SMPLCTY

Ecological Civilisation and the Will to Art

SAMUEL ALEXANDER

Essays on the Aesthetics of Existence

Democratising the Poet: William Morris and the Art of Everyday Life

S M P L C T Y: Ecological Civilisation and the Will to Art

Published by the Simplicity Institute 2023
Working Paper Series: Essays on the Aesthetics of Existence
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Acknowledgements: Heartfelt thanks to Professor Brendan Gleeson for critically reviewing these essays. Countless improvements, both substantive and stylistic, were made in response to his feedback. Remaining errors and infelicities are my own. Thanks also to Agim Sulaj for generously giving permission to use his image on the cover, and to Andrew Doodson for his design of the cover.

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[*] This is a provisional Table of Contents. The essays are being published individually as they are completed, meaning that this project is a work-in-progress which may evolve.

‘That which most breeds art is art.’

– **William Morris**

Democratising the Poet: William Morris and the Art of Everyday Life

Samuel Alexander

Born in 1834, William Morris was a poet, novelist, designer, printer, philosopher, activist, utopian theorist, pioneering environmentalist, romantic, medievalist, father, and husband. When he died in 1898 at sixty-two years of age, his doctor stated that the cause of death was 'simply being William Morris, and having done more work than most ten men.'[1] E.P. Thompson, in his prominent biography, described Morris's life as reflecting an evolution 'from romantic to revolutionary',[2] but it is probably fairer to say that Morris always remained something of a romantic, albeit one with a growing political sensibility. Despite coming to identify as a socialist, even a Marxist, it befits this complex and original thinker to acknowledge that he is, in a sense, beyond easy classification. This is why, as one commentator notes, everyone seems to want William Morris on their side.[3] He is claimed by socialists, anarchists, environmentalists, and artists – a testament to his social and political relevance, both then and now. At the same time, he has paradoxically become a neglected thinker today, unfairly dismissed by some as a nostalgic sentimentalist. But his aesthetic and political ideas point toward missing ingredients in most contemporary analyses of our troubled age, offering critical insight into how to understand, and perhaps resolve, aspects of the ever-deepening human-ecological predicament.

Before all else, Morris is remembered today as the leading figure – both arch-theorist and practitioner – in what became known as the Arts and Crafts Movement, which emerged in the late nineteenth century as a subclass of British aestheticism. This was a counter-movement against the trends of mechanisation in production and the intensifying division of labour within industrial capitalism, both of which Morris considered regressive shifts in the productive relations of British society. He feared that 'modern civilization [was] on the road to trample out all the beauty in life,'[4] dehumanising people by treating them as replaceable cogs in a profit-centred machine, all the while degrading the natural environment. Far from being crudely anti-technology, however, Morris was in favour of what today would be called 'appropriate technology'. He never rejected the role of machines in minimising hard, unpleasant labour – a point to which I will return. Rather, he celebrated the role of self-governed creative activity in everyday life, through which humans skillfully produced things by hand that were necessary for a good life.

Indeed, Morris' conception of the good life involved people realising themselves through the pleasurable expression of creative labour – what he broadly called 'art' – and he passionately explored this view both in theory and in practice. He conceived of himself 'not as an artist or poet in the High Romantic image, but rather as a craftsman engaged in the "lesser arts"[5], and he believed that, in a well-ordered society, '[a]rt rather than religion, was to become the centrepiece of people's daily lives, directing their hearts and minds to lofty affairs.'[6] This was the aesthetic premise upon which he built his critique of industrial capitalism, arguing that the arts were 'necessary to the life of [human beings]'[7], that there was 'some unthinking

craving for [art], some restless feeling in [our] minds of something lacking somewhere'.[8] I interpret this craving as a manifestation of the Will to Art, and the restless feeling he diagnosed as being a result of an aesthetic deficit in society.

In that spirit, this essay offers a reconstructive reading of Morris's views on art, labour, and politics. I begin by examining his broad definition of art, then review his utopian vision of an artful society as sketched in his novel *News from Nowhere* (1890).[9] This provides a foundation for evaluating Morris's theoretical views on labour, which were powerfully and eloquently presented in, among other places, his essay 'Useful Work v. Useless Toil'. This will lead to an engagement with his analysis of the so-called 'lesser arts' of craft, the importance of which he felt were being unduly diminished in an industrial and increasingly consumerist age. I conclude by exploring the political significance of Morris's aesthetic views, which will allow me to outline some of the societal implications of the preceding essays.

Morris's definition of art

To understand Morris's aesthetic views, it is necessary to grasp the inclusive way in which he defined art. In his most prominent definition (influenced by John Ruskin),[10] he declared that 'the thing I understand by real art is the expression by [human beings] of [their] pleasure in labour.'[11] This is meant to include not just the 'fine arts' – music, sculpture, painting, poetry, and architecture – but also what Morris would ironically call the 'lesser' arts and crafts. These lesser or decorative arts include the making of useful and beautiful things needed for practical affairs in everyday life, whether these be items of furniture, clothing, tools, household items, wallpaper, or even houses. He condemned the alienation of the artist from the craftsperson, of the poet from the people, and his overarching mission was to help create a society in which art would be part of everyday living.[12] In defining art as the 'beauty of life',[13] he explained:

> I must ask you to understand that by the word art, I mean something wider than is usually meant by it. I do not mean only pretty ornament though that is part of it; I do not mean only pictures and sculptures, thorough they are the highest manifestation of it; I do not mean only splendid and beautiful architecture, through that includes a great deal of all that deserves to be called art: but I mean all these things and a great many more, music, the drama, poetry, imaginative fiction, and above all and especially the kind of feeling which enables us to see beauty in the world and stimulates us to reproduce it, to increase it, to understand it, and to sympathise with those who specially deal with it. In short, by art I mean the… pleasure [which] is produced by the labour of [human beings], either manual or mental or both.[14]

Morris believed that creativity was an ahistorical 'need of a [human being's] soul',[15] and he wanted everyone to feel the same pleasure and meaning in labour that artists, as conventionally defined, feel when they are at work. '[D]elight in skill lies at the root of all art'[16], and he insisted that 'that which most breeds art is art.'[17] He felt art was the highest expression of the human spirit, a 'very serious thing',[18] and something as necessary to human beings as 'the bread we eat, the air we breathe'.[19] Indeed, he claimed that '[i]t is the province of art to set the true ideal of a full and reasonable life… a life to which the perception and creation of beauty… shall be felt to be as necessary to man as his daily bread.'[20] Art is 'above all the token of what chiefly makes life good and not evil, of joy in labour',[21] and in this light it can be

understood why Morris believed that it was impossible to disassociate art from morality and politics.

In contrast to high romanticism, Morris rejected the narrow conception of 'the artist' as a rare and inspired genius, instead maintaining that every person had the capacity to create and appreciate art. Creative expression should be part of everyday life, uniting the two elements of 'use and beauty',[22] bringing us into a harmonious relationship with self, society, and nature. In short, Morris wanted to democratise the poet and the artist. Over the course of his prolific life, he developed a social and political vision based on this egalitarian vision that there is genius, poetry, and art in all human beings, as the following passage makes clear:

> what I mean by an art is some creation of man which appeals to his emotions and his intellect by means of his senses. All the greater arts appeal directly to that intricate combination of intuitive perceptions, feelings, experience, and memory which is called imagination. All artists, who deal with those arts, have these qualities superabundantly, and have them balanced in such exquisite order that they can use them for purposes of creation. But we must never forget that all men who are not naturally deficient, or who have not been spoiled by defective or perverse education, have imagination in some measure, and also have some of the order which guides it; so that they also are partakers of the greater arts, and the masters of them have not to speak under their breath to half-a-dozen chosen men, but rather their due audience is the whole race of man properly and healthily developed.[23]

On that basis, Morris argued that society should be structured and organised to enable this aesthetic conception of flourishing. His vision of socialist society was one in which art fulfilled people during their everyday activities, offering meaning and pleasure in the exercise of their skills and creative capacities. 'That cause is the Democracy of Art,' he declared, 'the ennobling of daily and common work, which will one day put hope and pleasure in the place of fear and pain, as the forces which move [humankind] to labour and keep the world a-going.'[24] And again, art included all meaningful and creative labour, not merely the practice of the so-called fine arts.

The act of creation was less about producing a particular product and more about feeling a particular way about the product one created; about feeling connected to the process from beginning to end. It was Morris' view that the 'aim of art is to increase the happiness of [human beings], 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 [a person's] work happy and [their] rest fruitful.'[25] In a celebrated line from his essay 'Art for the People', Morris summarised his vision of aesthetic socialism by describing a society where art 'is to be made by the people and for the people, as a happiness to the maker and the user.'[26]

By contrast, in a society without art, Morris maintained, 'the progress of civilisation' would be 'as causeless as the turning of a wheel that makes nothing',[27] such that 'loss of peace and good life… must follow from the lack of it.'[28] Commenting critically on his own age, he suggested that people have 'degraded themselves into something less than [human beings]… because they have ceased to have their due share of art.'[29] Without this due share he believed true education and civilisation was impossible. His own diverse life as an artist and artisan instilled

in him the insight that creative work is incredibly fulfilling, but it also highlighted how mundane and meaningless working life was for most people in the existing conditions of British society in the late nineteenth century. In *The Necessity of Art* (1963), Marxist philosopher Ernest Fischer wrote that 'the sincere humanist artist could no longer affirm such a world. He could no longer believe that the victory of the bourgeoisie meant the triumph of humanity.'[30] Morris had anticipated this view when he wrote: 'The Death of Art was too high a price to pay for the material prosperity of the middle classes.'[31]

But in this very Death of Art, Morris was to find a source of hope. People would eventually realise that their toil under industrial capitalism was diminishing their inherent creative capacities and desires, thereby reducing them to something less than fully human. At such a point of realisation, whether it arrived sooner or later, people would 'cry out to be made [human] again.'[32] Morris believed that 'only art can do it, [only art can] redeem them from this slavery; and I say… that this is her [i.e. art's] highest and most glorious end and aim; and it is in her struggle to attain to it that she will most surely purify herself, and quicken her own aspirations towards perfection.'[33]

This vision of aesthetic flourishing required people to develop a *taste* for art, to realise their innate craving for it, as a source of resistance, hope, and vision:

> it is hard indeed as things go to give most [people] that share [in art]; for they do not miss it, or ask for it, and it is impossible as things are that they should either miss or ask for it. Nevertheless everything has a beginning, and many great things have had very small ones; and since… these ideas are already abroad in more than one form, we must not be too much discouraged at the seemingly boundless weight we have to lift.'[34]

Art would flourish when people 'begin to long for it'[35], so he asked his audience: 'what finally can we do, each of us, to cherish some germ of art, so that it may meet with others, and spread and grow little by little into the thing that we need?'[36] Here we see that art, for Morris, as for Friedrich Schiller,[37] is both the *end goal* of a good society and also the *means* by which such a society could be produced. As noted above, 'that which most breeds art is art,'[38] a statement in which a theory of change is implied.

News from Nowhere

In order to understand how Morris saw his aesthetic ideas coming to fruition in society, I will now consider his most developed expression of that vision, in his work of utopian fiction, *News from Nowhere*. One way to clarify this literary engagement is to begin with an earlier work of fiction against which Morris was by and large reacting, namely, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*,[39] published in 1888, two years before *News from Nowhere*.

Bellamy's novel is told from the perspective of Julian West, who falls asleep in Boston, Massachusetts, only to wake 113 years later, in the year 2000, in a radically changed world. In its bare essentials, Bellamy presents a picture of a socialist society where technology and machines, as well as an efficient, centralised state bureaucracy, have essentially relieved human beings of menial labour. This automation of production allows everyone to work few hours and retire early to live a life of affluence and leisure.

Even from this summary, a few central themes can be highlighted with which Morris would take issue in his own novel. Most importantly, Bellamy's vision was based on an assumption that labour was fundamentally a 'curse' that had to be lifted in a well-ordered society. In contrast, Morris believed that autonomous and creative labour was not a curse but a blessing, and that human beings would flourish when they were free to employ their skills in the production of useful and beautiful artefacts for themselves and their community. From this perspective, which did not depend on sophisticated technology or much machinery, labour was not something to be escaped in order to live a life of leisure, but something in which human beings would find meaning in everyday life. Morris believed that the good life consists of pleasurable creative work – that is, art.

Furthermore, Bellamy celebrated a centralised state as the main political tool for an egalitarian distribution of wealth and for administering technology and production. Morris' vision, however, was of a decentralised society whereby the state had 'withered away' (to use Marxist terminology), leaving local communities to govern themselves. In short, if Bellamy's socialist vision was one of affluence, technology, leisure, and centralised politics, Morris' was one of simplicity, handcraft, creative, pleasurable labour, and decentralised politics. The further element Morris added to his utopian society was a strong environmentalist perspective, taking many opportunities to highlight the dire ecological impacts of industrial production and the contrasting ethic of (re)connecting with, and taking care of, nature. Both novels presented socialist visions, but they took very different forms because of these differing assumptions and priorities. Morris's utopia will now be considered in more detail, after which some of the theoretical foundations can be examined.

♦ ♦ ♦

News from Nowhere is told from the perspective of William Guest. Like Julian West, he also falls asleep, albeit in London not Boston, only to wake up in a new society. This literary technique of mysteriously 'awakening' in a radically changed, post-revolutionary world is an obvious reference to Bellamy's novel. While the precise date of the setting is unclear,[40] it can be inferred from various passages that it is early in the twenty-first century, well over a century after the time when Morris was writing.

The narrator, Guest, wakes up from his long, deep slumber, taking it for granted that he is in his own society, in his own home, on the banks of the Thames. After getting dressed, he goes outside and notices a boatman at a landing-stage on the riverbank, who greets him cordially. It being a hot day, Guest decides to go for a swim in the river. The water is so clean that he comments on it to the boatman, who seems rather surprised by the observation, not noticing anything unusual. Here we see the first hint of our narrator being in a different world, one in which nature is in a good state of health, unlike England of the early industrial era (or today). The boatman, who seems to be dressed in simple but finely made fourteenth-century attire, offers to take Guest down the river, and as they begin their journey Guest is surprised to see salmon-nets spreading out from the riverbank. Again, this points to the theme of environmental regeneration that will distinguish this new world from the old. Indeed, it is fair to describe *News from Nowhere* as one of the first statements of an ecological utopia.[41]

As conversation between the two men continues, Guest eventually discovers that he is in England, but well into the future, although he attempts to hide the shock of this realisation from the boatman. Instead, he pretends that his confused state is due to having recently returned from many years travelling abroad. The boatman offers to be Guest's guide for the day, establishing a central relationship through which the new society is described and explored through conversation.

Guest accepts the kind offer and reaches into his pocket to discuss terms of payment. The reader is here introduced to a radically new form of economy, for the boatman is puzzled and even humoured by the suggestion that he might need to be paid for what he describes as his business. 'I would do [it] for anybody', says the boat-man, 'so to take gifts in connection with it would look very queer.'[42] Later in the novel a similar awkwardness arises when Guest offers to pay for some tobacco and an especially well-made pipe. The reader learns that this world is one in which people give what they are able, and receive what they need, such that monetary transactions have become a relic of bygone times – a reflection of an 'extinct commercial morality'.[43]

As the novel proceeds, Guest is shown various places and is introduced to many people. It is through these interactions that elements of the new society are conveyed to readers. England has come to resemble a 'garden',[44] characterised not by large industrial cities but by a pastoral and agrarian way of life. The landscapes are scattered with small, elegantly built villages, and each house has its own garden, 'carefully cultivated, and overflowing with flowers.'[45] The streets, such that they are, are lined with fruit trees. People seem to live humble, simple, and yet happy lives in harmony with nature, free from 'sham wants'[46] and the 'horrible burden of unnecessary production'.[47]

Continuing his journey, Guest sees that the citizens of this strange, post-industrial world have found freedom, pleasure, and meaning in joyful labour, producing useful and beautiful wares of the highest quality.[48] Production is undertaken based on what the community needs and what the worker enjoys, not what the profit-centred market dictates. Given that the people of Nowhere have 'found out what [they] want',[49] they are 'not driven to make a vast quantity of useless things,'[50] and so what things they do make, they 'have time and resources enough to consider [the] pleasure in making them.'[51] Machines are employed when necessary, but in the main, the technologies of handcraft provide for most of society's needs:[52] All work which it is a pleasure to do by hand machinery is happily done without more advanced technologies.[53]

Furthermore, there is no longer a severe division of labour, such that people now have diverse working lives and interests. Unlike the alienated labour of capitalism, workers in Nowhere can see *themselves* in what they create. One character, a weaver, tells Guest that besides weaving, he enjoys printing, composing, and studying mathematics, and that he is currently writing a book.[54] Labour is so enjoyable under these non-exploitative conditions that there is even a vague anxiety in society about a scarcity or shortage of work. Work-as-art is presented as the free and harmonious expression of human creative capacity, as a central feature of what it means to live well. There is certainly no problem providing an 'incentive to work', which was historically given as an objection to socialism. We learn that 'the reward of labour is *life*'.[55] On this point, the contrast with Bellamy's 'utopia of leisure' could not be sharper.

One point of criticism that can be levelled at Morris' utopian vision concerns relations between the sexes. In one sense, Morris was clearly a social progressive in this regard, highly critical of patriarchal society. He attempted to present a society with radically different relations between the sexes, celebrating the fact that 'the men have no longer any opportunity of tyranny over the women'.[56] Nevertheless, in his utopia there remains a relatively traditional division of labour, although women are certainly not confined to domestic work. Still, we are told that '[i]t is a great pleasure to a clever woman to manage a house skilfully, and to do so that all housemates about her look pleased and are grateful to her. And then, you know, everybody likes to be ordered about by a pretty woman…'.[57] Lines like this have not aged well, but a sympathetic reading can suggest that Morris's main goal was to highlight the honour and pleasure that can be derived from keeping a home, a point which Aristotle made long ago by defending the household as the foundation of the *polis*. That may be true, but to the contemporary reader it is not clear why the art of housekeeping, noble though it is under non-coercive conditions, needs to remain gendered. As contemporary eco-anarchist Ted Trainer sometimes quips: 'A woman's place is in the kitchen… right next to the man.'

In further exposition of how social relations have evolved in the new society, Guest learns that systematised education is no more, with schools for children having been replaced with a more organic and less structured process of learning by doing. He is told that children 'often make up parties, and come to play in the woods for weeks together in the summer-time, living in tents, as you see. We rather encourage them to do it; they learn to do things for themselves, and get to know the wild creatures; and you see the less they stew inside houses the better for them.'[58] As well as formal institutions of schooling having faded away, the institution of private property has also been abolished. Because that property system created the conditions for poverty and crime, we are told that there is no longer any need for prisons either.

♦ ♦ ♦

So how did all this come about? In discussion with an elderly character known as old Hammond, Guest discovers that a revolution occurred in 1952, causing a rupture that gave birth to this new socialist order beyond the 'systematized robbery'[59] and 'organized misery'[60] of industrial capitalism. There is no longer a centralised government, and in fact there is no government at all that resembles anything like political societies in history. Indeed, the Houses of Parliament at Westminster have been turned into a dung-market. 'Dung is not the worst kind of corruption,' says Hammond, 'fertility may come of that, whereas mere dearth came from the other kind, of which those walls once held the great supporters.'[61]

The historic state is described, with a clear nod to Marx, as merely a 'committee' that served the interests of the upper classes and which deluded the masses into thinking that they have some share in the management of their own affairs.[62] In the place of top-down parliamentary rule, communities now govern themselves through participatory democracy, aiming for consensus. 'The whole people is our parliament,'[63] Hammond advises. A model of social discourse is outlined in which any disagreements are addressed through various stages of discussion and debate.[64] This resembles anarchist processes of governance, and helps to explain why Morris has drawn sympathies from diverse political affiliations beyond socialism.

A brief but sophisticated explanation is given for how the revolution occurred, prompted by Guest's inquiry into whether the transition took place peacefully. 'Peacefully?' old Hammond responds, somewhat aghast: 'What peace was there amongst those poor confused wretches of the nineteenth century? It was war from beginning to end: bitter war, till hope and pleasure put an end to it.'[65] We learn that the transition from commercial slavery to freedom was a 'terrible period'[66], involving strikes, lock-outs, starvation, and violent rioting and fighting. The working classes became increasingly organised and powerful, slowly squeezing more power and wealth from the upper classes, such that there came a time when 'the mere threat of a "strike" was enough to gain any minor point.'[67] Minimum wages were secured, coupled with a maximum price on the necessities of life.

Eventually, however, the upper classes fought back aggressively, in the hope of reclaiming their lost power. By order of the executive, thousands of unarmed workers were murdered in a gathering at Trafalgar Square. But this massacre merely provoked the 'great crash' of 1952, inducing an extreme state of hunger and disorder. This did not end the revolutionary period but genuinely ignited it, leading to a General Strike. The trains stopped running, the newspapers stopped printing, food stopped being distributed, and all at once the upper classes realised that the economy depended on the workers. Eventually this clash of interests led to two years of civil war, after which so much of the economy had been destroyed that a centralised state was no longer an affordable luxury. Thus, communities were forced to build the new world from the ground up, in their new conditions of precarious freedom.

Looking back on those times, old Hammond states that the 'motive-power of the change was a longing for freedom and equality.'[68] At first the socialist agents for change seemed to aim for little more than greater distribution of wealth, as if the same industrial mode of production, albeit under the governance of a socialist state, could be used to lift the poorest out of destitution and satisfy the masses. But Hammond dismissed this goal as merely 'improved slave-rations.'[69] After the civil war, what emerged could be described not as *more of the same* but rather, as outlined above, *less, different, and better*.

Trying to expand the political imagination, Morris's utopia wasn't about providing workers with a greater share of industrially produced wealth and maximising leisure using technology and machinery. In contrast to Bellamy, he was attempting to explore a radically new conception of wealth and a new means of producing it – through the pleasurable and meaningful expression of creative labour, that is, through art. Indeed, it is notable that art as conventionally defined (painting, music, poetry, etc), is barely mentioned in *News from Nowhere*. The insinuation is that life itself had become art, through the everyday satisfactions of creative activity and aesthetic experience. As Hammond says, what used to be called art 'has no name amongst us now, because it has become a necessary part of the labour of every [individual] who produces.'[70] In an important passage, the old man continues:

> The art or work-pleasure, as one ought to call it, of which I am now speaking, sprung up almost spontaneously, it seems, *from a kind of instinct amongst people*, no longer driven desperately to painful and terrible over-work, to do the best they could with the work in hand – to make it excellent of its kind; and when that had gone on for a little, *a craving for beauty seemed to awaken* in men's minds, and they began rudely and awkwardly to ornament the wares which they made; and when they had once set to work at that, *it soon began to grow*. All this was much

> helped by the abolition of the squalor which our immediate ancestors put up with so coolly... Thus at last and by slow degrees we got pleasure into our work; then we became conscious of that pleasure, and cultivated it, and took care that we had our fill of it; and then all was gained, and we were happy. So may it be for ages and ages![71]

Of course, the word utopia derives from the Greek word meaning 'nowhere' (hence *News from Nowhere*, which was subtitled 'A Utopian Romance'). Like Thomas More, Morris was using the term in full knowledge that the world he described did not exist and might never exist. This sometimes invites the accusation that Morris was being escapist, merely presenting a dreamworld or romantic fantasy that lacked any critical relationship to reality. But if such a critique is justified in relation to some utopians, it is unwarranted when levelled at Morris. By presenting a compelling vision of a better, richer, more meaningful and sustainable world, he was trying to expose the flaws in the industrial society of his time. His strategy was to induce discontent in the reader, and therefore have a political effect by agitating and energising his readers by provoking outrage, hope, and vision.

Philosopher Gary Zabel, in his book *Art and Society* (1993), defends Morris's utopian project, arguing that he understood:

> people are not puppets operated by anonymous historical forces, that they do not struggle, at least not effectively, for goals they cannot plausibly envision. Moreover, as an artist he knew that an image of the future capable of motivating action, and even eliciting sacrifices, had to have more than a purely intellectual appeal, that it had to be anchored in the most fundamental texture of people's sensuous and emotional experience. Socialists must deploy the utopian imagination in a struggle for what Antonio Gramsci was later to call 'hegemony', in which their emancipatory vision becomes a deeply rooted schema through which people interpret the details of their everyday lives.[72]

In this sense, Morris's novel can be considered a success, not *in spite of* it being based on a 'dream' but *because* of it. Scholar Clive Wilmer writes in his introduction to *News from Nowhere*: 'The image of dreaming could hardly be more significant. No longer a form of escape, it becomes the means whereby a different order is conceived and then becomes possible in the process of awakening.'[73] So *News from Nowhere* is neither a blueprint nor a prediction. It is an expression of discontent and a personal vision. As Wilmer concludes: 'It asserts the possibility of a different world. We are not expected to swallow Morris's dream whole. On the contrary, we are encouraged to dream for ourselves.'[74]

'Useful Work v. Useless Toil': An aesthetic analysis of labour

My review of Morris's novel highlighted how meaningful and pleasurable labour lay at the heart of his utopian vision, and how this sat in direct contrast with Bellamy's hopes for a society of leisure. According to Morris, creative work was not something to be escaped but to be sought out and embraced – for the reward was *life* itself. Just as Nietzsche revalued the place of suffering in a well-lived life,[75] Morris argued that labour need not be a curse if it is creative and self-directed. The social and political challenge was to maximise opportunities for the expression of pleasure in labour, that is, for what Morris called art. This led him to develop a unique form of anarcho-socialism, or what he sometimes called a 'Democracy of Art'.[76] These

ideas regarding labour and art were presented powerfully in his essay 'Useful Work v. Useless Toil', published two years before *News from Nowhere*, and which certainly influenced the thematic content of the novel. Given the centrality of these themes to Morris's worldview, his arguments in the said essay, as well as in his collection of lectures published as *Hopes and Fears for Art*, deserve some attention.

Morris begins by acknowledging that nature does not provide everything for humankind (or any animal) without the requirement of labour. We must either labour or perish. This raises the questions: 'what shall our necessary hours of labour bring forth?'[77] And how can we gain hope of pleasure in our daily creative skill, hope of pleasure in using what it makes, and hope of pleasure in rest?[78] These are questions which we all ought to ask, Morris argued, for the answers fundamentally shape our lives and society, for better or for worse. Examining the nature of labour in productive relations can inform a critique of existing society as well as guide the vision of an alternative, freer one. What is being produced? In what conditions? And why?

Morris objected to the industrial economy of his own age on the grounds that productive relations were harmful both to the worker (harsh and demeaning toil) and the consumer (purchasing what were often meaningless, unnecessary commodities). One of his leading motivations in the essay 'Useful Work v. Useless Toil' was to meditate on the issue of why English society had developed in such a way that most people were working in horrible conditions, producing what were often superfluous things, only in demand by a leisured aristocracy. In one of his more acidic moments, Morris commented in words that could have been penned by Henry Thoreau, that:

> I have never been in any rich man's house which would not have looked the better for having a bonfire made outside of it of nine-tenths of all that it held. Indeed, our sacrifice on the side of luxury will, it seems to me, be little or nothing: for, as far as I can make out, what people usually mean by it, is either a gathering of possessions which are sheer vexations to the owner, or a chain of pompous circumstance, which checks and annoys the rich man at every step. Yes, luxury cannot exist without slavery of some kind or other, and its abolition will be blessed, like the abolition of other slaveries, by the freeing both of the slaves and of their masters.[79]

This is a polemical statement, of course, but if we distil these lines down to their core thesis it becomes clear that Morris is highlighting the critical connection between, on the one hand, what a society needs and desires to consume, and, on the other, the nature and extent of labour required to meet those needs and desires. The more a society or an individual desires in terms of material wealth, the more labour is required for production of that wealth, and Morris calls on us to remain cognisant of the trade-off here. Production is inextricably related to consumption, and both are value-laden categories that require people to answer: what is an economy *for*?

In other words, superfluous consumption in culture can require more labour than is socially optimal; that is, it can be uneconomic, with costs that exceed the benefits. Even more importantly, the production of luxuries can require *forms* of labour that are neither meaningful nor pleasurable. If, however, a society attains 'simplicity of life' by moderating its material needs and desires, then Morris argued that the labour required to produce necessary

and desirable things will not be a curse but a pleasure. Indeed, this position isn't merely about pleasure but also about justice. 'For if our wants are few,' Morris maintains, 'we shall have but little chance of being driven by our wants into injustice; and if we are fixed in the principle of giving every [person their] due, how can our self-respect bear that we should give too much to ourselves?[80] Accordingly, if 'we attain also to the love of justice, then will all things be ready for the new springtime of the arts.'[81]

On this ethical basis, Morris built his social and political vision of a Democracy of Art. 'The chief duty of the civilised world today,' he argued, 'is to set about making labour happy for all.'[82] And his premise was that people would and do enjoy labour if they are free to produce beautiful and useful things. If there was labour that was inherently unpleasant, then Morris had two main responses: either, in these limited circumstances, use appropriate technology and machinery to do the work; or, to consider whether the costs of the unpleasant labour were really worth the expected rewards, and if not, then forgo such labour and what it would have produced.

Thus, Morris believed that politics was fundamentally about organising labour to provide for worthwhile needs – an orientation that is obviously and inescapably value-laden. It demands an answer to the questions: what 'needs' and 'desires' are worthwhile? And what should a society be producing, why, and for whom? Morris did not believe the market under capitalism was able to answer these questions properly. This is because markets are designed to incentivise the production of things that people are most able to pay for. But in a deeply unequal society like England (then and now), the market thus becomes directed toward the production of what the richest members want, not what a society more generally needs. Furthermore, in a culture that overvalues material wealth through a confusion of desire, the market is again distorted, making the workforce meet what are really artificial needs and 'sham wants'.[83]

All this will have, and is having, demonstrable ecological consequences too, given that superfluous production and consumption will tend to make excessive demands on natural resources and ecosystems, just as the waste-streams of such a consumerist-industrial society will degrade nature in dangerous ways. In *News from Nowhere*, Guest is told that the industrial era was a 'mistaken' way of living, because people tried 'to make "nature" their slave… [as if] "nature" was something outside of them.'[84] This type of mistake was problematic from an eco-centric perspective, purely on the grounds that ecosystems and wildlife are of inherent worth and ought not to be destroyed to meet the dubious needs of consumerist cultures. But even with respect to specifically human wellbeing, Morris was disturbed by how industrial society was making life ugly, turning rivers into filthy sewers, clearing ancient forests, polluting the air with sulphurous smoke, and generally making the increasingly urban environment unpleasant and unhealthy to be in. In a line that establishes his place as a pioneer of environmentalism, he asked his audience: 'What kind of account shall we be able to give to those who come after us of our dealings with the earth?'[85] In sum, Morris contended that:

> If we were only to come to our right minds, and could see the necessity for making labour sweet to all [people]… 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

> [individuals'] happiness in [their] labour – an art made by the people, and for the people, as a happiness to the maker and the user.[86]

Beautifying labour through the 'lesser arts'

The above was framed as an aesthetic analysis of labour. Morris argued that labour is beautiful if the worker takes pleasure in self-directed creative activity in pleasant conditions; labour is ugly if the worker is forced to produce luxuries for an overclass in conditions of squalor. Thus the *sensual experience* of work was central to Morris's worldview – both critically and in terms of his vision of an alternative society. This aesthetic of labour was also the soil in which his politics was seeded.

To deepen this analysis, I return to his distinction between the 'fine arts' (of music, sculpture, painting, poetry, and architecture) and what he called the 'lesser arts' or 'decorative arts' (such as carpentry, pottery, glassware, sewing, cobbling, embroidery, printing, etc). One of Morris's central theoretical contributions to aesthetics was his critique of how the lesser arts had been driven apart, in the industrial era, from what became the conventional understanding of art (as something limited to the fine arts). When a society comes to make this distinction, Morris believed that 'it is ill for the Arts altogether: the lesser ones become trivial, mechanical, unintelligent, incapable of resisting the changes pressed upon them by fashion and dishonesty,'[87] and the fine arts 'become nothing but dull adjuncts to unmeaning pomp, or ingenious toys for a few rich and idle men.'[88] Morris sought to dignify the lesser arts and crafts by once again elevating them to the status of art proper, given that it was through these lesser arts that human beings 'have at all times more or less striven to beautify the familiar matters of everyday life.'[89]

As noted above, human beings, like all animals, must labour or perish. In labouring for those material things that humanity needs to flourish, Morris aspired for an artful labour that expressed the innate creativity of the human spirit: 'this is at the root of the whole matter, everything made by man's hands has a *form*, which must be either beautiful or ugly; beautiful if it is in accord with Nature, and helps her; ugly if it is discordant with Nature, and thwarts her; it cannot be indifferent.'[90] Accordingly, if humanity *must* labour in order to survive and flourish, and all labour must be either beautiful or ugly, then the lesser arts ought to be celebrated as the domain where human beings can 'beautify labour,'[91] by finding meaning and pleasure in the production and use of necessary artefacts. Morris wrote: 'to give people pleasure in 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.'[92]

This reinforces Morris's egalitarian ethos, which I've framed in terms of democratising the poet. This is a view that pushes against the romantic ideal of the poet as a rare and specially gifted 'genius'. Morris maintained that 'I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few.'[93] His aim was to make art truly popular, not merely something held in the houses of the rich or practiced only by an elite class of creatives. Like Marx, Morris did not conceive of self-expression or self-actualisation as an individual affair, but as something fundamentally social and ultimately political: the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. The vision was of an aestheticised society in which

everyone was enabled to be an artist in everyday life, through the meaningful expression of creative labour, and to enjoy art (including the beautiful products of the lesser arts) in leisure. In a lecture on this topic, Morris impressed this vision upon his audience: 'I am bidding you learn to be artists, if art is not to come to an end amongst us; and what is an artist but a workman who is determined that, whatever else happens, his work be excellent? or, to put it in another way: the decoration of workmanship, what is it but the expression of man's pleasure in successful labour?'[94]

On these issues Morris looked back to medieval times – the 'Middle Ages' – and found aspects of economic life far superior to the productive relations of the industrial society in which he was embedded. 'In those days all handicraftsmen were ARTISTS, as we should now call them.'[95] This positive view of history can surprise readers, and lead to accusations of naïve romanticism or deluded nostalgia, but Morris was prepared for this counterattack and had a response. He was, of course, perfectly aware of the profound flaws of feudal society:

> Once men sat under grinding tyrannies, amidst violence and fear so great, that nowadays we wonder how they lived through twenty-four hours of it, till we remember that then, as now, their daily labour was the main part of their lives, and that that daily labour was sweetened by the daily creation of art; and shall we who are delivered from the evils they bore, live drearier days than they did? Shall men, who have come forth from so many tyrannies, bind themselves to yet another one, and become the slaves of nature, piling day upon day of hopeless, useless toil?'[96]

It is important to recognise that Morris was not crudely calling for a return to the feudal society of the Middle Ages. Rather, he was seeking to highlight how 'industrial progress' had actually been regressive in some regards, specifically with respect to opportunities in working life for pleasure in the exercise of skill. In his essay 'The Relations of Art to Labour', Morris noted that medieval craftsmen owned their own tools and materials, and by and large directed their own working day. Morris maintained that:

> … the more the question is studied, both through the existing remains of mediaeval art and through the records left us of the condition of the people at the time, the clearer it is seen that it is no exaggeration to say that during the middle ages nothing that was made was otherwise than beautiful; that beauty formed as essential a part of man's handiwork then as it does of nature's handiwork always. And further, that this essential beauty of handiwork was, amongst a vigorous and healthy people, the inevitable result of the workman working freely, and for no master; having, as I have said before, full control over his material, tools, and time.[97]

It may be that Morris is glossing, to some extent, the nature of working life in the Middle Ages, but resolving that historical question is not my interest and, in the end, it wasn't Morris's primary concern either. He was looking to the past to better understand his industrialising present, so that we could all move toward a better, freer, and more dignified future in which all people can have a share in art. The following passage makes his prospective mission clear: 'It is a dream, you may say, of what has never been and what will never 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.' Hopelessness, he reminded his listeners and readers, would have locked his mouth shut, not opened it.[98]

The politics of everyday aesthetics

As discussed above, Morris felt that the productive relations of industrial capitalism were draining everyday existence of its aesthetic value, its beauty, emptying life of its art and recklessly degrading nature along the way. Beauty was not something he hoped would be restored merely to artists, narrowly defined. He was calling for a wholesale aesthetic rebellion in the name of humankind, all of whom deserve to realise pleasure and meaning in creative labour – in art. As Gary Zabel notes, leaving aside a few scattered comments on aesthetics in Marx and Engels, Morris was the first socialist writer 'to frame a theory that locate[d] art squarely within the general life process of society.'[99]

That was the foundation of Morris's worldview, upon which he built his eco-aesthetic politics. His political activity was an education for hope, an attempt to refine social and political aspirations and imbue them with greater ambitions. Like Friedrich Schiller,[100] Morris was of the conviction that a new type of human being had to precede any successful structural transformation of society, for without the former the latter would eventually degenerate into what it was trying to leave behind. Art was necessary to that transformation of character. Like Marx, Morris took the dignity of self-expression as something that could not remain 'individual' but ultimately required social and political expression. As Terry Eagleton explains:

> The aesthete… possesses more truth than the left generally imagines. The point is not to substitute art for life, but to convert life into art. Living like a work of art means fully realising one's capacities – this is Marx's ethics. It is also the basis of his politics: socialism is whatever set of institutional arrangements would allow this to happen to the greatest extent.[101]

Morris would have agreed, albeit colouring his own conception of aesthetic socialism with a far deeper shade of green than Marx ever employed.[102] In 'The Society of the Future', Morris upheld a vision of a 'society conscious of a wish to keep life simple, to forgo some of the power over nature won by past ages in order to be more human and less mechanical, and willing to sacrifice something to this end.'[103] If he were alive today, Morris would surely be an advocate for degrowth, for he believed, as the contemporary phrase goes, 'less could be more' – but not just less of the same, but less and different. He did not merely want the working classes to receive a greater share of industrially produced material wealth. He demanded a new conception of wealth and freedom. He wanted human life and society to become so infused with art that the very distinction became obsolete.

Nevertheless, Morris was certainly not blind to 'what stupendous difficulties, social and economical, there are in the way of this.'[104] Industrial capitalism wasn't going to lie down lie a lamb at the mere request of left-leaning environmentalists or political radicals. He was also aware that both his lines of critique, and his vision of an alternative society, would seem strange or even out of place in an industrial era. 'How can I ask working-men passing up and down these hideous streets day by day to care about beauty?'[105] As to be expected, he had an answer. Part of his theory of change was based on what he saw as the natural, emerging consequence of people becoming ever more alienated from their own creative natures. To his listeners he insisted that 'you will become so discontented with what is bad, that you will determine to bear no longer that short-sighted reckless brutality of squalor that so disgraces our intricate civilisation.'[106]

We see here that even his vision of aesthetic rebellion was grounded in affect as much as reason. It would be a *felt need* that would emerge and drive the transformation of society, as much as a new understanding. Indeed, the relationship here is dialectical: a new sensibility could create fertile conditions for a new understanding, just as a new understanding of things could affect sensuous experience. Thereby sensuality and understanding develop in fruitful collision, each shaping, as it is shaped by, the other.

Looking back from the twenty-first century, it is clear that Morris was premature in anticipating these affective drivers for revolt, but this error in timing implies no necessary error in approach or strategy. Even a glance at the world today suggests that simmering discontent with the status quo is everywhere beginning to boil, and thus the task of political organisers and activists is to ensure, via aesthetic interventions in culture, that this powerful social energy is directed towards considered action for justice, sustainability, and wellbeing, not used to fuel further polarisation and violence. Both pathways remain live options, even as it is almost certain that what results will fall somewhere between these extremes. Morris would remind us, however, that where along that spectrum society eventually falls is, in large measure, up to us. And in that spirit, he would urge us to see that our primary task is to 'kindle the desire for beauty, and better still, for the development of the faculty that creates beauty.'[107] With a nod to Schiller, Morris believed in the critical importance of aesthetic education, encapsulating his theory of change in his maxim: 'that which most breeds art is art.'[108]

Although Morris was arguably a better critical and visionary theorist than he was political strategist, he was not so naïve as to think that beauty could be restored to any human society merely by art and artists (narrowly conceived). As the long passages in *News from Nowhere* make abundantly clear, he knew full well that his vision of an aestheticised society needed to join forces with social and political agitators fighting the existing order, and with prefigurative activists trying to build the new world within the shell of the old. He knew that any transition to a radically new society was only going to transpire by way of crisis, hardship, and suffering. But it is no good having an effective means of realising one's political vision if the vision itself is misconceived, and that is the enduring value of Morris's radical aesthetics. He presented a compelling vision worth fighting for – an Ecological Democracy of Art. And even if you have 'built castles in the air,' as Henry Thoreau once wrote, 'your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.'[109]

[1] See Clive Wilmer, 'Introduction' to William Morris, *News from Nowhere and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 2004) p. ix.
[2] E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (London: Merlin Press, 1976).
[3] See, e.g., Mark Bevir, 'William Morris: The Modern Self, Art, and Politics' (1998) *History of European Ideas* 24(3): pp. 175-194.

[4] William Morris, 'The Beauty of Life' in William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art: Five Lectures by William Morris*. Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1882/hopes/chapters/index.htm (accessed 10 May 2023), para. 11.
[5] See Bevir, 'William Morris', note 3, p. 179.
[6] Ibid.
[7] William Morris, 'The Art of the People' in Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art*, note 4, para. 8.
[8] William Morris, 'Making the Best of It' in Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art*, note 4, para. 109
[9] William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, in William Morris, *News from Nowhere and Other Writings* (London, Penguin, 2004), pp. 41-228.
[10] See William Morris, 'Preface to the Nature of Gothic' in Morris, *News from Nowhere and Other Writings,* note 9, p. 367 ('the lesson which Ruskin here teaches us is that art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour').
[11] Morris, 'Art of the People,' note 7, para. 38.
[12] Paragraphing from Jessie Kocmanova and J.E. Purkyne, 'The Aesthetic Opinions of William Morris' (1967) *Comparative Literature Studies* 4(4): p. 418.
[13] See Morris, 'Beauty of Life', note 4.
[14] William Morris, 'Introduction to Art to Labour'. Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1884/artintro.htm (accessed 10 May 2023), para. 1.
[15] William Morris 'Art and Socialism'. Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1884/as/as.htm (accessed 10 May 2023), para. 51.
[16] William Morris, 'Some Hints on Pattern-Designing' in William Morris, *News from Nowhere and Other Writings* (London, Penguin, 2004), p. 263.
[17] Morris, 'Beauty of Life' note 4, para. 102.
[18] Morris, 'Art of the people', note 7, para. 2.
[19] See Bevir, note 3, 'William Morris' p. 178,
[20] William Morris, *The Collected Works of William Morris* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1910-1915), Vol. 23, p. 279.
[21] William Morris, *The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969), p 52.
[22] William Morris, 'Art and the Beauty of the Earth'. Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1881/earth.htm (accessed 10 May 2023), para. 1.
[23] William Morris, 'The Lesser Arts of Life' (lecture, 1882) Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1882/life1.htm (14 July 2023).
[24] Morris, 'Beauty of Life', note 4, para. 104.
[25] William Morris, 'The Aims of Art'. Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1886/aims.htm (accessed 10 May 2023), para. 8.
[26] Morris, 'Art of the People' note 7, para. 46.
[27] Ibid, para. 8.
[28] William Morris, 'The Lesser Arts', Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art*, note 4, para. 27.
[29] Morris, 'Beauty of Life' note 7, para. 34.
[30] Ernest Fischer, *The Necessity of Art* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p. 52.
[31] Morris, 'Art and Socialism' note 15, para. 49.
[32] Morris, 'Beauty of Life' note 7, para. 54.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid, para. 41.
[35] Ibid, para. 56.
[36] Ibid.
[37] See Samuel Alexander, 'The Politics of Beauty: Schiller on Freedom and Aesthetic Education' in this collection of essays. The full set will be posted here: http://samuelalexander.info/s-m-p-l-c-t-y-ecological-civilisation-and-the-will-to-art/ (accessed 10 May 2023).
[38] Morris, 'Beauty of Life' para. 102.
[39] Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 1887-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[40] Morris wasn't merely unclear about when the novel was set; the dates upon which to base a timeframe are seemingly contradictory or inconsistent. In Chapter 2, the boatman describes a bridge, built in 2003, as 'not very old'. From this it can be inferred that the book is set soon after 2003. Readers also discover that the revolution occurred in 1952 (which I discuss later in this essay), and the character old Hammond, who is around 105 years old, was present during the revolution, seemingly as a young man, not a child. These

timestamps considered together suggest the era of the book could be in the first or second decade of the twenty-first century (allowing old Hammond to be a young adult during the revolution). Given that Bellamy's novel was set 113 years in the future, we might imagine that Morris also reflected that timeline in his own book, which would be 2003. Nevertheless, in Chapter 12, it is stated that people had been living in the new society for at least 150 years, and given that the revolution was 1952, a reader might infer that the setting is early in the twenty-second century. But if that is so, old Hammond cannot have been alive during the revolution 150 years earlier, given that we are told he is 105. These inconsistencies cannot be resolved, but doing so is not critical to understanding the novel. It may have been that Morris introduced these inconsistencies as he revised the original serialised publication of the text into the book version, where some key dates were changed (e.g., the date of the revolution was changed from 1910 to 1952, no doubt reflecting Morris' pessimism about the likelihood of revolution during his own lifetime).

[41] See generally, Marius de Geus, *Ecological Utopias: Envisioning the Sustainable Society* (Utrecht: International Books, 1999), especially Ch 6.

[42] Morris, *News from Nowhere*, note 9, p. 50.

[43] Ibid, p. 74.

[44] Ibid, p. 105.

[45] Ibid, p. 81.

[46] Ibid, p. 111.

[47] Ibid, p. 124, See also, p. 127.

[48] Ibid, p. 76, p. 81, pp. 121-3.

[49] Ibid, p. 127.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid, p. 125.

[53] Ibid, p. 127.

[54] Ibid, p. 58.

[55] Ibid, p. 122.

[56] Ibid, p. 93.

[57] Ibid, p. 94.

[58] Ibid, p. 65.

[59] Ibid, p. 97.

[60] Ibid, p. 126.

[61] Ibid, p. 107.

[62] Ibid, p. 108.

[63] Ibid, p. 107.

[64] Ibid, p. 119.

[65] Ibid, p. 133.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid, p. 136.

[68] Ibid, p. 134.

[69] Ibid, p. 135.

[70] Ibid, p. 160.

[71] Ibid (emphasis added).

[72] Gary Zabel, 'The Radical Aesthetics of William Morris' in Gary Zabel, *Art and Society: Lectures and Essays by William Morris* (Boston: George's Hill, 1993).

[73] Wilmer, 'Introduction' note 1, p. xxix.

[74] Ibid, p. xxxv.

[75] See Samuel Alexander, 'Pessimism without Despair: Suffering, Desire, and the Affirmation of Life' and Samuel Alexander, 'An Aesthetic Justification of Existence: The Redemptive Function of Art' in this collection of essays. See link in note 37.

[76] Morris, 'Beauty of Life', note 4, para. 104.

[77] Morris, 'Art of the people', note 7, para. 15.

[78] William Morris, *Useful Work v. Useless Toil* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 2.

[79] Morris, 'Art of the people', note 7, para. 54.

[80] Ibid, para. 52.

[81] Ibid, para. 55.

[82] Ibid, para. 41.

[83] Morris, *News from Nowhere*, note 9, p. 111.
[84] Ibid, p. 200.
[85] Morris, *Collected Works*, note 20, Vol. 23, p. 165.
[86] Morris, 'Art of the people', note 7, para. 46.
[87] Morris, 'The Lesser Arts', note 28, para. 2.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid, para. 3.
[90] Ibid, para. 4 (my emphasis).
[91] Ibid, para. 8.
[92] Ibid, para. 5.
[93] Ibid, para. 65.
[94] Ibid, para. 58.
[95] Ibid, para. 15.
[96] Morris, 'Art of the People', note 7, para. 17.
[97] Morris, 'The Relations of Art to Labour',
[98] Morris, 'Art of the People', note 7.
[99] Zabel, 'Radical Aesthetics', note 72, p. 1.
[100] See note 37.
[101] Terry Eagleton, 'Be Like the Silkworm' (29 June 2023) *London Review of Books* 45(13).
[102] That said, see the growing body of literature on Marxism and ecology, especially the work by John Bellamy Foster that is plausibly reconstructing Marx as an environmentalist.
[103] William Morris, 'The Society of the Future' (1889). Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1887/societyfuture.htm (accessed 15 July 2023).
[104] Morris, 'The Lesser Arts' note 28, para. 35.
[105] Ibid, para. 40.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid, para. 29.
[108] See note 17.
[109] Henry Thoreau, *Walden*, in Carl Bode (ed.) *The Portable Thoreau* (New York: Penguin, 1982), p. 562.