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WILLIAM MORRIS' THEORIES
OF ART
AS
THE BASIS OF HIS SOCIALIZED
by

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Presented in partial fulfillment of the re-
quirement for the degree of Master
of Arts

Montana State University

1947

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CONTENTS

	Pages
Introduction--Art and Socialism; Purpose of Paper.....	i-vii
I. Early Interests and Influences:	
Love of Nature; archeology and history; medievalism; John Ruskin and Edward Burne-Jones; "The Great Exhibition of 1857;" architecture; the spirit of fellowship; The Oxford Movement; "The Brotherhood;" Icelandic literature; Dante Gabriel Rossetti.....	1-14
II. Developing Theories--Art as the Remedy for Society's Ills:	
Theory of art; sources of his theory of art; architecture as the most important art; tradition and freedom in the art of the past; the free is the feudal society; the spirit of association; the medieval guilds; shortcomings of the medieval system.....	14-36
III. The Function of Art:	
As revealed in <u>A Dream of John Ball</u> ; in <u>The House of the Wolfings</u> ; ideal societies; freedom vs. slavery; the peculiar slavery of the modern capitalistic world.....	36-54
IV. Capitalism:	
Its growth in Medieval England; development of class; class consciousness; palliatives for capitalistic ills; fear of starvation, the root of oppression.....	55-64
V. Art and Capitalism:	
Machines deny labor individuality; capitalism, a system of perpetual war; sham and luxury replace art; the visible expressions of capitalism; social revolution must begin with art; the "Claim" for Socialism; people must be educated for change; stirring up of discontent with capitalism.....	64-73

VI. Morris, the Prophet:	
His peculiar gift for prophecy; prophecies that came true; his prophecy for change applied to Russia.....	73-77
VII. The Difficulty of Educating for Socialism:	
Faith and patience necessary; heritage from capitalism; misgivings about immediate success of Socialism.....	77-79
VIII. The Ideal Society in <u>News from Nowhere</u> :	
The rebirth of Art; results of the rebirth; Aesthetic Socialism; Socialism the machinery for Communism; the need for education re-emphasized; no government under the new system; abolition of the sources of crime eliminates the need for law; the unit of management; decisions of the majority and the case of the minority; Life, the rewards of labor; the change that made all the other changes possible.....	79-87
IX. The Validity of <u>News from Nowhere</u> :	
His ideal world described in lectures corresponds to world in <u>News from Nowhere</u> ; representative samples from three different lectures; his vision of the future <u>where</u> in popular view of the future, but real to Morris.....	87-92
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	93

INTRODUCTION

An attempt is made in this paper to arrive at an understanding of Morris' socialism through a study of his art and its relationship to man and society. Morris was primarily an artist who saw in every aspect of life either art or a lack of it; and since he found capitalism destructive of individualism, to him "the very breath and life of art,"¹ he turned to socialism. This socialism, however, was essentially a system calculated to foster individualism, leaving the individual free from all external restraints, both physical and psychological, and unhampered by them so that he might be an "artist." In Morris' ideal society every individual of normal intelligence was an artist who expressed in his work in terms of his intelligence the forces that affected his daily life; and, therefore, every expression of individuality in work, if the conditions of life were favorable to the creation of beauty, was a work of art. Society, he thought, existed for the bene-

1. "The Lesser Arts of Life," Collected works of William Morris, XXII, p. 276; hereafter cited as Collected Works.

fit of the individual, its primary function being to preserve the dignity of every one of its members. This it could best accomplish by leaving the individual completely free and by providing him with the means of finding beauty or art in his daily life; for it was art that made life worth living and that enabled men "to live as men."²

Socialism, as it had conventionally come to be understood by the 1880's,³ especially since Karl Marx had envisioned a "dictatorship of the proletariat," generally implied some form of strong central authority that regulated and controlled the affairs of the individual members of the society and that to some degree, at least, regimented their lives. This was not what Morris desired. His society was to be founded on a "complete equality of condition" with no authority above that of

2. Art is "a positive necessity of life, if we are to live as nature meant us to; that is, unless we are content to be less than men." "The Beauty of Life," Collected Works, XXII, 53.

3. "On the eve of the Revolution of 1848" Marx and Engels published the Communist Manifesto. Marx's "numerous writings culminated in the enormous work, Das Kapital, whose four huge volumes were not yet complete at the time of his death (1883)." Joseph Ward Swain, Beginning the Twentieth Century: A History of Europe from 1870 to the Present, p. 9.

the individual member.⁴ A definition of socialism, as the term has come to be understood today, could hardly be applied to a conception of a society possessing a "complete equality of condition;" consequently, Morris has often been accused of being an anarchist rather than a socialist;⁵ however, the measure of claim that Morris' society might have to the conventional definition lies in his idea of the common ownership of property. Morris nevertheless cooperated with all types of socialists, feeling that his ideal type of society would have to evolve from the imperfect conventional types of socialism. Conventional socialism, he felt, was merely the primary stage during which education for his higher type of society would be instituted; it was through education that

4. In an article Morris published in The Commonweal, 1889, he is reported to have stated: "If individuals are not to coerce others, there must somewhere be an authority which is prepared to coerce them not to coerce." Lloyd Wendell Kahleman, A Victorian Rebel: The Life of William Morris, pp. 262-82.

This "authority" Morris conceived of as resident within the individual himself, after he had developed a proper "public conscience." He illustrates and explains this in News from Nowhere, Chapters X-XV, pp. 63-98.

"...the communization of the means of industry would speedily be followed by the communization of its product: that is that there would be complete equality of condition amongst all men." "Communism," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 275.

5. See, for example, Fritzsche, William Morris' Sozialismus und Anarchistischer Kommunismus.

communism, as he called the full development of socialism, was eventually to be brought about. His view of the coming change of society into socialism and its eventual development into "Communism" was based on his conception of history,⁶ which envisioned inevitable change until the perfect system, a system for the benefit of all the members of society, had evolved. His faith in education for communism, a "complete equality of condition," sprang from a conception of human nature as being fundamentally good, unselfish, and altruistic.⁷ However, civilization, Morris felt, had thus far not allowed man to forget that he had once been a savage surrounded by a hostile environment which compelled him to struggle for his existence. The general insecurity and arbitrariness inherent in the social systems of civilized times had done nothing to allay man's "fear of starvation" and "desire for domination,"⁸ characteristics developed in his primitive struggle to survive amidst forces of Nature originally more powerful than he. Man's conquest of Nature, however, was now complete and it but remained for him to use and

6. Cf. infra., pp. 44 ff.

7. Cf. infra., pp. 61 ff.

8. Cf. infra., pp. 62 ff.

v

enjoy the forces of his conquest. But "blindly and foolishly" he continued to struggle, imagining his fellow man to be the foe, which in reality no longer existed. He thus made of modern civilization a primitive barbarism rather than a world of beauty or of art, which was lying conquered at his feet. To substitute cooperation and the recognition of the reality of civilization for "struggle" and the negation of intelligence man had to remove the source of his blind fear in order to free his mind to accept the beauty of life. Socialism would remove the source of fear and Communism would free the mind of man, Morris thought, thus bringing about complete civilization.

In this study an attempt is made to trace the development of Morris' theory of art in his early life and to show how socialism was the natural consequence of this theory. Even though Morris claimed he had always been a Socialist and that

...this view of Socialism which I hold today...is what I began with; I had no transitional period...⁹.

he developed no positive creed of Socialism until his later years. His early socialism, if it may be called that, was

9. "How I Became a Socialist," Collected Works, AXIII, p. 277.

"a hatred of civilization" rather than a positive socialism. As he himself states, he had always had an ideal which he saw

...clear enough, but had not hope of any realization of it. That came to an end some months before I joined the ...Democratic Federation, and the meaning of my joining that body was that I had conceived a hope of the realization of my ideal.¹⁰

In the same article, written for Justice, in 1894, summing up, he states:

...the study of history and the love and practice of art forced me into a hatred of civilization which, if things were to stop as they are, 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.¹¹

For the facts of Morris' life, facts which clearly reveal the development in his early life of a theory of art, various biographies have been used.¹² The theory of art as

10. "How I Became a Socialist," Collected Works, XXIII, op. cit., p. 277.

11. Ibid., p. 280.

12. For the biographical facts in this work I am indebted to the following:

John W. Mackail, The Life of William Morris; Margaret R. Grennan, William Morris: Medievalist and Revolutionary; Lloyd W. Eshleman, A Victorian Rebel: The Life of William Morris; Paul Bloomfield, William Morris; Arthur Compton-Rickett, William Morris: A Study in Personality; Elizabeth Luther Cary, William Morris: Poet, Craftsman, Socialist.

presented in this paper is the theory in its full development and the sources for these were his numerous lectures on art, delivered in his later life, from 1877 to 1894,¹³ and a few articles written during this same period.¹⁴ These lectures and articles likewise reveal his socialism, but in addition the lectures he delivered after he joined the Democratic Federation have also been used.¹⁵ To illustrate Morris' application of his theory of art to society some of his later works¹⁶ have been employed.

13. For his theories of art the following two collections were used chiefly: Hopes and Fears for Art, Lectures on Art and Industry, XXII.

14. The articles are in the collection of Lectures on Art, XXII, and Lectures on Socialism, XXIII.

15. For his theories of socialism the following collections were used chiefly: Signs of Change, Lectures on Socialism, XXIII.

16. Morris' later works used as sources for this paper: News from Nowhere, A Dream of John Ball, A King's Lesson, Collected Works, XVI. The House of the Wolfings, The Glittering Plain, Collected Works, XIV. The Roots of the Mountains, Collected Works, XV.

Morris' socialism is understandable only upon examination of his theories of art; for his socialism was in effect nothing more or less than the means for making art function in society. Art, to him, was but the apprehension of beauty in life and the utilization of it in making life beautiful. ¹⁷ Morris' life, as a child, was beautiful; in it was Epping Forest through which he loved to roam, often

17. "These arts...are part of a great system invented for the expression of 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, and are clear teachers of it; and, best of all, they are the sweeteners of human labour, both to the handicraftsman, whose life is spent in working in them, and to the people in general who are influenced by the sight of them at every turn of the day's work: they make our toil happy, our rest fruitful."

.....
 "To what side then shall those turn for help, who really understand the gain of a great art in the world, and the loss of peace and good life that must follow from the lack of it." "The Lesser Arts," Collected Works, XXII, p. 8 & p. 12.

"That the beauty of life is a thing of no moment, I suppose few people would venture to assert, and yet most civilized people act as if it were of none, and in so doing are wronging both themselves and those that are to come after them; for that beauty, which is what is meant by *art* (italics in the original), using the word in its widest sense, is, I contend, ...a positive necessity of life..." "The Lesser Arts," Collected Works, XXII, p. 53.

18
 on his pony. His receptive mind soon learned to know every tree and bush and bird by name. Later, at Marlborough School, he was noted for his long walks into the country and into the woods: at this time his love of the English country-side became a deep and sensitive obsession that remained with him throughout his life and shone through his work.

But Morris early must have noticed that around him, outside of his small world, there was much ugliness. A sensitive and precocious youngster, who read Scott's Waverley novels at the age of four, he could well have observed that there could be little beauty in the lives of many of his contemporaries. While he was reading Scott's novels and roaming through Epping Forest, children scarcely older than he were working long hours in factories and in mines, until in 1842, the first law was passed prohibiting women and children from working underground. In 1844, when Morris was eight years old, Elizabeth Barrett Browning published The Cry of the Children; and even though we do not know when he read her work, he admitted, just a month before his death, that

18. For the biographical facts of this work I am indebted to John W. Mackail's The Life of William Morris, Lloyd W. Eschelman's A Victorian Rebel: The Life of William Morris, Paul Bloomfield's William Morris, Arthur Compton-Rickett's William Morris: A Study in Personality.

his earliest poems he had written in imitation of Mrs. Browning. Something in his early life planted in him the seeds that developed into "a hatred of modern civilization" because of its ruthless destruction of beauty in the lives of men, and sometime in his early manhood a theory of art began to grow in him which, developing more and more fully as he advanced in years, became in effect his basic philosophy of life.

When Morris entered Oxford as a divinity student at the age of nineteen, he had already begun to steep himself in art. Three years earlier, at Marlborough College, his biographers report, he had not been interested in games but only in "archeology, old church music, and medieval architecture." His interest in Gothic architecture can be traced back to his childhood, when, at the age of nine, he had acquired a book on Gothic architecture which became one of his most prized possessions. When Morris was only eight years of age, his father took him on a visit to a Gothic church; exactly fifty years later, never having seen this church in the meantime, he described it in every detail.

The significant thing about these early interests is that archeology, the history of art, and architecture eventually came to form a basis for his whole philosophy of art.

The study of archeology revealed to Morris, when still a youth, that "the beauty of the world...could be carved by an artist with many 'flowers and histories'" ¹⁹ and, continuing his study of archeology, he found in later years that from the earliest times to the Middle Ages the growth and development of art had been dependent upon an unbroken chain of tradition with each new generation inheriting, building upon and improving upon the art of its fathers; and that the highest development of art, therefore, had been reached just prior to the time this tradition was broken, the latter part of the Middle Ages. Architecture, which Morris decided to make his life work in 1855, he soon came to conceive of as the basic and most important art with the other arts supplementing it and subordinated to it.

Mackail writes of Morris' love of the Middle Ages as being "born in him." ²⁰ In view of the fact that Morris' early years were surrounded by an atmosphere of medievalism this may be almost, if not quite, true. However, while Morris' love of the Middle Ages may be an important clue to an

19. Eshleman, op. cit., p. 29.

20. Mackail, op. cit., 1, p. 10.

analysis of his thought, it is important to note what aspects of medievalism appealed to him and what aspects did not. Morris was not an unqualified lover of medievalism; he loved only those aspects of medieval life which, in one way or another, were consistent with his view of art.

It is true that already in his boyhood Morris was attracted by the romantic aspects of the Middle Ages, their pageantry and glamour, and that he perhaps early became a Miniver Cheevy who longed for "the medieval grace of iron clothing";²¹ but what originally attracted him to medievalism is not so important as the fact that as he became more mature he selected various aspects of medievalism as worthy of his admiration while he subjected various other aspects to his unqualified condemnation. Perhaps Morris was influenced in his "selection" by the movements of his time, which generally extolled medieval virtues and condemned Victorian vices; certainly, in the 1850's the return to medievalism

21. Reference to Edwin Arlington Robinson's poem Miniver Cheevy. Miniver was an intellectual idealist, an impractical dreamer, who could not adjust himself to reality. He found refuge in escape into the past.

was in the air and Morris, already emotionally conditioned for "influence" and being an avid reader of current literature, could hardly help breathing in some of it. Thus, both the Oxford Movement and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement left their mark on his thought.

The most influential force behind his selection of medieval aspects for commendation, however, was undoubtedly John Ruskin, whose writings Morris adopted wholeheartedly shortly after coming to Oxford, and continued to read with sympathetic enthusiasm throughout his Oxford days and for some years after leaving the University. Ruskin was concerned with art: with Gothic architecture, for which, as we have seen, Morris had already developed a deep love; and by the time Morris left Oxford, Ruskin had given him the theory of use in art with its emphasis on the dignity of the individual and of hand labor, and the theory of "the art of the people," factors which became fundamental in Morris' philosophy

22. The Oxford Movement had been initiated in 1833 and even though the Tracts for the Times had ceased to appear after the publication of Newman's famous Tract 90 (1841) the influence of the movement was still strong and took on new significance as a result of the attacks on Newman by Kingsley and others. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, founded in 1848, was at its height when Morris came to Oxford in 1853. Ruskin and Carlyle were constantly "returning" to the Middle Ages.

23
 of art. It is also significant that at Oxford Morris met Edward Burne-Jones, who like himself had entered the University as a divinity student and whose interests were likewise tending in the direction of art. The common interests of the two young men immediately became the basis for a life-long friendship which proved mutually beneficial and undoubtedly contributed to the crystallization in each of his avocation into his real vocation.

Already the summer before Morris went to Oxford, during his last term at Marlborough and before he came under the influence of Ruskin, something happened which reveals his possession of definite ideas about modern progress through machines. On May 1st, 1851, a "Great Exhibition" had opened at Hyde Park. Exhibited there was what Queen Victoria called the "'triumph' of Prince Albert," who looked for "social salvation" in industry, "industry in three senses: hard work, organized work, and mechanized work." 24 The Morrisses came to the Exhibition:

23. Ruskin had published the following works which Morris had read before he left Oxford: Modern Painters, The Seven Lamps of Architecture, and Stones of Venice.

24. Paul Bloomfield, William Morris, p. 29.

...William Morris was through the turnstile. It appears that one glance was enough for him. The innocent eye penetrated in a flash through those vapours of suggestion that had acted so mesmerically on the public. All this dumped machinery, all these writhing metals and tortured textiles, and disgusting, clever wax-works of Indian Thugs..and statues of plump, cow-like kitchen-maids pretending to be Greek goddesses-- wonderful indeed!

'Wonderfully ugly!' William Morris called it, and refused to go another yard.

There was a seat. He sat down on it...There he stayed; the others went on.²⁵

This was a display of prejudice on William's part, but it was something else too. It was William Morris the idealist true to his ideal. Mechanization he saw, already at the age of seventeen, as a force destructive of the beauty in life and he would have nothing to do with it. The dream of Prince Albert was a nightmare which haunted Morris throughout his life. The idealist in the real world, if he insists on remaining true to his ideal, may often make himself ridiculous as Morris did on this occasion; but for Morris it was more important to remain true to himself, as we shall see later on in this essay, than to refrain from making himself ridiculous. Perhaps, after he came to Oxford and found John Ruskin he merely came upon the full grown plant of the seeds

25. Paul Bloomfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

that had been germinating in his own mind.

In the summer of 1854, his second year at Oxford, Morris visited various churches throughout England; and in 1855 he took a trip, this time in company with Burne-Jones and Fulford, two of his Oxford "cronies," to Belgium and Northern France. These trips were motivated chiefly by Morris' interest in Gothic architecture. According to Cannon Dixon, Morris looked upon the churches of Amiens, Beauvais and Chartres as "the noblest works of human invention."²⁶ The effect of these journeys on Morris was to confirm his growing conviction that his chief interest was in architecture rather than in religion.

How serious Morris had been in his decision to join the Church remains a question. Certainly, the influence of his mother in his original choice of a vocation is evident from the reluctance with which he informed her of his change of mind. Perhaps he had from the first been attracted more by church architecture and church music than by the religion itself, and perhaps in his young mind a religious vocation seemed to him to be the most direct way to their enjoyment. However, there was in religion another meaningful side which

26. Arthur Compton-Rickett, William Morris: a Study in Personality, p. 275.

had come to Morris through his medievalism: the essential spirit of unity that had characterized the Church in the Middle Ages. In A Dream of John Ball he significantly illustrates this spirit, defined in the words of John Ball, the rebel priest, himself:

...fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell; fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death; and the deeds that ye do upon earth, it is for fellowship's sake that ye do them.²⁷

This spirit of fellowship Morris must have early come to feel was the natural product of any society of free men in which all the members shared in art, in the beauty of life. It reveals itself in his interest in the Icelandic Heimskringla which he began translating with Magnússon in 1858; but already ten years earlier he had evinced an interest in Icelandic, as was revealed by his publications in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine.²⁸ Those who shared in art lived in a heaven on earth, while the rich man, who refused to share,

27. A Dream of John Ball, Collected Works, XVI, p. 230.

28. In 1856 Morris translated from the French and published in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine two works of Icelandic origin, Gertha's Lovers and Svend and His Brethren. "The people of Gertha's Lovers, the 'free brave men' whom the 'tyrant kings' have reason to fear, could claim kinship with the House of the Wolfings or the Burgdalers of The Roots of the Mountains." Margaret R. Grennan, William Morris: Medievalist and Revolutionary, p. 31

lived alone in hell.

It was inevitable that Morris with his ideal of fellowship should come under the influence of the Oxford Movement, a movement which sought to recapture the spirit of unity that had characterized the Church of the Middle Ages; eventually, however, Morris dissociated the society of fellowship from religion and traced its origins to freedom and art. ³⁰ A

society possessing freedom would develop art, which was beauty expressed in "all the details of daily life," and one of the expressions of this beauty in the lives of the individual ³¹ members was fellowship.

By 1855, a group of students at Oxford, including Edward

29. "...I tell you that the proud, despiteous rich man, though he knoweth it not, is in hell already, because he hath no fellow." A Dream of John Ball, op. cit., p. 231.

30. "The guilds, whose first beginning in England dates from before the Norman Conquest, although they fully recognized the hierarchical conditions of society, and were indeed often in early times mainly religious in their aims, did not spring from ecclesiasticism, nay, in all probability, had their roots in that part of the European race which had not known of Rome and her institutions in the days of her temporal domination." "Architecture and History," Collected Works, XXII, p. 303. Cf. post, pp. 36 ff.

31. "...the true secret of happiness lies in the taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily life, in elevating them by art." (italics in the original). "The Aims of Art," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 94. Cf. post, Pp. 38 ff.

Burne-Jones and Morris, the recognized leader, had steeped themselves in medievalism. Carlyle's Past and Present was read by every member with enthusiastic appreciation, and the group had previously read Ruskin's Modern Painters, Seven Lamps of Architecture, and The Stones of Venice. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which had come into existence seven years earlier, was making a deep impression on these Oxford medievalists; and they were now actively discussing plans for founding a monastery to "conduct a crusade, a 'Holy War against this Age.'³²" The outcome of this enthusiasm was the Oxford Brotherhood and the publication of the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine. The works that appeared in this periodical reveal the interests of the group as well as Morris' thought at the time. Two of his articles, The Story of the Unknown Church and The Churches of Northern France, are evidence of the deep impression his travels of the preceding summer had made upon him as well as of his growing preoccupation with Gothic Architecture.³³ Two other articles, Gertha's Lovers and Svend and His Brethern,³⁴ indicate not only his

32. Margaret R. Grennan, op. cit., p. 30

33. Ibid., p. 32

34. Ibid., p. 31

interest in Icelandic material but also, and more significantly, his interest in free societies and their art. Morris was looking into the societies of the past for the answer to a theory of art or of life which must have been shaping itself in his mind more and more fully at this time. The Icelandic material offered a fertile field for investigation, for he found there both societies of complete individual freedom and societies of slavery.

35

In 1866 Morris met Dante Gabriel Rossetti and, overcome by that man's charm, succumbed completely to his influence. Rossetti, who insisted that painting was the only real art, persuaded Morris to abandon architecture and to take up painting. But Morris, while he felt that painting was a great art, could not forget architecture and could not abandon it. While he agreed, therefore, to take up painting, he determined, nevertheless, to devote his spare time, at least six hours a day, to architecture. Rossetti exercised a strong influence upon Morris, who achieved a fair degree of success as a painter, for the next ten years. Lshleman says "there is evidence that he was still engaged in vigorous soul-searching

35. Cf. post, p. 26.

as to his future career," and "for a while...the enthusiasm of Rossetti and Burne-Jones was to carry him along."³⁶ This searching seems to be evidenced also in Morris' experiments in a wide variety of crafts, clay modelling, illuminating, wood and stone carving, embroidery, furniture designing, and numerous others, from 1856 onward. Rossetti's influence gradually waned as craftsmanship increasingly absorbed Morris' attention and finally became extinct when Morris started studying Icelandic under Magnússon in 1868.³⁷ The wide range of artistic pursuits in which Morris eventually acquired a working familiarity provided him with an adequate foundation upon which to construct a theory of art.

II

What Morris' early interests in religion and in medievalism indicate is his dissatisfaction with the Victorian

36. Eshleman, *op. cit.*, p. 59

37. "The beginning of Morris' Icelandic studies...coincides with what might be called the final extinction of Rossetti's influence over him as an artist." Mackail, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

world and his search for something that would produce a satisfactory world. He did not find it in religion; he found signs of it in medievalism; and he found it wholly in a philosophy of art. In this respect Morris was not unlike other reformers of the period. Art became Morris' remedy for the ills of the world just as it had become Ruskin's; just as religion had become Newman's remedy; education, Arnold's; and a "leader," Carlyle's. But none of the four Victorian "Prophets" had greater faith in his remedy than had William Morris; for the remedy, in each case, was chiefly for the common man and while each reformer aimed at making the common man "good," none dared to hope that the remedy he prescribed would make him so good that he could be entirely relied upon under all circumstances. Morris, however, felt confident that a society of art would "perfect" the individual members to a degree where a "complete equality of condition" would be entirely practicable. Art in the life of every individual, Morris felt, would develop a sense of social responsibility in him that would make the common welfare primary in his every action, thus making law and regulation unnecessary.

38

38. See, for example, News from Nowhere.

Art, as Morris came to conceive of it, probably shortly after entering Oxford, was essentially what Ruskin had said it was: the creation of beauty in an object made for use. But, the creation of beauty was dependent upon pleasure in labor, and such pleasure derived from the conditions of life and work under which the artist or the workman labored. Every workman "who is determined that...his work shall be excellent" was an artist; and art, "the decoration of workmanship," was in ultimate analysis "the expression of a man's pleasure in successful labour."³⁹ When the workman was free to work as he pleased and at whatever he pleased, pleasure was invariably his primary incentive and he then applied his skill, his imagination, and his intelligence and sought to produce something satisfying to his intelligence. Beauty. The workman with fear, worry, and anxiety on his mind was hampered; for these gnawing obsessions distracted his faculties, making it impossible for him to fully enjoy himself and to fully apply his intelligence to his work. This far Morris went hand in hand with Ruskin; but Morris

39. "The Lesser Arts," op. cit., p. 23

went much farther in the direction of freedom than Ruskin was willing to go. To Morris' mind it was perfectly logical that if freedom in work was necessary for the creation of beauty in work and if every expression of life was to be an expression of beauty, then freedom in every phase of life was necessary. In other words, the freer the workman, the greater were his opportunities for enjoyment and self-expression and the more beautiful and wholesome became his life as a result. Thus, in Morris' ideal society the workman must be free from all political, moral, social, and economic qualifications as well as from care and anxiety.

40

According to Ruskin's theory of use which Morris adopted.

40. "...it is impossible to dissociate art from morality, politics, and religion. Truth in these great matters of principle is of one..." "The Art of the People," Collected Works, XXII, p. 47.

"Society will thus be recast, and labour will be free from all compulsion except the compulsion of Nature, which gives us nothing for nothing. It would be futile to attempt to give you details of the way in which this would be carried out; since the very essence of it is freedom and the abolition of all arbitrary or artificial authority." "The Dawn of a New Epoch," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 134.

A detailed account of "the way in which this would be carried out" is given in News from Nowhere, Collected Works, XVI, Chapters X-XV inclusive.

"Thus would be minimized the danger of the community falling into bureaucracy, the multiplication of boards and offices, and all the paraphernalia of official authority, which is, after all, a burden even when it is exercised by the delegation of the whole people and in accordance with their wishes." "True and False Society," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 235.

the basis for all creativeness was Use. If man attempted to make anything he felt no real need for, he was wasting art; and the product of such labor would necessarily be characteristically artificial or false. "Nothing can be a work of art which is not useful."⁴¹ Nature had meant every individual to work for his livelihood and had therefore not only made his work attractive to him but had also intended it to be a "solace," a compensation for the burdens that life imposed.⁴² The solace was pleasure in labor and this pleasure was conducive to the creation of beauty in the final object. Beauty profoundly influenced man and it met a fundamental need in man's nature. Its presence made his life meaningful, his work a pleasure and his rest fruitful; and it entered into the very fiber of his soul, re-expressing itself in everything he did, his thoughts and actions, his relations with his fellow men. Thus, beauty was an absolute

41. "The Lesser Arts," op. cit., p. 23.

42. "Nature does not give us our livelihood gratis; we must win it by toil of some sort or degree. Let us see, then, if she does not give us some compensation for this compulsion to labour..."

"You may be sure that she does so, that it is of the nature of man, when he is not diseased, to take pleasure in his work under certain conditions." "Useful Work versus Useful Toil," Collected Works, 1881, p. 98.

necessity in life if "men" were "to live as men" and not as something "less than men."⁴³

When primitive man first chiseled a sharp edge on a rough stone, he created a work of art. Having set to work with a purpose, he found his labor a pleasure. Use was the goal and the creation of beauty in the finished object was the incentive and both these attributes were the natural outcome of pleasure in work. The finished object gave him both satisfaction and pride and it was these personal factors involved in his self-realization that made life worthwhile. He had found purpose in life in accomplishment and achievement. Conversely, "...the greatest of all evils, the heaviest of all slaveries" was

that evil of the greater part of the population being engaged for by far the most part of their lives in work which at the best cannot interest them, or develop their best faculties, and at the worst...is mere unmitigated slavish toil...and this toil degrades them into less than men.⁴⁴

Morris' Art evolved from a consideration of the primary needs of man and the basic urges in human nature. Man's

43. Cf. ante, Introduction, footnote 2.

44. "The Beauty of Life," Collected Works, XXII, p. 66.

primary needs were food, clothing, and shelter; and Nature supplied him the raw materials for these in abundance. Since man was an intelligent being, it was natural and necessary that he use his intelligence in carving his needs from Nature. Human intelligence naturally sought to express itself in everything the individual did and it sought to do this in terms satisfying to itself, in terms of beauty. The need for expression and for beauty was fundamental in man's nature, and it was this which raised man above the level of the beast.

You cannot educate, you cannot civilize men, unless you give them a share in art.⁴⁵

Nature itself was beautiful and therefore afforded man not only a beautiful environment for the creation of beauty in his own terms but also "taught" man the principles of beauty. Thus, anything which was in accord with Nature was beautiful and therefore "true;" while anything not in accord with Nature was ugly and "false." This did not mean that art was an imitation of Nature,⁴⁶ for man was true to nature,

45. "The Beauty of Life," Collected Works, XXII, p. 63.

46. "...it is impossible to imitate Nature literally; the utmost realism of the most realistic painter falls a long way short of that." "Some Hints on Pattern Designing," Collected Works, XXII, p. 178.

doing that which Nature intended him to do, when he was true to himself and expressed his intelligence in his work. Imitation of Nature might be beautiful but it was only "lesser beauty" compared to interpretation or "meaning beyond itself" which characterized the best art.⁴⁷ Exact imitation of Nature, which in effect aimed at duplication, was actually not possible, Morris felt; and if all art aimed at imitation merely it would tend to become "wearisome."⁴⁸ It was individuality, selection and interpretation, which Morris constantly emphasized; and imitation fell short of these important characteristics.

In civilization, of the primary needs, food, clothing, and shelter the last offered to man the greatest opportunities for self-expression. The art of house-building or

47. "You may be sure that any decoration is futile, and has fallen into at least the first stage of degradation, when it does not remind you of something beyond itself." "Some Hints on Pattern Designing," op. cit., p. 170.

48. "Is it not better to be reminded, however simply, of the close vine-trellis that keeps out the sun by the Nile side; or of the wild woods and their streams, with the dogs panting beside them; or of the swallows sweeping above the garden boughs toward the house-eaves where their nestlings are, while the sun breaks the clouds on them...is not all this better than having to count day after day a few sham-real boughs and flowers, casting sham-real shadows on your walls with little hint of anything beyond Covent Garden in them?" Ibid., p. 179.

architecture was central and primary in the life of civilized man; while all the other arts were merely different phases of this art, included in a more general conception of home-making. Art was the "guardian of the beauty of Nature"⁴⁹ and man in building his habitations was obligated to take care to utilize this natural beauty, building into it and enhancing it rather than destroying it and substituting for it, for example, the ugliness and crowding that characterized the modern city. This necessity for guarding the beauty of Nature also illustrated the universal character of art. If the environment was to be beautiful, and this was a condition necessary to the creation of beauty, all the people had to share in art; for, if one individual destroyed the beauty of Nature or disfigured the environment with an ugly building, he was contributing to the development of ugliness in the lives of those around him. A healthy art, therefore, could not exist unless "all the people shared in art."⁵⁰

49. "...beauty of the earth; and of that beauty art is the only possible guardian." "The Prospects of Architecture," Collected Works, XXII, p. 125.

50. "Art will not grow and flourish, nay, it will not long exist, unless it be shared by all the people." "Art and the Beauty of the Earth," Collected Works, XXII, p. 165.

From the earliest times to the Renaissance, "Art, which Nature meant to solace all, fulfilled its purpose; all the people shared in it;"⁵¹ and, in those times, "...everybody that made anything made a work of art besides a useful piece of goods."⁵² Art, then, "grew and grew, saw empires sicken and sickened with them; grew hale again, and haler...";⁵³ but, all that time, an unbroken chain of tradition had been kept alive and art had come to be "the outcome of instinct working on" that 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.⁵⁴

Besides this unbroken chain of tradition there was another significant force in the art of the past: the essential freedom which the workman enjoyed in his work.⁵⁵ The

51. "The Beauty of Life," op. cit., p. 56.

52. "Art and the Beauty of the Earth," Collected Works, XXII, p. 163.

53. "The Beauty of Life," op. cit., p. 56.

54. "The Prospects of Architecture," Collected Works, XXII, p. 133.

55. "...some will say, but their minds were enslaved. Were they? Their thoughts moved in a narrow circle maybe; and yet I can't say that a man is of slavish mind who is free to express his thoughts, such as they are..." "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," Collected Works, XXII, p. 386.

societies of the past, while they were most often characterized by tyrannies in various forms, had at least allowed

artistic freedom.⁵⁶ Under the system of labor of pre-

industrialized societies the workman was the unit of labor.⁵⁷

He was a skilled craftsman, left free in his work, and whatever he made he made for use. Pleasure in work was a natural condition inherent in his freedom to follow that profession or trade toward which his interests most inclined as well as in the self-realization he experienced in practicing his peculiar skill in his craft. If he produced wares for someone else, the basic attribute of use was still primary in his labor. There was between him and the consumer a direct contact which established a bond of sympathy and this

56. Speaking of the past, Morris said: "...And all that time it was the art of free men. Whatever slavery still existed in the world (more than enough, as always) art had no share in it." "Art and the Beauty of the Earth," *op. cit.*, p. 159.

57. "Under the old medieval conditions the unit of labour was a master craftsman who knew his business from beginning to end; such help as he had was from mere apprentices who were learning their business, and were not doomed to life-long service." "Architecture and History," Collected Works, XXII, p. 309.

58

sympathy was an incentive to desire for excellence in workmanship or to the production of something beautiful as well as useful.

What Morris chiefly loved in the Middle Ages was their condition of life which had made their great art possible. Their art was characterized by a high degree of skill in craftsmanship, a skill expressed in terms of individuality and rare beauty. This high degree of perfection was due not only to the essential freedom the medieval workman had enjoyed in his work, but also, as has been pointed out before, to the traditions of art in which he labored.

The designation of the medieval workman as "free" in his work may seem like an inversion of well known historical facts. Under the feudal system the serf was bought and sold

58. "...The carpenter makes a chest for the goldsmith one day, the goldsmith a cup for the carpenter on another, and there is sympathy in their work--that is, the carpenter makes for his goldsmith friend just such a chest as he himself would have if he needed a chest; the goldsmith's cup is exactly what he would make for himself if he needed one. Each is conscious during his work of making a thing to be used by a man of like needs to himself." "Art and Its Producers," Collected Works, XXII, p. 344.

"...it followed from this direct intercourse between the maker and the consumer of goods, that the public in general were good judges of manufactured wares, and, in consequence, that the art, or religion rather, of adulteration was scarcely known." "Architecture and History," Collected Works, XXII, p. 305.

with the land and even the free workman was subject to the whims and fancies of the nobility who controlled the government and owned most of the property. However, as Morris conceived of it, the Middle Ages actually had two societies: a free society, the society of the people, within a super structure of an aristocratic society which imposed upon and attempted to bind the society beneath it into rigid and systematic slavery. However, the feudal aristocracy, while it pressed heavily upon the society of the people, which it attempted to exploit, was actually too busy with wars and other matters to carry out a policy of exploitation with any degree of effectiveness. The society of the people had developed from the Germanic and Celtic tribal societies in which there had been almost complete individual freedom and it was still characterized by a

spirit of association which had never died out of the peoples of Europe, and which in Northern Europe at least had been kept alive by the guilds which in turn it developed.⁵⁹

The feudal society in England was superimposed upon this free society by the Norman French, but the "spirit of association"

59. "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," Collected Works, XXII, p. 362.

with its protective guilds formed a "strong organization that feudalism could not crush."⁶⁰

Actually, the intent and purpose behind the development of the feudal system had been the complete subjugation and exploitation of the masses; and in theory, at least, the serfs were men

who had no more rights than chattel slaves had, except that mostly, as part of the stock of the manor, they could not be sold off it.⁶¹

In fact, however, medieval society became, in effect, "an army fed by slaves, who could not be properly and closely exploited."⁶² There were, first of all, a number of factors that made effective exploitation difficult if not altogether impossible. The first of these was the system of economy based on use rather than profit:

...people produced for their own consumption, and only exchanged the overplus of what they did not consume.
...The medieval workman began with production⁶³

where the modern workman begins with money. Also, "every

60. "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," Collected Works, XXII, op. cit., p. 382.

61. "Feudal England," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 55.

62. Ibid., p. 54.

63. "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," op. cit., p. 380.

free man had at least the use of some portion of the soil on which he was born."⁶⁴ Another barrier to effective exploitation lay in the fact that the medieval system of economy was based solely on the land; and the serf, who worked the land, could not be closely watched and had to be left largely to himself:

Now since all the class-robbery that there was was carried on by means of the land, and that not by any means closely or carefully, in spite of the distinct arbitrary laws directed against the workers, which again were never fully carried out, it follows that it was easy for the productive class to live.⁶⁵

Besides these factors inherent in the economy of the system, there were a number of forces at work that gradually weakened the hold of the aristocracy on the people. The necessities of the feudal aristocracy, whose chief business came to be making and fighting wars, compelled them to relax their grip and to grant concession after concession until the serf

was in a very different condition from the chattel slave; for, certain definite duties being performed for his lord, he was (in theory at least) at liberty to earn his living as he best could within the limits of his manor.⁶⁶

64. "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," *op. cit.*, p. 381.

65. *Ibid.*

66. "Architecture and History," Collected Works, XXII, p. 303.

Thus, the serf, unlike the chattel slave he was in theory, was

by the condition of his labour, forced to strive to better himself as an individual, and collectively soon began to acquire rights amidst the clashing rights of king, lord, and burgher.⁶⁷

The "burgher," as has been hinted, constituted another force that had, from quite early in the Middle Ages, stood in the way of subjugation and exploitation. With him likewise, the "necessities of the feudal lord were the opportunities of the towns:

...the former not being able to squeeze his serf-tenants beyond a certain point, and having no means of making his money grow, had to keep paying for his main position by yielding up what he thought he could spare of it to the producing classes.⁶⁸

In conjunction with the rise of the towns a new and mighty force began to germinate for the help of labour,

the first signs of secular combination among free men, producers, and distributors.⁶⁹

This new force was the medieval guilds, which were associations formed by the towns to protect their rights. In the

67. "Architecture and History," Collected works, 2111, p. 303.

68. "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," op. cit., p. 382.

69. "Architecture and History," op. cit., p. 303.

early Middle Ages, in the struggle between the Crown and the Barons, the towns had found their first opportunity; and they had utilized it so advantageously that they had acquired status and considerable concessions in the Magna Charta. The continuation of this struggle, the advent of the wars of the Roses, and the One Hundred Years War brought further opportunities for the towns to take advantage of the "necessities of the lords" or of the King, who eventually became master. Henry I had been the first monarch to cater openly to the masses for their support and succeeding kings often found it profitable to do likewise. By the time the feudal system had developed to its full---the time of Edward III in the fourteenth century---the serf had acquired a system of rights that over-balanced his duties and left him in effect a tenant paying rent. The means of livelihood were cheap and holidays were numerous; and, actually, "the upper class did not live so much more comfortably than the lower." To those who would call the life of the medieval common man a life of slavery, Morris answered:

...it was certainly a condition of slavery in which the slaves were well fed, and clothed, and housed, and had abundance of holidays

70. "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," op. cit., p. 381.

and such a condition "has not often been realized in the world's history."⁷¹

The important fact to be noted in Morris' analysis of the craftsman's life of the Middle Ages is the development of the guilds and their total effect upon the craftsman as an "artist." The towns had arisen, Morris said, simply as a result of the population drawn together by convenience... associating themselves together for the ordinary business of life.

finding it convenient in those disturbed times to palisade the houses and closes which they inhabited and lived by.⁷²

But even before this

while the unit of habitation was not even a village, but a homestead (or tun), our Teutonic and Scandinavian forefathers, while yet heathens, were used to band themselves together for feasts and sacrifices and for mutual defence and relief against accident and violence into what would now be called benefit societies, but which they called guilds.⁷³

The guilds were thus a natural development that grew out of free associations formed for protection. Their chief

71. "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," op. cit., p. 386.

72. Ibid., p. 383.

73. Ibid.

function, in later times, became the protection of the workman against the encroachments of the aristocracy. It was the guilds that prevented the development of a system of labor for "profit" by keeping the aristocracy at bay and by strictly standardizing products and regulating production. The theory behind their standardization and regulation was need, the need of the consumer, which was limited by the law of supply, and the need of every laborer for a livelihood, which was dependent upon the law of demand. ⁷⁴ While this standardization and regulation was, in the long run, for the benefit of the workman, Morris nevertheless saw a limitation in it which he considered unfortunate. ⁷⁵ The medieval workman was bound by the limits of his craft and by

74. "The theory of industry among these communes was something like this. There is a certain demand for the goods which we can make, and a certain settled population to make them: if the goods are not thoroughly satisfactory we shall lose our market for them and be ruined: we must therefore keep up their quality to the utmost. 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..." "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," op. cit., p. 386.

75. Morris enumerates some of the shortcomings of the medieval system which prevented its development into socialism. The "Spirit of association" was too exclusive and the guildsman's duties were "bounded" too much to allow expansion into a freer society. Ibid., p. 388.

"the boundaries of the liberties of his city or town," thus the system was not geared sufficiently for the development of greater freedom in the life of the workman.

However, in spite of the limitations medieval society contained, the medieval workman had enjoyed a greater measure of freedom than had any workman in any civilized society before or since.⁷⁶ In fact, Morris had seen the possibility of Communism developing out of medieval society:

If the leading element of association in the life of the medieval workman could have cleared itself of certain drawbacks, and have developed logically along the road that seemed to be leading it onward, it seems to me it could scarcely have stopped short of forming a true society founded on the equality of labour: The Middle Ages, so to say, saw the promised land of Socialism from afar, like the Israelites, and like them had to turn back into the desert.⁷⁷

76. "In one way or another these serfs got gradually emancipated, and during the transitional period, lasting through the last two centuries of the Middle Ages, the labour class were in a far better position than they had been before, and in some ways than they have been since." "True and False Society," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 218.

"And this hopeful art was possible amidst all the oppression of those days, because the instruments of that oppression were grossly obvious, and were external to the work of the craftsman. They were laws and customs obviously intended to rob him...The medieval craftsman was free in his work, therefore he made it as amusing to himself as he could..." "The Aims of Art," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 90. Cf. ante, p. 24, footnote 56.

77. "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," op. cit., p. 388.

What had prevented this apparently logical next step was the development of nationalism, which eventually enabled the war-making aristocracy to establish a bureaucracy. Furthermore, the "spirit of association" which characterized the guilds was often merely local, a fact leading to rivalries, and there was generally lacking a "means of intercourse" among these small bodies of associations. But the greatest weakness inherent in the whole system was the fact that

...the birth of tradition, strong in instinct, was weak in knowledge, and depended for its existence on its checking the desire of mankind for knowledge and the conquest of material nature: its own success for developing the resources of labour ruined it; it opened chances to men for growing rich and powerful... 78

This temptation was "too strong for the craving ignorance of the times

so the need for knowledge and the power over material nature swept away the communistic aspirations of the fourteenth century.⁷⁹

78. "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," op. cit., p. 389.

79. Ibid.

Morris nowhere drew a clearer picture of the stubbornness with which the medieval society of the people resisted the encroachments of the feudal aristocracy and the spirit of association or fellowship which characterized that society than in A Dream of John Ball. The struggle for freedom of these fourteenth century socialists becomes essentially the struggle of Morris and his nineteenth century socialists; and perhaps Morris saw himself preaching to the workingmen of London in John Ball preaching to his "fellowship." But there was a significant difference between John Ball's followers and the London workingmen. There were no ugly crowded slums, and there was no soot and smoke contaminating the pure country air. The beauty of Nature shines through the whole and the houses and the villages blend into the scenery and become a part of it. The very people are a part of it and they are men with souls, revealing that men with beauty in their lives and their surroundings reflect that beauty in their character. The houses are made of oak, with some stone here and there, but "strong and sturdy"⁸⁰ like

80. That houses, furniture etc. should be built "strong and sturdy" was a rule with Morris. It occurs constantly throughout his lectures on Art and Industry, Collected Works, XXII, pp. 155-421

the men who built them; and the beautiful Gothic church in the village is something from which Morris cannot take his eyes. The fourteenth century socialists are prosperous and they enjoy life because they are the artists who help to create the beauty that is in it.

III

A Dream of John Hall first published in 1887 illustrates what art does in the lives of men and their beauty or art, which has become as much a part of them as their "fellowship," is reflected everywhere in their simplicity of taste. There is "nothing in their houses which they do not need"⁸¹ and that which they have therein they enjoy. Outside, the buildings are mostly white-washed; inside, there

81. "...if you want a golden rule that will fit everybody, this is it: Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful (italics in the original)." "The Beauty of Life," op. cit., p. 76.

is some "restful" decoration on the walls; for the mood of a house, Morris said elsewhere, should be "restful."⁸²

Significantly, Morris found his ideal types of society, in which men were free so that they might have art in their lives, not only in the Middle Ages but also in certain primitive tribal societies⁸³ as well. The House of the Wolfings, a picture of a primitive society in which a "complete equality of condition" exists, perhaps approaches his ideal communistic society as closely as any he wrote about.⁸⁴ The

82. Decoration within the house should be: "Properly subordinated to architecture on the one hand, and to historic art on the other, it ought yet, I think, to play a great part in making our houses at once beautiful and restful; and end which is one of the chief reasons for the existence of all art." "Some Hints on Pattern Designing," Collected Works, XXII, p. 159.

83. Morris felt that primitive societies, at least the Germania, were chiefly communal; and while they had developed a "Teutonic" feudalism, the tribal chiefs were leaders rather than rulers and the individual was largely free. In the House of the Wolfings Morris is, of course, writing a romance; but he liked to feel, if he did not actually believe, that the Gothic societies contained a "complete equality of condition." That he perhaps actually believed this appears from certain references to tribal communities in his lectures. Cf. post, p. 45, footnote 100.

84. "...the Icelandic Republic represented, more nearly than any other state of things recorded in history, the political and social framework of life which satisfied his mind and imagination." Mackail, op. cit., I, p. 247. Mackail's opinion may be essentially correct; however, the society in the House of the Wolfings embodied essentially the freedoms the Icelandic societies contained. For my knowledge of the Icelandic Republic I am indebted to Margaret R. Grennan, William Morris: Medievalist and Revolutionary, pp. 39-40.

central theme in this work is the sense of social responsibility, the subordination of self-interest to the welfare of the community, which a "complete equality of condition" breeds. The society of free men is thrown into sharp contrast with a society of "slaves," the Romans; and the free man, living in his traditions of freedom from which springs innately a respect for individual dignity, cannot understand the spirit of the Roman society:

...they are grim; and knew it by this token: those captains of tens and of hundreds spare not to smite the warriors with staves even before all men, when all goeth not as they would; and yet, though they be free men, and mighty warriors, they endure it and smite not in turn. They are a most evil folk.⁸⁵

The leaders of the two societies, each one the embodiment of the spirit of his world, are presented in a climactic contrast: Thiodulf, the leader of the free Gothic tribes, chooses to sacrifice his life for the welfare of his people; but the Roman captain is primarily concerned about his personal safety, the lives of his men being only of secondary value to him. Conquest and personal glory are, with the Roman captain, more important than the lives of the individual men

⁸⁵. The House of the Welfings, Collected Works, XIV,
p. 67.

under him. This is the contrast. The conclusion is obvious: the ancient society had existed for the benefit of the individual, and the individual in turn had become a human being with a genuine sense of values that never failed to place the welfare of the community ahead of self interest. On the other hand, the modern society, which subjected and subordinated the individual to the State, failed utterly to develop in him a sense of social responsibility and left him a grasping, selfish animal.

Morris' writings on earlier days clearly show that his love of the past was not a love of the past for its own sake, in the common romantic fashion, but rather a love of individual freedom and all that it meant to him. Individual freedom, of course, was inherent in a free society; and the important product of all this freedom was for him Art. In a society in which there was art, the lives of the individuals were interesting and beautiful and they reflected this beauty in everything they did. The burgdalers in The Roots of the Mountains live in their beautiful dale and supplement the beauty of Nature with their dwellings and with their skillful craftsmanship. They are bound by no bonds but one, the bond of fellowship which is stronger and infinitely more satisfying to the individual than any physical bonds imposed

upon the man could be. Morris' return to the past, therefore, might, for purposes of a clearer perception of his thought, be considered merely an accidental frame; it is the picture within the frame that was important, not the frame itself, and he sought this picture wherever he could find it, not merely in medievalism as some of his critics have attempted to show.⁸⁶ The picture was in Morris' mind. He found more or less imperfect replicas of it in past societies and he conveniently used some of their sharp outlines to illustrate his own ideal and to demonstrate the effects that certain desirable features had produced. Thus, Morris found types of his ideal in the Middle Ages but also in primitive times;⁸⁷ whereas, his Icelandic tales may be said to belong to the period in between, the period of transition from the primitive to the medieval. Actually, the primitive societies portrayed in The House of the Wolfings as well as the societies Morris found in the Heimskringla⁸⁸ were more representative of his ideal world than the medieval society; but the

86. See, for example, Margaret R. Grennan, op. cit.

87. Cf. ante, p. 37, footnote 83. See also Cf. post, p. 45, footnote 100.

88. Cf. ante, p. 37, footnote 84.

Middle Ages had the one advantage of inheriting the tradition of art from the past and so had produced a greater art than had any previous period.

While Morris appeared to have no trouble finding freedoms in the past, in modern society he could find nothing but "slavery." In medieval society, for example, the system of economy was such that the individual had to be left free in his work at least, regardless of the restrictions that may have been imposed upon him in other matters;⁸⁹ consequently, he could produce art. Nevertheless, Morris considered feudalism in combination with the religious hierarchy of the Middle Ages a system of slavery and oppression; yet this slavery, because of the nature of the economic system, had to be confined to the political, social, and moral sides of life. The existence of artistic freedom gave men "hopes" for greater freedom in other matters also; consequently, as has been shown, the struggle going on between the masters and their "slaves" gradually weakened the political, social, and moral restrictions and netted the people

89. "There was a time when men had pleasure in their daily work, but yet, as to other matters, hoped for light and freedom..." "Art and Socialism," Collected Works, XIII, p. 202.

more and more freedom in all phases of life. In fact, as Morris pointed out, Socialism was not far away,

...their dim hope grew brighter and brighter, and they watched its seeming fulfilment drawing nearer and nearer, and gazed so eagerly on it that they did not note how the ever watchful foe, oppression, had changed his shape and was stealing from them what they had already gained in the days when the light of their new hope was but a feeble glimmer.⁹¹

In the modern world, Morris found the most complete system of economic slavery the world had ever known and this economic slavery entailed complete artistic slavery. Yet, the modern world was characterized by a greater measure of political and moral freedom than the Middle Ages had known.⁹² Political freedom in effect had become the mere guise under which social and economic slavery were hidden. What had given the men of the Middle Ages "hopes" for greater freedom was the art in their lives. The modern man, however, was bereft of art; the gains he had made in political and moral freedom had been "bought...at too high a price in the loss of the pleasure in daily work which

90. Cf. ante, p.25 ff.

91. "Art and Socialism," op. cit., p. 202.

92. "...Europe has gained freedom of thought, increase of knowledge, and huge talent for dealing with the material forces of nature; comparative political freedom withal and respect for the lives of civilized men, and other gains that go with these." "Art and Socialism," op. cit., p. 203.

once did certainly delude the mass of men for their fears and oppressions: the death of Art was too high a price to pay for the material prosperity of the middle classes.⁹³

History, according to Morris did not tell the real story of the past, the story of the "people;" it told only the story of the "kings and scoundrels." But this was not the whole story of the past:

...the story has not been fully told...only a chance hint given here and there. The palace and the camp were but a small part of their world surely; and outside them you may be sure that faith and heroism and love were at work, or what birth could there have been in those days? For the visible tokens of that birth you must seek in the art that grew up and flourished...the nameless people wrought it.⁹⁴

To Morris, therefore, the real study of history constituted the study of the remains of the art of the past. Through art, which Morris insisted, must always be

...either in its abundance or its barrenness, in its sincerity or its hollowness, the expression of the society amongst which it exists,⁹⁵

he attempted to arrive at an understanding of the past.

93. "Art and Socialism," op. cit., p. 203. For a fuller discussion of the "loss of art" see pp.

94. "Art and the Beauty of the Earth," Collected Works, XXII, p. 158.

95. "The Aims of Art," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 84.

who can say how little we should know of many periods, but for their art? History (so called) has remembered the kings and warriors, because they destroyed; Art has remembered the people because they created.⁹⁶

and though history (so called) has forgotten them

yet their work has not been forgotten, but has made another history--the history of Art. ⁹⁷

The art of the Middle Ages had "climbed gradually to the top of the hill,"⁹⁸ chiefly, as has been pointed out before, because it was still in line with a continuous tradition of striving toward greater perfection and because it was free. But, unfortunately, it carried with it "the seeds of the disease that was to end it, threatenings of great change."⁹⁹ According to Morris' interpretation of history, the "seeds of disease" were in effect a residue of the Roman Civilization. In England, Morris felt, there had existed the possibility of the development of communism in the

96. "The Art of the People," Collected Works, LXII, p. 32.

97. Ibid.

98. "Art and the Beauty of the Earth," op. cit., p. 160.

99. Ibid.

fusion of the purely Teutonic and the Celtic civilizations. Their common social heritage and traditions had been communal and out of their early confusion and barbarism should have developed a civilization that retained its basic social character. However, the Normans "Romanized" England, bringing with them culture they had inherited from the Roman civilization as well as its vices. These vices Morris called the

100. This possibility Morris implies: He recognizes the existence of a "Teutonic feudality" but the central government of England was weak and generally disorganized. "Undoubtedly, then, the Norman Conquest made a complete break in the continuity of the history of England.

.....
The development of the country as a Teutonic people was checked and turned aside by this event. Duke William brought, in fact, his Normandy into England, which was thereby changed from a Teutonic people (Old Norse tech), with the tribal customary law still in use among them, into a province of Romanized Feudal Europe, a piece of France, in short..." "Feudal England," op. cit., pp. 40-41.

"...Hereward, that valiant man, was conquered and died, and what was left of the old tribal freedom of East England sank lower and lower into the Romanized feudality that crossed the Channel with the Frenchmen." "Art and Industry of the Fourteenth Century," op. cit., p. 378.

The "...spirit of Romanized feudalism" was "diametrically opposed to that of the earlier tribal communities, in the tales of which the great chiefs are shown smithying armour, building houses and ships, and sowing their fields, just as the heroes of the Iliad and the Odyssey do." "Art and Industry of the Fourteenth Century," op. cit., p. 384.

"Residuum," and it was this that clogged the efforts of civilization to develop in the direction of universality or to the benefit of all the people. ¹⁰¹ While the Roman culture, like all cultures of past civilizations, embodied universal aspects that tended to develop in the direction of the common good and to uplift the whole people, the residuum, developing with the culture, constantly tended to divert the development toward exclusiveness, exploitation of the benefits for the "few" at the expense of the masses. However, in past civilizations, whenever this exclusiveness had

101. "...the residuum: that word since the time I first saw it used, has had a terrible significance to me, and I have felt from my heart that if this residuum were a necessary part of modern civilization, as some people openly, and many more tacitly, assume that it is, then this civilization carries with it the poisons that shall one day destroy it, even as its elder sister did: if civilization is to go no further than this, it had better not have gone so far: if it does not aim at getting rid of this misery and giving some share in the happiness and dignity of life to *all* (italics in original) the people that it has created, and which it spends such unwearying energy in creating, it is simply an organized injustice, a mere instrument for oppression, so much the worse than that which has gone before it...

"surely there is a distinct feeling abroad of this injustice: so that if the residuum still clogs all the efforts of modern civilization to rise above mere population-breeding and money-making, the difficulty of dealing with it is the legacy, first of the ages of violence and almost conscious brutal injustice, and next of the ages of thoughtlessness, of hurry and blindness." "The Beauty of Life," *op. cit.*, p. 65.

developed to the full, the whole civilization rapidly decayed and then fell. The full development of the exclusive character of a civilization, having deprived the masses of all the benefits of that civilization, aroused a universal discontent which accordingly weakened the civilization and set in motion a rapid deterioration. This process of development and change must inevitably go on in every civilization, Morris felt, until a civilization should emerge which allowed of development of its benefits for the whole people. Thus,

Ancient civilization was chained to slavery and exclusiveness, and it fell; the barbarism that took its place has delivered us from slavery and grown into modern civilization; and that in turn has before it the choice of never-ceasing growth, or destruction by that which has in it the seeds of higher growth.¹⁰²

A good illustration of this process of change was that of "the complete feudalism of the fourteenth century" which

fell, as systems always fall, by its own corruption, and by development of the innate seeds of change.¹⁰³

These "seeds of change" sprang from the "necessities of the lords," which tended in the direction of granting more and

102. "The Beauty of Life," op. cit., p. 65.

103. "Feudal England," op. cit., p. 53.

more rights to the classes below them until

these craftsmen and traders began to grow into importance and push themselves...into the feudal hierarchy

and

as they acquired status, so the sickness of the feudal system increased on it, and the shadow of the coming commercialism fell upon it.¹⁰⁴

The Middle Ages had also contained the "seeds of higher growth" and the course of their civilization had been rapidly moving in that direction: the common man, who had always enjoyed complete artistic freedom, was continually breaking down more and more economic, political, moral, and even social barriers. Thus, he saw "Communism from afar;" but, lacking in knowledge, he made the wrong choice and on the very doorstep of the "promised land" was compelled to "turn back into the desert."¹⁰⁵ The Renaissance which was the flowering of the new hopes and aspirations springing from the accumulation of freedoms again brought along the "Residuum" and while "on the whole" it was "steadily destroying privilege and exclusiveness in other matters" it "delivered up art to

104. "Feudal England," op. cit., p. 54.

105. Cf. ante, p. 33.

the exclusive privilege of the few" and took from the people
 "their birthright."¹⁰⁶ Exclusiveness found expression chief-
 ly in the form of the new commercialism, which turned men's
 attention to "the production of profit instead of the pro-
 duction of livelihood,"¹⁰⁷ and in effect gave the masses of
 the people political freedom in exchange for economic slav-
 ery. This attention to "profit" was further facilitated by
 the Reformation, which placed a sharp distinction not only be-
 tween ecclesiastical and civil authority but also between
 earth and heaven, thus disrupting the essential unity that
 characterized the medieval system. For

According to the medieval theory of life and
 religion, The Church and the State were one in
 essence, and but separate manifestations of the
 Kingdom of God upon earth, which was part of the
 Kingdom of God in heaven...the Church was not
 withdrawn from the everyday life of men.¹⁰⁸

What this accomplished in the long run was the break-up of
 the "spirit of association" or "fellowship" which had char-
 acterized medieval society. This break-up was only the ex-
 ternal expression of the disintegration of the values which

106. "The Beauty of Life," op. cit., p. 57.

107. "Architecture and History," op. cit., p. 209.

108. "Feudal England," op. cit., pp. 41-42.

had held men together in past societies. As has been pointed out, the "spirit of association" had, in the Middle Ages, operated upon the society of the people to stubbornly and courageously withstand the encroachments of the upper class upon their liberties. The dissolution of this spirit left the individual unprotected and commercialism found little difficulty in exploiting and enslaving him in a slavery more complete than feudalism had ever been able to effect. This new system of oppression was so much the worse than that which

has gone before it, as its pretensions are higher, its slavery subtler, its mastery harder to overthrow, because supported by such a dense mass of commonplace well-being and comfort.¹⁰⁹

The mistake the Renaissance had made lay in its return to the distant past while it "looked at the thousand years behind" it as a "deedless blank," thus severing the tradition of art in which its progressive growth had continually acquired strength. Up to the time of the Renaissance, since art first began,

it had always looked forward, now it was looking backward; that whereas once men were taught to look through the art at that which the art represented, they were now taught to deem the art an end in itself,

¹⁰⁹. "The Beauty of Life," op. cit., p. 65.

and that it mattered nothing whether the story it told was believed or not.¹¹⁰

The return to the far past for art, left the people helplessly without art; for they lacked not only the means necessary to avail themselves of classical art but also the "special education" necessary to understand it. Hitherto, the lesser or decorative arts, which constituted the chief means for the common man, the man without special education, to avail himself of art, were subordinated to the higher or intellectual arts.

The highest intellectual art was meant to please the eye, as the phrase goes, as well as to excite the emotions and train the intellect. It appealed to all men, and to all the faculties of a man. On the other hand, the humblest of the ornamental art shared in the meaning and emotion of the intellectual; one melted into the other by scarce perceptible gradations; in short, the best artist was a workman still, the humblest workman was an artist.¹¹¹

The return to the distant past for "art" severed the intellectual arts from the decorative and the latter fell into decay and almost completely disappeared. Decoration or ornamentation, which had been supplemental to architecture, could no longer be utilized with classical architecture without

110. "Art and the Beauty of the Earth," op. cit., p. 161.

111. "Art Under Plutocracy," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 167.

"special education." This separation of the decorative from the intellectual arts not only deprived the people of art but also worked a hardship upon the producer or artist of the intellectual arts. First, he was cut off from tradition and was consequently "heavily weighted...by having to learn everything from the beginning, each man for himself;" and, what was worse, he was deprived of a "sympathetic and appreciative audience."¹¹² The tendency toward exclusiveness expressed through commercialism had likewise played its part in the severance of art from the people. There was too much profit to be made from art to allow the people to have it in abundance gratis and commercialism thus made it a luxury, something which at the same time made it a commercial product; but luxury, Morris said, is the very antithesis of art "fated¹¹³ to stifle all art, and in the long run all intelligence."

112. "Apart from the artists themselves and a few people who would be also artists but for want of opportunity and for insufficient gifts of hand and eye, there is in the public of today no real knowledge of art, and little love of it. Nothing, save at the best certain vague prepossessions, which are but the phantom of that tradition which once bound artist and public together. Therefore, the artists are obliged to express themselves, as it were, in a language not understood of the people." "Art Under Plutocracy," Collected Works, XXIII, op. cit., p. 167.

113. "Some Hints on Pattern Designing," Collected Works, XXII, p. 204.

The purpose of art was to afford man a "serious help to life;" but making it a luxury converted it into a mere toy that "can no more lift the burden from the conscience of the rich than it can from the weariness of the poor."¹¹⁴ Making art a luxury necessarily made it an art of the few; but art, Morris insisted, cannot long exist unless "it be shared by all the people."¹¹⁵ Art is

a good thing which all can share, which will elevate all; in good sooth, if all people do not soon share it there will soon be none to share; if all are not elevated by it, mankind will lose the elevation it has gained.¹¹⁶

Under the modern system the lack of art in the lives of men had so degraded them that they were no longer capable of either producing or appreciating beauty in life; this lack of beauty could not remain confined to the lower classes only but necessarily had to affect all classes. Morris saw evidences of the growing state of "ugliness" all around him in modern civilization and

The lack of art, or rather the murder of art, that curses our streets from the sordidness of the

114. "The Prospects of Architecture," Collected Works, XXII, p. 123.

115. Cf. ante, p. 22, footnote 50.

116. "The Art of the People," op. cit., p. 39.

surroundings of the lower classes, has its exact counterpart in the dulness and vulgarity of those of the middle classes, and the double-distilled dulness, and scarcely less vulgarity of those of the upper classes.117

An art of the few, which existed in the modern world, he felt, could not long exist; it either had to disappear entirely as a result of the general degradation or to be revived and elevate all into a universal sharing of art. Thus,

The present state of things in which it does exist, while popular art is, let us say, asleep or sick, is a transitional state, which must end at last either in utter defeat or utter victory for the arts.118

Thus, while the Renaissance had taken from the people their "birthright" and severed the tradition of art, Competitive Commerce, one of the ramifications of the Renaissance Movement, "enslaved men," making it impossible for them again to produce art.

117. "The Beauty of Life," *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

Capitalism, or competitive commerce, as Morris most often called it, began to rise when feudalism had developed to "perfection" in the fourteenth century; and it germinated chiefly through the middle class, which began "forming underneath the outward show of feudalism still intact."¹¹⁹

That epoch began with the portentous change of agriculture which meant cultivating for profit instead of for livelihood, and which carried with it the expropriation of the people from the land, the extinction of the yeoman, and the rise of the capitalist farmer; and the growth of the town population, which, swelled by the drift of the landless vagabonds and masterless men, grew into a definite proletariat or class of free workmen; and their existence made that of the embryo capitalist-manufacturer also possible; and the reign of commercial contract and cash payment began to take the place of the old feudal hierarchy, with its many-linked chain of personal responsibilities.¹²⁰

The change was gradual and in its early stages at least it was indicative of great "hopes," as has been pointed out, in the prospects of a development that appeared to lead toward communism. From the fourteenth to nearly the end of the seventeenth century, in fact, the individual still largely remained the "Unit of labour"¹²¹ and all that time therefore held within its transformation "hopes." But commerce "grew

119. "The Hopes of Civilization," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 62.

120. Ibid., pp. 62-63. (Italics in original)

121. Ibid., p. 63.

and grew, and moulded all society to its needs" and by the end of the seventeenth century the individual workman had become only a part of a group which by that time was in the handicrafts the real unit of production;

division of labour even at that period had quite destroyed his individuality, and the worker was but part of a machine.¹²²

But capitalism did not stop there,

having turned the workman into a machine, the next stage for commerce to aim at was to contrive machines which would widely dispense with human labour.¹²³

The increase in the number of machines did not reduce the amount of labor for the individual workman, a fact which the term "labour saving" often appears to imply, but the aim behind the inventions, "Taking for granted that every workman would have to work as long as he could stand up to it," was to "produce the utmost possible amount of goods which" could be sold for profit.¹²⁴ Thus, "industrial productiveness was increased prodigiously, but so far from the workers reaping the benefit of this, they were thrown out of work in enormous numbers." This was the chief over-all effect of the industrial revolution and the deplorable conditions that resulted

^{122.} "The Hopes of Civilization," Collected Works, XXIII, op. cit., p. 63.

^{123.} Ibid., p. 68.

^{124.} Ibid., p. 69.

made the life of the working class so bad that "at no period of English history was the condition of the workers worse than in the early years of the nineteenth century."¹²⁵ As a consequence of real "hunger" the Chartist movement came into being; but its aim was chiefly political rather than social and the Chartists "did not understand that true political freedom is impossible to people who are economically enslaved."¹²⁶ The injustices of the whole system began to be perceived by men who did not belong to the oppressed working class. In England was Robert Owen; and abroad were men like "St. Simon, Proudhon, Fourier and his followers" who "kept up the traditions of hope in the midst of a bourgeois world." Of these men, Morris maintained, Fourier was the one "that calls for most attention: since his doctrine of the necessity and possibility of making labour attractive is one which Socialism can by no means do without."¹²⁷ In England, Robert Owen's Socialism failed because "it did not understand that,

125. "The Hopes of Civilization," Collected Works, XXIII, op. cit., p. 69.

126. Ibid., pp. 71-72.

127. Ibid., p. 73.

...as long as there is a privileged class in the possession of the exclusive power, they will take good care that their economical position, which enables them to live on the unpaid labour of the people, is not tampered with.¹²⁸

Perhaps the most significant result that had come of the oppression of the working class by the capitalists, Morris felt, was the growth of class consciousness and with it the "consciousness of the antagonism between" the workers and their employers.¹²⁹ This "consciousness" had grown up chiefly in the nineteenth century, the period during which the working class was in its worst plight; and it had made significant strides especially in Germany since "Lassalle started his German workman's party in 1845."¹³⁰ But especially significant was the advent of Karl Marx, who started "with an historical view of what had been" and saw that "a law of evolution swayed all events in it." In whatever particulars Morris

128. "The Hopes of Civilization," Collected Works, XXIII, op. cit., p. 71.

129. Ibid., p. 76.

130. Ibid.

131
 disagreed with Marx, he agreed with him whole-heartedly
 that whether Socialism be desirable or not, it is at least
 132
 inevitable."

The growing conviction among the workers of capitalist injustices had begun to convince them that the only way to deal with the employer was as a class, and the Chartist movement had been merely the first strongly organized attempt to do this. While that movement failed, laborers were nevertheless placing more and more faith in organization. Unification of the laborers was actually facilitated by the very system of organization which

the capitalist or modern slave-owner has been forced by his very success...to organize his slaves, the wage-earners, into a co-operation for production.

131. One difference between Morris and Marx must be obvious to anyone familiar with the two men: Morris insisted on an "artistic" society, one calling for the eventual abolition of the use of machines, except in rare cases where "rough" or "unpleasant" labor was concerned, while Marx was not opposed to the use of machines as long as they were used by the proletariat for their own benefit. Lehman mentions that in 1889 Morris published an article in the Commonweal "showing therein how his Socialism differed from Marxian Communism on the one hand and from Anarchism on the other, as well as from that strange blend of the two which was, in those days, sometimes called Anarchistic-Communism." Lehman, op. cit., p. 282.

132. "The Hopes of Civilization," op. cit., p. 75.

The "co-operation for production" had to be "so well arranged that" it required only the elimination of the capitalist "to make it a foundation for communal life."¹³³ The recognition by the capitalist of the threat to his system which the developing class consciousness with its growing discontent involves has often struck fear into him; therefore, he occasionally attempted to alleviate the threat by palliatives. Palliatives, however, Morris inslated, were a mere "sop" thrown to the workman and did not remedy anything. The source of the evil lay in the monopoly of the means of production which the capitalist held, a circumstance which enabled him to compel others to work for him while he lived in idleness on the proceeds of their labor. This put the workmen "in a degraded condition, and" even

if their condition could be much raised from what it is now, even if their wages were doubled and their work-time halved, they would still be in a degraded condition, so long as they were in a position of inferiority to another class--so long as they were dependent on them...134

Furthermore, palliatives effected no permanent relief to the laborers; for the capitalists met "every attempt at bettering

133. "The Hopes of Civilization," op. cit., p. 76.

134. "Monopoly: or How Labour is Robbed," Collected Works, XIII, p. 242.

the condition of the people with an attack on a fresh side; new machines, new markets, wholesale emigration, the revival of grovelling superstition, preachments of thrift to lack-alls, of temperance to the wretched.¹³⁵

In viewing the class system of past history, which had always practiced enslavement or tyranny in some form, and the new capitalist tyrant, the question arises: if Morris believed that man was naturally good and required only the proper freedom to exercise his altruism, how did he account for the tyrants who have always attempted to exploit and to enslave their fellow men in an effort to accumulate an abundance for themselves while allowing only the minimum portion to their "slaves?" Morris' answer to this problem was simple. Man had not yet become civilized enough to rid himself of the primitive fear of starvation. Primitive man had been a slave to Nature:

Nature was mighty and he was feeble, and he had to wage constant war with her for his daily food and such shelter as he could get.¹³⁶

All man's "...morals, laws, and religion," were in fact "the outcome and the reflection of this ceaseless toil of earning his livelihood." As time passed he became stronger

¹³⁵. "Art and Socialism," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 208.

¹³⁶. "The Lesser Arts," op. cit., p. 14.

and stronger, accomplishing a proportionately greater mastery over Nature until "after all these ages he has almost completely conquered Nature."¹³⁷ After accomplishing this conquest, Morris maintained, man "should now have leisure to turn his thoughts towards higher things than producing tomorrow's dinner." But alas, Man "still has himself to conquer, he still has to think how he will best use those forces which he has mastered." History revealed, and the modern capitalist system was further evidence, that man has been using these forces "blindly, and foolishly, as one driven by mere fate."¹³⁸ He has not been able to forget his fears and has therefore not accustomed himself to present reality, civilization. He still acts

as if some phantom of the ceaseless pursuit of food which was once the master of the savage was still hunting the civilized man; who toils in a dream, as it were, haunted by mere dim unreal hopes, born of vague recollections of the days gone by.¹³⁹

Man therefore required "more civilization" or education before he could accustom himself to the reality of civilization.

137. "The Lesser Arts," op. cit., p. 15.

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid.

Now our business is...the organization of man. For till this is attempted at least shall we ever be free of that terrible phantom of fear of starvation which, with its brother devil, desire of domination, drives us into injustice, cruelty, and dastardliness of all kinds: to cease to fear our fellows and learn to depend on them, to do away with competition and build up co-operation, is our one necessity.¹⁴⁰

It is clear that Morris felt man was not yet ready for the "complete equality of condition," or Communism. He felt that the way to his ideal society lay in an evolution from Socialism, which he conceived of as merely the initial stage in which education for the higher state would be instituted. Only after man had learned to accept civilization as an accomplished fact, to thrust aside his age-old fears of starvation and to place faith in his fellow man, only then could a "complete equality of condition" be effected.

But why, may be asked, must the initial stage leading toward the higher life be Socialism? Could not education leading toward "complete equality of condition" be instituted under capitalism as well? Or, could capitalism not be essentially retained while a "complete equality of condition" was gradually brought about?

It must be remembered that Morris had arrived at the

140. "The Lesser Arts," op. cit., p. 15.

positive conviction that art was "an absolute necessity in
 141
 life." and that

You cannot educate, you cannot civilize men, unless
 you give them a share in art.142

V

The problem therefore resolves itself into the ques-
 tion: is art possible under capitalism? Morris' analysis
 of the capitalistic system leaves no doubt that he was firm-
 ly convinced that the essence of capitalism was the sum to-
 tal of all the forces antithetical to art.

It has been shown how the Renaissance had taken art
 away from the people and how capitalism had "enslaved" the
 workman to a machine; hence, since "freedom in work" was a
 condition necessary for art, capitalism obviously made the
 production of art impossible as long as the enslavement of
 the workman was an essential feature of the system. Morris
 himself admitted that machines might be used to good

141. Cf. ante, Introduction, footnote 2.

142. "The Beauty of Life," Loc. cit., p. 63.

143

advantage as long as man remained the master of the machine, that is, as long as man employed the machine to lighten the burden inherent in "unpleasant and rough labour" and as long as he accomplished with the machine the end which individual labor directed by individual intelligence intended. But the capitalist system did not use machines in this manner; under this system it was essential that the workman be enslaved to a machine and this enslavement was necessary as long as the aims of capitalism remained what they were: production for profit rather than production for use or livelihood. Production for profit made it necessary that all wares be alike; consequently, individuality was undesirable. The commercial laborer had to make his wares by means of instruments

...as far as possible by means of instruments without desires or passions, by automatic machines...

143. "I do not mean...that we should aim at abolishing all machinery: I would do some things by machinery which are now done by hand, and other things by hand which are now done by machinery: in short, we should be the masters of our machines and not their slaves, as we are now." "Art and Its Producers," Collected Works, XXII, p. 352.

"The wonderful machines which in the hands of just and foreseeing men would have been used to minimize repulsive labour and to give pleasure, or in other words added life..." "Art and Socialism," op. cit., p. 193.

and where that was not possible the capitalist used "highly drilled human beings instead of machines." It was essential to his success

that they should imitate the passionless quality of machines as long as they are at work; whatever of human feeling may be irrespressible will be looked upon by the commercial person as he looks upon grit or friction in his non-human machines, as a nuisance to be abated. Need I say that from these human machines it is futile to look for art?¹⁴⁴

The production of art was inherent in a society of "fellowship" and art in turn promoted such a society; but the capitalistic "system of Society," Morris pointed out, "is based on a state of perpetual war,"¹⁴⁵ not fellowship. There is, first, national rivalry, which is nothing but a "desperate 'competition' between the great nations of civilization for the world market;" then there is the "competition" between "the organizers of labour, great firms, joint-stock companies...capitalists, in short;" and finally there¹⁴⁶ is the competition between laborers for jobs:

The manufacturer, in the eagerness of his war, has had to collect into one neighbourhood a vast army of workers...when the glut comes in that market he

144. "The Arts and Crafts of To-day," Collected Works, XXII, p. 368.

145. "How We Live and How We Might Live," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 5.

146. Ibid., pp. 5, 7, 9.

is supplying...the factory door is shut on them.¹⁴⁷
Consequently, the scarcity of jobs resulting from chronic
overproduction compels the laborers to undersell each other
in the attempt to obtain the limited number of jobs avail-
able.

This "War, or competition," Morris defined as

...pursuing your own advantage at the cost of some one
else's loss, and in the process of it you must not be
sparing of destruction even of your own possessions,
or you will certainly come by the worse in the strug-
gle.¹⁴⁸

In other words, in order to meet competition wares must
be made "cheap" and this "cheapness" in turn creates a "false"
demand which is further stimulated by the creation of a
desire among the working classes to imitate the rich in their

147. "How We Live and How We Might Live," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 9.

148. Ibid., p. 5.

149 "luxury." 150 Luxury, as we have seen, is in essence the very antithesis of art; and this "artlessness" that characterized the capitalistic system was reflected in the lives of both rich and poor. The houses of the former were cluttered with things "for show" rather than for use only; while the houses of the latter were filled with "sham" wares in imitation of rich men's houses rather than with wares that

149. "It seems that the market for gambling in profit is too exacting, or the need for the employment of labour is too pressing to allow them to purchase and consume only what they need; they must, in addition, purchase and consume many things which they do not need; habits of pomp and luxury must be formed amongst them, so that the market which would be starved by the misery of the poor, may be kept busy with ministering to the luxury of the rich. And you must understand ...that though all wares made must be consumed, nevertheless that consumption does not prove their use: they may be used or they may be wasted, and if they are not needed, they cannot be used and must be wasted." "Art and Its Producers," op. cit., p. 350.

"The manufacturer...cannot turn out quite nothing and offer it for sale, at least in the case of articles of utility; what he does do is turn out a makeshift of the articles demanded by the public, and by means of the 'sword of cheapness,'...he not only can force the said makeshift on the public, but can...prevent them from getting the real thing; the real thing presently ceases to be made after the makeshift has been once foisted on the market." Ibid., p. 356.

150. Cf. ante, p. 53.

met real needs.

Morris' severest condemnation of capitalism sprang from his disgust with its visible expressions. Just as a society of art expressed itself in terms of beauty or art through its individual members in their contacts with Nature and their fellows, so a society completely lacking in art expressed its ugliness everywhere.

...the produce of all modern industrialism is ugly, and...whenever anything which is old disappears, its place is taken by something inferior to it in beauty; and that even out in the very fields and open country. The art of making beautifully all kinds of ordinary things, carts, gates, fences, boats, bowls, and so forth, let alone houses and public buildings, unconsciously and without effort, has gone.¹⁵²

151. "As greed of unfair gain, wanting to be paid for what we have not earned, cumbers our path with this tangle of bad work, of sham work, so the heaped-up money which this greed has brought us...gathered into heaps little and big, with all the false distinction which so unhappily it yet commands amongst us, has raised up against the arts a barrier of the love of luxury and show, which is of all obvious hindrances the worst to overpass: the highest and most cultivated are not free from the vulgarity of it, the lower are not free from its pretence." "The Lesser Arts," op. cit., p. 23.

152. "The Revival of Handicraft," Collected Works, XXII, p. 336.

The most disconcerting feature about modern ugliness, however, was that people were apparently unconcerned about it and were not interested in reforms because

they do not feel the evils they live amongst, because they have degraded themselves into something less than men; they are unmanly because they have ceased to have their due share of art.¹⁵³

Capitalism, however, was not content with enslaving the workman and compelling him to make sham wares rather than allowing him to express himself in his labor, with requiring him to use sham articles rather than enabling him to possess himself of genuine wares, and with degrading his very soul so that he willingly condoned ugliness rather than sought beauty in life; but it proceeded to destroy the only possible compensation left to man for all the ugliness his life was surrounded with: the beauty of the face of the earth.

That loss of the instinct for beauty which has involved us in the loss of popular art is also busy in depriving us of the only compensation possible for that loss, by surely and not slowly destroying the beauty of the very face of the earth.¹⁵⁴

London and the great commercial cities have become "more masses of sordidness, filth, and squalor, embroidered with

153. "The Beauty of Life," op. cit., p. 62.

154. "Art Under Plutocracy," op. cit., p. 170.

patches of pompous and vulgar hideousness while

...whole counties of England, and the heavens that hang over them, disappeared beneath a crust of unutterable grime, but the disease, which, to a visitor coming from the times of art, reason, and order, would seem to be a love of dirt and ugliness for its own sake, spreads all over the country, and every little market-town seizes the opportunity to imitate...the majesty of the hell of London and Manchester.155

It is clear from this that Morris saw in capitalism only growing ugliness not only in the individual lives of men but in their collective expressions, which disfigured the very face of the earth itself. The only remedy, he insisted, lay in changing the system, because under the capitalistic system there could be no art or beauty. But, he also insisted that

...the beginnings of Social Revolution must be the foundations of the rebuilding of the Art of the People, that is to say of the Pleasure of Life.156

His claim for socialism, he said, was this:

It is right and necessary that all men should have work to do which shall be worth doing, and be of itself pleasant to do; and which should be done under such conditions as would make it neither over-wearisome nor over-anxious.157

155. "Art Under Plutocracy," *op. cit.*, p. 170.

156. "Art and Socialism," *op. cit.*, p. 211.

157. *Ibid.*, p. 94. (Italics in the original.)

Having reasoned the conditions of life he felt were necessary for the creation of art, Morris postulated a "Claim" which is in effect nothing more or less than a demand for such a condition of life. Art resulted from Pleasure in work and the artist had to be free from worry and fear.

Morris did not feel that the "Social Revolution" would come suddenly or even violently, although he did allow that the revolution once started might require violence in the final stages. Since men had been so degraded under the capitalistic system, as a result of the lack of art in their lives, that they no longer felt the need for beauty, they would have to be made conscious of this need, he felt, before revolution could be attempted. He had dedicated his own efforts, he said, to stirring up discontent with the present state of things;¹⁵⁸ and until this discontent or desire for something better became almost universal among the oppressed classes at least, he did not feel that revolution could be effected. However, his efforts to stir up discontent were not confined to the oppressed class alone; he constantly addressed himself to the middle class and the capitalists as

158. "...my business...is to spread discontent...as discontent spreads, the yearning for bettering the state of things spreads with it...and melts away resistance to change..." "Art, Wealth, and Riches," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 159.

much as to the proletariat. The ugliness in modern life and the tyranny inherent in the modern system, he felt, could be perceived by anyone who faced the truth.

VI

A number of Morris' critics have pointed out his peculiar gift of prophecy and some of his predictions regarding the twentieth century, for instance, have indeed come true. Having called the nineteenth century a Century of Commerce, he predicted that the the twentieth century would be known as the Century of Education; ¹⁶⁰ and this indeed appears to be borne out. But more important for us today is his prediction of the Change, from the capitalistic to the socialistic system, and the manner in which this was to come about.

159. See, for example, Eshleman, op. cit., pp. 321-27. Or Margaret R. Grennan, op. cit., pp. 134-55.

160. "...so that it may be, that as the nineteenth century is to be called the Century of Commerce, the twentieth may be called the Century of Education." "The Beauty of Life," op. cit., p. 53.

If we take Russia as an example, his prediction again proved essentially correct. His complete picture of this social revolution is fully narrated in News from Nowhere, and it appears to be almost an eye-witness account of the events which took place in Russia between 1917 and 1922 rather than a work written twenty-six years before the Russian Revolution began. First there were attempts at amelioration; many of them, in the early stages of the revolution, on the part of the oppressed class in attempts to climb "out of the oppressed into the oppressing class."¹⁶¹ Finally, State Socialism "was partly put in motion, though in a very piecemeal way. But it did not work smoothly."¹⁶² For a time "matters hung in the balance; the masters could not reduce their slaves to complete subjection" and the workers "forced their masters to grant them ameliorations, real or imaginary, of their conditions, but could not force freedom from them." But at last came "a great crash;" the workmen had at last "learned how to combine after a long period of mistakes and disasters." This combination took the form of a "federation

161. News from Nowhere, op. cit., pp. 105 et seq.

162. Ibid., p. 107

of all or almost all the recognized wage-paid employments" and through this they succeeded in effecting reforms; however, their activities were "not seldom mixed up with... rioting."¹⁶³ The general strike had by this time become the laborers' most effective weapon, but "the biggish fund of money for support of strikes" which the labor organization had collected was often "much misused" and "indeed more than once the whole combination seemed dropping to pieces because of it." Eventually the mere "traitors and self-seekers... were thrust out and mostly joined the declared reactionaries." Matters had come to a state "perilously near to the late Roman poor-rates...and the doling out of bread to the proletariat.

...the spread of communistic theories, and the partial practice of State Socialism had at first disturbed, and at last almost paralysed the marvellous system of commerce under which the old world had loved so feverishly, and had produced for some few a life of gambler's pleasure, and for many, or most, a life of mere misery: over and over came 'bad times'...the workman suffered dreadfully; the partial, inefficient government factories, which were terribly jobbed, all but broke down, and a vast part of the population had for the time being to be fed on undisguised 'charity.'¹⁶⁴

163. Ibid., pp. 108 et passim.

164. Ibid., pp. 109-110.

Only then did the federated labor organization pass a "Resolution" compelling the "handing over the management of the whole natural resources of the country" to the Combined Workers. This brought the declaration of war, the last stand by the upper class in their attempt to retain their possessions. After a bloody riot in Trafalgar Square, in which workmen were killed by the police, the reactionaries placed the government under a young general; but "the clever general took no visible action" while the Committee of Public Safety, which had been set up by the federated laborers, went ahead and organized an army. This "people's army" was finally surrounded at Trafalgar Square by government troops who mowed it down with machine guns. The "massacre of Trafalgar Square began the civil war, though

like all such events, it gathered head slowly, and people scarcely knew what a crisis they were acting in.165

Even though after the massacre, the reactionary government appeared to have gained the upper hand, the effects of this incident were so far-reaching upon the masses of the people that they finally gained the upper hand by means of a general strike that paralyzed everything. Workmen's committees

165. News from Nowhere, op. cit., p. 117

slowly but surely became the organizations in which public confidence began to be placed and soon the control naturally fell into the hands of the Committee of Public Safety. But confusion and unrest still marked the progress of the people's government, and the situation was again complicated when advocates of pure Communism now began making strong demands. The civil war continued until at last the new government openly joined hands with the communists and founded a system of life "on equality of Communism."¹⁶⁶

VII.

What Morris clearly recognized, as News from Nowhere reveals, is the difficulty of educating the masses for socialism and finally for Communism. He understood that there would have to be many mistakes and that often it might appear that the new system utterly failed in everything; he therefore constantly emphasized the need for faith in the ultimate

166. News from Nowhere, op. cit., pp. 117-128.

outcome. The mistakes would undoubtedly result in much hardship and disillusionment but people had to have courage and patience. Everything would work itself out in the end, if people only gave Socialism a fair chance.

Even after the "complete equality of condition" had been instituted in Morris' society in News from Nowhere, he still found that people, especially those who had been most oppressed under the old capitalistic system, experienced difficulty in realizing themselves in the new world. Their sense of beauty had been so dulled that they could not quite understand art and its significance in their lives at first:

The great difficulty was that the once-poor had such a feeble conception of the real pleasure of life...they did not ask enough, did not know how to ask enough, from the new state of things.¹⁶⁷

Morris here again, even though he believed the Change was inevitable, expressed his misgivings about the immediate success of the new system. The people of the Middle Ages, who had possessed art in their lives, might have readily accepted communism or even naturally drifted into it; but the people who had lived under a capitalistic society, people degraded and hardened into vulgarity and brutality, were a much

¹⁶⁷. News from Nowhere, op. cit., p. 130.

more difficult problem. It would take much work, much educating, and much time.

VIII

What was Morris' ideal society like? It was, of course, a society of art. Again Morris drew his clearest picture of this society in News from Nowhere:

Even before the struggle for establishing the new society had been accomplished, Art

revived in a wonderful way during the latter part of the struggle...The art of work-pleasure, as one ought to call it...sprung up almost spontaneously, it seems, from a kind of instinct amongst people no longer driven desperately to painful and terrible overwork... and when that had gone on for a little while, a craving for beauty seemed to awaken in men's minds, and they began rudely and awkwardly to ornament the wares which they made.¹⁶⁸

As a result of this revival of art, the new world was

...a garden, where nothing is wasted and nothing is spoilt, with the necessary dwellings, sheds, workshops scattered up and down the country, all trim and neat and pretty.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸. The quotations following are from News from Nowhere, op. cit., pp. 134 ff. Exceptions will be noted.

¹⁶⁹. Ibid., p. 72.

Compton-Rickett has pointed out that Morris was an "aesthetic socialist" rather than a humanitarian reformer. He began with art and built his idea of socialism around his conception of a society of art.

Socialism is an all-embracing theory of life, and that as it has an ethic and a religion of its own, so also it has an aesthetic: so that to every one who wishes to study Socialism duly it is necessary to look on it from the aesthetic point of view. And, secondly, I assert that inequality of condition, whatever may have been the case in former ages of the world, has now become incompatible with the existence of a healthy art.¹⁷⁰

The separation of art from the lives of the people and the breaking of the tradition of art, a tradition that had made art a matter of instinct in the workman, required training and education for art under the new system. Commercialism had diseased civilization with its "sham" art and had also produced articles in which there had been no pretence to art. This the Socialist conceived of as "a disease...hurtful to humanity"¹⁷¹ but he felt that it could be remedied by education.

169. Compton-Rickett, op. cit., pp. 213-14.

170. "The Socialist Ideal," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 255.

171. Ibid., p. 255.

As has been pointed out before, Socialism, to Morris, was only the primary stage in which education and a general bettering of the condition of the people would be instituted. He felt that socialists in general were cognizant of this ideal, and their conception of Socialism included the whole idea, Socialism plus its higher development, a development which he often called Communism

...what most non-Socialists at least consider at present to be Socialism seems to me nothing more than a machinery of Socialism, which I think it probable that Socialism must use in its militant condition; and which I think it may use for some time after it is practically established; but it does not seem to me to be of its essence. 172

The important matter for consideration in the initial stage of the new system was the institution of art in the lives of the people. It was this which would ennoble them and revive the humanity which had been destroyed in them under the Commercial system. Thus, there would be attempts to "relieve the sordidness of civilized town life by the public acquirement of parks and other open spaces, planting of trees, establishment of free libraries and the like." ¹⁷³ Once

172. "Communism," Collected Works, XIII, pp. 264-65. (Italics in original)

173. Ibid., pp. 264-65.

Socialism had been instituted and had secured control of all the resources of production, the welfare of the workman would be improved by shorter hours of labor and higher wages; workmen's houses would be improved and more time and energy would be allotted to the education of children; but the ultimate good would depend upon how such reforms were done--in what spirit; or what else was being done, while this was going on, which would make people long for equality of condition;

which would give them faith in the possibility and workableness of Socialism; which would give them courage to strive for it and labour for it.¹⁷⁴

Here again his answer was education, but, as has been shown, his prerequisite for education was art.

News from Nowhere is Morris' picture of the ideal state, while the course of the development from Socialism is narrated by an old man who had lived at the time the revolution first began. Ironically, the Parliament House of the Old system had become a dung-market; but dung "is not the worst kind of corruption; fertility may come of that, whereas mere dearth" had come from what had been called democracy under the old capitalistic system.¹⁷⁵

174. "Communism," Collected Works, XLIII, op. cit., p. 265.
(Italics in original)

175. Ibid.

Under the ideal system there was no government for "a man no more needs an elaborate system of government, with its army, navy,

and police, to force him to give way to the will of the majority of his equals, than he wants a similar machinery to make him understand that his head and a stone wall cannot occupy the same space at the same moment.¹⁷⁶

Under the Old System the Parliament had merely been "a kind of watch-committee

sitting to see that the interests of the Upper Classes took no hurt; and on the other side a sort of blind to delude the people into supposing that they had some share in the management of their own affairs.¹⁷⁷

The government then had been "but the machinery of tyranny," and now that "tyranny has come to an end, we no longer need such machinery; we could not possibly use it since we are free." Under this system there were no criminals "since there is no rich class to breed enemies against the state by means of the injustices of the state."¹⁷⁸ Civil law "abolished itself" for the civil law courts had existed merely to protect private property; but since private property no longer

176. News from Nowhere, op. cit., p. 75.

177. Ibid., p. 76.

178. Ibid., pp. 79 et seq.

existed there was no longer any need for civil law. In like manner, "private property being abolished, all the laws and all the legal 'crimes' which it had manufactured of course came to an end."¹⁷⁹ With the abolition of private property had also vanished the idea that woman was the property of man, and the need for all criminal law likewise no longer existed.

The chief reasons for crime, under the old system, had been private property and the "artificial perversion of the sexual passions, which caused overweening jealousy and the like miseries." Now that woman was free these crimes no longer happened. Another "cognate cause of crimes" had been "the family tyranny" but all that is ended "since families are held together by no bonds of coercion, legal or social, but by mutual liking and affection." The standards of honour and estimation" had likewise changed: success in "beating our neighbours" was no longer a road to renown.

Each man is free to exercise his special faculty to the utmost, and every one encourages him in so doing. Violence occasionally still happens for "hot blood will err sometimes." But punishment is not meted out to an offender,

179. The quotations following are from News from Nowhere, op. cit., p. 172ff.

for punishment, under the old system, was only "the expression of fear" and under that system "they had need of fear, since they--the rulers of society--were dwelling like an armed band in a hostile country." Under the New System we who live amongst friends need neither fear nor punish.

Surely, if we, in dread of an occasional rare homicide, an occasional rough blow, were solemnly and legally to commit homicide and violence, we could only be a society of ferocious cowards.

The criminal will punish himself in the remorse he suffers, after he has "cooled off" and weighed all the circumstances; he will then feel obligated to make all atonement possible. Torture or punishment would only "turn his grief into anger, and the humiliation he would otherwise feel for his wrongdoing is swallowed up by a hope of revenge for our wrongdoing on him." There are no laws but there are regulations of the markets,

varying according to the circumstances and guided by general customs. But these are matters of general assent, which nobody dreams of objecting to, so also we have made no provisions for enforcing them.

Such provisions, of course, were unnecessary in a society where every individual had developed a true sense of social responsibility.

The unit of management in the new society is the commune and matters concerning the public are settled by an assembly of all the people in the community. The will of the

majority prevails, but if the minority so desires, there will be sufficient delay before final decisions are reached in order to allow the minority to exert its full influence and to make everyone cognizant with its views. Even after a majority decision has been made about some matter, those of the minority opinion are not obligated to obey if they insist on being stubborn, for there is no system of coercion; however, in nearly every case the minority willingly follow all decisions of the majority.

When Morris, the guest, asks the old sage who had lived at the time the "change first began" in the land of Nowhere:

...how you get people to work when there is no reward of labour, and especially how you get them to work strenuously?

He answers indignantly:

No reward of labour? The reward of labour is life. Is that not enough?

But no reward for especially good labour?

Plenty of reward...the reward of creation. The wages which God gets, as people might have said time ago. If you are going to ask to be paid for the pleasure of creation, which is what excellence in work means, the next thing we shall hear of will be a bill sent in for begetting children.

The incentives to labour, briefly summarized, are these:

...all work is now pleasurable; either because of the hope of gain in honour and wealth with which the work is done, which causes pleasurable excitement, even when the actual work is not pleasant; or else because it has grown into a pleasurable

habit...and lastly (and most of our work is of this kind) because there is a conscious sensuous pleasure in the work itself; it is done, that is, by artists.180

When Morris is curious to know how this change in attitude toward labour was effected, the reply is:

Indeed, you may say rather that it is this change which makes all the others possible...Happiness without happy daily work is impossible.

This happiness grew from

...the absence of artificial coercion, and the freedom for every man to do what he can do best, joined to the knowledge of what production of labour we really want.

IX

This was Morris' vision of the future, a world in which every individual enjoyed complete freedom so that he could be a complete artist. Could Morris really have been serious in News from Nowhere? After all, had he not written the book

180. (All italics in original)

in reply to Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward?¹⁸¹ Bellamy's world was too mechanical for Morris' ideal of individualism. Is it not quite likely then that in his desire to overcome Bellamy's argument Morris strained a point here and there and over-reached himself in counter-proposal?¹⁸² A study of Morris' lectures delivered between 1877 and 1894¹⁸³ will reveal in embryo the world portrayed in News from Nowhere. As early as 1877, in a lecture delivered before the Trades' Guild

181. "The immediate occasion which led Morris to put into a connected form those dreams of an idyllic future in which his mind was constantly hovering was no doubt the prodigious vogue which had been obtained the year before, by an American Utopia, Mr. Bellamy's once celebrated 'Looking Backward.'" Mackail, op. cit., II, p. 256.

182. "The refined rusticity of 'News from Nowhere' is in studied contrast to the apotheosis of machinery and the glorification of the life of large towns in the American book; and is perhaps somewhat exaggerated in its reaction from that picture of a world in which the phalanstere of Fourier seems to have swollen to delirious proportions, and State Socialism has resulted in a monstrous and almost incredible centralization." loc. cit.

183. These lectures were later collected and published under four general titles: Hopes and Fears for Art, Lectures on Art and Industry, Signs of Change, and Lectures on Socialism.

of learning, Morris said:

I believe that as we have even now partly achieved LIBERTY, so we shall one day achieve EQUALITY, which, and which only, means FRATERNITY, and so have leisure from poverty and all its griping, sordid cares.

Then, no one will be

...bidden to by any man's servant, every one scorning to be any man's master: men will then assuredly be happy in their work, and that happiness will assuredly bring forth decorative, noble, popular art.

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, and not a weight upon the spirits to come from the open country into the town; every man's house will be fair and decent, soothing to his mind and helpful to his work: ...and every man will have his share of the best.

Of the world Morris pictured in this lecture he expected popular skepticism. "It is a dream, you may say," he said,

of what has never been and never will be; true, it has never been, and therefore, since the world is alive and moving yet, my hope is the greater that it one day will be: true, it is a dream; but dreams have before now come about of things so good and necessary to us, that we scarcely think of them more than of the daylight, though once people had to live without them, without even the hope of them.¹⁸⁵

The idyllic working scenes in News from Nowhere have their seeds in numerous earlier statements, of which the following,

184. "The Lesser Arts," op. cit., pp. 26-27.

185. Loc. cit.

186

from a lecture delivered in 1885, is a typical example:

I believe people would find, as they advanced in their capacity for carrying on social order, that life so lived was less expensive than we now have any idea of, and that, after a little, people would rather be anxious to seek work than to avoid it; that our working hours would rather be merry parties of men and maids, young men and old enjoying themselves over their work...187

In "True and False Society," a lecture delivered in 1887, Morris envisions

That true society of loved and lover, parent and child, friend and friend, the society of well-wishers, of reasonable people conscious of the aspirations of humanity and of the duties we owe to it through one another--this society, I say, is held together and exists by its own inherent right and reason, in spite of what is usually thought to be the cement of society, arbitrary authority to wit, that is to say, the expression of brute force under the influence of unreasoning habit.188

Morris anticipated popular skepticism regarding his ideal world. In that anticipation very probably lies the significance of the word Nowhere in News from Nowhere. Such a world could not yet exist anywhere in the popular conception of the future; but to Morris it not only could but one day would exist.

186. "How We Live and How We Might Live," op. cit.

187. Ibid., p. 21.

188. "True and False Society," Collected Works, XXIII, p. 237.

Early in life he had developed a "hatred of civilization," a disgust with all the ugliness he found in life around him. He searched long for a remedy, and loving beauty and hating ugliness he sought a means for substituting the one for the other. He saw ugliness growing larger and ever more ominous, threatening to blot out every last vestige of beauty left in the world. He saw it trample underfoot the very souls of men, kneading them into a brutality that obliterated their humanity and made even their innate recognition of a need for beauty obsolete. Thus, out of his hatred of civilization evolved a positive creed which he had undoubtedly long felt growing before he expressed it openly. He first publicly professed socialistic views in 1877, but the seeds of socialism were already obvious in his Icelandic works and were at least foreshadowed in his publications in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine, as early as 1856.

His statement that he had always been a socialist might well mean that he had always felt that art could not thrive under a capitalistic system; therefore, he turned to socialism. Socialism was only a primary stage out of which was to

189. In "The Lesser Arts," a lecture he delivered in 1877, Morris laments the growing ugliness and the need for pleasure in work. Cf. ante, pp. 12-13.

evolve Communism, the "complete equality of condition" which he felt was the most desirable system for the growth and development of art. Hence, his dream of the future, existing nowhere in the popular imagination but real in Morris' vision of the future nevertheless.

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