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Bevir, Mark

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WILLIAM MORRIS: THE MODERN SELF, ART, AND POLITICS

By

Mark Bevir

Department of Politics

University of Newcastle

Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU

U.K.

[Email: [Mark.Bevir@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:Mark.Bevir@ncl.ac.uk)]

## ABSTRACT

A concern to pin ideological labels on Morris has obscured the continuing importance of romanticism and Protestantism for his socialist politics. Romanticism led him to seek self-realisation in an art based on naturalness and harmony, and Protestantism led him to do so in the everyday worlds of work and domestic life. From Ruskin, he took a sociology linking the quality of art to the extent of such self-realisation in daily life. Even after he turned to Marxism, he still defined his socialist vision in terms of good art produced and enjoyed within daily life. Moreover, his over-riding concern to promote a new spirit of art, not his dislike of Hyndman, led him to a purist politics, that is, to look with suspicion on almost all forms of political action.

## WILLIAM MORRIS: THE MODERN SELF, ART, AND POLITICS

Keywords: Morris, Socialism, Art, Self, Romanticism, Protestantism

### I

William Morris, 1834-98, is best known as a poet and designer who inspired the Arts and Crafts Movement. But he was also an important socialist and utopian theorist, arguably the most influential, and surely the most inspirational, writer on the left in Britain. There has been a fierce debate, however, over whether or not Morris was a Marxist. Early commentators insisted he was an ethical socialist. John Bruce Glasier remembered him telling a meeting, "to speak quite frankly, I do not know what Marx's theory of value is, and I'm dammed if I want to know"; "I have tried to understand Marx's theory, but political economy is not my line, and much of it appears to me to be dreary rubbish."<sup>1</sup> Besides, there was his own written testimony that "whereas I thoroughly enjoyed the historical part of Capital, I suffered agonies of confusion of the brain over reading the pure economics."<sup>2</sup> This evidence suggested Morris had never grasped the economic foundations of Marxism: he was a socialist for purely moral reasons. However, from the 1950s until recently, a number of studies appeared that placed Morris firmly in the Marxist tradition. Robin Page Arnot led the way when he dismissed Morris's own words by saying the first chapters of Capital were notoriously difficult, and anyway Morris had confessed only to having had difficulties with them, not to having failed to understand them.<sup>3</sup> The revisionists uncovered considerable evidence to suggest Morris was familiar with Marx's economic writings. He read Capital in French in 1883, and again in English in 1887 - he kept both editions in his library and they were well thumbed. Moreover, he published, together with E. B. Bax, a series of articles that provided one of the most accurate contemporary summaries of the first volume of Capital.<sup>4</sup> In the first edition of E. P. Thompson's classic study of Morris's politics, he came across not only as a Marxist, but as a Marxist who struggled with the problems his practice posed him

until he finally reached the Grail of Leninism.<sup>5</sup> However, the new evidence was nearly as problematic as the old. To have read Capital is not to have understood it, and the articles could have been the work of Bax with little help from Morris. Indeed, Morris wrote in his diary, "Tuesday to Bax at Croydon where we did our first article on Marx: or rather he did it: I don't think I should ever make an economist even of the most elementary kind."<sup>6</sup> More importantly, the whole idea of Morris having been a Marxist seems to do scant justice to the utopian elements in his thinking. His writings reveal a man much more concerned to imagine a new way of life than to analyze the economic logic of capitalism. Was he not too much of the visionary, and too little of the social scientist, to be a Marxist? These sorts of worries have led a recent crop of scholars, following James Hulse, to toy with comparisons between Morris and anarcho-communists such as Prince Kropotkin.<sup>7</sup>

Let us change tack for a moment. Does it matter whether or not Morris was a Marxist? In one sense, the nature of Morris's politics is an important matter. Morris has long been an icon of the British left, inspiring theorists and politicians as diverse as Clement Atlee, G. D. H. Cole, Ramsay MacDonald, and R. H. Tawney. To study the origins and limitations of his politics is, therefore, one way of approaching the origins and limitations of that peculiar beast, British socialism. In another sense, however, the ideological label we pin on Morris does not seem very important. Ideologies are not mutually exclusive, reified entities. They are overlapping traditions with ill-defined boundaries. Thus, whether or not we think of Morris as a Marxist depends on how we define the Marxist tradition as much as on how we view Morris, and to conclude Morris was a Marxist would not be rule out his also being either an ethical socialist or an anarchist. To say this is not to deny people such as Glasier, Thompson, and Hulse offer us different interpretations of Morris. It is, however, to suggest far too many interpretations of Morris are distorted by their authors' concern to pin a particular ideological label on him; after all, which ideological label we choose to pin on him is of little importance compared with whether or not we describe his thought adequately. In particular, a focus on political ideologies such as ethical

socialism, Marxism, and anarchism, all too often entails a neglect of broader intellectual movements, such as romanticism and Protestantism. Perhaps, then, we can improve our understanding of Morris's political thought by tracing the particular way in which the romantic and Protestant conceptions of the self fed through into his aesthetics and his socialist values. The aim here is not to provide precise characterisations of romanticism and Protestantism. It is rather to leave these terms deliberately vague so as to relate Morris's politics to central strands in the modern concept of the self as analysed by theorists such as Charles Taylor.<sup>8</sup>

A proper emphasis on Morris's particular debt to romanticism and Protestantism will have other beneficial consequences. One is that it will enable us to understand why he has proved attractive to diverse political thinkers, including ethical socialists, Marxists, and anarchists. The breadth of his appeal reflects the way his utopian vision satisfies both romantic longings deeply rooted in Anglo-American culture - longings for harmony with oneself, one's fellows, and nature - and a Protestant concern, equally deeply rooted in our culture - the concern that we should exemplify the moral life in the everyday worlds of work and home. His utopian vision appeals to our deeply rooted desire to realise ourselves in our daily lives. In addition, the breadth of his appeal is indicative of the way his particular romantic and Protestant inheritance led him to avoid difficult political questions. His concern with romantic fulfilment in daily life led him to reject almost all political action as corrupting of the ideal. Ethical socialists, Marxists, and anarchists have been able, therefore, to endorse his utopian vision of a natural and harmonious daily life centred on art without thereby committing themselves to any particular form of political action as a means of realising that vision.

Another beneficial consequence of our approach to Morris is the critical stance it offers us. To argue Morris's suspicion of political action was deeply rooted in his thought is to take issue with the powerful strand of socialist thinking that holds him up as an ideal. Although Thompson wrote a postscript to his classic study of Morris in which he expressed misgivings about his earlier Leninism, and in which he placed

greater stress on the importance of romantic moralism for Morris's socialism, he always dismissed Morris's purism as a contingent product of an unfortunate encounter with H. M. Hyndman rather than a failing with deep roots in his thought.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, we will find Morris's purism arose out of the particular use he made of a romantic and Protestant legacy. Moreover, by doing so, we will begin to explore tensions that can appear within the modern concept of the self. Morris illustrates one way in which a Protestant concern with the everyday self, particularly in conjunction with a romantic concern with natural harmony, can come into conflict with the imperatives of viable political action and so a classical concern with the public self which is also deeply rooted in modern culture. The warning for socialists, and others, is clear: if one wishes to establish harmony in daily life, one has to be careful to moderate one's ambitions to ensure they are realisable through political action.

## II

The young Morris lived in an intellectual world defined by romanticism: he devoured the medieval histories of Walter Scott when he was only four or five; at school, in Marlborough, he revelled in the surrounding countryside as nature; at University, in Oxford, he became an aesthete who admired medieval architecture and wrote romantic verse. Morris's place within the romantic movement was, therefore, well established by the time he left Oxford. The prose pieces he wrote there, like his later poetry, exhibited a debt to various sources - medievalism, gothic fiction, John Ruskin's aesthetics, Scott's novels, folklore, romantic allegory, and others - debts that are characteristic not only of Morris but also of third-generation romantics generally. His early prose romances are Pre-Raphaelite works full of dreaminess, medievalism, a delight in sensory details, subjectivity, and a deliberate simplicity.<sup>10</sup>

Although Morris's commitment to romanticism in his pre-socialist days is unquestionable, we have to identify its content, not just establish its presence. The point to emphasise here is that Morris, like most romantics, longed for good art, and identified good art with natural harmony. According to Morris, art was the highest

expression of the human spirit. He said not only that "Art is a very serious thing," but also that people such as he "love art most," for art "is to us as the bread we eat, and the air we breathe."<sup>11</sup> Art gives meaning to human life, for without it "the progress of civilisation" would be "as causeless as the turning of a wheel that makes nothing."<sup>12</sup> One reason for so lauding art was, of course, that it embodied the imagination of the creative individual, and Morris, like most romantics, desperately wanted to fortify the imagination and the creative individual against the mechanical and regimented society he found about him. Artists had a special status as symbols of genius: they embodied to an exceptional degree the capacities that ennoble humanity. The role of the artist is, however, to produce good art, and good art requires the creative imagination to act to create the effect of a natural harmony. Morris, like most romantics, elegized and idealised nature: his poems often invest nature with personality, finding in it human emotions and a moral message. As he himself recognised, the romantic movement in literature inspired "a feeling for the romance of external nature."<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the idealisation of nature made naturalness seem a pre-requisite of good art. Something is "beautiful," Morris believed, "if it is in accord with Nature, and helps her: ugly if it is discordant with nature, and thwarts her: it cannot be indifferent."<sup>14</sup> Morris rarely asked for art precisely "to imitate nature"; he asked rather for the artist to create "forms and intricacies" that look "natural" and evoke things such as patterns of vegetation - an aesthetic principle he put into practice in his designs. Art should bring us into a harmonious relationship with nature. Indeed, Morris, like most romantics, equated good art with a general harmony: art should unite the individual with nature, and also with society, history, and even God, bringing everything into a harmonious whole. The churches of Northern France were "the most beautiful . . . of all the buildings that the earth has ever borne" because their builders had produced works exhibiting such harmony:

Ah, do I not love them [the builders] with just cause who certainly loved me, thinking of me sometimes between strokes of their chisels? And for this love of all men that they had, and moreover for the great love of God which they

certainly had too; for this, and for this work of their s, the upraising of the great Cathedral front, with its beating heart of thoughts of men wrought into the leaves and flowers of the fair earth, wrought into the faces of good men and true, fighters against the wrong, of angels who upheld them, of God who rules all things.<sup>15</sup>

Morris's debt to Ruskin, his place among the Pre-Raphaelites, his concern with a natural and simple beauty, all these things appear in his golden rule that you should "have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful."<sup>16</sup>

A concern with art as the highest expression of the human spirit, and with naturalness and harmony as essential features of good art; such a concern is an almost universal feature of romantic thought. Morris's emphasis on the place of art within our everyday world, in contrast, implied a rejection of the High Romantic beliefs in the individual genius of the poet and the autonomy of art. Morris insisted that everyone had the capacity to create art and that art should have an integral place within all our daily activities. A similar stress on the everyday worlds of work and home represents one of the main legacies of Protestantism to modern, western thought. Although Morris once described "Puritanism", along with "classicism", as one of "the two things which I hate most in the world," he had in mind here the cold austerity of Puritan ethics, not the more general Protestant focus on the central ethical importance of daily activities.<sup>17</sup> During his youth, Morris thought of making a career in the Church, but once he lost his faith, he, together with Edward Burne-Jones, pledged himself to art. Art, rather than religion, was to become the centrepiece of people's daily lives, directing their hearts and minds to lofty affairs. Although similar beliefs appear throughout Morris's work, his experience of the Firm brought them to the fore.<sup>18</sup> The Firm - originally Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company, but later just Morris and Company - was dedicated primarily to interior design. It encouraged Morris to conceive of himself not as an artist or poet in the High Romantic image, but rather as a craftsman engaged in the "lesser arts" with an eye on profit.<sup>19</sup> As the focus

of his activities shifted from poetry and architecture to patterns and designs, he increasingly emphasised the need not only for the labourer to be a craftsman, but also for art to dominate the domestic setting of our leisure. His main concern became "the crafts of house-building, painting, joinery and carpentry, smith's work, pottery and glass-making, weaving, and many others" - "that great body of art, by means of which men have at all times more or less striven to beautify the familiar matters of everyday life."<sup>20</sup>

Morris's stress on the everyday worlds of work and home flowed out of his insistence that the decorative arts were as much art as were the high arts. He argued all things made by humans involved art since they expressed the human spirit, and, besides, "everything made by man's hands has a form, which must be either beautiful or ugly."<sup>21</sup> A broad concept of art as everything humans produce enabled Morris to put art at the very centre of our everyday existence at work and in the home. For a start, most people spend much of their lives working, and when they work they produce art. If people are producing real, aesthetically-pleasing art, they will enjoy their labour, and so the main part of their lives. Thus, Morris argued, "the chief duty of the civilized world to-day is to set about making labour happy for all," that is, to promote good art.<sup>22</sup> In addition, most people spend much of their time outside of work using products made by others. If people are using aesthetically-pleasing art, they will enjoy their leisure, and so the other main part of their lives. Thus, Morris argued, "without these arts [the decorative arts] our rest would be vacant and uninteresting."<sup>23</sup> For Morris, therefore, art should be central to daily life in work and leisure. The lesser arts were vital to this vision: "to give people pleasure in the things, they must perforce use, that is one great office of decoration; to give people pleasure in things they must perforce make, that is the other use of it."<sup>24</sup> Implicit in Morris's aim was the need to make art truly popular - everyone had to be an artist enjoying their labour and a connoisseur using art in their leisure time. Besides, art could flourish only if it were widespread: "if she [art] is ever to be strong enough to help

mankind once more, she must gather strength in simple places," not just in "rich men's houses."<sup>25</sup>

Morris called Ruskin his "master" in social theory, and his pre-socialist lectures clearly indicate the strength of this debt.<sup>26</sup> Morris followed Ruskin not only in taking the romantic ideals of naturalness and harmony, or in taking a broad concept of art to include everyday objects, but also in using a sociology of art as a basis for a critique of contemporary society.<sup>27</sup> Morris used Ruskin's sociology to bring a social dimension to his evaluation of works of art. He identified good art with the nature of the labour that produced it, saying "the thing that I understand by real art is the expression by man of his pleasure in labour."<sup>28</sup> A work of art reflected the society in which it was produced: it was beautiful if the worker had taken pleasure in his labour, and so had expressed his spirit within it; it was ugly if the worker had been unable to enjoy his labour, and so had not expressed his individuality within it.

Medieval England and later the Iceland of the Sagas provided Morris with lived examples of the romantic ideals of harmony, vigour and beauty, examples of societies composed of people with strong communal ties, people who led simple and happy lives surrounded by useful and aesthetically-pleasing objects. The rude simplicity of these societies had produced good art - the churches of Northern France and the Sagas. In contrast, the paucity of modern art reflected the immorality and unhappiness found in contemporary society. To realise the aesthetic values of naturalness and harmony in everyday life, to promote good art, we have to reject the mentality that informs modern social life. We have to rebuild society in accord with the principles of simplicity and honesty. Simplicity is a human corollary of the romantics' praise of nature - people should live naturally. Honesty entails a reversal of current commercial practices - workers should not produce slovenly goods, factory owners should pay fair wages, and consumers should not seek unreasonably low prices. Morris, like Ruskin, called for a moral economy based on the "careful and eager giving his due to every man," not the utilitarian values of the counting-house.<sup>29</sup> He thought a new society of happiness could rise like a phoenix from a new morality

of simplicity and honesty, a new morality that acknowledged the humanity, worth, and creativity of the producer. He said:

If we were only to come to our right minds, and could see the necessity for making labour sweet to all men . . . then indeed I believe we should sow the seeds of a happiness which the world has not yet known . . . and with that seed would be sown also the seed of real art, the expression of man's happiness in his labour - an art made by the people, and for the people, as a happiness to the maker and the user.<sup>30</sup>

Before Morris turned to socialism, therefore, his thoughts on the plight of modern art were characterised by, first, a romantic ideal of good art as based on naturalness and harmony; second, a Protestant concern to realise the ideal in our daily activities; and third, a Ruskinian indictment of economic liberalism as inimical to good art. Initially, however, his hostility to economic liberalism did not spill over into a hostility to political liberalism. On the contrary, he was an important figure in the Liberal-inspired Eastern Question Association, formed to fight Disraeli's jingoism: when its Parliamentary Committee nominated a committee to convene a National Conference, Morris was appointed as treasurer and selected as a member of the sub-committee set-up to prepare the manifesto to convoke the conference. For a while anti-jingoism was the centrepiece of his life, and it brought with it a strong identification with the Liberal Party. His appeal To the Working Men of England deployed the language of Radicalism. He said Britain was being pushed towards a war with Russia by "greedy gamblers on the Stock Exchange, idle officers of the army and navy (poor fellows!), worn-out mockers of the clubs, desperate purveyors of exciting war-news."<sup>31</sup> Soon, however, Gladstone's second government was repressing the Irish and bombarding Alexandria. Morris was horrified. He despaired of liberalism, and turned to socialism, saying "the action and want of action of the new Liberal Parliament, especially the Coercion Bill and the Stockjobber's Egyptian War, quite destroyed any hope I might have had of any good being done by alliance with the Radical party."<sup>32</sup> In January 1883, Bax persuaded him to join the Democratic

Federation, which soon became the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.).<sup>33</sup> He announced his conversion to socialism in November 1883 in a talk at University College, Oxford.<sup>34</sup> Ruskin was in the chair.

### III

The overlap between Ruskin's sociology of art and Marx's historical sociology should have been clear long before the 1930s, when the full extent of Marx's early concern with alienation became apparent upon the discovery of some of his early manuscripts. Morris, following Ruskin, long had argued art reflected the conditions of labour in society; the arts "are connected with all history and are clear teachers of it."<sup>35</sup> Now Morris, following Marx, also argued different social systems represent different solutions to the necessity of man conquering his subsistence from nature by labour. In both cases, something like the economic base explained at least part of something like the social superstructure. Nonetheless, there are differences between a Marxist historical sociology and a concern with good art, even when the latter is combined with a Ruskinian sociology. The best way to understand Morris's socialism is to see how he brought the two together.

Morris's broad conception of art did not cover social or political relations. His turning to Marxism meant, above all else, that he came to believe the conditions of labour determined not only the nature of art and so the quality of individual lives, but also the character of our social and political relationships. Now Morris insisted on the reality of the class struggle. The conditions of labour divided civil society into classes with opposed interests. Thus, whereas earlier he had talked of the need "to bridge the gap between the classes," now he argued that "the workman's real master is not his immediate employer but his class."<sup>36</sup> His new acceptance of the reality of the class struggle brought with it a commitment to Marx's historical sociology. History consists of the struggle of classes to advance their own interests: the class struggle explains past history. The bourgeoisie had overturned the aristocracy whilst also trying to defend private property from the challenge of the emerging proletariat.

Morris's tone was very much that of Marx: "the middle class had freed commerce from her fetters of privilege, and had freed thought from her fetters of theology, at least partially; but it had not freed, nor attempted to free, labour from its fetters."<sup>37</sup> Even his affection for medieval society was affected by his new belief in the class struggle. He now said that beneath medieval society's "rough plenty, its sauntering life, its cool acceptance of rudeness and violence, there was going on a keen struggle of classes which carried with it the hope of progress."<sup>38</sup>

A powerful belief in the class struggle led Morris to condemn the state as an instrument of class oppression. People were producers, not citizens, so the notion of a shared nationality was an illusion. Parliament was just a committee of the upper classes, which presented a facade of democracy while actually oppressing the working class. The violent repression of protesters on Bloody Sunday revealed the true nature of the state. First the police and then the judges enforced the interests of property in flagrant violation of the supposed rights of the common people. (Morris said, "the greatest humbug which Sunday's events have laid bare is the protection afforded by the law to the humblest citizen.")<sup>39</sup> The capitalist state allowed the workers to participate in their own slavery but that was all. The true nature of the state, and the reality of the class struggle, were hidden from most people by the operation of ideology. Ideology, especially Christianity as it was preached in the Churches, served to protect the interests of private property. The capitalist is "furnished with what he can use as a mask under the name of morals and religion."<sup>40</sup>

Morris's commitment to the idea of the class struggle is unproblematic. The same can not be said of his economic analysis of capitalism. On the one hand, he clearly tried to come to terms with Capital, and the articles he wrote with Bax really do show an impressive grasp of Marx's ideas. On the other hand, he clearly was not comfortable with economic theory, and the articles he wrote on his own are far less impressive than those he wrote with Bax. Even if Glasier's story of Morris's easy dismissal of economic theory is an invention, nobody who reads widely in Morris's socialist writings can fail to recognise how much he prefers to depict a communal way

of life rather than try to unravel any economic logic in capitalism. Moreover, at the same time as he published the articles with Bax, he wrote two lectures by himself in which he outlined a theory of surplus value based on the twin pillars of the capitalists' having a monopoly of the means of production and wages being fixed by an iron law. He called one "Monopoly: Or, How Labour is Robbed," and in the other he explained:

The capitalists, by means of their monopoly of the means of production, compel the worker to work for less than his due share of the wealth which he produces - that is, for less than he produces. He must work, he will die else, and as they are in the possession of the raw material, he must agree to the terms they enforce.<sup>41</sup>

This theory of surplus value differs from that of Marx. Marx argued that labour-power had greater use-value than exchange-value, and this was the source of surplus value. The capitalists necessarily acquired surplus value when they purchased labour-power irrespective of any supposed law of wages or monopoly of the means of production, although, of course, the historical fact that the proletariat were a landless class helped to explain why labour-power had become a commodity for sale in the market. Given that Morris said his economic theory derived less from reading Marx than from "conversation with such friends as Bax and Hyndman and Scheu," perhaps we should not be surprised his theory of surplus value incorporated the Lassalleian perspective of the latter two.<sup>42</sup>

The fact is that Morris's commitment to the class struggle, and to socialism in general, owed far more to his sociology of art than to his grasp of Marx's economic theory. He saw the class struggle as the driving force behind the dialectical movement of history, and, in this respect, it merely took over from his Ruskinian view of the history of art as a indication of the changing conditions in which craftsmen had laboured. In the feudal era, craftsmen related to their products as artists, but they did so within a class-ridden society. The rising bourgeoisie destroyed the political power of the landed aristocracy, but they did so on the basis of a commercial system that denied the artistic nature of production. Morris argued capitalism was inimical to

good art. An attractive building in a modern suburb would surprise one, whereas medieval cities such as Oxford and Rouen contained almost nothing but attractive buildings.<sup>43</sup> Contemporary art was in such dire straits that students of design now had to study artefacts from the past, not modern goods. Moreover, the plight of art reflected the conditions of labour under capitalism. Capitalist production for profit had destroyed the relationship between craftsmen and their products which alone could ensure good art. Craftsmen had been replaced by wage-slaves: the growth of factories had compelled workers to labour for long hours at monotonous tasks; industrialisation had turned them into mere adjuncts of machines, thereby preventing them from expressing their individual spirit; and commercialisation had forced them to make commodities that pamper to the whims of the wealthy rather than satisfying genuine needs. Craftsmen had been replaced by wage-slaves, whose conditions of work denied them the self-respect that comes from doing useful work. Moreover, these conditions of labour demonstrated the immorality of the capitalist economy. Capitalism involved a ceaseless search for profit at the expense of human values. Art was made to serve riches, not wealth. Wealth represented "the means of living a decent life"; riches represented "the means for exercising dominion over other people"; and capitalism maximised the riches of the capitalist, not the wealth of society.<sup>44</sup> Soon, however, a communist society would appear in which craftsmen would again be seen to be artists but in which there would be no classes. Art and fellowship would flourish as they never had before.

Morris's commitment to a Marxist sociology reflected his earlier thought in several more minor ways. For a start, the pattern of the dialectic harked back to his romantic belief in an organic cycle in human affairs. Before he became a socialist, he said of the growth of art that "like all growth, it was good and fruitful for awhile; like all fruitful growth, it grew into decay; like all decay of what was once fruitful, it will grow into something new."<sup>45</sup> In addition, the whole concept of class suited his earlier concern with people as producers. A concern with class groups people together

according to their relationship to the means of production, not according to their geographical location, as does the concept of citizenship.

Perhaps we should consider briefly what our analysis of Morris's thought implies about the suitability of the ideological labels commentators have pinned on him. It seems clear we legitimately can describe him as a Marxist. He considered himself to be a Marxist, he joined Marxist organisations, and his views on capitalism and class show he was influenced by Marx. That his theory of surplus value was not Marx's does not preclude our describing him as a Marxist. Ideologies overlap, so there is no logical reason why we should not describe Morris as an anarchist or an ethical socialist as well as a Marxist. However, there are empirical reasons why we should be at least a little wary of these labels. Although his stateless, communalist utopia resembles that of some contemporary anarchists, he repudiated anarchism, he battled against the anarchists in the Socialist League, and, perhaps most importantly, he granted the need for some sort of social authority, maybe even involving some sort of coercion.<sup>46</sup> Again, although his dominant concerns were aesthetic and moral, and although he inspired a number of ethical socialists, there is a danger of anachronism in describing him as an ethical socialist. The ethical socialist movement arose in the 1890s in the provinces, whereas Morris was active mainly in the 1880s in London. It seems, therefore, that "Marxist" is the most appropriate ideological label, although neither "anarchist" nor "ethical socialist" is wholly inappropriate. Nonetheless, Arnot clearly overstated his case when he argued Morris's socialism rested on economics, not on "an historical, ethical 'and literary' basis."<sup>47</sup> Against Thompson as well as Arnot, we should insist Morris's economic theory was not Marx's, and his Marxism rested on a historical sociology centred on the class struggle and informed by a concern for good art, not an economic theory. His Marxism was not only temporally, but also in a sense conceptually, preceded by a Ruskinian view of art and the ideal it inspired. Certainly he defined socialism in terms of his ideal rather than an economic theory. He said:

What I mean by socialism is a condition of society in which there should be neither rich nor poor, neither master nor master's man, neither idle nor overworked, neither brain-sick brain workers, nor heart-sick hand workers, in a word, in which all men would be living in equality of condition, and would manage their affairs unwastefully, and with the full consciousness that harm to one would mean harm to all.<sup>48</sup>

Similarly, socialism appealed to him mainly because of his aesthetic. He said he could not "conceive of anyone who loves beauty, that is to say the crown of a full and noble life, being able to face it unless he has full faith in the religion of socialism."<sup>49</sup>

#### IV

It is understandable but unfortunate that much of the work that affirmed the Marxist nature of Morris's thought was polemical in style. The result has been to obscure the continuing influence of romanticism and Protestantism on his socialist politics. Morris did not move from being a romantic to being a revolutionary, as Thompson suggests he did. Rather, he always remained a romantic, and his particular romantic and Protestant concerns led him to a purist form of socialism rather than a revolutionary one. Although Morris came to think collective ownership of the means of production was essential to end exploitation, his main concern remained the place of art in people's everyday lives. His vision of a socialist society remained centred on his concern with a natural and harmonious art fulfilling people at work and in the home. Romanticism and Protestantism continued, therefore, to play a vital role in his thinking. They committed him to a definite ethic. He wanted everyone to feel the same way that artists do about their daily work - creativity was an ahistorical "need of man's soul."<sup>50</sup> And he wanted everyone to enjoy art in their domestic lives - being surrounded by beautiful objects was also a need of the soul. What is more, these ethical concerns largely defined his political strategy. They led him to disparage the struggle for higher wages, and even public ownership of the means of production, as doing nothing to end the true slavery of the working class. They led him to a purist

perspective from which he denounced almost all forms of political action because they dirtied the hands of those who undertook them. They led him to emphasise the visionary content of his utopia, and to do so at the expense of political questions about how his utopia was to be created. Romanticism and Protestantism are, of course, broad intellectual movements, and they certainly need not lead to a purist politics. Nonetheless, the particular way Morris's developed his intellectual inheritance led him to a purist politics in a way which should make us wary of holding him up as a model socialist.

Morris argued our daily lives consisted of two dominant moods - energy and idleness. Our ethical goal was happiness in both of these moods. Art brought such happiness. Morris said "the aim of art is to increase the happiness of men, by giving them beauty and interest of incident to amuse their leisure, and prevent them wearying even of rest, and by giving them hope and bodily pleasure in their work; or, shortly, to make man's work happy and his rest fruitful."<sup>51</sup> The core of his socialism remained a vision of a society in which art thus fulfilled people during their everyday activities. In the mood of idleness, happiness came from using products that were works of art. This happiness was simple and natural, as exemplified by an evening in his utopia:

The wine was of the best; the hall was redolent of rich summer flowers; and after supper we not only had music . . . but, at last we got to telling stories, and sat there listening, with no other light but that of the summer moon streaming through the beautiful traceries of the windows, as if we belonged to time long passed, when books were scarce and the art of reading somewhat rare.<sup>52</sup>

People needed a decent environment in which to enjoy art during their leisure and thereby satisfy the mood of idleness. The population of Morris's utopia moved back to the countryside, where they lived in simple communal dwellings, and took great care to preserve natural beauty - one of the first things the Guest noticed was the cleanness of the Thames.<sup>53</sup> In the mood of energy, happiness came from being an artist. Morris's broad view of art included all labour, so to be an artist one did not have to create a particular type of product, but only to feel a particular way about the

product one created. Certain conditions of labour would help to engender the required feeling, but the feeling, not the conditions of labour, was what mattered. Workers should have varied tasks so they would not feel compelled; they should be able to stamp their individuality on each product so they would feel the hope of creation; and they should produce goods to fulfil genuine needs so they would feel self-respect.<sup>54</sup> It was vital to make work enjoyable because people needed to work in order to exercise their energies - the population of Morris's utopian society were actually worried about a possible shortage of work.<sup>55</sup> People needed "honourable and fitting work" to satisfy the mood of energy: their work had to be worth doing in that it produced genuinely useful commodities, "pleasant to do" in that it allowed for individual expression, and not "over-wearisome."<sup>56</sup>

Because Morris allowed for the needs of both consumers and producers, there inevitably arose the question of what should happen if consumers had legitimate desires that could be satisfied only if producers acted in a way that undermined their status as artists. Morris believed such conflicts would be rare because machinery would alleviate heavy and monotonous work. But if a conflict did occur, the decision would balance the nature of the work against the social value of the product, and if the work were particularly degrading or the product not essential, society would have to forego the product.

Morris's vision of a communist society centred, therefore, on self-fulfilment through an art which realises the values of naturalness and harmony in everyday life. His Ruskinian and Marxist sociology led him to relate this vision to a transformation of industry and social life in general. The message for industry was clear: the market value of a commodity was unimportant compared to the conditions and nature of labour. What mattered was that the workers should be like the craftsmen of old; they should create beautiful artefacts, imprinted with their own personality. Doing so would give them satisfaction, as would the knowledge that others would take pleasure in using their creations. Art would be the watchword of the factory of the future. This was why slavery would disappear. Collective ownership of the means of

production was essential primarily in order to promote good art, and so happiness, not in order to eliminate surplus value:

The attractive work of our factory, that which it was pleasant in itself to do, would be of the nature of art; therefore all slavery of work ceases under such a system, for whatever is burdensome about the factory would be taken turn and turn about, and so distributed would cease to be a burden, would be in fact a kind of rest from the more exciting or artistic work.<sup>57</sup>

Some commentators have suggested Morris's concern with traditional craftsmanship made him hostile to mechanisation as such. Actually, however, he just wanted people to judge the worth of machines by whether or not they made labour more pleasant, not whether or not they made production cheaper. In his communist society, "machines of the most ingenious and best approved kinds will be used when necessary, but will be used simply to save human labour."<sup>58</sup> Because everybody would be a craftsman, they would judge the worth of the work of others and of machines in terms of beauty and use-value, not profit and exchange value. The mutual exchange of useful products would replace the competitive market.

Morris's sociology of art suggested good art also required an honest and simple social life resembling that of the middle-ages. People had to recognise that "fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell: fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death."<sup>59</sup> Morris's ideal, therefore, was a society of neighbours in which people would assist each other gladly, taking pleasure in being of service. People would live rude, simple lives. They would find happiness in animal acts such as eating, loving, and sleeping - Morris liked "to think of barbarism once more flooding the world, and real feelings and passions, however rudimentary, taking the place of our wretched hypocrisies."<sup>60</sup> Children would learn by play, not the methods of the schools, with an emphasis on swimming and carpentry, not on books, and they would spend the summer camping-out in the woods. Adults would eat in large communal dining-halls before sitting around telling and retelling heroic stories. At harvest time, everyone would carouse in the fields.

A neglect of Morris's particular debt to romanticism and Protestantism a concern to fit him into a predetermined ideology, a desire to hold him up as a model socialist, all these things have obscured crucial continuities in his thought, continuities which we have now brought to the fore. For a start, his utopian vision revolved around his continuing romantic concern to promote good art based on naturalness and harmony. In addition, the way he sought to entrench art within work and leisure - the moods of energy and idleness - reflected his continuing, Protestant concern to realise the ideal in daily life. Finally, by embedding the ideal in an honest and simple society characterised by fellowship and a moral economy, he showed his continuing debt to Ruskin's sociology of art. Morris defined his socialism, therefore, primarily in terms taken from his earlier romanticism, Protestantism, and Ruskinian sociology. He called for things such as the collective ownership of the means of production principally because his conversion to Marxism suggested they were necessary for good art to flourish in everyday settings. Again, because people have not recognised the particular role Morris's romantic and Protestant heritage played in his socialism, they have not noticed how it led him to reject most forms of political action. Because socialism depended on art being given a new role in daily life, a change in our mode of being - our attitudes and activities - was more important than either a change in institutions or the acquisition of political power. Thus, Morris told his fellow socialists, "the religion of Socialism calls upon us to be better than other people since we owe ourselves to the society which we have accepted as the hope of the future."<sup>61</sup> And he warned them of "the error of moving earth & sea to fill the ballot boxes with Socialist votes which will not represent Socialist men."<sup>62</sup> His desire was to make good art central to human lives in the moods of energy and idleness alike, and this meant above all else that people had to feel themselves to be artists and concern themselves with art.

All of Morris's arguments against parliamentary action drew on his concern to transform daily life in accord with a new spirit of art. For a start, he thought it unlikely parliamentary action would do the socialist cause much good. Parliamentary

action could secure only material ends: it could not turn workers into artists. Socialist M.P.'s could only point out what concessions may be necessary for the ruling class to make in order that the slavery of the workers may last: they could not promote the artistic spirit. In addition, he thought it highly likely parliamentary action would do the socialist cause harm. He feared that if socialists entered Parliament, they would draw attention away from the fundamental need to transform activities and attitudes beyond the political sphere. He said, "the real business of Socialists is to impress on the workers that they are a class, whereas they ought to be Society; if we mix ourselves up with Parliament we shall confuse and dull this fact in people's minds instead of making it clear and intensifying it."<sup>63</sup> Besides, parliamentary action would corrupt the activities and attitudes of the socialists who engaged in it:

I really feel sickened at the idea of all the intrigue and degradation of concession which would be necessary to us as a parliamentary party: nor do I see any necessity for a revolutionary party doing any 'dirty work' at all, or soiling ourselves with anything which would unfit us for being due citizens of the new order of things.<sup>64</sup>

Morris's moral and aesthetic ideals also led him to doubt the efficacy of palliatives and trade unions. He argued that if capitalism's "wrongs and anomalies were so capable of palliation that people generally were not only contented, but were capable of developing their human faculties duly under it, and that we were on the road to progress without a great change, I for one would not ask anyone to meddle with it."<sup>65</sup> He denounced palliatives because even if they provided material contentment, they would not transform the place of art in daily life; they would neither turn workers into artists nor bring good art into the home. Similarly, Morris often dismissed trade unions because they struggled for higher wages and better conditions of work, not a mode of being capable of sustaining good art:

The position of the Trades Unions, as anything but benefit societies, has become an impossible one; the long and short of what they say to the masters is this: We are not going to interfere with your management of our affairs

except so far as we can reduce your salary as our managers. We acknowledge that we are machines and that you are the hands that guide us; but we will pay as little as we can help for your guidance.<sup>66</sup>

Morris proposed, therefore, a policy of abstention based on a refusal to participate in bourgeois institutions, arguing "the true weapon of the workers as against Parliament is not the ballot-box but the boycott."<sup>67</sup> He wanted socialists to provide a pure example; he wanted them to be a party of principle; he wanted them to restrict their activities to education - "our business I repeat is the making of socialists."<sup>68</sup> A new type of being had to precede any attempt to capture power. Action had to wait until the process of education was complete because "until we have that mass of opinion, action for a general change that will benefit the whole people is impossible."<sup>69</sup> In News from Nowhere, Morris described the action to follow the successful education of the workers.<sup>70</sup> The existence of an educated population who were aware of the ills of capitalism and who gave minimal obedience to existing authority would compel the state to adopt a policy of either force or fraud. At first the monopolists would try a policy of fraud by introducing state socialism in an attempt to buy the workers off. But fraud would fail because the workers would be educated to recognise it for what it was. Thus, the monopolists would turn to force. The workers would combine in one great federation, and when the economy next suffered a cyclical depression they would insist on taking control of the natural resources of the nation. This act would lead to a civil war from which the workers would emerge victorious and then go on to establish communism.

Should we consider this revolutionary strategy to be an expression of Morris's basic rejection of politics? There are three main reasons why we might do so. First, Morris believed the revolution had to represent a transformation of everyday life - the rise of a new spirit of art. He said:

I want a real revolution a real change in Society: Society a great organic mass of well-regulated forces used for the bringing-about a happy life for all. And the means for attaining it are simple enough; education in Socialism, and

organization for the time when the crisis shall force action upon us: nothing else will do us any good at present: the revolution cannot be a mechanical one, though the last act of it may be civil war, or it will end in reaction after all.<sup>71</sup>

Second, revolutionary action presupposed a prior change in daily activities and attitudes, so there was to be no action until the workers were educated, and this meant the revolution constantly receded from view. Morris began "with the distinct aim of making Socialists by educating them, and of organizing them to deal with politics in the end," and this allowed the revolution always to be postponed on the grounds that the end had not arrived yet.<sup>72</sup> Third, Morris's talk of a revolution to follow education seems, therefore, to have been less a call to political action than a symbol for the vastness of the change he desired. The revolution marked the tragedy needed to ensure a total break with the present. "The world was being brought to its second birth; how could that take place without a tragedy?"<sup>73</sup>

Scholars who idealise Morris sometimes acknowledge the presence of purist elements in his activities, but they then follow Thompson in denying his purism was integral to his socialist thought. They argue he became disillusioned with politics because he so disliked Hyndman's opportunism. In particular, they insist that after he left the S.D.F. his struggles with the anarchists in the Socialist League led him to embrace an appropriate, revolutionary politics. Actually, however, Morris's anti-parliamentarianism derived from his aesthetic and moral ideals. His experience of Hyndman's "opportunism" might have strengthened his dislike of the compromises necessitated by political action, but the dislike was already there. When he joined the S.D.F., he said "the aim of socialists should be the founding of a religion, towards which end compromise is no use"; and when the S.D.F. adopted a new programme, he said it "is better than the old one, and is not parliamentary."<sup>74</sup> Morris reacted negatively to parliamentary action, palliatives, trade unions and the like because of the nature of his particular concern with a new spirit of art in daily life. It is true that Morris's battles with the anarchists in the Socialist League led him to take a slightly less hostile view of stepping stones: during the May Day celebrations of 1894 and

1895 he even spoke from the platform of the S.D.F. Nonetheless, his Hammersmith Socialist Society still renounced both parliamentarianism and the social revolutionary stance of the anarchists in favour of a purist policy of pure propaganda.<sup>75</sup> The funds of the Society could be used only to educate the people in socialism by peaceful means, including lectures, publications, and street meetings. At the very most, therefore, Morris seems to have glimpsed some of the difficulties confronting his purism, while continuing to feel he personally could not take any stance other than a purist one. He said the League had failed because "you cannot keep a body together without giving it something to do in the present," but he still concluded "socialism is spreading, I suppose, on the only lines on which it could spread, and the League is moribund simply because we are outside those limits, as I for one must always be."<sup>76</sup>

Morris had come to believe only that unsuccessful attempts at parliamentarianism and state socialism alike necessarily would proceed the moment when the workers turned to his strategy and his vision. He had not changed the content of his strategy or vision. He had not come to believe that purism necessarily was ineffective. Indeed, his farewell article to Commonweal clearly revealed the continuing strength of his commitment to purism. He said:

There are two tendencies in this matter of methods: on the one hand is our old acquaintance palliation [parliamentarianism] . . . on the other is the method of partial, necessarily futile, inconsequent revolt [anarchism] . . . With both of these methods I disagree; and that the more because the palliatives have to be clamoured for and the riots carried out by men who do not know what Socialism is, and have no idea what their next step is to be, if contrary to all calculation they should happen to be successful. Therefore, at the best our masters would be our masters still, because there would be nothing to take their place . . . The authorities might be a little shaken perhaps, a little more inclined to yield something to the clamours of their slaves, but there would be slaves still, as all men must be who are not prepared to manage their own business themselves.<sup>77</sup>

The strength of Morris's purism had led him to reject both parliamentary action and revolutionary action. He became convinced socialists would try such action. But at no time did he renounce his strategy of abstention. He ended up in the political wilderness of the Hammersmith Society precisely because he could not endorse any feasible political strategy.

## VI

We have found that Morris's purism underlay his socialist activity right up to the end. He opposed first the parliamentarians and then the social revolutionaries on purist grounds, and even in his very last years he continued to advocate his policy of abstention. The persistent strength of Morris's purism reflects the fact that it had deep roots in his thought. It arose from the particular impact a romantic concern with good art and a Protestant concern with everyday life had on his political thought. Morris wanted to transform our daily activities and attitudes at work and at play so as to centre them on good art. He decried most forms of political action because they were unlikely to promote new activities and attitudes in everyday life, and because they were likely to encourage a lasting adherence to old ones. He rejected parliamentarianism, trade unions and palliatives, and later revolutionary violence on the grounds that far from promoting a new spirit of art in work and leisure, they would corrupt socialists. There is, therefore, a problem in Morris's thought which needs to be addressed by those who would hold him up as a model socialist. The problem is that he failed adequately to reconcile his intense desire to transform daily life with the necessity of doing so through effective political action. If, like Morris, one wishes primarily to change everyday lives and one sees the political realm as inherently corrosive of the lives one wishes to promote, then one is in danger of leaving oneself perilously few ways of bringing change about; indeed, one can end up, as Morris arguably did, postponing all action to bring about change until after the change has already taken place.

One of the reasons Glasier, Thompson, Hulse and others have ignored or underplayed Morris's purism is their neglect of the continuing impact of his romantic and Protestant heritage on his socialism. They have concentrated on placing his politics within fixed ideological categories, and they have done so at the expense of a proper appreciation of his actual intellectual inheritance. Moreover, one of the reasons why Glasier, Thompson, Hulse and others have concentrated on placing Morris's politics within particular ideological traditions is the tremendous appeal of his utopian vision. Morris is an icon of the left. Everyone wants to have him on their side. Here our analysis of Morris's thought enables us to appreciate better why he has held such sway over the socialist imagination. Morris has appealed to ethical socialists, Marxists, and anarchists because he offers us a utopia that draws on longings deeply rooted in our culture without thereby committing us to a contentious political strategy as a way of realising this utopia. Ethical socialists can applaud his emphasis on a new moral spirit without worrying about how to create it. Marxists can celebrate his avowal of communism without worrying about the haziness of his account of how and when it is to be established. Anarchists can exult in his opposition to the state and parliamentary action without worrying about the structure of the organisation through which the change is to be made. Much British socialism - perhaps much western socialism - embodies a concern to revolutionise the Protestant domain of work and leisure so as to establish the romantic vision of a natural harmony. Although socialists of different persuasions have called for things such as the welfare state, collective ownership of the means of production, and federations of producers co-operatives, many of them have done so principally because they have hoped thereby to overcome the sense of alienation from nature and others that currently pervades our daily lives. Morris's work encapsulates this hope with its romantic and Protestant roots, and it does so without prioritising a particular political strategy.

Morris is the great dreamer of the British left. During the depression of the 1930s, Barbara Castle tramped the Yorkshire moors overlooking the ugly, polluted,

industrial towns of the valleys. Her despair was dispelled as she read Morris's poem "The Message of the March Wind" with its evocation of fellowship; its old inn and roaring fire, the fiddler playing and the people dancing. Morris wanted to improve the world; to make it simpler, more enjoyable, more beautiful, more fulfilling, more just. His romantic vision of a harmonious, beautiful world educates our aspirations.<sup>78</sup> It gives us a glimpse of a better world, and for this we should be grateful. Nonetheless, we should not allow the grandeur of our aspirations to undermine our concern with the realisation of genuine improvements. We should not ignore the imperatives of political action.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Glasier, William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement (London: Longmans, 1921), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> W. Morris, The Collected Works of William Morris, intro. M. Morris (London: Longmans, 1910-15), Vol. 23: Signs of Change, Lectures on Socialism, p. 278.

<sup>3</sup> R. Arnot, William Morris: The Man and the Myth, including the letters of William Morris to J. L. Mahon and Dr. John Glasse (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1964). Also see P. Meier, William Morris: The Marxist Dreamer, 2. Vols. (Sussex: Harvester, 1978); and E. Thompson, William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary, revised ed. (London: Merlin, 1977), partic. pp. 741-62.

<sup>4</sup> The articles were published in Commonweal throughout 1887, and republished as W. Morris & E. Bax, Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1893).

<sup>5</sup> Thompson himself renounced the Leninist pieties of the first edition in the revised edition of 1977. See Thompson, Morris.

<sup>6</sup> W. Morris, Socialist Diary, ed. F. Boos (London: Journeyman, 1982), p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> See F. & W. Boos, "The Utopian Communism of William Morris", History of Political Thought 7 (1986), 489-510; J. Hulse, Revolutionists in London: A Study of Five Unorthodox Socialists (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970); R. Kinna, "William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarianism", History of Political Thought 15 (1994), 593-613; and F. MacCarthy, William Morris: A Life for Our Time (London: Faber, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Taylor analyses the modern self as a composite of elements drawn from the classical, Protestant, and romantic traditions in C. Taylor, Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Although I owe a clear debt to Taylor's impressive work, my argument requires only that we see these three elements to be part of the modern self, not, as he sometimes suggests, constitutive of it.

<sup>9</sup> See Thompson, Morris, pp. 763-816.

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<sup>10</sup> Morris, Works, Vol. 1: The Defence of Guenevere, The Hollow Land, pp. 149-325. His study of "'Men and Women' by Robert Browning" defends various pre-Raphaelite concerns: see Morris, Works, Vol. 1, pp. 326-48.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 22: Hopes for Art, Lectures on Art and Industry, pp. 29-31.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, p. 59.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 349.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 23, p. 77.

<sup>17</sup> W. Morris, The Letters of William Morris to His Family and Friends, ed. P. Henderson (London: Longmans, 1950), p. 247. (When possible I have referred to letters as they appear in the more recent and comprehensive edition edited by N. Kelvin. However, to avoid any confusion all references to a letter specify whether Henderson or Kelvin edited the volume referred to.)

<sup>18</sup> On the strong overlaps between Morris's romantic poetry and his involvement in the Arts and Crafts Movement, see K. Goodwin, "The Relationship Between the Narrative Poetry of William Morris, His Art-and -Craft-Work, and his Aesthetic Theories", D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford University, 1969.

<sup>19</sup> On the significance of Morris, a gentleman, engaging in such activities, and on his enormous influence, see P. Stansky, Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s, and the Arts and Crafts Movement (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985). The central place of the domestic in Morris's aesthetic is highlighted in P. Stansky, William Morris and Bloomsbury (London: Cecil Woolf, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> Morris, Works, Vol. 22, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, p. 43.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, p. 5.

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- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, p. 113.
- <sup>26</sup> Justice, 16 June 1884.
- <sup>27</sup> The best-known example of Ruskin's sociology of art is J. Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic", in The Works of John Ruskin, eds. E. Cook & A. Wedderburn (London: G. Allen, 1903-12), Vol. 10: The Stones of Venice - II: The Sea Stories, pp. 180-269.
- <sup>28</sup> Morris, Works, Vol. 22, p. 42.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, pp. 47-8. Ruskin's moral economy is spelled out in J. Ruskin, "Unto this Last", in Works, Vol. 17: Unto This Last, Munera Pulveris, Time and Tide, and Other Writings on Political Economy 1860-1873, pp. 15-114.
- <sup>30</sup> Morris, Works, Vol. 22, p. 46.
- <sup>31</sup> "The Manifesto To the Working Men of England" is reproduced in Morris, Letters, ed. Henderson, pp. 388-89.
- <sup>32</sup> W. Morris, The Collected Letters of William Morris, ed., N. Kelvin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1984-87), Vol. 2., Part A: 1881-84, p. 230.
- <sup>33</sup> See G. Shaw, "The New Politics", BM:50683, The Shaw Papers, The British Museum, London (BM numbers in the Shaw papers are provisional).
- <sup>34</sup> For the talk see Morris, "Art Under Plutocracy" in Works, Vol. 23, pp. 164-91.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, p. 8.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 23, pp. 162 & 224.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 23, p. 66.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 23, p. 62.
- <sup>39</sup> Commonweal, 19 November 1887.
- <sup>40</sup> Morris, Works, Vol. 23, p. 231.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 23, p. 223.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 23, p. 278.
- <sup>43</sup> He had long been an admirer of Rouen. See Morris, Letters, ed. Kelvin, Vol. 1: 1848-1880, pp. 19-22.
- <sup>44</sup> Morris, Works, Vol. 23, p. 143.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., Vol. 22, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> Morris argued against the anarchists that "if individuals are not to coerce others, there must somewhere be an authority which is prepared to coerce them not to coerce." He explained, "I am not pleading for any form of arbitrary or unreasonable authority, but for a public conscience as a rule of action: and by all means let us have the least possible exercise of authority." W. Morris, William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist, ed. M. Morris, with an account of William Morris as I knew him by Bernard Shaw (Oxford: Blackwell, 1936), Vol. 2: Morris as a Socialist, pp. 314 & 316.

<sup>47</sup> Arnot, Morris, p. 11.

<sup>48</sup> Morris, Works, Vol. 23, p. 277.

<sup>49</sup> Morris, William Morris, Vol. 1: Morris as a Writer, p. 240.

<sup>50</sup> Morris, Works, Vol. 23, p. 203.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., Vol. 23, p. 84.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., Vol. 16: News From Nowhere, p. 140.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., Vol. 16, p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., Vol. 23, pp. 164-91.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., Vol. 16, pp. 91-2.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., Vol. 23, p. 194.

<sup>57</sup> Morris, William Morris, Vol. 2, p. 135.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 134.

<sup>59</sup> Morris, Works, Vol. 16, p. 230.

<sup>60</sup> Morris, Letters, ed. Kelvin, Vol. 2, Pt. B: 1885-88, p. 436.

<sup>61</sup> Commonweal, 28 August 1886.

<sup>62</sup> Morris, Letters, ed. Kelvin, Vol. 2, Pt. B, p. 693.

<sup>63</sup> Commonweal, July 1885.

<sup>64</sup> Morris, Letters, ed. Kelvin, Vol. 2, Pt. B, p. 598.

<sup>65</sup> Morris, Works, Vol. 23, p. 229.

<sup>66</sup> Morris, William Morris, Vol. 2, p. 443.

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- <sup>67</sup> Commonweal, 7 June 1890. For his "Policy of Abstention", see Morris, William Morris, Vol. 2, pp. 434-52.
- <sup>68</sup> Morris, William Morris, Vol. 2., p. 518.
- <sup>69</sup> Commonweal, 15 November 1890.
- <sup>70</sup> See Morris, Works, Vol. 16, pp. 103-30.
- <sup>71</sup> Morris, Letters, ed. Kelvin, Vol. 2, Pt. B, p. 368.
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, Pt. B, p. 369.
- <sup>73</sup> Morris, Works, Vol. 16, p. 132.
- <sup>74</sup> Morris, Letters, ed. Kelvin, Vol. 2, Pt. A, pp. 219 & 312-13.
- <sup>75</sup> The Hammersmith Socialist Society, Statement of Principles (London: Hammersmith Socialist Society, 1893). The only other significant source of information on the Society I have found is The Minutes of the Hammersmith Socialist Society, The William Morris Papers, The British Museum, London, BM:45891-3.
- <sup>76</sup> Morris, Letters, ed. Henderson, pp. 231-32.
- <sup>77</sup> Morris, William Morris, Vol. 2, p. 516.
- <sup>78</sup> On Morris and the education of desire, see C. Waters, British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture 1880-1914 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).