our civilization, with its general freedom from the ruder forms of violence.... ...very perfection of continuity [of society] prevents us from noticing [the problems]."\textsuperscript{525}

\textsuperscript{523} Ibid., p44,
\textsuperscript{524} Michael Holzman(1990), 'The Encouragement and Warning of History' in \textit{Socialism and the Literary Artistry of William Morris}, p109
\textsuperscript{525} 'True and False Society', Work, vol.23, p220, Morris continues: "it is hard for under the quiet order and external stability of modern society to note that much the same thing is going on in the relations of employers to the employed as went on under the slave society of Athens or under the self-sustained baronage of the thirteenth century."
Therefore by breaking the continuity – travelling to the past and talking about the present with John Ball – he wanted his fellow workers to think about the difference and the similarity between the past and the present.

In *A Dream of John Ball*, feeling weary of the riddle of free men in the nineteenth century, John Ball asks Morris the time-traveller “shall they who see themselves robbed worship the robber?” Morris explains to him the nature of ‘free competition’. “[I]n those latter days a man who hath nought save his own body ... must needs pawn his labour for leave to labour”, but think that they do it by their own will. Therefore “the robbery shall they not see; for ... they shall hold themselves to be free men”.\(^{526}\) This appearance of ‘free men’ is the key which prevent us from seeing the reality of our society.

Let me quote that part further:

I smiled and said: “... thou [John Ball] hast told me that hardly in these days may a poor man rise to be a lord: now I tell thee that in the days to come poor men shall be able to become lords and masters and do-nothings; and oft will it be seen that they shall do so; and it shall be even for that cause that their eyes shall be blinded to the robbing of themselves by others, because they shall hope in their souls that they may each live to rob others” ...

"Now am I sorrier than thou hast yet made me," said [John Ball].\(^{527}\)

In this society everybody seems to have a chance to climb a ladder of free competition

\(^{526}\) *A Dream of John Ball*, op. cit., p108
\(^{527}\) Ibid.
and become rich and famous, but in reality only a few can 'win'. Most workers remain as workers whose work is exploited. Nevertheless, workers cannot see this because exploitation is disguised by the rhetoric of free competition. They even accept blame for failure. In the medieval period exploitation by the elite classes - landlords and aristocrats - was obvious. But most farmers could not resist 'the robbery', because they thought that being born into the lower class was their fate which they could not change by their will. For those who stood up against the exploitation and challenged the hierarchy, the failure of free people to resist exploitation must have been something of a "riddle". Looking through the eyes of the medieval rebel, Morris wanted his fellow workers to see the reality from outside of the frame of the present. He wanted them to develop their imagination and appreciate the universal predicament.

Laurence Davis says "what is required ... is not simply logic, but a form of persuasive communication that will reshape the images that people see.... [I]n other words, the vivid exercise of ethical imagination in the sphere of social relations - in short, utopia." I agree entirely. That is exactly what Morris tried in John Ball and News from Nowhere. I could not see why Davis excludes Morris's utopia from this category.

[10] Communicative power of utopia

It is true that both of Morris's stories are tinged with medievalism. Morris was perfectly aware that it was his taste. He said "a man's vision of the future society" must after all

528 Davis(2001), op. cit., p83
"always be more or less personal to himself". As Morris recommended, "[t]he only safe way of reading a utopia is to consider it as the expression of the temperament of its author." How could one write one's own utopian society without his/her personal likings? News from Nowhere stirs people's minds and emotions because Morris invested it with his personal taste and experiences. A personal writing can touch people's hearts and convey the impact of universality in a way that a general statement could not. Analysing the poetry of Philip Larkin, Stephen Ingle says that the poem might be very personal, but it is "precisely because we recognize the universality of Larkin's despair that this poetry does indeed rise above the contingent, speaking the truth of our own experience". I think this is the difference between utopian literature and political writings, and Morris was well aware of this power.

Ingle raises an interesting point about the communicative power of imaginative literature:

Some general statements about human experience cannot always be stated objectively and the whole point of turning to narrative forms such as imaginative literature is 'to convey by illustration a general truth that cannot be stated explicitly.' Indeed, the atmosphere of society and colourful relationships of people could not be written in a political text, although the principles of future society can be explained in that way. Morris did so in various political writings including 'Socialism from the Root Up'. What Morris wanted to convey in News from Nowhere was, however, the living image of future society. This is the enrichment and "instantiation' of the principles" as Peter G.

529 ‘Morris’s comment on Looking Backward’, POLITICAL WRITINGS, p424
530 Ibid., p420
531 Stephen Ingle(2002), Narratives of British Socialism, p9
532 Ibid., p8, emphasis added
Knowledge alone cannot make people and society change. What is needed is something that moves us, body and soul. Reason has to be united with emotion. Morris wanted to stir emotion as well as reason by sharing his imaginative experiences with us. As Ingle says in another article “literature is not primarily concerned with the transmission of information but the sharing of experience”\(^\text{534}\) Stillman also says utopia is in a way ‘thought experience’ and “utopian principles are tested by the practices of the (imaginary) individuals who live in utopia”\(^\text{535}\). In Nowhere, people try out Morris's dream society. It might be different from your or my dream society, but since they live and walk around freely, they stir us to think what our dream society might be.

Morris's utopia makes Ingle think, but does not seem to resonate with his experience. Ingle considers Nowhere "a stagnant society". Perhaps its 'harmonious medieval outlook' makes Ingle think so. Some might think that it is a pitfall of sharing personal experience, since personal taste is often different. However, this is the point of 'the philosophy of utopia' according to Stillman. He thinks "concrete utopias present a plurality of sometimes incompatible principles and do not erect monolithic value systems."\(^\text{536}\). If a utopia does not encourage plural interpretations and imaginations, that utopia would be a failure.

\(^{533}\) Peter G. Stillman(2001), 'Utopias as Practical Political Philosophy' in The Philosophy of Utopia, p12
\(^{534}\) Stephen Ingle(1996) 'The anti-imperialism of George Orwell', in Literature and the Political Imagination, p234
\(^{535}\) Stillman(2001) op. cit., p13
\(^{536}\) Barbara Goodwin's introduction of Stillman's article in The Philosophy of Utopia, p3,
My interpretation of Nowhere is that it is far from a ‘stagnant society’. Although Nowhere looks quiet and peaceful for the moment, Morris left several points open to suggest the possibility that society degenerates. One example is Ellen’s anxiety. Ellen sensed Guest came from the unhappy past and said to Guest:

I think people are too careless of the history of the past. ... 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 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 ruinous, deceitful, and sordid.\(^{537}\)

As Norman Talbot rightly says “if [Ellen] feels that humanity is in danger or falling back out of Nowhere into bad old ways, this will give her a mission.”\(^{538}\) I hope the future of people who love work as art remains happy. However, it might not be forever rosy even if human beings could ever overcome almost all unfairness and meanness: There is nothing absolute in this world. Therefore Morris wanted Nowherians to be conscious of Guest’s existence and of the past.

Clara is the different type from Ellen. She looks leisurely and carefree. Nevertheless she also senses something uneasy when Old Hammond and Guest are talking about the past: “You have been talking of past miseries, ... and it is in the air all round us, and makes us feel as if we were longing for something that we cannot have.”\(^{539}\)

\(^{537}\) Nowhere, p202  
\(^{539}\) Nowhere, p141
Even Dick, who is not so interested in the past or history in general, acknowledges “meeting Guest has helped him to understand Dickens better”. Dick says outdoor work will get “some of those strange discontented whims” out of the head, but “fortunately, the reverse happens: Dick gets some strange discontented whims of his own into his head (or admits their presence there).”  

Every day in Nowhere seems to be a sunny summer day, as commentators sometimes sarcastically note. But one of Morris’s strong messages is not to forget the trouble of winter, the misery of the past. Towards the end of the journey, Dick says to Guest, “[o]ne thing seems strange to me, ... I must needs trouble myself about the winter and its scantiness, in the midst of the summer abundance. If it hadn’t happened to me before, I should have thought it was your doing, guest; that you had thrown a kind of evil charm over me.” The existence of Guest brings a tension between the present, the past and the future. For Guest, it is the tension because of a constant comparison between the future and his time (which Ellen points out to him), as well as an anxiety that he must leave the future someday. For Nowherians, it is the tension which arises from remembrance of the past and consideration of the future in the midst of happy present. And this is “all the better for them”, as Talbot puts it. 

We could remind ourselves here of Berlin’s pluralism and his criticism of monism. He says that monism cannot premise the encounter of “some unforeseen and unforeseeable

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540 Talbot(1990), op. cit., p50
541 Nowhere, p217
542 Talbot(1990) op. cit., p50
human development." The concerns that Morris left open in the development of Nowhere and the interaction with Guest and the people in Nowhere might be another evidence of Morris' pluralism – or at least his rejection of status.

One more advantage of imaginative literature is the following point John Horton makes:

[T]he novel implies a relationship between the author and the reader of a more egalitarian and less authoritarian cast than most orthodox philosophical or political modes of writing.

When reading utopian stories, the reader can communicate with the author more freely. Of course the reader needs a critical mind to converse with the author when reading political writings, but in order to do so he/she needs certain knowledge and experience. In the case of utopia, it is easier because your heart will tell whether you like a particular scenery, a person, a relationship. You can talk to the author about your likes or dislikes. There is no one-sided preaching but an exchange of opinions.

Actually Morris was concerned about the difficulty of permeating socialism. He wrote to a colleague in 1884:

[Though you may make a formula or maxim which carries Socialism with it, ... the subject is difficult & intricate one, and to understand really requires a great deal of reading: I don't mean to say that everybody who joins our ranks must understand it in

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543 Isaiah Berlin (1995), op. cit., p216
544 John Horton (1996), 'Literature, philosophy and political theory' in literature and the political imagination, p24
this way; but some must, & everybody must know something of its elements.\textsuperscript{545} Since he joined the socialist movement, this problem must have stayed in his mind. He himself studied hard and read \textit{Das Kapital}, but he knew he could not expect all workers to do this. In order to convey his message most effectively to his fellow workers, he deliberately chose this style of utopia.

Behind this choice, I sense Morris's defiance about the pejorative treatment of the concept of 'utopia' by some socialists. As Levitas says, "the place of utopia in Marxist thought has remained a controversial issue."\textsuperscript{546} Therefore, "[f]or many Marxists, [\textit{News from Nowhere}]'s form as a utopian novel has long been sufficient to prevent it receiving serious attention, even where it has been read."\textsuperscript{547} Nevertheless, Morris not only wrote in the genre, he endorsed the idea that the future was open to imaginative explanation.

There must have been a certain difference, or even criticism on this matter in Morris's mind. Let me examine this difference by looking first at Levitas's argument, then Morris's comment on utopianism in \textit{Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome}.

It is well-known that Engels called Marx's (and his own) ideas 'scientific socialism' opposed to utopian socialism. Levitas analyses utopian socialism with the concepts of form, content and function and argues that "the basis of Marx's and Engels's criticism of utopian socialism is not an objection to speculation about the future, but a difference of view about the process of transformation".\textsuperscript{548} In other words, the problem lies in the "function" of utopia in her analysis. 'Utopian' however, became a term of abuse during

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{545} Letters, vol.2, p306
\item \textsuperscript{546} Ruth Levitas(1990), \textit{The Concept of Utopia}, p58,
\item \textsuperscript{547} Ibid., p112
\item \textsuperscript{548} Ibid., p55
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the Second International, i.e. after Marx died, and it was "extended to a total rejection of all attempts to discuss the nature of socialist society."\footnote{549} To Levitas, "this is a radical revision of the way in which Marx and Engels used the concept."\footnote{550} Considering Marx's strong tone in the forward of Das Kapital – never 'write recipes for the cook-shops of the future',\footnote{551} I do not think we could attribute 'the rejection of imagining the future' entirely to his successors. However, it is true that Marx did not totally reject thinking about a society of the future and he did discuss it in the Critique of the Gotha Programme, though not in detail.

When Levitas examines Morris's utopia, she approaches it with her distinction – form, concept and function. She appreciates the form and content of Morris's utopia: "News from Nowhere was written because he believed it could inspire people to work for a form of socialism worth having",\footnote{552} while she argues that Morris was aware the risk of attaching a 'wrong function' to utopianism and that "the vision itself might lead aspirations and political struggles astray".\footnote{553} In order to show this she cites Morris's words "the barren shore of Utopianism" in Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome.

By using the term 'function' she tries to emphasise Morris's similarity with Marx and Engels who 'rejected the function of utopia', and to bracket his utopianism within Marxism. However, this argument seems to me unconvincing. There still remains a clear difference between Morris and the two. Even if we accept her distinction and suppose

\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{549} Ibid.
  \item \footnote{550} Ibid., p57
  \item \footnote{551} Marx, Das Kapital, op. cit., 'Afterwords on the Second German Edition'. Also see Chapter Three, p20
  \item \footnote{552} Levitas(1990) op. cit., p111
  \item \footnote{553} Ibid., p126
\end{itemize}
Marx and Engles admitted the form and the content of utopia, there are substantive differences between their 'form and content' and Morris's approach. They did not adopt the utopian genre at all or detail future society in an imaginary way, while Morris explored the area and created the image of his dream society. And isn't this the point of utopia? Levitas herself admits a tendency "for Marxists to treat projected futures as blueprints rather than as explorations of values".554

Her own position is that "dreaming is an activity necessary to transcending our present sorry state, and that such dreams have both an educative and a transformative function, ... these claims are, if not already contained within Marxism, at least compatible with and a necessary adjunct to it."555 I agree with her that the image of the future should be welcomed as 'exploration of values' and 'an activity necessary to transcending our present'. However, is it appropriate to assimilate Morris's contribution to Marx's idea or 'Marxism'? (The term 'Marxism' itself should be defined, but let this put aside for a while) Rather, it would be beneficial to look into what Morris said about utopianism and utopians more closely to develop arguments.

*Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*, was written in 1893 with Belfort Bax as a new version of *Socialism from the Root Up*. In its chapter, 'The Utopists', Morris wrote about Robert Owen, Saint Simon and Charles Fourier. As Levitas mentioned, Morris's criticisms of the utopians were similar to Marx's and Engels's. For instance, Morris wrote about Robert Owen: although Owen was "the most generous and best of men", "[h]is shortcoming was  

554 Ibid., p125
555 Ibid., p127
the necessary one of the utopist, a total disregard of the political side of progress. ... He ignored the antagonism of classes necessarily existing under this system..." 556

Although Morris respected the passions and efforts of the predecessors for better society, he was well aware that they lacked insight for changing the system of society and that they wrongly believed they could make an 'ideal community' in the middle of the capitalist system was not a solution.

Morris used the phrase 'the barren shore of Utopianism' in this sense. Since the phrase is powerful, there is a risk of it being simplified and used out of context. We should understand what Morris meant in the round. Therefore let me examine it in its full paragraph.

In the chapter 'Socialism Militant', Morris discusses "a discrepancy" or even "an instinctive antipathy" between "the theoretic movement by thinkers" and the actual popular struggles, and writes:

"[I]t is essential that the ideal of the new society should be always kept before the eyes of the mass of the working-classes, lest the continuity of the demands of the people should be broken; so it is no less essential that the theorists should steadily take part in all action that tends towards Socialism, lest their wholesome and truthful theories should be left adrift on the barren shore of Utopianism." 557

Morris raises two issues. First, in order to prevent the working class movement stopping

556 Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome, p210 and in 'Socialism from the Root Up', POLITICAL WRITINGS, p565
557 William Morris and E. Belfort Bax(1984), Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome, op. cit., p278-9
short of revolution at the improvement of working conditions, socialists should show "the ideal of the new society" vividly "before the eyes of the mass". Second, in order to keep these visions alive, practical and wholesome, intellectuals should "take part" in all actions. They should not only 'teach' their ideas but also learn from the living movement, since teaching is the two-way street.

Morris attached the same weight to these aspects. Since he himself did not belong to "the mass of the working-classes" but to the latter group ("the theorists" is used almost as a synonym for socialists here), probably his own interest lay in showing the "wholesome and truthful theories" more imaginably.

Furthermore, Morris's attitude towards utopianism should be understood with his appreciation of dreams. In 'The Society of the Future' in 1887, he set the difference from "the utopian schemes", but at the same time asserted the power of something beyond reason. Being aware of the sensitivity of the subject among socialists, he was cautious and explained carefully why he talked about the society of the future. He sets the premise of the argument: We know "better than putting forward elaborate utopian schemes for the future."558 "It is our business ... to remedy immediate evils which oppress us" and after we win the freedom, "we must leave the task of ... using the freedom" to the coming generations.559

Morris adds that although the detail should be left for the future generations, "we do partly

559 Ibid., p453-4
know the direction" because "the evolution of past history teaches us that",\textsuperscript{560} i.e. we have a degree of knowledge. His fellow socialists might follow as far as here. However, Morris steps outside of the frame and widens his argument:

And besides what we know, a knowledge without which we should not take the trouble to agitate for a change in the basis of Society, we cannot help guessing at a great deal which we cannot know; and again, 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.\textsuperscript{561}

Here we can clearly see Morris's criticism of the overly 'scientific' approach. Reason alone cannot make man a socialist. We need hopes and dreams for the future to make the socialist movement strong and alive. This was Morris's message. Morris knew that there were 'the analytical' and 'the constructive' among socialists and that he owed the knowledge of the analysis of capitalist economy or the evolution of history to 'the analytical'. But putting himself in the latter group, he saw it was his task to emphasise the importance of stirring hopes and dreams and revealing utopia 'before the eyes of the mass of working-classes'.

That is why Morris dared to publish Thomas More's \textit{Utopia} in 1893, the year following the publication of the English version of Engels's \textit{Socialism: Scientific and Utopian}. In its introduction, Morris clearly mentioned that utopia was a socialist genre; [d]oubtless the

\textsuperscript{560} Ibid., p.454
\textsuperscript{561} Ibid., emphasis added
Utopia is a necessary part of a Socialist's library". He said More's book was a link between the old and the new, although it was rather "the last of the old than the first of the new.\textsuperscript{563}

In this way, there is an explicit difference from the majority of socialists and indeed from Engels – the guardian of Marxist orthodoxy. Morris was not an argumentative type, but he clearly wanted the difference known. It is certain that this area, what Levitas calls 'dreams with an educative and a transformative function', is "not already contained within Marxism". In her opinion it is compatible with and a necessary adjunct to Marxism. It is indeed necessary, but should it be an 'adjunct'? It is undoubtedly an important and relevant part of Morris's revolutionary socialism, but should it be attached to Marxism? Morris's own answer was clear: "Socialism does not rest on the Marxian theory".\textsuperscript{564} Therefore, rather than treating Morris's utopianism as an adjunct to Marxism, we should appreciate it as it is. Morris was able to choose this genre because he was artist and romantic as well as socialist. This is what makes Morris's socialism original and relevant to us.

\textsuperscript{562} 'Foreword by William Morris to More's Utopia', May Morris vol.1, p289
\textsuperscript{563} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{564} Letters, vol2, p729
Chapter Five       Conclusion

[1] The relevance of Morris's socialism in modern consumer society

In the introduction, I argued that Morris's relevance rests in the historical juncture: we share the ongoing problems of capitalism with Morris and his call for complete equality is relevant. I have also argued that the centre of his socialism lies in the joy and the creativity of work – the critical activity of human beings. He thought that unless people could enjoy work without any fear of exploitation, society could not be called socialist. He formed these ideas because he was a hands-on artist and a life-long romantic. He urged people to create their own utopias and opened his to public view. Without understanding his romanticism and utopianism we cannot understand his socialism, or its relevance. On these points, I have also claimed, Morris is the socialist of a different stripe. His difference, especially from orthodox Marxists, is best shown in his utopianism. Whereas they denied utopias, Morris held his utopia high and placed imagination in the centre of his socialism.

Based on these starting points, I have analysed his socialism by comparing his concept of work with that of other socialists and examining his utopian society in News from Nowhere. To summarize the relevance of his socialism, I will recapitulate the argument: the problems of the global economy – our historical juncture – and his rejection of statist/authoritarian socialism.
Let me expand the relevance of the juncture first in this section. In the Introduction I highlighted the huge problem of waste. Some might try to be re-assuring and tell me not to worry too much because people are becoming aware of the problem. This is true. Nowadays, reducing waste has become a fashionable topic. On television and in magazines we are given tips about how to reduce it. We are warned to be careful. If we fail, local governments might impose taxes on us. Thus the responsibility for tackling waste and climate change seems to rest on individuals' shoulders. Our own effort is of course important, but shouldn't we stand back a while and think about the causes of this phenomenon? This society of ours asks us to reduce waste, while it continues to produce a deluge of new products and bombards us with advertisements to buy them. It is as if someone is urging us to eat, on the one hand, and slapping us, on the other hand, when we try to do so, like in the discussion of obesity – children are scolded for eating too much 'rubbish', while they are surrounded and seduced by these foods.

We cannot solve the problem of waste without questioning the overwhelming scale of production. The economy is geared to maximize the profits of each business. In an attempt to sell successfully, individual capitalists produce a variety of goods. Laws of supply and demand operate on the profit motive. If a product is popular, there is a shift in production. Similar lines, often cheaper and/or more elaborate, are brought to market, although everyone is fully aware that there are enough products already. Who knows? The next one could be a hit which brings huge profit to its maker.

Some might urge that a huge capacity for production is not bad anyway because it gives
us lots of choices – there are many sophisticated products as well if we have eyes to choose. Does it really give us choice? It does not work in that way for people in developing countries. There are many basic medicines, for instance, which easily cure basic illness, but people in developing countries do not receive the benefits. The price of drugs is often too high for them. Their choices are substantially limited. The situation is harder for them because there seem to be many choices available out there and they can glimpse them. This is acutely true for not well-off (i.e. ordinary) people in developed countries too. But not only affordability hampers choices, too much information for too many products also makes it difficult for us to choose and paradoxically restricts our right to choose as we saw in Chapter Four. The mindset formed in this era of the torrent of advertisement also limits our choices. Although consumers think it their choice, actually they are skillfully led to the choices big companies want them to take.

That massive capacity for production is not used evenly to feed, clothe and shelter the whole population on earth. The advance of pharmaceuticals enables us to treat even AIDS more efficiently now, but to treat HIV patients in Africa is a different matter. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), a world-wide medical aid organization, uses affordable drugs made by generic producers in India to help them. Still, it might become impossible in the near future, because a Swiss pharmaceutical company has taken the Indian government to court regarding its patent law. If the company wins, MSF will lose the affordable drugs it currently uses for 80% of its African patients, many of whom are women and children. Five years ago the Swiss company, Novartis, also filed a case with thirty-five other companies against the South African government to contest its law to
keep drug prices down. Strange indeed, as Morris uttered more than a century ago, "but true that the bounty of nature and the energetic ingenuity of man must under our system produce famine among us".

Indeed, when Morris said the following, he might have been addressing us in the twenty-first century:

[...]

The population of Europe will be face to face with the great question, 'What are we to do with the wealth which we civilised people produce in such huge quantities? It seems we cannot refrain from producing it, shall we waste it or use it?' Now it seems to me that the time when the answer to that question can no longer be evaded is growing so near, that we should bestir ourselves at once to answer it.

Probably the question is more urgent now, because 'the scale of quantities' is incomparable with the one in his time. Still, the problem is the same in essence: We cannot manage the power of modernity which we summoned from the magic lamp. We are stunned by the volume of waste we produce. Yet we cannot reach a consensus on what are the most appropriate solutions to deal with waste and the environmental change it threatens, except by advising consumers to somehow reduce or alter their consumption.

Far from providing a solution, many businesses regard even the problem of climate change as a business opportunity. The greed for profit creates more problems rather than solutions.
than solutions. According to a recent report on biofuel by a NGO, Grain, the push for the production of this replacement for oil is "causing enormous environmental and social damage" in India, Brazil and African countries. "[H]undreds of thousands of indigenous and peasant communities are being thrown off their land" to make way to plant crops for biofuel.\(^{568}\)

As I have argued, the nineteenth century was the 'historical juncture' for the present. The current system in which almost everything is turned into a commodity and bought and sold, was sprung from the feudal system. Witnessing the collapse of the Middle Ages and the growth of the capitalist system, Morris argues:

> When we freed ourselves from their [medieval] superstitions, we were not careful enough of the freedom of all men: the freedom we claimed and got was the freedom of each to succeed at the expense of other people if only he [sic.] were stronger and cleverer than they; in other words, the freedom to enslave others.\(^{569}\)

Therefore Morris urged us to stop producing for profit and using others for making profit. In other words, Morris thought that there could be no halfway measures to improve the system. Capitalism had to be abolished to make way for "a society of practical equality". Morris called this "true and complete socialism" or "communism".\(^{570}\) It could only be realized by the "effective majority of the working-people", when they gained "[I]ntelligence

\(^{568}\) 'No to the agrofuels craze!', \texttt{http://www.grain.org}, 06 July, 2007, Grain is 'an international NGO which promotes the sustainable management and use of agricultural biodiversity based on people's control over genetic resources and local knowledge'

\(^{569}\) 'The End and the Means', op. cit., p427-8, emphasis added

\(^{570}\) 'Communism' [1893], Works, vol.23, p266
enough to conceive, courage enough to will, [and] power enough to compel." 571

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, we have been told that communism and/or socialism is obsolete. The ideas which the Soviet bloc employed were indeed proven not only unworkable but also harmful to the majority of ordinary people. However, the collapse of the Soviet bloc does not mean that all socialist ideas of the nineteenth century are worthless and should be consigned to the dustbin. It is important to excavate Morris's socialism, because we are still watching the problems and the sufferings of the capitalist system. It is also essential because Morris's idea has a different quality from orthodox Marxism. Most regimes which claimed (and still claim) to be communist systems tried hard to match the productivity of capitalism and helped in some way or other the spread of consumer society.

Contrary to this, Morris not only called for a classless, equal society, but also insisted that in that future society work should be the centre of people's activity and be enjoyed as free expression as we argued in Chapter Two. Morris's call that socialists should think beyond the quantitative aspect of work was sadly forgotten in the twentieth century. After the workers and peasants succeeded in the Russian revolution in 1917, the leaders of the revolution seemed to concentrate on building up the productive force of the new-born state. 572 If Russia had not been poor or so underdeveloped, the situation might have been different. (Though, of course, the revolution might not have occurred there at all). It must have been difficult to think during its early stages that the important

571 Ibid., p266
572 There is no reference of the qualitative aspect of labour, for instance, in Lenin's The State and The Revolution.
thing was not how much bread society provides, but how it provides it. Even if food is not enough, when it is distributed equally and fairly, when their work is the expression of existence, people can afford to wait for the future and go through this passing phase, exactly as Morris expressed in 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil'.\textsuperscript{573} I am able to say this with the benefit of hindsight, but it is regrettable that the revolutionaries did not consider the qualitative aspect of work. They concentrated on competing with capitalism and failed. Most European socialist systems collapsed and implemented capitalism, while another big pillar of socialism in Asia, China, has adopted 'the market system' and is producing and consuming on a massive scale.

[2] Morris's relevance as a socialist

Concentrating on the promotion of the productive force and ignoring the pleasure of work leads human beings to treat others as a thing to produce products. Then, human beings become inhuman. It is the same mistake that capitalist society makes. However, Morris was distinguished on this point and indeed some other points too. This is the second aspect I would like to expand on Morris, the socialist of a different stripe. Morris's focus on socialism was to bring back creativity to human beings - not only key to socialist organization, but to theorizing also. As I have argued, the most obvious difference is his treatment of utopianism. And his utopianism is based on his belief that ordinary people can dream and take the lead in bringing about change. In this, he denies the cult of

\textsuperscript{573} Morris writes about this 'passing phase of utilitarianism': "If the cripple and the starving disappear from our streets, if the earth nourish us all alike, if the sun shine for all of us alike, ... we can afford to wait awhile ...", Works, vol.23, p116-7
leadership and avoids dogmatism. His socialism is very different from the forms we associate with the USSR and cannot be subject to the same criticism. Therefore, in order to examine his relevance as a socialist and his difference from others, I will expand the points from two angles: 1) his use of utopia and the encouragement of imagination, and 2) his rejection of dogmatism for the inclusiveness in thought.

Let me review his treatment of utopia first. Morris not only campaigned for the realization of a completely equal society, but also vividly created his own image of that society and encouraged others to do the same. As we saw in the previous chapter, imaginative literature conveys "by illustration a general truth that cannot be stated explicitly". Morris was well aware of this power of literature. He believed "the ideal of the new society should be always kept before the eyes of the mass of the working-class", and he used stories to keep socialism vividly "before the eyes" of people. Reason alone cannot move people. Morris's imagination and longing for better society helped him realize and study how different the reality was. The more knowledge he gained about the organization of his time, the sharper his longing for ideal society grew. Knowledge is important, but at the same time guessing, hopes, and dreams for the future "make many a man a Socialist". After all, humans have both body and soul. Socialism is about a hope to change the world for better, and cannot be reasoned without emotion and passion.

After witnessing the two critical events in Eastern Europe in 1956, Zygmunt Bauman

574 Ingle(2002), Narratives of British Socialism, op. cit., p9
575 Socialism : Its Growth and Outcome, op. cit., p278
writes precisely about this character of hope. In *Socialism: The Active Utopia* he argues "[t]he driving force behind the search for utopia is neither the theoretical nor the practical reason, ... but the principle of hope. ... Hope supplies the missing link between practical and theoretical interests".\(^{577}\) Referring to James O’Connor’s words he adds “one has to merge thought with feelings”.\(^{578}\) Regrettably many socialists in Morris’s time did not think in that way. Many still don’t. Talking about a personal dream society of the future was dismissed as unscientific and the term ‘utopia’ or ‘utopian’ became terms of abuse among socialists. In denying the hope of utopia, feeling was also denied and socialism lost its compassion.

Imagination is one of the crucial factors that make us human beings. Without it, we are like programmable robots. Imagination keeps our resilience in adversity. When we think over those who lived and died in similar circumstances to us, their sorrows and hopes give us strength to carry on. Imagine what would happen, if people lost their ability to imagine. Instead of thinking about how they might shape the future, they would instead follow someone else who did the thinking for them. Like this, the world would be a very dangerous place.

Before the Second World War, the Japanese government implemented a totalitarian education for Imperialism. ‘Imperial Rescript of Education’ was framed and held respectively in every school along with the photograph of the Emperor. Children had to bow to the photograph and recite the Rescript every morning. The sentences were

\(^{577}\) Bauman, Zygmunt (1976) *Socialism: The Active Utopia*, p14-15
\(^{578}\) Ibid., p110
written in classic style, so difficult for young children to understand, but this was irrelevant. It was not important to examine the literal meaning of the words, but only to accommodate the image of the Emperor as the embodiment of God and to obey his order without doubt. Loyalty and filial piety was ingrained into children with the force of habit. Every one was an 'infant' of the Emperor. The phrase was used almost automatically to show one's determination: 'I will work hard as the infant of the Emperor!' People also often used the phrases: 'Messhi Hoko! [Eliminate privateness or individuality and serve the public!]' and 'Hakko Ichiu! [Gather all nations in the world under one roof (of the Emperor)!]' The crisp sound composed of four Chinese characters possessed its own power beyond literal meanings, especially when it was cited repetitively. People used it without thinking much about what the words exactly meant. A shout: "do 'Messhi Hoko!'" was enough to finish any arguments - just as 'Heil Hitler' came to be used as a standard greeting. Doubting and examining the meanings, let alone expressing any questions, was itself a dangerous deed for citizens in that period.

University students at that period were the elite of society, therefore exempted from military service. When the exemption was abolished in 1943, they went to war with a huge fanfare in the Palace Plaza. They were mainly organized into special attack corps and died as kamikaze suicide bombers. Their last letters to their families or sweethearts were later collected and published in 1947.\textsuperscript{579} We can detect their agony of dying in the middle of their youth. Some brave ones expressed disguised doubts on war, but even in these private letters they seldom questioned the order of the Emperor outright.

\textsuperscript{579} Kike Wadatsumi no Koe [Listen to the voices from the ocean] (1947, Tokyo, Iwanami) was a best-seller in post-war Japan. No English version available.
Abhorrent atrocities that the Imperial Army committed in many Asian countries are beyond the comprehension of ordinary human beings in times of peace. Some might have persuaded themselves that it was all for ‘the sublime cause’. Still it does not explain why they were able to toss babies up and pierce them to death by bayonets. Perhaps war created a particular psychology and turned humans into monsters. They stopped being humans: they were unable to imagine others’ pain and horror, and therefore shutting their eyes and senses. Alternatively they have regarded their victims as non-human and coldly got on with ‘the job’. In this case, we might say that they had allowed their imagination to be controlled or manipulated – to suit the terms of their rulers. This crucial human capacity was not used to sharpen the analysis of the reality – as Morris suggested – but employed to maintain a fictional idea of the struggle for survival.

The Japanese experience might be an extreme case. Yet, without an imaginative faculty, without asking: ‘what will happen in the end if the things keep going on this way?’ – we will miss critical turning points. This is Ellen’s fear of forgetting the past. Change usually happens slowly and by the time we notice it, it is often too late.

As well as fostering compassion, imagination/utopia provides a means of challenging the status quo. In order to challenge habitual thinking and/or dominant cultures, it is important to emphasize the power of imagination or utopianism as Morris upheld. Bauman, who saw the confrontation of the two systems, analyses “socialism as culture”

\[580\] A former African child soldier explained himself in a radio interview that when he was forced to kill someone, he had tried not to think the victims as human beings.
and underlines the importance of a counter culture. He points out that "the hegemonic capitalist culture demonstrates an enormous survival capacity", and it is "unlikely to give way unless driven away by new culture". Significantly, he argues that the Soviet Union focused only on industrialisation and "conspicuously failed" to offer "an alternative to the capitalist-inspired culture". As I have argued, few socialist thinkers apart from Morris paid attention to the role of imagination. Moreover, it must have been depressing to see 'socialism' identified with the situation in the Soviet bloc. Bauman puts it in this way:

"the gap [between the reality of capitalism and socialist ideals] has been narrowed to the point at which one can see from one coast clear outlines of the other; and what one sees is much less inspiring than one used to hope."

It is not at all inspiring to identify 'socialism' with a totalitarian planned economy and a huge security apparatus. In very early stages of Soviet Russia, workers and peasants must have been full of passion and hopes eager to create their new society. They must have had various dreams beyond the shared grounds of a classless, fairer society. Their dreams were not allowed to develop, but merged into one image: industrialized modern Russia. Hence "[t]he utopia-producers ran out of ideas" as Bauman puts it. It is no wonder that after Stalin we do not have masterpieces of utopia, but only dystopia, Nineteen Eighty-four.

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581 Bauman, op. cit., p103, please note that this was written even before the collapse of the Soviet Bloc.
582 Ibid., p101
583 Ibid., p107
584 Bauman, op. cit., p108
Morris's stance towards dreams or images of future society was far from homogenising. So treading between the imaginary future and challenging - through imagination - a brutal present necessarily involved an ethical judgment, which Morris located in fellowship or compassion.

Moreover he strongly denied dogmatism. This is the second key aspect of Morris's socialism. He often advised his audiences not to 'dogmatize' his opinion and encouraged them to develop their own views on future society. Morris was also very humble when he had to take a leading position.⁵⁸⁵ As if he had foreseen the future, Morris warned that cults of leadership were the last thing that socialists should accept.⁵⁸⁶ Nevertheless, we witnessed most leaders in 'socialist regimes' become dictatorial like Stalin in one way or another. Morris did not emphasize how right his opinion was in his speeches, but warned his audience not to dogmatize his 'hints'.⁵⁸⁷ This attitude might seem to be naive to some socialists, but not to idolize himself was a matter of course for Morris, because his ideal society was 'true and complete equal society'.⁵⁸⁸ There should not be a division between 'the leader' and the followers. Even an individual has a special talent, they should be treated equally. Under the current circumstances, people do not have equal conditions to live and their abilities are not always allowed to develop. But

⁵⁸⁵ "For myself I feel miserably uncomfortable at having any leadership put upon me, but hope I shall be able to learn to do whatever is necessary", Feb, 1885, Letters, vol.2, p385, also "As to my capacity for leadership in this turmoil, believe me, I feel as humble as could be wished; yet after all it is my life, and the work of it, and I must do my best", Feb, 1886, ibid, p525
⁵⁸⁶ Letters, vol.2, p472
⁵⁸⁷ "These [hints] must be considered as being given without any intention of dogmatizing, and as merely given my own personal opinion", 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil', Works, vol.23, p112, emphasis added
⁵⁸⁸ See for instance 'Communism', Works, vol.23, p266 and 267. To Morris, socialism is “the new society of Equality”, and when he uses socialism it means to him “true and complete Socialism [i.e.] Communism".
Morris believed people would be able to develop their abilities equally, though diversely and at different paces, once opportunities were given. This faith in equality led him to adopt an open-minded approach to socialism. In any case, for Morris, differences in ability — and supporting different preferences — were not a foundation for authoritarian relations.

People often choose socialism out of a sense of justice and condemn the inequality of capitalism. Nevertheless, once in a group, they often accept the dominance of their leader(s). They think the dominance to lead or to be led as necessary, therefore seldom question the inequality between the members of the group. When they are mesmerized by charismatic figures, they do not dispute the privilege of the leader(s). When Morris joined the Democratic Federation, he sensed problems of party politics but chose to join because of his keenness to act.\(^{589}\) Still he could not bear Hyndman’s possessive attitude towards the organization and his behaviour as ‘master’, which was one of the reasons he defected from that organization. Morris kept his sense of equality.

Ruth Kinna characterises Morris’s thought as “open and independent approach to socialism” or “the inclusiveness”.\(^{590}\) As Kinna points out, Morris included ‘John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle, the men of the Commune of Paris, Karl Marx and Peter Kropotkin’ as the men who laid the foundations of socialism.\(^{591}\) They were all different in their beliefs, but they contributed in various ways to build the foundations of socialism.

\(^{589}\) “We seek perfection, but can find no perfect means to bring it about; let it be enough for us if we can unite with those whose aims are right, and their means honest feasible. ... if we wait for perfection in association in these days of combat we shall die before we can do anything”, ‘Art under Plutocracy’ [1883], Works, vol.23, p191


Orthodox Marxists would not approve of such an inclusive list. Specifically they would cross Kropotkin off any list that included Marx, although the difference between socialism (including what was later called Marxism) and anarchism was not so obvious in the early days of socialist movement. The situation was more fluid in those days, but after the establishment of the Soviet Union, the status of Marx grew out of all proportion in the socialist movement. Those who Marx studied and criticized in forming his thought were disregarded as if they had no value to socialism. Those who were contemporary opponents of Marx and Engels are dealt with sometimes as if they are worse than the 'enemy'. The rejection is often made without even reading and examining original thinkers' opinions, as if the criticism offered by Marx is enough to dismiss them.

This attitude of exclusiveness among certain Marxists was persistent, but Morris was open to a different tinge of socialists. His relationships with George Bernard Shaw and Kropotkin are well known. Although Morris did not agree with the Fabian Society’s state socialism or the anarchism of Kropotkin, he acknowledged their sincerity and appreciated their talents. Similarly he opposed the ideas of his anarchist friends in the Socialist League, but he also learned from discussions with them. He shared their criticism of the state and their critique helped Morris form the idea of future society as the federation of communities, where true democracy is held (even the majority opinion concedes to the status quo if the difference is minor), and where people develop their different abilities freely.

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592 "Socialists turned out to be anarchists only when expelled from Marxist parties. Johann Most was one example, thrown out of the German Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1880 when he refused to toe the party line... It was not until after his expulsion that Most call himself an anarchist", Ruth Kinna, (2005) Anarchism: a beginner’s guide, p28-9
Morris preferred to call himself 'communist' since he wanted the higher level of socialism with complete equality, but he also often used the term 'socialist' to make things easy to understand. Sadly the term 'communism' now cannot escape the image of totalitarianism because of the failure of the Soviet bloc. The image stuck in the mind of people, especially people in Eastern Europe, so it should be carefully clarified when one prefers to use it. The term 'socialism' has wider meanings and it can be used to refer to the amelioration of capitalism. When one wants to be clear socialism requires the abolition of capitalism through revolution as Morris believed, one can use the term revolutionary socialism or practical socialism. At any rate, I don't think it proper to use the term 'Marxist' for Morris in the light of his difference from orthodox Marxism. 593

The term 'Marxism' itself is used too loosely, and it is about time now to be used more definitely. In the nineteenth century, 'Marxian' or 'Marxist' was used when the person took the line of what Marx wrote. But Morris did not follow this line: he followed his own path. When the term 'Marxism' started to be used, it became larger than Marx himself and extended to include everything that 'Marx might have said if he was alive'. Every idea of revolutionary socialism is described by the label of 'Marxism'. Ruth Levitas's suggestion that if dreaming is not contained within Marxism, it is a necessary adjunct to it, 594 is an example. Although I acknowledge her good intention, I cannot help thinking why it should be called 'Marxism' in that case. Isn't the term 'socialism' (or revolutionary socialism if one prefers) enough? Is it fair to identify Morris with a particular position

593 Fiona MacCarthy makes this point: "Thompson was later to stress that William Morris was an 'original Socialist thinker whose work was complementary to Marxism'. But he underestimates that extent to which Morris, from the middle 1880s, was not just in sympathy with but was on terms of warm personal friendship with the leading London Anarchists", MacCarthy(1994) op. cit., p543

594 See Chapter Four
when he wanted to open up socialism to diverse views?

The other side of Morris's inclusiveness was his weakness as a leader of a political organization. His failure to lead a political group was evident. He left the Social Democratic Federation with Bax, Aveling, Eleanor Marx and others because he disliked competing with Hyndman, although his group was the majority. He lost Eleanor Marx and others from the Socialist League and then was driven out from it by anarchists. He admitted himself too good-natured to be a leader. To be 'the leader', he needed more sense of tactics and politics. Yet politics is a dangerous game to play. The passion to push his/her policy often results in the manipulation of other members or in the exclusion of even like-minded people if they belong to other organizations. Therefore, although it looks like a weakness, Morris's attitude towards leadership provides a good guide to judge the thin line between leadership and cultishness. His attitude as a socialist is so rare and yet critical for the creation of equal society. In order to highlight his difference from orthodox socialists, I will touch on this issue of cultishness further.

[3] The thin line between leadership and cultishness

When we consider the balance between leadership and equality among members, or respect for leaders and cultishness, an immediate image which comes to our mind is the

595 Morris disliked competitions: "I do not love contention; I even shrink from it with indifferent persons. Indeed I know that all my faults lie on the other side: love of ease, dreaminess, sloth, sloppy good-nature, are what I chiefly accuse myself of. All these would not have been hurt by my being a 'moderate Socialist'; ... for in such a party I could easily have been a leader, nay, perhaps the leader, whereas amidst our rough work I can scarcely be a leader at all and certainly do not care to be", May, 1886, Letters, vol.2, p549
attitude of socialists towards Stalin, since Stalinism exemplifies the problem of cultishness in socialism. Morris's thought is completely opposed to Stalinism. Of course to say this raises a huge and complex set of issues about the specifics of Stalin's rule which are not the concern of this analysis. What is relevant, though, is the contrast between Morris's rejection of cultishness and the perfect example of authoritarian socialist – what Stalin represents, sadly, in socialism.

Stalin's behaviour and people's attitudes to him were unusual and perhaps Stalin's character is the object of pathology. Still the question remains: why he was able to rise in his party in which supposedly many fair-minded, wise socialists were members? Why were they all trapped in the net of cultishness and why could nobody prevent it from spreading? The result of this cultishness – the purges, the careless use of soldiers' sacrifice during the war against Nazism, and other unthinkable evils – are too weighty to be dismissed as the unfortunate and accidental result of individual's paranoia. At any rate, Stalin seemed to be an 'ordinary' revolutionary to his comrades until Lenin's death. The development of his distorted personality and his comrades' obedience and silence must have been conditioned by the attitudes of the party. As Ronald Grigor Suny says "whatever his personal predilections for unchallenged power, his inability to accept frustration or criticism, ... Stalin was also the product of the particular political culture and internal party practices of Bolshevism."596 Moshe Lewin argues: "It is here [the Civil War period, 1918-21] that his personal ruthlessness seemed to have shown its weight as an excellent political expedient. It is in this terrible crucible that Stalin learned the secret of

596 Ronald Grigor Suny(1977), 'Stalin and his Stalinism' in Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorship in Comparison, p30
victorious politics in the most daunting situation.\textsuperscript{597}

What was 'the particular political culture' or 'the secret of victorious politics'? And how did it spread among members? Suny and Lewin do not elaborate, but I will analyse it, in the contrast with what Morris stressed, from three aspects: 1) over-reliance on party policies, 2) barbaric enforcement of the party-line, and 3) the significance of the area – the problem of attitude/mindset of socialists per se, separate from the structural issue of an organization.

During these periods, there was a lot of politicking. As we saw in Chapter Four, Morris was very clear about the abolition of politics.\textsuperscript{598} Some early Russian revolutionaries might have believed, like Morris, that politics and the state would eventually die away in socialist society. However, unlike Morris, they thought tactics/conspiracies were necessary in the transition period and that the end would justify the means. However, not even talented leaders are always and forever right, and high position tends to intoxicate people and make them develop their egoistic sides. Politics grew on its own and crept inside the organizations. Organizations designed for fellowship were contaminated with Machiavellianism allowing room for personalities like Stalin to emerge and thrive.

When they thought that the means was justified because of "the righteous end", the problem is that they believed that the policy of the party was the only one which was right

\textsuperscript{597} Moshe Lewin(1977), 'Stalin in the mirror of the other' in ibid., p112
\textsuperscript{598} Chapter “Concerning politics” – “we are very well off as to politics, -- because we have none”, Nowhere, p87
– this is the first point I would like to make. Reality is wider than a theory and there could be more than one way of achieving a goal, especially in regard to detailed/localized policies. It is natural to discuss different means and approaches to problems. Yet, in the eyes of those who thought only their policies were scientifically valid, questioning and discussion was not at all acceptable.

As we saw in the previous section, Morris took a completely different attitude and was wary of this over-reliance on ‘the righteousness of policies’. He knew that his opinion was one of many and encouraged others to have their own point of view – in other words he was inclusive and open to other opinions. As long as the principle of equality is observed, members are entitled to express any opinion. Morris would even give in to the minority, if the gap is narrow, as we saw in the discussion of bridge building in Nowhere. However, if one takes pluralism – as Morris did – in orthodox Marxist parties, debate is regarded as a sign of weakness or doubt and those who raise discussion are treated as individuals who cannot persuade others or themselves to follow the right course.

Worse consequences result when one openly disagrees with the party line. This is unacceptable, and considered the sign of disloyalty to the party. From here, it is a very short step to enforce ‘the right party line’ whatever the cost – this is the second point. The dissent from the party line is tantamount to the rejection of the party, therefore those who hold such opinions are regarded as heretics to be eradicated from the party or society. The enforcement of the ‘right’ line was especially barbaric in the purges executed by Stalin. The tragedy is, however, that the over-reliance on policy reflected not only on the leaders but also on the mindset of the led. They also believed that the
eradication was right, although it hurt them. This is the similar psychology which we saw in the imperial education in Japan. It makes the process of the enforcement brutal and easy for leaders.

Arthur Koestler’s memoirs give us a glimpse of the mindset of ordinary rank and file members. He joined the German Communist Party in 1931, believing passionately that communism was the solution to social injustice. He had been a member for seven years, and knew what it was like to have loved ones go missing. He finally left the party after he participated in Spanish civil war. Among many distressing accounts, Koestler describes:

I saw the ravage of the famine of 1932-33 in the Ukraine: hordes of families in rags begging at the railway stations, the women lifting up to the compartment window their starving brats which ... looked like embryos out of alcohol bottles.... I was told that these were kulaks who had resisted the collectivization of the land and I accepted the explanation; they were enemies of the people who preferred begging to work.599

As this illustrates, the collectivization was the right decision and those who did not accept it had to face ‘the consequences’. He adds: “it may all sound monstrous and yet it was so easy to accept while rolling along the single track of faith”.600

His transformation and disillusionment are sadly too familiar – the exultation of joining the righteous cause, getting used to party jargon, thinking only along the party lines, followed by the realization of the sectarianism of the party to the Socialist Party in Germany, or the

600 Ibid., p61
POUM, an independent group of Trotskyite leanings in Spain. The reality began to dawn on him when he learned that his brother-in-law was missing and his friends had been arrested and imprisoned. Even then he did not consciously confront the problems — although he witnessed them —, nor was he able to express them until he decided to leave the party.\(^{601}\)

These attitudes — 'only our policy is right' and 'every thing should be allowed to enforce the right policy' are die-hard. And they do not disappear by simply getting rid of the hierarchy of an organization. In other words, there is a specific area we must focus on, separate from the problem of the structure per se. Of course the organizations of Stalin had an overwhelmingly powerful hierarchy which was a problem. But even if we flatten the structure, there still are problems if we do not question our attitudes towards leaders — as Morris wanted us to do. This is the third point I want to mention. Analysing the feminist movement, Jo Freeman suggests that tyranny exists even in structureless organizations.\(^ {602}\) She warns of the danger of presupposing 'unstructured' groups to be democratic. She suggests that it is more difficult to address the problem in structureless organizations. People will gain power with some 'good' or capricious reasons, but since "[t]heir power was not given to them [formally], it cannot be taken away." She argues that it is better to admit this danger and structure organizations democratically, rather than leave them without structure.

\(^{601}\) It is not clear whether he abandoned his faith in socialism altogether when he left the communist party. Judging from the introduction by Richard Crossman, he might have. Some might dismiss this book, originally published in 1950, as Cold War propaganda. Whatever Koestler's intention, the facts he described remain.

As to the issue of how to organize a democratic structure, her suggestion is informative. Among the seven principles for democratic structuring, the following principles seem to be important: 1) delegation of specific authority to specific individuals for specific tasks by democratic procedures, 2) distribution of authority among as many people as is reasonably possible, 3) rotation of tasks, 4) diffusion of information to everyone and equal access to resources. In a way this reminds us of the principles of the Paris Commune workers in 1871, especially 1) all officials are chosen by universal suffrage and the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune, 2) the abolition of all monetary privileges to officials and the reduction to the level of workers' wages. Lenin studied them just before the Russian revolution by reviewing Marx's *Civil War in France*, but these very basic principles were disregarded in Soviet Russia.

Freeman's points – 'specific authority for specific task' and 'diffusion of information to everyone' – seem to me especially significant to prevent risks. But they must be taken in combination with the awareness of mindset of participants. Powerful positions are addictive. When a person begins to dominate through his/her confidence, ability or whatever elements, s/he can also develop authoritarian tendencies which surprise others and even the person him/herself. After all, we are all born and bred in competitive society.

Morris did not elaborate answers to the problems Freeman raises, but he was aware of the issues of both unstructured groups and party organizations. He not only emphasised

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603 Lenin [1917] *The State and Revolution* op. cit., chapter 3, section 2 ‘What is to Replace the Smashed State Machine?’, emphasis added
equality among the members and criticized authoritarianism, but he also examined simple majoritarianism and offered an alternative. As I touched upon, Old Hammond in Nowhere enlightens Guest that there is no vote when opinions are divided, and the majority, not the minority, tolerates the status quo when the division is still narrow after three meetings.\textsuperscript{604} Democracy is operated by majority decision-making, and regarding this system beyond reproach is dangerous. Decisions made by majorities can be wrong and/or unnecessary. Minorities can feel alienated or persecuted by majority rule. Morris showed that what was important was to reach consensus through thorough deliberation. Thus he suggested that we should be aware of a potential 'tyranny of majoritarianism'. Sadly, Morris's contribution was not much studied and was too easily forgotten. Probably orthodox Marxists dismissed it as the idea of naïve artist or a deviation of Marxism.

Let me summarize the points. It is important now to excavate Morris’s warning against dogmatism in the light of the history of socialism. After all, the difference between leadership and dogmatism is very precarious and an admiration for leaders can easily cross the thin line towards cultishness. Relying on a strong character makes one feel safe. Standing on one's own feet and using one's own imagination like Morris did is difficult, but it makes us human. Morris's rejection of dogmatism and the worship of leaders is based on his belief – people are different but equal – in other words his pluralism. Morris not only practised this principle in his activities for socialism, but also demonstrated it in his utopia and encouraged others to use their imagination too. His utopia was not a fixed image which was provided by a party elite, and which all other

\textsuperscript{604} See Chapter Four, (3) Society as 'guardian', p14
members had to work hard to achieve. His utopia was one of many utopias people might create, if only they could use their imagination to see something beyond the difficult reality of the present. In this way, Morris's utopianism offers another important way of showing the openness of his socialism.

[4] 'Utopias' in our time

Let us respond, then, to Morris's call and imagine our own utopia to tackle the present. It is all up to us, so what kind of ideal society do we of this century crave? On the premise of 'complete equality' with the abolition of the capitalist system and class, we could dream anything. Some might think that this is just a useless daydreaming. I disagree. In order to free ourselves from the deeply ingrained habits of our time, each one of us needs to develop their own utopia. In doing so, we engage in performative action – challenge the mantra: T. I. N. A. In fact, there are similar kinds of attempts to offer or help people think of alternatives. For example, Michael Albert offers Parecon (participatory economy) as an alternative life to capitalism. He offers a detailed vision of a new society, saying "[t]he ultimate answer to the claim that 'there is no alternative' is to enact an alternative. In the short term, however, the answer is to offer a coherent, consistent, viable, economic vision able to generate hope, provide inspiration, reveal what is possible and valuable ...". Also, Chaz Bufe provides a questionnaire to help us design our own utopias. Bufe argues "[w]ithout a vision of something better, something that inspires, the chance of social progress is low; and the clearer the vision, the better the chances of

achieving it.⁶⁰⁶

So, let me try my utopia. In my case I share many of Morris's utopian desires, but the experience of the twentieth century suggests some revisions. People might live and produce locally as in Nowhere. They can mainly eat local foods, so there is no need for excessive air cargo to transport them. Food suited to local climate is fresh and healthy. Some times people want to eat exotic food and it is certainly delicious, but it is more delightful if you encounter it less.

Since commerce will have disappeared, the huge energy spent on advertising and finance will disappear with it. We do not need to spend energy on armaments either. People will engage in other pursuits. The food-service industry will have gone too. People eat together at halls as well as at home. As Morris suggests the halls are comfortable and relaxing, quite different from the over-charging restaurants or busy fast-food shops of our time. It is like dining with friends at one of their houses. Everybody will participate in preparing meals in some way. In other words, in contrast to Nowhere, it is not only women that prepare and serve food. Men are also interested in this amusing task and actually good at it. There are many good male and female chefs who like teamwork. So, those who are good at cooking will mainly do the actual cooking, but as with all work, other people will learn and share this work too, often with delight. The same goes with organizing housework. Not only women are good at it, as Morris argued, but some men are too. Besides, cleaning, washing etc are jobs for all members

who use the facility, either a hall’or house, so everybody will have their turn, although some are good at organizing it and take the lead.

Since many people and other ‘resources’ will have been shifted into more substantial work, contrary to Cole's fear, there is no shortage of the basics that people need. At first perhaps there were shortages of ‘goods’. There were also some difficulty for the people in developed countries to grasp the volume of necessities that people in developing countries required, but people enjoyed the learning process, not only because of sense of fellowship but because they enjoyed living more simply. Gradually the situation has improved and people in every country have more or less what they want, but the desire for certain products faded in time. People have decided what they really want through the trial and error. Some people wanted convenience and technology and some tried to throw away nearly everything the previous society produced. As Old Hammond told to Guest when offering a not-well executed oak chair made in early days of the post-revolution, people “were almost beginning again in those days: and they were brisk, hot-headed times.”607

The most apparent change is the need for cars. Morris did not have to confront the mass production of cars and the resulting oil consumption, but it is most likely that he would have loathed it, considering his hatred of railways. Indeed, in the first scene of News from Nowhere the protagonist sits in a carriage of the London Underground – in “that vapour-bath of hurried and discontented humanity”.608 Cars do not vanish, but are rarely

607 Nowhere, p58
608 Nowhere, p4
seen because there is good 'public transport' available; buses, trains, ships, canalboats, and horse carts. The trains Morris hated will have survived. They are more spacious and not noisy. Views from the windows are pleasant because no carrier bags and rubbish are discarded along the railways. Since people live and work locally, they do not have to commute too far. Therefore there is no heavy traffic. Huge motorways will have disappeared. Those who like driving enjoy running along country lanes. If people want to go to another town for some reason or other, they can easily organize it with the neighbours and someone will give them a lift.

Some people are curious and adventurous, so they want to visit other countries and cultures. They do not need to hurry to go there or to come back in time for a school term or a job arrangement. They just arrange someone to take their place, if this is really necessary. They do not travel by air, but go by ship and/or train, enjoying the process of the move itself – exactly as Morris travelled by boat up the Thames. (Since some people like the view from the sky, flying will not totally disappear, but people will often use smaller types of planes and balloons). Some people like other cultures and climates better than their native cultures, like Dick said in Nowhere, “it’s a matter of taste”. If they like living in the place they visit, they can. It is much easier to live in a ‘foreign country’, because like Nowhere there is no ‘artificial border’ between states, and because there is an advanced communication technology (which is not mentioned in Nowhere, although in his definition of ‘wealth’ Morris included “means of free communication” and left the matter of development open to others).

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609 ‘Useful Work versus Useless Toil’, Works, vol.23, p103, other elements are ‘the storing up of knowledge of all kinds, and the power of disseminating it
When they want to contact people at home, they can contact them face to face, because the internet technology of the twenty-first century has survived and evolved. Every village has sophisticated libraries, where people can freely access the internet and get any information when they want. (Although people can access information from everywhere, Oxford and other university towns remain 'the Art of Knowledge' like in Nowhere. Those who prefer it in the flesh rather than online visit the places). The screens differ from big to small, and small ones are mobile. This small one is like a mobile phone in the twenty-first century. People can pick it up and keep it with them if they need to contact someone during a day, but it does not happen often. The pace of everyday life is much slower than before. The time does not fly but flows slowly and deeply.

People do not usually keep their personal computers or televisions at home either. There are too many interesting activities to concentrate only on computers, not to mention the pleasure of work such as farming and creating beautiful buildings, clothes or wares. Still there are people who like working with computers, and it is 'a matter of taste'. However, even they do practical work with their hands just as the mathematician Bob is also a weaver and asks Dick for outdoor work in Nowhere. People take different activities from time to time and enjoy the difference. Films and some TV programmes have survived, and people see them at 'the library', but it becomes much less than the past, partly because there are interesting dramas of nature going on outside; moreover people prefer to watch the excellent travelling live theater performances.
Every building has an advanced solar power system. The disappearance of secretive competition for new invention makes technical advance easier. The system is enough to meet needs, which are much less than the previous century. People easily handle advanced technology. But the facility of modern technology is inconspicuous and merges into the scenery. Ugly scars on the earth made by human activities will have healed gradually and the planet earth becomes a beautiful place to live for all humans and other animals alike.

I know this is just a dream – at the moment, at least. Yet, in order to survive the dead-end of our consumer society, we need dreams to change our sense of value. Needless to say, this is my image and others might prefer more or less modern technological worlds. They can co-exist. As Morris suggested in Nowhere, even in utopian society changes will occur according to people's hopes.

[5] Beyond time

As we saw in previous sections, Morris's relevance lies in his treatment of the historical juncture and his open-minded, creative socialism. For Morris, it is not a few leaders but every one of us who should lead the change, since every body has the possibility and capacity to dream – Morris rejected cultishness and put his faith in ordinary people. He encouraged people to imagine their ideal society vividly and in detail: this is the performative element of his utopianism. His utopianism is not a fixed image given from the top, but a collection of varied images which come from the bottom of people's hearts.
Therefore, it is a critical form of socialism which rejects elitism and cultishness both in capitalism and in socialism. Finally, then, the relevance and revolutionariness of Morris’s socialism lies in his utopianism and his belief in ordinary people.

The identification with ordinary men/women was well expressed in his speech at the funeral of Alfred Linnell, who joined the anti-unemployment demonstration at the Trafalgar Square on 20 November 1887, one week after ‘Bloody Sunday, and died because of the injury sustained by the police:

There lay a man of no particular party – a man who until a week or two ago was perfectly obscure, and probably was only known to a few ... Their brother lay there – let them remember for all time this man as their brother and their friend ... Their friend who lay there had had a hard life and met with a hard death; and if society had been differently constituted from what it was, that man’s life might have been a delightful, a beautiful one, and a happy one to him. It was their business to try and make this earth a very beautiful and happy place. 610

Morris’s earnest cry, “[l]et us feel he is our brother” moved the people in the gathering. 611

Ordinary people live sincerely and steadily. Every person experiences sad events in their lives in some way or other, still they carry on. Morris himself was unhappy as a family man, although his two daughters loved him and his younger daughter, May, followed him to the socialist movement. He wrote many romances with happy endings, but Morris himself could not find and gain his Isolde in real life. His alter ego, William

610 Commonweal, December 24, 1887, cited in EPT, p494
611 MacCarthy(1994), op. cit., p573
Guest, found the beautiful and active Ellen in utopia, but had to leave her because he did not yet belong to that society. May Morris described her father as "an intensely lonely man". Through her, we can catch a sight of a face of Morris rarely shown to us.

People always say that my father was one of the happiest of men in his work: but who can know for sure? ... [H]is difficulties and moments of despondency and self-doubt are rarely, if ever, voiced, and truly the worker is lonely to the end. ... When I had received my copy of the Kelmscott Press Chaucer, ... the look of profound melancholy that (perhaps unconsciously) he turned on me in smiling tenderly seemed like a glimpse into a very far country. What it quite meant I don't think I realized at the time, though it moved me deeply: all was made clear not long afterwards ... it was the look of an intensely lonely man – never to be forgotten while memory serves. 612

Perhaps with this intense loneliness, Morris understood the sorrow and happiness of ordinary people in the past, long dead and forgotten. His imagination to make the past present, in other words his romanticism, 613 became more acute with this loneliness. Many honest people have died under unfair systems in one way or another, believing the future might be better for their children. Some brave ones actually tried to change society for better. Their lives might seem to be in vain. Yet, if we remember their struggles, re-create their hopes within in our mind and carry out on their behalf and our own, they still live with us, and this is what Morris tried to do. Morris's appreciation and 'rumination' of the people's sorrow and happiness in the past is the key to his socialism. It

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612 Works, vol.24 px-xj
613 "What romance means is the capacity for a true conception of history, a power of making the past part of the present"; Address at the twelfth annual meeting for S. P. A. B', Many Morris, vol. 1, p148
led him through to his socialism and made him crave the change. In turn, his socialism bears full of identification with ordinary people. In his socialism, everyone is a dreamer. Everyone is an own judge of his/her utopia. Everyone is an artist. When everyone becomes a real dreamer on their own, the change will be within our reach. In other words, everyone becomes a revolutionary.

He wrote a poem when he joined the socialist movement, *The Day is Coming*,614 in its stanza:

Come, join in the only battle
wherein no man can fail,
Where whoso fadeth and dieth,
yet his deed shall still prevail615

Indeed, the deed shall still prevail, if we can see our own utopias as Morris saw his and take action to realize them. Then, the dream "may be called a vision rather than a dream."616

614 Made in 1883 for the Social Democratic Federation along with its membership card Morris designed. Later included in *The Chants for Socialists* in 1885
615 William Morris(1896), *Poems by the Way*, p112
616 Nowhere, p220
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