There was a paradox in the writing and the reception of *News from Nowhere*. In some ways it was a very public work, with each episode in *Commonweal* effectively an invitation to the reader to engage in discourse with the text. It was almost an irritant, to stimulate thought and discussion about the reader's own utopia. But at the same time as it was a work with a specific intention and readership, it was also intensely personal, elevating many of Morris's own concerns, preferences and even idiosyncrasies to the status of core elements of life in the new society: an obvious example is the uneven representation of the arts in Nowhere. Almost every conceivable kind of craft is represented, but the non-plastic arts are on the whole neglected. Meier patiently lists these omissions: there were no theatrical performances, though the architecture of the theatre was praised. There was no account of any enquiry with scientific or technical aims. And as for music, Meier writes, "The outlook is restricted and somewhat discouraging." ¹

An explanation could lie in Morris's authorial and partisan prejudices, but this trivialises his achievement and does not go very far in explaining the persistent popularity of the work. A more convincing answer lies in an examination of the intellectual roots of Nowhere and the tradition in Western thought that has seen good work as the most basic source of human satisfaction.

Certainly the novel is not short of accounts of work. Guest's first encounter with a Nowhere resident occurs when Dick the ferryman reveals that people do not expect payment for the services they provide and that he is about to do "a good turn to a friend of mine, who wants to take my work here." (Ch. II p.11) Guest's expectations about his own times make it hard for him to understand that work is freely chosen and fun. Another surprise is in store when Guest meets Dick's friend, Robert the weaver. "I only do the most mechanical kind of weaving," he apologises, but goes on to reveal a polymathic list of activities, which include printing, the study of mathematics and the writing of antiquarian books. (Ch. III, p.19) Obviously work in Nowhere is very varied. The enjoyment of physical activity is also emphasised. In the short episode with the road menders ("looking much like a boating party at Oxford"), pick work is described as "right good sport" and the quality of the workers' clothing and of their lunch suggests that they enjoy a style of life very different from that of a labourer of the 1880s. "I pondered silently." (Ch. VII, pp.44/5).
Guest’s private questions are answered by Hammond. In Nowhere, work is a pleasure because it is creative: “we are not short of wealth,” but “there is a kind of fear growing up amongst that we shall one day be short of work. It is a pleasure which we are afraid of losing, not a pain.” (Ch. XV, p.86) The products of such work are described on several occasions. The glass and crockery at the Bloomsbury dinner are simple but well-designed and obviously the hand-made product of craftsmen and women. (Ch. XVI, p.95) This style had been re-discovered or even re-invented after the civil war which had brought Nowhere into being: “The art or work-pleasure...sprung up almost spontaneously... from a kind of instinct...to do the best they could with the work in hand....they began rudely and awkwardly to ornament the wares which they had made.” (Ch. XVIII, p.125)

Similar instances can be multiplied: the work of hay harvesting is recommended in the way one might assess a holiday (Ch. XXI, p.133), giving rise to the slightly ponderous joke about the Obstinate Refusers. A group of builders has decided to erect a house worthy of a site by the river; but having been delayed by the illness of Philippa, their best mason, they cannot be attracted to the “easy-hard” work of the harvest, so that the “neighbours find it amusing to jeer good-humouredly at them.” (Ch. XXVI, p. 162) A final example underlines the importance of the process of work as well as its product. Following the Great Change, hand work became once more widespread and “machine after after machine was quietly dropped under the excuse that machines could not produce works of art, and that works of art were more and more called for.” (Ch. XXVII, p.168)

It is worth pausing to reflect just how remarkable these examples are when considered in the light of the popular understanding of work in Victorian times. The ordinary man might assume that work was to be avoided if at all possible; that machines would and could remove drudgery from work; that work and pleasure were antithetical; that art had little or nothing to do with work; and most especially that the benefits derived from occupational specialisation and from the division of labour were so obvious as to require no justification or apology. Nowhere violates each and every one of these assumptions. How was it that Morris could calmly repudiate the benefits of technical rationality and contradict the common-sense expectations of his day?

The answer lies in his thorough-going opposition to the industrial division of labour, which can be seen as the root from which all the other arguments and objections grow. Lest this seem an overblown and peremptory claim, such a position is widespread through the rest of Morris’s work: for example in ‘The Hopes of Civilization’ (1885), he wrote:

This new system....is known as the division of labour, wherein...the unit of labour is a group, not a man; the individual workman in this system is kept life-long at the performace of some task quite petty in itself, and which he soon masters, and having mastered it has nothing more to do but to go on increasing his speed of hand under the spur of competition with his fellows, until he has become the perfect machine which it is his ultimate duty to become, since without attaining to that end he must die or become a pauper.2

The position he adopted in News from Nowhere therefore was wholly consistent with previous and well-developed arguments.
To gain some purchase on this kind of problem, historians of ideas often compare seemingly remote texts to highlight the particularities of the work under discussion. (Bill Stafford's important paper on Owen, for example, achieves a new insight through a perhaps surprising comparison with B.F. Skinner.) Here it is proposed to compare Morris's thought with that of the virtual inventor of the ideology of the division of labour, Adam Smith, with the criticisms of Smith that were sketched out by Marx, and with the romantic idealism of Schelling, which saw work, play and art as inseparable.

Smith saw the division of labour as the cornerstone of modern production methods, for it increased manual dexterity and abolished the breaks that would otherwise occur when a worker changed jobs. Work was speeded up and output increased. In the light of Morris's 'Hopes' lecture it is hardly necessary to speculate as to what his answer would have been to these points. But Morris would have been even more critical of Smith's concealed human nature theory which lay behind the technicalities of the division of labour. In a remote and fictional pre-history, mankind had exhibited a deep and innate "propensity to truck and barter", which is seen as an irreducible part of human nature. The person was an atomised individual in whom self-interest arose spontaneously:

Give me that which I want, and you shall have that which you want...It is not from benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest.

Occupational specialisation arose from the society's practices, hunting, pastoralism or whatever, set into specific roles, exchanged by rational and calculative individuals on a contractual basis. To Morris, this was the "human nature of paupers, of slaves, of slave-holders...." (Ch. XIV, 81)

Morris might have found the young Smith slightly less obnoxious, for early drafts of *Wealth of Nations* sketched two arguments missing from the later edition. The first admitted that "The poor provide both for themselves and for the enormous luxury of their superiors....those who labour most get least." Morris would not have been interested in a slightly less unfair distribution of the 'benefits' of work which seemingly would have satisfied Smith. More interestingly, Smith seems to have been aware that the extreme division of labour could contradict the idea of producing an independent-minded and politically aware citizenry. Winch tells us:

according to Smith "the employment of the far greater part of those who live by labour reduces their capacity for invention and renders them...as stupid, and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become...incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation...It corrupts even the activity of the body".

The mature Smith seems to have forgotten these qualifications; to Morris he must have been the propounder of anathema.

Marx often referred to Smith in Chapter 12 of *Capital*. He described two processes by which manufacturing industry had achieved its high level of specialisation. Previously, distinct skills had been drawn together so that in the end they became "nothing more than mutually complementary partial operations": or else the work process became a "series of tiny sub-processes which were isolated and independent
of one another."6 It was this second case that corresponded to Smith's pin mill. For Marx, the wearisome repetition of a simple task violated our spontaneous need for variety; moreover the division of labour was deeply implicated in the appalling rates of morbidity and pathology that were associated with factory work in the early part of the nineteenth century.

But this monstrous technique was Janus-faced, for it was part of the process of modernisation and rationalisation which had established humanity's victory over the vagaries and vicissitudes of the environment and the problem of scarcity. Capitalism had defeated and eventually replaced the feudal aristocracy; but this same innovative force was also the means by which the proletariat was both created and exploited, making it impossible to get a living outside the system:

Having been rendered incapable of following his natural bent to make something independently, the manufacturing worker can only develop productive activity as an appurtenance of the capitalist workshop.7

Unwillingly recruited to the status of wage earner, the worker would experience the division of labour as a technology of control, a kind of mechanical supervision, where, for example, the speed of the machine dictated the pace of the worker. Accordingly the division of labour became the terrain over which the battle between capital and labour was fought. Marx allowed the egregious Ure to make his point for him: "The more skilful the workman, the more self-willed and intractable he is apt to become."8 By de-skilling, capital wrote the rules for the struggle between itself and labour even more unevenly.

The division of labour has been depicted in many ways: as the site of a concealed human nature theory, as being responsible both for stupidity and for exploitation, as an important form of modernisation, as a source of ill health and death and as a technology for social control. What were Morris's views on these issues? Like Marx, Morris regarded the contemporary organisation of industry as a source of illness and premature death. The factory as it might be contradicted the reality of Morris's own day in a very telling way.

Morris also endorsed the idea that long hours at mind-numbing work reduced people's capacity for self-education and for constructive leisure. His own views on the need for time to develop one's skills and interests are obvious: in *Nowhere*, children learn the skills and abilities they need precisely through not being taught academically. They are like Morris himself, who was lucky enough "to have been born well off enough to be sent to a school where I was taught — nothing, but learned archaeology and romance."9 Such a process of autonomous self-education could not develop among the helots of the division of labour.

Like Marx again, Morris saw the specialised groups generated by the division of labour as a source of internal contradiction within the working class. In consequence it had the effect of supporting capitalism's inequality, for it was a case of ideological divide-and-rule. The hostility between the skilled and the unskilled was an obvious example, and Morris clearly appreciated this problem: for example, in his address to the striking Northumberland miners in 1887, he warned that the progress of one group at the expense of the other was "a hopeless fight".10

It is clear that Morris found much common ground with Marx in their opposition to the division of labour. But such similarities do not exhaust Morris's critique. In
the ideal society of fellowship and equality, such economic and political objections to the division of labour could not exist, for the class structure that generated them would have been abolished. They were the products of the old society, and in Nowhere, the circumstances that had generated them had been thought away. Nonetheless, the inhabitants refuse to be tied to specialised jobs: mental and manual labour are interchangeable and specific tasks exchanged at will. So emphatic is Morris on this point, that is is clear there must have been some deeper objection to the division of labour itself.

In this, Morris was heir to a tradition, more conspicuous in the Marx of the 1844 Manuscripts, that looked critically at the experience of work itself. Human needs and the means for meeting them should be so closely tied together that work became intrinsically and self-evidently meaningful:

it is only when the objective world becomes everywhere for man in society the world of man's essential powers – human reality, and for that reason the reality of his own essential powers – that all objects become for him the objectification of himself, become objects which confirm and realise his individuality, become his objects.11

But in capitalist society his objects became someone else's. Legally, they were the employer's; metaphorically the objects that had belonged to the worker in respect of the labour he had put into them belonged to nobody. Subdivided detail-work meant that everybody and nobody had made the pins in the pin-mill. Made by no-one, the pins were equally for no-one. Abstract labour made goods for the impersonal market. Moreover, it made them by a process that put workers in competition with each other.

But perhaps the most serious aspect of this alienation was the worker's separation from species-life. Those powers and skills which distinguished humanity from animals, together with those that had been 'humanised' from their origins in our physical nature, were the basis of species-life. The most conspicuous of these powers were those that might loosely be termed creative, concerning rational, consciously planned activity:

Marx...points out that man alone of all creatures is capable of giving close attention to what he is doing over any length of time; only man can concentrate...one further quality emerges: the individual's activity is always social.12

Through the exercise of these qualities, Marx believed, the society of the future was to be discovered: this was of course not some specific end state, but a new kind of relationship among people and between the species and nature. Though capitalism had achieved the conquest of scarcity, it had had the effect of acting as a dead hand on the possibility of progress. Symbolically and actually, the division of labour restrained human history in a cul-de-sac.

Here was a parallel to the economic and industrial objections to the division of labour. Would Morris have endorsed the project of the young Marx, the idea that eventually humanity would necessarily transform capitalism in its search for the right way of living, where co-operation would replace competition and where men would discover a relationship with nature different from that of the exploitative overlord? Morris agreed with the substance of these points. Spontaneous, expressive, creative work was the central activity of human life: capitalist organisation prevented the discovery of our true natures. But Morris's agreement did not share quite the same
roots as those from which Marx's thought had grown. Firstly, Marx's technical vocabulary - objectification, species-life and so on - would not have been familiar to Morris. Moreover the philosophic preoccupations of the young Marx were not current in the Britain of the '80s and '90s. The *1844 Manuscripts* were of course not available, and Engels (that Grand Lama of Regent's Park) had defined Marxism as something economistic and scientific.

There were also important points of detail where Morris and Marx would have parted company. There was nothing in Marx, for example, to parallel Morris's insistence on the importance of physical craft skill. Marx could not have written of the "mysterious bodily pleasure that goes with the deft exercise of our bodily powers" as if it were a universal and transhistorical quality. And there was a respect in which Morris was a thinker with a different sense of the historicity of things. For Marx, men made things and also made themselves in the making. Human nature was a human product. In Morris people had something closer to a fixed and atemporal nature, which was violated and deformed by the division of labour. For example, Morris referred to the loss of pleasure in work remaining a loss that remained actually and biographically perceived, despite the long passage of time: three hundred years, it will be remembered, had not changed the human essence. A third difference between them concerned the extent to which some work could remain within the realm of distasteful necessity. For Marx, even socialist man would have to accept a minimum of alienated but necessary work. Marcuse puts the matter thus:

Marx rejects the idea that work can ever become play. Alienation would be reduced with the progressive reduction of the working day, but the latter would remain the day of unfreedom, rational but not free. For the citizens of *Nowhere* almost the reverse was true. For them, work was not only freely chosen, it was also free from the demands of instrumental rationality. The day of unfreedom had been rendered unnecessary by the invisible action of a high technology that operated the force barges and powered the banded workshops. Work could be chosen on intrinsic grounds that were closer to the aesthetic than to the practical. The hay-making, the ferrying, the road mending and the obstinate refusing of *Nowhere* are beginning to make a different sort of sense in this light.

In this respect Morris took Marx's project further than Marx himself had done. There was to be no alienating work whatsoever. Indeed Gouldner's judgement on Marx is more appropriately applied to Morris himself:

Marx wanted a society in which all men's faculties and senses - and not only his intellect - would find a home. Marx, therefore, counterposed to the Socratic rule - one man, one task - the new vision of a society in which one man would play many parts, not simply during his lifetime, but even during a single day, uniting manual and intellectual, aesthetic and cognitive activities.

In the light of these differences between Marx and Morris, it is probably fair to say that Morris was closer to the mood of Romantic thought in general than he was to the specifics of Marx in particular.

A.O. Lovejoy has characterised the romantic as being concerned with the local, the specific and the antiquarian. At the same time, however, he identifies aspects that were not backward-looking, negative and reactive. Romanticism also contained an
"apotheosis of the future", a call to action, which can be regarded as a search for a new coherence in the light of the increasing atomisation of people's experience.16 Everywhere man was parcelled out in men. Therefore a central concern was with finding a way of reconciling potentially fissiparous feeling, experiences and ideas. Unity and diversity were to be accommodated to each other, an aspiration that was almost programmatic for the German Sturm und Drang:

Beneath all the formulations of their problem, whether in ecstatic, tragic or satirical mode, lies the effort for all-sided and full experience, embracing feeling, activity, knowledge.17

Schiller was wholly typical of this project to unite the deep antinomies of human experience: he aimed to bridge the gap between "matter and form, passivity and activity, feeling and thought."18 The tension between the whole and the part, the individual and society were similarly to be reconciled. The contradiction between humanity's physical appetites and its spiritual aspirations was to be healed, and the completely untrammelled freedom to which the individual might aspire was to be integrated with the restrictions placed upon him as a member of the community.

For Schiller these were in the present polarities; but they were capable of becoming reciprocal and complementary in the future through the introduction of a third and mediating concept, the aesthetic. Both terms of each opposite pair were thereby transcended:

By means of beauty sensuous man is led to form and thought; by means of beauty spiritual man is brought back to matter and restored to the world of the senses.19 Schiller made the same point with a different vocabulary when he wrote that "the abstract thinker often has a cold heart," while the man of practical affairs lacks imagination, "incapable of extending himself to appreciate other ways of seeing and knowing".20

Artistic activity should therefore be the central human pursuit, for it integrated and combined all aspects of human nature. There was implied here a rather special version of the aesthetic. It was not to be a sheltered domain, a mere ornament to a more privileged and basic conception of real life: nor was it an exotic refuge from the world. Instead it was the site of humanity's self-discovery and self-creation:

The beautiful is to be neither mere life, nor mere form, but living form, i.e. Beauty; for it imposes upon man the double law of absolute formality and absolute reality. Consequently Reason also makes the pronouncement: with beauty man shall only play, and it is with beauty only that he shall play.21

Of course Schiller's own times were nothing like this, and the contradiction between how things actually were and how they should be was another tragic tension. Ancient Greece had understood the centrality of the aesthetic, but later societies had lost this wholeness in the pursuit of 'civilisation', a term which for Schiller, as for many later radicals, implied distinct disapprobation:

It was civilisation itself which inflicted this wound upon modern man... once the increasingly complex machinery of State necessitated a more rigorous separation of rank and occupations, then the inner unity of human nature was severed too, and a disastrous conflict set its harmonious powers at variance.22
The division of labour had separated thought and feeling, action and reflection, beauty and utility, and had generated opposed social classes.

It was the cultivation of the aesthetic that was to heal this rift, for in the pursuit of art the division of labour was to be abolished: after all, the execution of an artistic project is the physical achievement of a concept through the manipulation of the resources of the material world. Mental and manual labour were to be reciprocally determined in the service of art: neither would dominate the other. Schiller amplified this vision until it had become the model of the good society. The past held examples of social organization where individuals had been coerced in the interests of the security of the state: there had also been societies that oppressed their minorities through the democratic expression of the will of the majority.

By contrast the “aesthetic state” alone could make a truly human society because it consummated the “will of the whole through the nature of the individual.”23 Invidious differences of wealth and status would disappear certainly, but the kind of aesthetic equality that Schiller had in mind was far removed from the dullness of uniformity. There was in Schiller a celebration of cultural variety which had found, for instance, the societies of ancient Germany and Scotland very different but equally worthwhile. The society of the future would blossom into a thousand expressions of cultural diversity.

What Schiller proposed here was a shift away from the Enlightenment view of a uniform human nature. Where there had been transhistorical canons of taste and rationality, Schiller’s world was to become a series of different aesthetic projects where the division of labour was refused along with the distinction between work and play, art and reality. Marcuse wrote about this sort of feeling:

Art as Form of reality means, not the beautification of the given, but the construction of an entirely different and opposed reality. The aesthetic vision is part of the revolution....(Art) would then be creation in the material as well as intellectual sense, a juncture of technique and the arts in the total reconstruction of the environment, a juncture of town and country, industry and commerce.24

For Schiller, Marcuse and Morris, art is not a decoration of the present, nor a retreat from that present, but an authentic form of reality itself.

This was the informing and coherent argument that lay behind Morris’s opposition to the division of labour, behind the elisions and the half-argued, half-asserted asides, behind the superficially curious insistence that the form of work/art and the form of social organisation were inextricably, organically linked. Technique would not be separated from design, for both were reciprocal parts of the whole, the discovery and expression of human potential. To Morris socialism was the only means by which a society could be instituted that would provide for all the possibilities and opportunities that human nature demanded. In the simplest language, where the periods of Cobbett resonate more strongly than the accents of Schiller’s systematic philosophy, Morris expressed his vision in ‘How we live and how we might live’:25

Well, I will now let my claims for a decent life stand as I have made them. To sum them up in brief, they are: First, a healthy body; second, an active mind in sympathy with the past, the present, and the future; thirdly occupation fit for a healthy body and an active mind; and fourthly a beautiful world to live in.
This very close affinity between Schiller and Morris could be left to stand as it is as an illumination, an amplification of Morris's thought. Indeed some historians of ideas are guilty of finding affinities and similarities among writers widely dispersed across time and cultures without enquiring about the routes by which these resemblances appear. In fact, however, there is a strong intellectual link between Morris and Schiller, which Schiller's translators identify almost as a British Schillerian tradition, encompassing Coleridge, Scott, Carlyle, Ruskin, Pater and Morris himself. These are, apparently, rather wilful intellectual progeny, for they stand accused of misunderstanding Schiller:

They preached on....‘Art for Morality’s sake’: like Ruskin treating its works as ‘sermons in stone’, and naively insisting that a sense of beauty could not fail to further the performance of moral deeds; or, like William Morris, confusing art with craft, pleasure in labour with joy in contemplation, the social and religious functions of art with its aesthetic function.26

This lack of precision provides a clue to the nature of the connection between Schiller and Morris, for it was through the accounts of others, especially Coleridge and Carlyle and Ruskin, that Morris had become familiar with this structure of feelings and ideas. Coleridge, for instance, had seen it as part of his work to introduce the British reading public to systematic romantic thought. He made translations of Schiller's poetry and drama, and, as Rosemary Ashton points out, the Letters and Naive and Sentimental Poetry had a deep influence on Coleridge's own thought:

....he wrote to Sotheby about his desire that poetry should combine the life of the spirit....with that of nature.... “Nature has her proper interest; and he will know what it is, who believes and feels, that every Thing has a Life of it’s [sic] own, and that we are all one Life. A Poet’s Heart andIntellect should be combined, intimately combined and unified....with the great appearances in Nature.”27

If Coleridge's thought was sometimes more enthusiastic than it was coherent, then the lack of accuracy in the view that English culture formed of German thought is quite explicable.

In the case of Carlyle, the specific difficulties are different but the general problem is the same. Carlyle took themes from Schiller and emphasised them in isolation from the coherent whole of the original. For example, the theme of aesthetic activity as answering the needs of human nature became coarsened into a panegyric on all and any work: “Blessed is he who had found his work; let him ask for no other blessedness. He has a work, a life-purpose....Labour is Life.”28 Both Schiller and Morris would have had something to say about the nature and quality of that work, but for Carlyle effort and intensity were central. Yet on other occasions, Carlyle could be very accurate in his understanding of Schiller:

Undue cultivation of the inward or Dynamical province leads to idle, visionary, impracticable courses....Undue cultivation of the outward, again, though less immediately prejudicial....must....prove not less certainly, and perhaps still more hopelessly, pernicious.29

Morris himself acknowledged this source of influence: only Carlyle and Ruskin had opposed themselves to the complacent 'Whiggery' of the nineteenth century.30 And
in Ruskin, we find another interpreter of Schiller and an even greater influence on Morris. ‘The Nature of Gothic’, for instance, was a central statement of pre-socialist aesthetic and moral values, and Morris’s ‘Gothic Architecture’ of 1889 shows the extent of this debt. Ruskin saw in the Gothic both process and product: his account emphasized details of architectural style, but focussed also on the social and cultural practices that had made the style possible. By implication, it was also a critique of bourgeois culture, which could only produce a life-denying commercial aesthetic that was far removed from the integration of art and society that Ruskin and Schiller sought. Architecture was also an expression of a metaphysical relationship between man and landscape and a demonstration of Schillerian diversity. In an especially powerful piece of writing, Ruskin observed the exemplar of the Northern temperament at work:

...let us stand by him, when, with rough strength and hurried stroke, he smites an uncouth animation out of the rocks which he has torn from the moss of the moorland, and heaves into the darkened air the pile of iron buttresses and rugged wall, instinct with a work of an imagination as wild and wayward as the northern sea; creations of ungainly shape and rigid limb, but full of wolfish life. This made architecture the most important of the arts, for it told the story of the relationship between the environment and human need and nature. But above all the Gothic was a permanent testimony to the processes that had gone into its making, allowing a style of self-expression that was tragically absent from the factory work of the nineteenth century. It demanded that the worker give attention both to design and to execution. Mere de-skilled manual work was drudgery: mere mental labour was irresponsible. Schiller, quite as easily as Ruskin, could have written that “the workman ought often to be thinking, and the thinker ought often to be working.”

Schiller, Coleridge, Carlyle and Ruskin: this was the path by which German romantic idealism became part of Morris’s heritage. E.P. Thompson suggests that the view of labour contained here was a determining factor in the policies of the Firm and, thirty years later, it was still discernible in News from Nowhere in the form of detailed speculation about the reconciliation of the mental and the manual, the creative and the calculative.

Thompson has noted the ambivalence of this thought in English culture, for it had two parallel meanings. Using Keats as a paradigm, he argues that as romanticism went sour, the “great aspirations at the source of the Romantic Revolt – for the freeing of mankind from a corrupt oppression, for the liberation of man’s senses, affections, and reason” began to turn in on themselves, and the commitment to imagination and intuition was defeated by the successes of “analytic science” and technical rationality. Romanticism in retreat withdrew to the exotic, the strange, the antique; what had begun as a feeling about how one should live became the “easy way out of Manchester.” Art was another opiate of the people, half refuge, half entertainment. Literature, for example, did not speak to the condition of everyday life. Morris was not wholly exempt from this tendency: the medievalism of some of his early poetry is as exotic and make-believe as that of Tennyson. But in the five years from 1878 to 1883, Morris came to believe that romanticism could be taken literally and seriously. He moved away from Thompson’s “creeks and backwaters” of antiquarian bibliography and away from the decoration of intrinsically ugly houses to a position
where he could hope to re-establish the values of romanticism in everyday life. Art “was what made life romantic, as people call it, in those days: that and not robber-barons and inaccessible kings”.\textsuperscript{34} Morris’s achievement was to take the slightly cantankerous criticism of a moralistic English tradition and to give it a political dimension: in universalising the dream of the worthwhile life, he strove to make it possible in fact. All could be involved in its promise and its aspiration. It was Lovejoy’s “apotheosis of the future”, the programme for which was laid out in \textit{News from Nowhere}.

New forms of work were absolutely central to that programme, forms where the rationality of the division of labour was abandoned because it violated a basic and universal need of human nature and because it reflected productivist assumptions about maximising output and neglected the quality and experience of work. Moreover, the division of labour contradicted Morris’s implied position on the autonomy of the individual; each should make a unique contribution towards collaborative action, the direction of which should emerge from the consensus of those working on it. Neither requirement could be met by the allocation of tasks and methods by a supervisor, foreman or work-study engineer. In short, Morris saw the division of labour as a product of a society that was incapable of humanising itself and changing the conditions of its work. Divided labour and capitalism were inseparable and that, of course, is why the change had to come.

\textbf{NOTES}


8 Marx, \textit{Capital} 1, pp. 389–90.


He quotes from \textit{Commonweal}, June, 1888.


ibid.

ibid., p.39.

ibid., p.107.

ibid., p.33 (My emphasis).

ibid., p.215.


Schiller, *op.cit*, Translators' preface, p.clvi.

She quotes from Coleridge to Southey, 10/9/1802.


Schiller, *op.cit*, Translators' preface, p.clvi.
