

2015

Working in Utopia: Locating Marx's "Realm of Necessity" in the Socialist Futures of Bellamy and Morris

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WORKING IN UTOPIA: LOCATING MARX'S "REALM OF NECESSITY" IN THE
SOCIALIST FUTURES OF BELLAMY AND MORRIS

A Thesis Presented

by

Kira Braham

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts in English
Specializing in English

May, 2015

Defense Date: March 24, 2015

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ABSTRACT

This project examines two works of nineteenth-century utopian fiction, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and William Morris's *News from Nowhere*, and considers the way in which the organization of work in these imagined post-capitalist futures is guided by their respective philosophies of labor: while Bellamy's utopia is structured by an understanding of labor as primarily a social duty, Morris presents labor as central to the full development and happiness of the individual. These two utopias are read as representative of a fundamental tension within the writings of Marx: while Morris's understanding of labor aligns with the early works of Marx, Bellamy's vision is an expression of later attempts by Marx to distinguish between productive activity performed in the "realm of necessity" and that performed in the "realm of freedom." This project identifies in Bellamy's utopia a continued presence of alienated labor and reads this limitation as the inevitable outcome of an attempt to realize Marx's distinction between necessary and free production; Morris's ability to eradicate alienated labor in his utopia is thus only possible because he abandons this distinction and recognizes, as did the early Marx, the centrality of all forms of production to the individual's realization of her creative human essence. However, while Morris overcomes alienation, his attempt to break with the material foundations of capitalism leaves his utopia unsustainable; this project therefore looks to Bellamy's economic structures in an attempt to imagine how Morris's labor philosophy might be infused with Bellamy's structural elements to create a socialist future which would grow from the material conditions of capitalism while fully separating itself from the alienation of capitalist labor relations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee, Sarah Alexander, Todd McGowan, and Dona Brown, for making this project possible. I would like to particularly thank Dr. Alexander for the amount of time she spent helping me to develop my ideas, reading and responding to drafts, and talking me off the ledge. I would also like to thank all of the exceptional faculty at UVM for helping me to become a better scholar and for always being so supportive. Lastly, a huge thanks to my fellow English graduate students at UVM for creating a work environment that has been truly delightful; thank you especially to Travis and Matt for always filling my life with song.

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INTRODUCTION

Marx was skeptical of the political efficacy of utopian thinking. In *The Communist Manifesto*, he critiques utopian socialists like Henri Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, and Robert Owen for their inability to understand the role of historical forces and class antagonism in bringing about social change. For Marx, their “fantastic pictures of future society,” while revolutionary in their thinking, lose “all practical value” once the proletariat begins to realize itself as a class and engage in concrete political action (255). However, Marx’s critique here cannot be understood as an indictment against envisioning a post-capitalist future; in fact, he argues that utopian texts have intrinsic value as critical works: because their radically alternative visions of society serve to “attack every principle of existing society,” they are “full of the most valuable materials for the enlightenment of the working class” (255). For Marx, utopian thinking becomes a detriment only when it is considered as the equivalent of or alternative to immediate political action; Marx lauds future visions for their ability to act as a critical lens that could motivate and supplement “practical” activity. While Marx himself never produced a systematic utopian vision, he constantly interwove glimpses of the post-capitalist future with his analysis of the current system. It is in these moments, in which Marx provides visions of a world beyond capitalism, that the ultimate aim of the political action he advocates becomes most clear. As I argue in this thesis, the anticipatory moments of Marx’s work all point towards “a society in which the full and free development of the individual forms the ruling principle” (*Capital V. I* 739). However, an examination of these moments, while revealing continuity of purpose, also reveals a discontinuity in Marx’s work concerning the way in which this full and free development would be achieved in a future society. I will establish that this discontinuity is the result of a

significant change in Marx's philosophical understanding of the role of labor. While in his earlier works, Marx understands labor to be a necessary aspect of the individual's full and free development, his later works distinguish socially necessary acts of labor from free individual activity, creating a condition in which labor becomes a foundation, as opposed to an active component, of this development.

Understanding this discontinuity is important for those interested in the continuing relevance of Marx's political project: because this shift in Marx's philosophy produces practical differences in the end goal of social change, any movement towards this type of change must choose a direction. One path allows for a continuance of the basic distinction between work and free time that structures society under the capitalist system, while the other would require a fundamental break with this distinction. In this project, I will examine two socialist utopias, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and William Morris's *News from Nowhere*, as respective representations of these two disparate paths with the intention of better understanding both the potential and the limitations of Marx's theories through their application in these imagined futures: I will be employing these utopias as a critical lens, as Marx imagined, but I will be turning that lens not on the capitalist system, but on Marx himself. My project will not be solely critical in its function, however. In considering the way in which Marx's own ideas concerning the post-capitalist future are expressed in the systematic form of the utopian novel, his brief glimpses can be examined as holistic visions that may act, not as political programs in themselves, but as "an indication of the kind of place it is worth desiring" (Dentith 149). As Frederic Jameson argues in his classic essay, "The Politics of Utopia," it is "difficult [...] to imagine any radical political programme today without the

conception of a systemic otherness, of an alternative society, which only the idea of utopia seems to keep alive” (36).

Before I begin to examine the novels themselves, I will outline my understanding of both the way in which Marx’s focus on the development of the individual remains consistent throughout his works, as well as the way in which his view of labor in relation to this development undergoes a fundamental change. The question of rupture versus continuity in Marx’s thought is one that has been discussed heatedly since the publication in the twentieth century of previously unpublished writings composed early in his career. These works proposed the presence of a human essence or inherent human nature that some Marxists found incompatible with the materialist doctrines of his later works. The argument for the presence of a decisive rupture in Marx’s thinking is still most notably embodied by Louis Althusser, whose proposal of the “*epistemological break*” in the 1960s continues to structure debates within Marxist studies. For Althusser, Marx’s body of work can be divided into two distinct periods: the ideological and the scientific (34). He contends that Marx’s “Early Works,” those written prior to 1845, were a reaction to his historical conditions: as a young philosopher in nineteenth-century Germany, it was inevitable that he should have responded to Hegel. Thus, Marx’s early work, particularly the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844, in which “the essence of man is the basis for all history and politics,” is an attempt to reconcile the idealism of Hegel with real material conditions (226). Althusser’s conception of the epistemological break is based on his assertion that the mature Marx broke fully from this connection to Hegel, abandoning the aim of establishing a humanist philosophy that addressed a universal vision of man; moreover, this break was not incidental, but was of primary importance to

what Althusser views as Marx's most meaningful contributions. Marx's primary "scientific discovery," was, for Althusser, the establishment of what he terms Marx's "theoretical anti-humanism," which is founded on the understanding that "it is impossible to know anything about men except on *the absolute precondition* that the philosophical (theoretical) myth of man is reduced to ashes" (229, my emphasis). Thus, the theoretical foundations of *Capital* and other "Mature Works," e.g. "the concepts of mode of production, forces of production, relations of production, superstructure, ideology, etc.," are necessarily predicated on the belief that humanity can be understood not in terms of a universal essence, but only as an "ensemble of social relations" (243-4).

For Althusser, then, Marx's relationship to philosophical humanism is to be considered a youthful dalliance, an affair necessary for the formation of the mature man, but one that must be wholly disregarded once he is wed to historical materialism. For other thinkers, however, the exact opposite is true: humanism is Marx's lasting companion, the ideal to which he is faithful through every tempestuous theoretical development. One of the most eloquent advocates of this position remains Erich Fromm, a contemporary of Althusser, whose *Marx's Concept of Man* contained, in addition to his own writings on Marx, the first publication in the United States of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* in its entirety. This work, which Althusser calls "the Marx *furthest from Marx*" (159), is, for Fromm, the key to understanding the entire body of Marx's work. Contrary to Althusser, Fromm contends that "it is impossible to understand his [Marx's] concept of socialism, and his criticism of capitalism as developed in his later years, except on the basis of the concept of man which he developed in his early writings" (79). For Fromm, Marx's aim remained throughout this

career “the spiritual emancipation of man” (3), and the early works, particularly the *Manuscripts*, contain the most significant elaboration of what this emancipation would entail. Like Althusser, Fromm recognizes Marx’s philosophical debt to Hegel, particularly in the former’s focus on alienation: “For Marx, as for Hegel, the concept of alienation is based on the distinction between existence and essence, on the fact that man’s existence is alienated from his essence, that in reality he is not what he potentially is, or, to put it differently, that *he is not what he ought to be, and that he ought to be that which he could be*” (47). As Fromm goes on to explain, this alienation of human essence from human existence is a product of labor relations and thus forms Marx’s primary critique of capitalism, the system which creates these alienating labor conditions. In the *Manuscripts*, as Fromm argues, Marx establishes that what constitutes the human essence is the interaction of man with nature through the process of labor; for Marx, “Labor is the self-expression of man, an expression of his individual physical and mental powers. In this process of genuine activity, man develops himself, becomes himself; work is not only a means to an end—the product—but an end in itself, the meaningful expression of human energy” (41-2). Thus, what man could be, what he *ought* to be, is a free producer, a being who has control over his own labor, the fundamental means by which he realizes and expresses his humanity.

The Marx of the *Manuscripts* did certainly present a universal vision of humanity that is predicated upon the individual’s relationship to labor. He states, “The whole character of a species, its species-character, resides in the nature of its life activity, and free conscious activity constitutes the species-character of man” (328). For Marx, this “free conscious activity” takes the form of production and labor:

The practical creation of an objective world, the fashioning of inorganic nature, is proof that man is a conscious species-being [...] It is therefore in his fashioning of the objective that man really proves himself to be a species-being. Such production is his active species-life [...] The object of labor is therefore the objectification of the species-life of man: for man reproduces himself not only intellectually, in his consciousness, but actively and actually, and he can therefore contemplate himself in the world he himself has created. (329)

For Marx, the human essence, the species-being, is expressed through the individual's relationship to labor. Through labor, this fashioning of nature, the individual recognizes herself as an integral and active part of the world in which she exists; her consciousness, her individuality, is shaped by the way in which she sees herself reflected back in the objective world around her that she has helped to create. Labor, as man's fundamental "life-activity" is not just about the object created but is an end in itself; it is in the *act* of free conscious production that the individual becomes species-being.

Since Marx's humanism is thus predicated upon man's relationship to labor, the question of whether or not his philosophical origins continue to inform his work must be based on the way in which he presents this relationship throughout his career. Thus, when Fromm argues that "the core of the philosophy developed by the young Marx was never changed" (79), he is arguing that Marx remained committed to a vision of labor as the basis for the full development of the individual as species-being. In support of his claim for philosophical continuity in Marx, Fromm discusses the following famous passage

from *Capital Volume Three*, in which Marx lays out what is perhaps his most comprehensive vision of labor organization in a socialist society:

The realm of freedom really begins where labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends; it lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper [...] Freedom, in this sphere, can consist only in this, that socialized man, the associated producers, govern the human metabolism with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their collective control [...]; accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for their *human nature*. But this always remains a realm of necessity. The true realm of freedom, *the development of human powers as an end in itself*, begins beyond it. (959, my emphasis)

For Fromm, this passage is the height of Marx's humanism, the end of the alienation that formed the basis of his critique of capitalism. He contends that in this "new form of unalienated society," man "would no longer be crippled by the alienated mode of production and consumption; that he would truly be the master and creator of his own life, and hence that he could begin to make *living* his main business, rather than producing the *means* for living" (60).

There does indeed seem to be a fundamental continuity here between the Marx of the *Manuscripts* and the Marx of *Capital*: the universalist language of this passage—human nature, human powers—suggests the kind of philosophical humanism that Althusser was convinced Marx had broken with entirely; this is the presentation of a system whose ultimate purpose is the full and free development of the human essence.

However, the nature of this continuity, as Fromm presents it, contains a glaring contradiction. As Fromm rightly points out, this passage from *Capital* does present a society in which there is a sharp distinction between “living” and “producing the *means* for living;” in this vision put forth by the later Marx, the true expression of the human essence can occur only outside the realm of necessary production. Thus, labor that is performed for the meeting of material needs is placed in contradistinction to human life activity. While Fromm argues that there is no significant philosophical break between the early and the late Marx, his own evaluation of the *Manuscripts* suggests otherwise. As he says, labor, in this and other early works, is presented by Marx as an “end-in-itself;” it is the “self-expression of man.” In short, for the early Marx, *labor is life-activity*—producing the means for living is life itself, not something that occurs before living can properly begin. In the *Manuscripts*, Marx identifies as one of the primary sources of alienation in the capitalist system the fact that labor, for the worker, becomes “not the satisfaction of a need but a mere *means* to satisfy needs outside itself” (326). In Marx’s vision in *Capital*, there is an entire realm of human production, labor performed in the realm of necessity, that is to serve only as a means to an end.

I would thus like to propose a reading of Marx that lies somewhere between Althusser’s conception of the epistemological break and Fromm’s assertion of complete philosophical continuity. While Marx continued throughout his career to base his visions of a socialist society on the conception of a human essence that should be allowed to flourish in each individual, his understanding of the role of labor in this process of human emancipation underwent a significant shift. In his early works, Marx presents all unalienated labor as part of the free conscious production that defines man as a species-

being and thus establishes for labor a fundamental role in the full development of the humanity of the individual. However, in his later writings, the development of the human essence becomes severed from material production, culminating in his insistence in *Capital Volume Three* that labor performed in the realm of necessity must, by definition, serve only as the precondition, and not as the means, of fundamental human expression. Recognizing the continued presence of the human essence in Marx's work is vital to any understanding of the end goal of Marx's political project: Althusser's reading of the "scientific" Marx incorrectly divorces his later writings from the moral imperative that structures his definition of a better society as one in which the essential humanity of every individual would be realized. Equally as important, however, is the recognition that Marx presents two different understandings of how the creative and productive human essence would achieve this realization: in eliding this difference, Fromm avoids the fact that a fundamental decision concerning the role of labor must be made before any movement towards this goal of human emancipation can be achieved.

Marx first establishes his notion of labor as formative human activity in the *Manuscripts* of 1844, and he carries on and elaborates this understanding in his work of 1845, *The German Ideology*. In this text, he says that men

begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence [...] This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of individuals. Rather it is a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production. (37)

In this passage, it is clear that Marx points specifically to production performed for the satisfaction of material needs as a form of individual human expression; he directly cautions against viewing necessary production as merely a means of meeting material needs. As in the *Manuscripts*, his critique of capitalism in this text is based on the argument that capitalist production, which alienates the worker from his own labor, has severed him from his fundamental life-activity; he argues that while the separation of “self-activity and the production of material life” occurred in earlier periods, it is with capitalism that “they now diverge to such an extent that material life appears as the end, and what produces this material life, labour (which is now the only possible but, as we see, *negative form of self-activity*), as the means” (96, my emphasis). Because, with the capitalist division of labor, the worker becomes severed from his own production, and “man’s own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him” (53), labor ceases to be self-fulfilling and becomes a “negative form of self-activity.” For Marx, then, because human expression is tied to production, the only way in which individuals can “achieve self-activity” is through taking control of “the existing totality of productive forces”; it is through this appropriation of the instruments of production that the individual, who is shaped by his own acts of production, develops his “individual capacities” (96). It is only after this appropriation has occurred, when man is reunited with his own labor, that “self-activity coincide[s] with material life, which corresponds to the development of individuals into *complete individuals*” (97, my emphasis). Thus, for the Marx of *The German Ideology*, as for the Marx of the *Manuscripts*, the individual is only fully realized as a species-being through her relationship to labor; it is through labor that her humanity becomes fully-developed.

While the message of Marx's early works is overwhelmingly one that presents all unalienated labor as formative human activity, there is a moment in the *Manuscripts* which seems to suggest that labor performed in the realm of necessity may be distinguished from truly free human production. In the *Manuscripts*, Marx establishes the distinction between animal and human production, and one of these elements is that animals "produce only when immediate physical need compels them to do so, while man produces even when he is free from physical need and *truly produces only in freedom from such need*" (329, my emphasis). While Marx suggests here that true production only occurs when man is not concerned with meeting physical needs, I would argue that there is a significant difference between producing *for the sole purpose* of physical necessity and freely creating a product that meets physical needs. For Marx, alienated labor is that which is "not the satisfaction of a need but a mere *means* to satisfy needs outside itself" (326). This "immediate physical need" which Marx defines as driving animal production would be the equivalent of a human being freezing to death in the wilderness if she does not immediately produce shelter; however, in the case of a worker commissioned to build a home for another, the shelter is still a physical necessity, but it is not produced by the worker out of her own immediate needs but rather to fulfill a social need. If the worker is fulfilled in her work, performing it freely (without the compulsion to earn her own means of subsistence), she is performing socially necessary work that also satisfies her own need to reproduce herself through her labor; thus, the work is not solely a means to an end, but is also an end in itself. Marx is speaking here of the compulsion of the immediate physical need of the individual, not of all necessary material production. There is thus no separate social "realm of necessity" here as there will be for the later Marx.

Marx does not begin to establish the distinction between the “realm of freedom” and the “realm of necessity” that will become so central to his vision in *Capital Volume Three* until several years later, in 1857-8, when he composed the notebooks which would later be published as *The Grundrisse*. Peter Beilharz argues that, in this work, Marx breaks with “the very labour ontology upon which his early work is based [...] The prospect of freedom, or at least of free time, shifts beyond the sphere of labour or production into the realm beyond it” (599). The “labour ontology” to which Beilharz refers here is in line with my own reading of Marx’s early works as presenting labor as the formative human activity; the break from this vision of labor occurs for Beilharz in Marx’s discussion of advanced automation as a replacement for direct labor in *The Grundrisse*. There are certainly grounds for Beilharz’s reading. In this work, Marx argues that the advancement of machinery creates a situation in which the individual no longer relates *directly* to production through her labor:

Labour no longer appears so much to be included within the production process; rather, the human being comes to relate more as a watchmen and regulator to the production process itself [...] In this transformation, it is neither the direct human labour he himself performs, nor the time during which he works, but rather the appropriation of his own general productive power, his understanding of nature and his mastery over it by virtue of his presence as a social body. (284)

Here, the act of material production, previously performed by human labor, is taken over by machinery. Marx does not lament this transference; instead, it is for him the grounds for the advancement of society. The worker whose time is no longer monopolized by

direct physical labor is freed to fully develop her human capacity: “[T]he general reduction of the necessary labour time to a minimum” leads to “the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them” (285). The freeing of the individual from direct labor, the creation of “disposable time,” is beneficial not just for the individual but for society as a whole: “The saving of labour time [is] equal to an increase of free time, i.e. time for the full development of the individual, which in turn *reacts back upon the productive power of labour* as itself the greatest productive power” (290, my emphasis). Thus, Marx does seem to abandon his earlier “labor ontology” in the sense that he shifts his focus from the development of the individual through her labor to a focus on what occurs in her “free time”; this free time, far from being equated with leisure as it is in ordinary parlance, is instead the space in which the individual actively develops her full creative capacities. This passage from *The Grundrisse* does seem to parallel Marx’s insistence in *Capital* on a division between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom. Here, as in *Capital*, the individual develops herself as species-being, as a free conscious producer, only after she is freed from direct labor.

However, there are indications in *The Grundrisse* that Marx had not yet committed to a complete break between necessary production and “the development of human powers as an end in itself” (*Capital* V.3 959). While the worker of *The Grundrisse* no longer relates to material production in the same way, her development is still intrinsically tied to her labor; it is just that her labor has changed forms. She has become the “watchmen and regulator” of the process; instead of being herself a tool of production, she is guiding and shaping it. The machines, freeing her from *direct* labor,

have not divorced her from the material production process entirely but have created a new role for her, one that allows for a more intellectual, as opposed to physical, engagement. Thus, when she undergoes her “full development” in her disposable time, it immediately “reacts back upon the productive power of labour.” She does not develop as an individual separated from the production process, but as a worker who continues to contribute to material production. This understanding leads Marx to immediately compromise the distinction between labor time and free time that he has himself just established. He explains that once the workers have appropriated their own surplus labor, thus controlling their own free time (that spent outside of direct production), “*disposable time* thereby ceases to have an *antithetical existence*” (287). As he goes on to clarify, “direct labour time itself cannot remain in the abstract antithesis to free time in which it appears from the perspective of bourgeois economy” (290). Because free time is directly linked to the development of the productive forces of the individual, forces which are then channeled back into the combined human labor force, the distinction between free time and labor time becomes inconsequential. The realm of freedom, then, is intertwined with the realm of necessity: the artistic and scientific work done by the individual in her “free” time is not distinct from her contributions to material production. Thus, to say, as Beilharz does, that Marx’s ontology has been divorced from labor and production is not entirely accurate. While Marx does argue in *The Grundrisse* that human development does occur when the individual is, in part, freed from *direct* labor, he says this with the understanding that the distinction between direct labor and the creative production performed outside the realm of necessity cannot truly be made once the worker controls the means of production.

While I do not believe that a fundamental break with Marx's early philosophy of labor occurs in *The Grundrisse*, I believe that he establishes a foundation here for the break that does occur in *Capital*. While he has not fully committed in the earlier text to a break between the realms of necessity and freedom, his understanding here of the role of automation is parallel to what Marx sees in the latter text as the role of the entity which he calls the "associated producers" (*Capital V.3* 959). Both are predicated on the idea that the worker must in some sense be freed from obligations to the realm of necessity before she can begin to truly develop as a species-being. However, it is only in *Capital* that Marx wholly divorces individual development from necessary material production. It is the adoption of this distinction that fully severs the labor philosophy of the early Marx from that of the late Marx; in *Capital*, socially necessary labor ceases to be formative life-activity and instead becomes a means to life. Throughout his career, Marx remained true to a humanist agenda; in the words of Eagleton, for Marx, "there is or should be no ultimate point to human existence beyond its self-delighting development" (18). As Marx says in *Capital Volume One*, the ultimate goal is to create a society in which the "full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle" (739). However, while the agenda remains consistent, Marx's understanding of what it means to reach this goal undergoes a fundamental change. While in his early works, this "full and free development" is inseparable from necessary material production, the Marx of *Capital* sees the potential for this development only in the social spaces that exist outside of it.

In my first chapter, I will respond to the common reading of *Looking Backward* which sees Bellamy's utopia as failing to break with the capitalist society in which it was written; I will argue that Bellamy presents a future that is much more Marxist than

capitalist and that the ties that remain with the capitalist present represent not his failure to move beyond it, but the understanding he shares with Marx of the way in which the socialist future must employ the large-scale production and socialized labor force brought into being by industrial capitalism. I will argue that Bellamy, like Marx, imagines a society whose goal is the “full and free development” of the individual and that Bellamy’s understanding of how labor functions in the achievement of this goal aligns with that proposed in the later writings of Marx. My reading of Bellamy’s utopia will discuss the ways in which his society opens up the possibility of a move beyond alienated labor, but I will argue that his adoption of Marx’s distinction between the “realm of necessity” and the “realm of freedom” forecloses this possibility by creating conditions in which the daily activity of the individual is separated from her “self-delighting development.” In my second chapter, I will argue that Morris’s socialist vision in *News from Nowhere* also takes as its primary goal the “full and free development of the individual” but aligns, in opposition to Bellamy, with the conception of labor as fundamental to the development of the individual as a species-being found in Marx’s early works. I will further argue that in adopting this view, Morris’s utopia actively deconstructs the distinction between necessary and free production and that it is the abandonment of this distinction that leads to the eradication of alienated labor in his imagined future. In my conclusion, I will respond to the work of Darko Suvin, who has argued that the utopias of Bellamy and Morris are fundamentally compatible. For Suvin, Bellamy’s utopia represents a “*societas rerum*” (a society of things) while Morris’s utopia represents a “*societas hominum*” (a society of human relations); in short, “each lacks what the other has” (184-5). I will argue that while Suvin is correct about *News*

from Nowhere, which he claims lacks a strong material foundation, *Looking Backward* cannot be understood as a hollow material shell waiting for a philosophy because it is already strongly informed by one of its own. Thus, any attempt to graft the understanding of humanity proposed by Morris onto the material conditions proposed by Bellamy would necessarily include a displacement of Bellamy's philosophy. I will further argue that understanding how this displacement might be achieved without abandoning the material structures of Bellamy's utopia may be the key to imagining a socialism which would grow from the material conditions of capitalism while fully separating itself from the alienation of capitalist labor relations.

CHAPTER ONE: FULFILLING THE “EDICT OF EDEN” IN *LOOKING
BACKWARD*

William Morris, in his 1889 review of *Looking Backward*, critiques Bellamy’s inability to imagine a future socialist society that is fully severed from the capitalist present; Bellamy, he argues, is “perfectly satisfied with modern civilization, if only the injustice, misery, and waste of class society can be got rid of; which *half-change* seems possible to him” (354, my emphasis). This reading of Bellamy’s utopia as incomplete in its transition from capitalism to socialism, as representing only a “half-change,” is one that is frequently echoed in modern scholarship. Simon Dentith, while acknowledging the sincerity of Bellamy’s moral commitment to socialism, argues that he fails to imagine a significant “transformation of human relations” (144). Likewise, Alexander MacDonald sees Bellamy’s utopia as expressing a “basic acceptance” of capitalist society’s “essential features” (82), and Matthew Beaumont claims that Bellamy’s vision, while ostensibly socialist, most closely resembles “a more humane and morally acceptable species of capitalism” (30). In this chapter, I will argue that Bellamy *does* imagine a radical transformation of human relations and that his ties to capitalism represent not a failure to move beyond it, but a necessary employment of the large-scale production that arose with capitalism for the creation of a socialist future: in his utopia, Bellamy employs, as Marx imagined in *Capital Volume One*, the “new productive power, which is intrinsically a collective one” (443), which necessarily arises with capitalism, to distinctly socialist ends. I will argue that Bellamy’s use of an organized collective labor force as a highly efficient means for meeting the needs of society as a whole aligns with Marx’s vision of a socialist society at the end of *Capital Volume Three* and that the shared vision of Bellamy

and Marx significantly reimagines the human relations of capitalism in its understanding of cooperation as the foundation of society. I will further argue that Bellamy adopts as the end goal of his societal transformation the “full and free development” of the individual, which Marx argues should form the “ruling principle” of any “higher form of society” (*Capital V.1* 739). I will align Bellamy’s approach to the achievement of this end with that found specifically in the *later* works of Marx, which establish a distinction between productive activity performed in the “realm of freedom” and that performed in the “realm of necessity” (*Capital V.3* 959). An examination of how this distinction manifests itself in Bellamy’s utopian vision will show that any attempt to relegate necessary material production to a separate realm inevitably allows for the continuation of alienated labor as it is defined in the early works of Marx. My purpose in aligning Bellamy’s utopia with Marx’s writings is thus two-fold. In studying how Bellamy’s vision employs the productive forces that arose with capitalism, I will highlight the potential for a post-capitalist society to emerge from the material conditions of the present, and in examining the problems inherent in his creation of a distinct realm of necessity, I will explore the consequences that arise from a structural divide between individual fulfillment and the meeting of social needs. In aligning these aspects of Bellamy’s society with the theories of Marx, I will show both the potential and the limitations of the latter as they may arise in practical application.

The world of Boston in the year 2000, the stage of Bellamy’s utopian speculation, is unveiled to the reader through the eyes of its nineteenth-century protagonist, Julian West. West, a wealthy young Bostonian, enters a mesmeric trance in the year 1887 and lays undiscovered (through a series of events not relevant to this study)

until he is found in the year 2000 by the Leete family, not having aged a day due to the preservative nature of the trance. Upon awakening, he finds himself in a world very different from the one he left, and it is the Leete family who educate him on the nature of his surroundings. One of the first things to be elucidated by the family patriarch, Dr. Leete, is how the world in which West finds himself came to be. As he explains, private economic enterprise has been eliminated through a process of “industrial evolution” in which the great monopolies of the nineteenth century were combined into one productive force:

Early in the last century the evolution was completed by the final consolidation of the entire capital of the nation. The industry and commerce of the country, ceasing to be conducted by a set of irresponsible corporations and syndicates of private persons at their caprice and for their profit, were intrusted to a single syndicate representing the people, to be conducted in the common interest for the common profit. The nation, that is to say, organized as the one great business corporation in which all other corporations were absorbed; it become the one capitalist in the place of all the other capitalists [...] The epoch of trusts had ended in The Great Trust.

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Bellamy’s language here certainly lends itself to the criticism that his utopia has not broken with the fundamental elements of capitalism. The concept of the nation as “one great business corporation” sounds, at first blush, more like an authoritarian right-wing paradise than a socialist one. Bellamy, in fact, never describes his future society as socialist; instead, it is the “national party” that facilitates the political change necessary to

accompany this “industrial evolution.” The transition of the means of production from private to public ownership was accomplished not by an act of political revolution by the laboring classes, but by the peaceful action of one unified party that was comprised “equally of all classes” (149). Scholars like Beaumont and Phillip Wegner are undoubtedly correct in their assertion that Bellamy was ambivalent toward socialism and eschewed revolutionary politics. Bellamy himself stated that that word socialism was one he “could never well stomach,” and that socialism would never be accepted in the United States because it “smells to the average American of petroleum, suggests the red flag, with all manner of sexual novelties, and an abusive tone about God and religion” (Wegner 69). His account in *Looking Backward* of the way in which his utopian society comes to be clearly forecloses the possibility of any meaningful change being accomplished by means of class struggle. As Dr. Leete tells West, “The labor parties, as such, never could have accomplished anything on a large or permanent scale” (149). It is only through the mutual recognition by all classes of the need to organize society “on a higher ethical basis” that a just order is brought into being (149).

Why, then, is Bellamy’s utopia even considered socialist? Why debate whether or not Bellamy’s utopia achieves a full transition to socialism when that seemingly was not even its intention? Bellamy himself realized that, even with his aversion to the *term* socialism, he seems to “out-socialize the socialists” with his “radicalness of opinions” (Wegner 69). Furthermore, Bellamy’s novel was widely accepted as a socialist vision. In fact, as Beaumont shows, many of *Looking Backward*’s readers interpreted it as “the socialist bible of reconstruction, a kind of guidebook to post-capitalist society” (28). Morris, himself an avowed socialist, viewed the popularity of Bellamy’s novel as an

indication “that there are a great many people who are hopeful in regards to Socialism” (353). Most importantly, as I will show, despite Bellamy’s choice of language, his vision of a just society fundamentally aligns with that of Marx; regardless of its intention, Bellamy’s utopia acts as a proving ground for many of the ideas proposed in Marx’s works. In short, while Bellamy may have been ambivalent towards socialism as he saw it enacted in his historical moment, his utopia is structured by its core philosophies and dictates.

One of Bellamy’s primary objections to socialism was not its end goal, but rather the way in which that end was achieved. Bellamy’s vision of a seamless transition to a new social order, enacted by and for the whole of society, is in clear opposition to Marx’s vision of the rise of a revolutionary proletariat. It is Bellamy’s focus on the evolutionary, as opposed to the revolutionary, development of society that is often turned to as a sign of his inability to significantly break with capitalism. As MacDonald argues, “Bellamy’s view that the existing society could evolve into a better society implies a basic acceptance of the former’s essential features” (82). For Beaumont, Bellamy’s means of social transition suggests his belief that capitalism itself could, under the right conditions, solve the “social question,” and he views Bellamy’s reliance on economic concentration as the employment of an essentially capitalist strategy (36-7). However, it must be remembered that Marx’s vision of the future was not one predicated solely on rupture. While Marx believed that political revolution was a necessity, he also believed that a socialist society could only grow from the material foundations constructed by the organic movements of capitalist forces. In fact, Bellamy’s understanding of the role of economic concentration, in which the creation of “larger and larger aggregations of capital” makes possible the

final combination of all production into one rationally organized force (32-3), is an almost precise transposition of Marx. The latter writes in *Capital Volume One*:

Everywhere the increased scale of industrial establishments is a starting-point for a more comprehensive organization of the collective labour of many people, for a broader development of their material motive forces, i.e. for the progressive transformation of the isolated processes of production [...] into socially combined and scientifically arranged processes of production. (780)

Marx believed that this increasing accumulation of wealth would result in a larger redundant working population and therefore increased misery, followed by increased unrest which would ultimately lead to political action by the proletariat (929). Bellamy, on the other hand, while also acknowledging that the society shaped by the great monopolies was “oppressive and intolerable,” envisions the people collectively realizing the potential of the “prodigious increase of efficiency” created by these concentrations and acting peacefully to appropriate the means of production for the collective good (32-3). However, while the two thinkers differ fundamentally concerning the way in which the private concentrations of capital would be appropriated for collective use, they share an understanding of the evolutionary quality inherent in the creation of a socialized means of production. Therefore, Bellamy’s vision of “industrial evolution” need not be read as an acceptance of the essential features of capitalism or as an employment of capitalist strategies. Rather, it marks an alignment with Marx’s vision of the way in which the material conditions created by capitalism would necessarily be employed as the foundation for a socialist society.

It is arguably this understanding of the way in which a socialist society must arise from a capitalist one that leads Bellamy to employ the language of the latter to describe the structures of the former. For, despite his employment of capitalist terminology, the social structures and human relations of capitalism have been thoroughly supplanted in Bellamy's utopia by ones built on socialist principles. Many critics do not share this view. In a comparison between *News from Nowhere* and *Looking Backward*, Dentith argues that while Morris "anticipates no less than a transformation of human relations," Bellamy is limited by "arrangements that do not go as far as Morris;" Bellamy, he claims, is trapped in the trope of inversion, able to imagine a new society only in terms of the previous one (144). For Raymond Williams, Bellamy's focus on economic organization overrules "questions of substantially different social relations and human motives" (57). Similarly, MacDonald argues that Bellamy's insistence on economic efficiency creates a utopia based on values that are "essentially quantitative" and labels him an "intellectual descendent" of the famous Utilitarian Jeremy Bentham (84). For all of these scholars, Bellamy's utopia lacks a significant reimagining of the human experience: his envisioned changes are economic, focused on a readjustment of quantitative elements, and overshadowed by ideologies of the past. However, while Bellamy does focus on economic development as the means by which his new society comes into being, these material conditions are predicated on a significant change in human relations from competitive and individualistic to cooperative and social. As Dr. Leete explains to West, every citizen of the twenty-first century United States is granted an equal share of the national wealth because they have recognized "the solidarity of the race and the brotherhood of man" as the foundation of their social relations (77). Moreover, this

recognition of solidarity is based not on an abstract moral conception but rather on an understanding of the reality of human interaction. As Leete goes on to explain,

There is no such thing in a civilized society as self-support [...] As men grow more civilized, and the subdivision of occupations and services is carried out, a *complex mutual interdependence becomes the universal rule* [...] The necessity of mutual dependence should imply the duty and guarantee of mutual support; and that it did not in your day constituted the essential cruelty and unreason of your system. (77, my emphasis)

There is no doubt that we see here a fundamental shift from the capitalist understanding of individual autonomy and competition. Bellamy's utopia is built on the principles of equality, cooperation, and mutual support. In light of this, it is particularly strange that MacDonald would associate Bellamy with Bentham, whose conception of human interaction is based on the absolute supremacy of self-interest divorced from social relationships. As Marx says, for Bentham, interaction between individuals is predicated on the idea that the "only force bringing them together, and putting them in relation with each other, is the selfishness, gain, and private interest of each" (*Capital V. 1* 280).

Bellamy's utopia is an unequivocal refutation of this understanding of humanity; in his imagined society, self-interest is realized as inseparable from collective interests. The illusion of self-sufficiency has been eradicated, and all individuals operate under the knowledge that they are functioning as part of a social whole. This realization of human connectedness not as an abstract conception, but as a material reality, parallels Marx, who in *The German Ideology* makes clear that the "common interest does not exist merely in the imagination" but is first of all the reality of "mutual interdependence" created by the

division of labor (52). As he goes on to say in *Capital Volume One*, the inability of the individual to realize this mutual interdependence is a product of capitalist production, which, while creating a real human connection through collective labor, obscures this connection by presenting it as “a plan drawn up by the capitalist”; thus, the workers’ interrelation appears to them as externally constructed (449-51). It is only after capitalism ceases to obscure this real connection that the worker “strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capability of his species” (447). For Bellamy, as for Marx, the process of creating a socialist society requires a new philosophy of human relations that is predicated on the essential collectivity that already exists in reality. While Bellamy might employ the language of capitalism, his utopia has stripped away the impediments of capitalist relations, allowing the individual to recognize herself for what she truly is: a social being.

Just as this philosophy of human relations is predicated on the reality of mutual interdependence, the philosophy, in turn, acts upon real material conditions. The economic structures of Bellamy’s utopia cannot be separated from the guiding principle of cooperation. According to Leete, in the twenty-first century view, the capitalists of the nineteenth-century were doomed to failure because of their understanding of human relations: “Selfishness was their only science, and in industrial production, selfishness is suicide. Competition, which is the instinct of selfishness, is another word for dissipation of energy” (144). For Leete, who acts as the voice of Bellamy’s enlightened utopian population, it is capitalism’s insistence on the role of self-interest and competition that creates a prodigious waste of human productive power. This parallels Marx, who argues in *Capital Volume One* that capitalism “begets, by its anarchic system of competition, the

most outrageous squandering of labour-power and the social means of production” (667). For both Bellamy and Marx, it is the driving force of competition that undermines the productivity of the capitalist system; thus, for both thinkers, the elimination of this motive force is key to the creation of a truly productive society. In Bellamy’s future society, they have realized that “combination is the secret of efficient production” and have utilized this understanding to create a productive force capable of keeping all its citizens in material comfort (144). This replacement of competition by cooperation, while an economic strategy, cannot be separated from a fundamental shift in human relations. Competition can only be eliminated in practice by also eradicating its root cause: selfishness. This requires an ontological reimagining; the individual must cease to be viewed as an autonomous entity, driven by self-interest, and instead be understood as part of an interconnected societal whole. Thus, Bellamy’s focus on economic efficiency, which critics like MacDonald and Williams have seen as supplanting concerns of human relations, is intrinsically tied to a fundamental philosophical change. To say, as Dentith does, that Bellamy does not imagine a “transformation of human relations” is to ignore the fact that his society is predicated on a new image of humanity as a collective, cooperative force, an image that parallels Marx’s understanding of life in a socialist society.

In addition to the eschewal of revolutionary politics and the focus on economic efficiency, the representation of consumption in Bellamy’s utopia has also been understood to compromise its socialist status. In Bellamy’s twenty-first century Boston, buying and selling between individuals is considered “essentially anti-social” because it is predicated on “self-seeking at the expense of others” (52). There is thus no need for

money; instead, each citizen, at birth, is granted a “credit card” which represents their equal share of the national wealth as it is determined annually. The nation is sole employer and producer, so all goods are considered products of the combined productive effort of society and are thus purchased not from individuals, but from the nation; goods are made available through a highly-organized system of “public storehouses” found in every community (51). Despite this radical change in the way in which consumption is carried out, both MacDonald and Beaumont have argued that the portrayal of consumption in Bellamy’s future society links it with the capitalist present in which it was written. For both scholars, representations of consumption take precedence over representations of production in Bellamy’s novel. As MacDonald argues, the novel “lacks any description of the process of production,” but “pays a good deal of attention to the machinery of circulation” (78). Likewise, Beaumont claims that the “processes of production are effectively invisible” and that the citizens of Bellamy’s utopia are “by vocation consumers rather than producers” (39). Both scholars conclude that *Looking Backward* is marked by the continued presence of commodity fetishism; in the words of MacDonald, the novel showcases “the endless consumption of fetishized goods, objects that magically seem to produce themselves” (80). Thus, they argue, Bellamy’s utopia is more capitalist than socialist because it hides production while glorifying the consumption of commodities; further, because production remains hidden, the commodities still embody the fetishized character of the goods produced in the capitalist system.

It is true that in his exploration of twenty-first century Boston, West spends a considerable amount of time in one of the national stores, and there is no doubt that the

image of this establishment takes on a distinctly utopian character: “I was in a vast hall full of light [...] [I]n the centre of the hall, a magnificent fountain played, cooling the atmosphere to a delicious freshness with its spray [...] Around the fountain was a space occupied with chairs and sofas, on which many persons were seated conversing” (60). The description of the store as a site of both aesthetic pleasure and social engagement makes clear that shopping in Bellamy’s utopia is not a briskly utilitarian function but an activity in which one can delight. Furthermore, Leete assures West (and thus Bellamy assures the reader) that while the national wealth is distributed equally to every citizen, it is so vast as to allow everyone to get “whatever he desires whenever he desires it” (51). Since there is no scarcity, parsimony, “having lost its utility,” is no longer considered a virtue; as Leete says, the “nation is rich, and does not wish the people to deprive themselves of any good thing” (52). There is no doubt, then, some validity to the readings of Bellamy’s utopia that mark it as enthusiastically consumption-driven. It is also true that West, and thus the reader, is given no direct access to a site of production; in one brief scene, West visits a distribution warehouse (the shoppers in Bellamy’s utopia chose from samples of goods, and then the actual products are distributed by these warehouses directly to their home), but this is the only definitive image of the vast labor structure that is the source of all the national wealth being consumed. Furthermore, while the narrative focuses on the beauty of the site of consumption, the site of labor is noticeably utopian only in its “prodigiously multiplied efficiency;” it is not a “vast hall full of light,” but a “gigantic mill” (106). Thus, if we consider West’s physical journey of exploration through twenty-first century Boston as indicative of the focus of Bellamy’s utopia, the

argument that consumption is prized over production and that goods appear “magically” divorced from the labor that creates them, may certainly be accepted.

However, while West himself is not privy to a direct view of the labor process, the very structure of Bellamy’s imagined society forecloses the possibility that labor is hidden from the view of his utopian citizens; thus, the reading of Bellamy’s utopia as enmeshed in the capitalist world of commodity fetishism is compromised. As Marx explains the process of commodity fetishism in *Capital Volume One*, the “mysterious character of the commodity-form” is created by the fact that, in a capitalist system, commodities take on the social relations that exist in reality among the producers; the labor process, the real source of animate connections and relationships, is obscured by the exchange of commodities, which act in the market as “autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own” (165). Therefore, the “veil is not removed from the countenance of the social life-process, i.e. the process of material production, until it becomes production by freely associated men, and stands under their rational and planned control” (173). While MacDonald and Beaumont see this veil as still being firmly in place in Bellamy’s utopia, his society is a rationally-organized collective of voluntary workers of the very nature that Marx here imagines. As I have argued, Bellamy’s major philosophical move is his structuring of social relations around the acceptance of an essential human interconnectedness that stems from material relations of production. In his utopian society, the citizens comprise a vast labor force called the “industrial army” that carries out all production; while some members may chose at a certain point to pursue professions not directly tied to material production, every citizen is educated concerning the way in which production is carried out in their society. As Leete explains, “A

thorough study of the National industrial system, with the history and rudiments of all the great trades, is an essential part of our educational system [...] Our schools are constantly visiting our workshops, and often are taken on long excursions to inspect particular industrial enterprises” (39). While the purpose of this component of education (which Leete assures West does not overshadow the “intellectual culture” of the schools) is primarily to prepare the citizen to choose an occupation for which he is best suited¹, it also serves to connect Bellamy’s Bostonians with the intricacies of the process that produces their material environment. In addition to this educational component, all male citizens, before entering their chosen industrial profession or pursuing further training in the “professional schools,” must serve for three years as “unskilled or common laborers,” a period in which they are expected to perform a variety of socially-necessary duties (41-2). This serves to further connect the (male) members of Bellamy’s utopia to its material foundations, giving them more practical knowledge of the processes that underlie the creation of their nation’s vast material wealth. As a member of the industrial army, every citizen is expected to have an understanding of the way in which the collective work force functions. Thus, Bellamy’s society can be said, returning to the words of Marx, to truly commit itself to lifting the “veil” from the “countenance of the social life-process.” While Bellamy’s reader, seeing through the eyes of West, may be blind to the specifics of the production process, the citizens of his utopia are not; the goods they purchase do not just “mysteriously” appear as fetishized commodities do in the capitalist system.

¹ I must note here that my choice of the masculine pronoun has significance. While women are also members of the industrial army, and seemingly undergo the same education, they are greatly limited in their choice of employment: they form a distinct work force of “feminine” occupations.

Furthermore, while goods still embody exchange-value in Bellamy's utopia, it is the creation of use-values that drives production; thus, there is a decisive reversal from the way in which goods are produced in a capitalist system. As Marx explains, "Use-values are produced by capitalists only because and in so far as they form the material substratum of exchange-value, are the bearers of exchange-value" (*CV.I* 293). Because the capitalist is primarily concerned with the valorization process, with the making of more capital, he is largely unconcerned with the social utility of the goods that are incidentally produced during this process. In Bellamy's Boston, because there are no individual producers or markets for the buying and selling of goods, the production of use-values is no longer subjugated to the production of exchange-value. Goods must still be understood as commodities in Bellamy's utopia: they do take on an abstract quantifiable value. However, because all production is carried out as a cooperative social venture, and the profit motive which arises with competitive production is removed, the exchange-value of a commodity is derived solely from the amount of socialized labor which is employed in producing it (109). Because it is the collective force of workers which controls the means of production, there is no outside entity to extract surplus-value; exchange-value thus becomes a direct representation of what Marx calls the "socially necessary labour-time" required by society in the production of a commodity (*CV.I* 129). In order for both production and distribution to be collectively and rationally organized for the meeting of social needs, both labor and the goods produced must be considered in the abstract: exchange-value thus loses its primary character and becomes a means to create and deliver use-values.

Commodities have also largely lost their fetishized character for the consumer. As Leete explains, in a society in which goods have ceased to represent monetary value, “accumulations of personal property are merely burdensome the moment they exceed what adds to the real comfort” (69). Since exchange-value has become only a necessary means of organization, use-value has been restored as the means by which goods are evaluated. Once goods have ceased to represent money, they again assume their own “sensuous properties” and are purchased for the comfort and enjoyment they provide. Each citizen may use her allotted share of the national wealth in any way she chooses; because every individual can easily provide for her immediate physical needs and still have much left over, the use of the remainder is guided by the personal interests of each. One may spend it on “pretty clothes,” another on an “elaborate table,” but, as Leete’s daughter Edith says, nothing is done for the purpose of “ostentation” but is always “a matter of taste” (64). Furthermore, while personal luxury is not discouraged, the social character of existence in Bellamy’s utopia guides not just the process of production but also the act of consumption; as Leete explains, much of the surplus wealth is voluntarily spent, not on individual pleasures, but on “public works and pleasures in which all share [...] and in providing on a vast scale for the recreations of the people:” “At home we have comfort, but the splendor of our life is, on its social side, that which we share with our fellows” (143). While all purchases are guided by an evaluation of use-value, a fact in itself marking a significant break with consumption under capitalism, consumption is further guided by the underlying socialist principles of collective living. Thus, while consumption may be celebrated in Bellamy’s utopia, its character has been radically changed to reflect the new nature of human relations in his imagined future.

I have thus far attempted to establish that *Looking Backward* presents a utopian vision that is built on the material conditions of capitalism while breaking with its ideological foundations and establishing a new philosophical basis for human relations; the employment of the collective labor force created by capitalist modes of production in a cooperative manner for the public good is, I have argued, in line with Marx's conception of the way in which a socialist society would grow from a capitalist one, despite the absence of political revolution in Bellamy's vision. I will now turn to an examination of the way in which this collective labor force is organized and employed to establish its connection to Marx's vision of a socialist future. Bellamy's "industrial army" has been derided by many critics for its obviously militant associations. Morris argued that while Bellamy "tells us that every man is free to choose his occupation and that work is no burden to anyone, the impression which he produces is that of a huge standing army, tightly drilled, compelled by some mysterious fate to unceasing anxiety for the production of wares" (356). Writing from a twentieth-century perspective, Williams associates Bellamy's organization of labor with a "Stalinist version of the bureaucratic party" (60), and, more recently, Samuel Haber has labeled Bellamy's approach to economic organization "thoroughly authoritarian" (433). I believe we again have a situation, as with Bellamy's continued usage of capitalist terminology, in which his chosen language obscures the real meaning of his vision. While everyone must serve in the industrial army in some capacity, Bellamy imagines this service not as obligatory adherence to an authoritarian command but rather as the voluntary fulfillment of a social duty. For Bellamy, the usage of the term "army" implies not compulsory obedience but service driven by "the ardor of self-devotion" (57). As opposed to in a capitalist system,

in which every individual is forced to work in order to survive, the provision that every citizen is provided for equally from the social wealth, regardless of the nature of his contribution, removes this self-interested compulsion to labor. Thus, the labor of the individual is recognized for what it is: a contribution to the collective welfare of society. As I have argued, this recognition of the role of each individual as part of an interconnected whole marks an ontological shift that changes the nature of human relations. It is with an understanding of this ontological shift that participation in the industrial army must be considered. The individual who genuinely understands herself as an intrinsic part of a social whole need not be coerced into service; her participation is not external to her, but is an element of her essential existence as a social being. As Leete makes clear, the sense of duty felt by the citizens of Bellamy's utopia is not based on an abstract conception of national unity (though the continued usage of the term "patriotism" admittedly seems to suggest this) but is instead the product of a larger understanding of human connection; as he explains, the rule that everyone in their society must work is an extension of "the law of nature—the edict of Eden" and thus their system is "the logical outcome of the operation of human nature under rational conditions" (68). While the phrase "edict of Eden" implies a religious element clearly eschewed by Marx, Bellamy's understanding of this connection between humanity and labor echoes the Marx of *Capital*, who describes labor as "the everlasting nature-imposed condition of human existence" (290). Thus, the law that everyone must work is not an imposition by an authoritarian regime but a recognition by all the members of society of the fundamental nature of human existence. Thus, labor performed for the collective good is viewed, in

Bellamy's utopia, as a way in which its members willingly embrace their shared humanity.

As Morris notes in the above quotation, Bellamy does tell us that every citizen is allowed to choose the work for which he or she is best suited (as long as that work is properly gendered) and that work is no longer viewed as a burden. The educational system under Bellamy's utopia is designed to provide its members with ample opportunity to learn about all trades so that they may choose the one for which they feel they are best suited. While the administration is tasked with assuring that the necessary number of workers are allotted to each trade, and the worker may sometimes have to take his second choice of occupation for some time, he may switch to his first-choice trade later, when the space becomes available (40-1). Furthermore, any citizen wishing to pursue a "professional" occupation, such as science, medicine, or music, is eligible to attend an institution of "higher liberal learning" (43). While Bellamy's utopia does seem to genuinely create conditions that allow the worker to freely choose his occupation, the question of whether or not he has created a society in which work is no longer a burden is one that requires further examination. For Morris, who believes that labor should be a source of pleasure and personal fulfillment, Bellamy appears to seek only to make labor "tolerable" by "decreas[ing] the amount of it" (357). It is true that Bellamy focuses on the reduction of labor time as a necessary component of his utopian vision; every member of the industrial army serves only twenty-four years; he is educated until the age of twenty-one and goes into retirement at the age of forty-five (37). Furthermore, one of the ways in which the administration makes arduous occupations, such as mining, attractive to potential volunteers is the shortening of hours; the "lighter trades, prosecuted under the

most agreeable circumstances” require longer working hours (40). However, this is not, as Morris suggests, the only way in which labor is made attractive to the citizens of Bellamy’s utopia. The organization of labor imagined by Bellamy is predicated on the belief that individuals have a wide variety of interests and aptitudes; thus, all occupations, even the most demanding, can be carried out by “persons having natural tastes for them” (40). In Bellamy’s conception, the shortening of the working day is only an extra incentive to those who already have some desire to perform the task. Furthermore, the balancing of working hours is based largely on a rational consideration of physical health: the text implies that it is those occupations which will most quickly wear on the physical well-being of the worker (like mining) that are subject to the shortest hours. There is no doubt, however, that the primary way in which labor is made attractive to the worker of Bellamy’s utopia is through the sense of self-fulfillment that arises from performing an essential social duty. As Leete explains to West, it is the “inspiration of duty” and the “passion for humanity” within their workforce that creates “the ardor of self-devotion which animates its members” (56-7). The individual, viewing himself as an integral part of a greater social whole, does not begrudgingly carry out his employment but is inspired to do so and is passionate in his labor. The sense of solidarity that underlies Bellamy’s utopia “animates” each worker: his work in the service of his fellows fills him with life. The worker of this imagined twenty-first century realizes, in the words of the early Marx, that “what I create from myself I create for society, conscious of myself as a social being” (*Manuscripts* 350). As a conscious social being, the individual finds fulfillment and pleasure in his labor because it further connects him to those for whom his product is created; his labor is not individualized, but social, activity.

So, Bellamy's society does not simply seek to reduce the amount of labor performed, as Morris contends; however, his utopian vision is shaped by a philosophy that greatly limits the role of labor and significantly undermines the potential of his radically reimagined system of human relations. While Bellamy presents labor as not merely an unpleasant obligation to be minimized as much as possible, he also makes clear that labor performed to meet the material needs of society, even when made attractive, is the foundation, not the source, of individual self-fulfillment. As explained by Dr. Leete:

[T]he labor we have to render as our part in securing for the nation the means of a comfortable physical existence is by no means regarded as the most important, the most interesting, or the most dignified employment of our powers. We look upon it as a necessary duty to be discharged before we can fully devote ourselves to the higher exercise of our faculties, the intellectual and spiritual enjoyments and pursuits which alone mean life.

(115)

He goes on to say that while everything is done to make labor attractive, and that labor is “not usually irksome, and is often inspiring,” labor’s true value is that it provides the material basis that allows for the pursuit of “higher and larger activities” which are “the main business of existence” (115). This unequivocal distinction between labor done in service of the collective and individual productive activity is one that distinctly aligns with the Marx of *Capital*. In *Volume Three*, he directly discusses the role of labor in a socialist society:

The realm of freedom really begins where labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends; it lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper. Just as the savage must wrestle with nature to satisfy his needs, to maintain and reproduce his life, so must civilized man [...] This realm of natural necessity expands with his development, because his needs do too; but the productive forces to satisfy these expand at the same time. Freedom, in this sphere, can consist only in this, that socialized man, the associated producers, govern the human metabolism with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their collective control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power; accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for their human nature. *But this always remains a realm of necessity. The true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in itself, begins beyond it.* The reduction of the working day is the basic prerequisite. (959, my emphasis)

While it has been my intention throughout this chapter to establish an alignment between Marx and Bellamy, it is the philosophical continuity of these passages that is, for me, the most striking. Both thinkers clearly put forth a future vision in which the “realm of necessity” is provided for by a rationally organized collective force and the true development of human powers occurs outside of this realm. Material production serves only as a foundation for a higher purpose, the allowance of the individual’s ability to express her humanity through pursuits divorced from the meeting of material needs.

A further examination of Bellamy's utopia will reveal the problems inherent in this distinction between the "realm of necessity" and the "realm of freedom." This fissure between necessity and freedom sets up two others that compromise Bellamy's utopian project: one between the state and the individual and one between manual and intellectual labor. As I have argued, Bellamy's utopia transcends capitalist social relations through its portrayal of the individual as a social being, as an intrinsic part of the social whole; furthermore, he acknowledges that this connection is not founded on an abstract conception but is actively established through the individual's productive contributions. The realization of this connection means, in Bellamy's vision, that the individual is inspired by a "passion for humanity" that positions her work to be a means of self-fulfillment. However, Bellamy's insistence that it is *not* through the work done for the collective that the individual truly develops her humanity undermines his utopian vision of the social being. This insistence suggests that the worker's life is divided into two parts: the work she performs for society's benefit and the individualized activities she performs for her own fulfillment. While throughout most of the novel, Bellamy insists that the labor performed in the industrial army is a source of individual fulfillment, by the end of the novel he begins to equivocate: "work is not *usually* irksome, and is *often* inspiring." Bellamy sets up the potential for all necessary labor to be made individually meaningful by the understanding of material production as an expression of the laborer's social being, but his later presentation of the social realm of necessity as primarily a means to an end significantly blocks this potential.

In addition to creating a problematic barrier between the individual and society, the distinction between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom requires that a

barrier be placed between two distinct types of production performed in these realms. Furthermore, in the conception of both Bellamy and Marx, these types of production need not only be distinguished from one another but must also be unequally valued, the latter prized over the former. Even establishing such a barrier seems a futile project; as Marx himself notes, the realm of necessity is a moving target: it “expands with his [man’s] development, because his needs do to.” How does one even articulate which production is done out of necessity? For Bellamy, this realm of necessity becomes all work performed in the service of providing a “comfortable *physical* existence;” necessary production in Bellamy’s utopia is by no means limited to what could be considered necessity. Leete tells West that the nation “does not wish the people to deprive themselves of any good thing” (52); their society is one that encourages comfort and the enjoyment of material goods. Since all goods consumed are produced by the same collective labor force, this means that much of the energy of that body must be spent on material production. This material production becomes, for Bellamy, largely equated to manual labor. Earlier in the novel, Bellamy suggests that there is no distinction of value between kinds of labor in his utopia; all contributions are viewed as equal. Leete, explaining to West that there is no longer any shame in waiting tables, claims that “there is recognized no sort of difference between the dignity of the different sorts of work required by the nation” (92). However, establishing a distinction between manual and intellectual labor problematizes this statement. In Bellamy’s construction, an individual may choose, after his three-year service as a common laborer, to pursue a higher education and thus serve the nation with his “brains” rather than his “hands:” these are the members of Bellamy’s society who become scientists, doctors, and scholars (43).

While these workers are still considered to serve the nation, they are not engaged directly in material production. Their work instead aligns with what Leete describes as the “higher and larger” intellectual activities that supposedly are carried out only after one has rendered his service to the nation, “those scientific, artistic, literary, or scholarly interests which make leisure the one thing valuable to their possessors” (115). The problem here is apparent: In a society in which intellectual and manual labor in service of the nation are supposed to be of equal worth, how can intellectual pursuits, when performed in the individual’s “leisure” time, be defined as more valuable than any other activity? How does, for instance, the scientific activity performed in the service of the nation differ from the scientific activity performed in one’s leisure time? How is the former considered equivalent to manual labor while the latter is considered superior?

This blatant contradiction exposes a crack in Bellamy’s vision of labor equality. It becomes clear, in his attempt to distinguish between activities performed in the realm of necessity and those performed in the realm of freedom, that no such distinction can actually be made; in the case of intellectual pursuits, they are the *same* activities, performed on either side of an arbitrary line. It is thus further revealed that the distinction he is actually making, despite his assertions to the contrary, is not one between service to the nation and individual “free” time, but one between physical and intellectual contributions, between those who labor with their “hands” and those who labor with their “brains.” While these contributions may be equal in “dignity” on the social scale, Bellamy makes clear that it is the latter pursuits “which alone mean life” (115). Bellamy’s society ensures that all its citizens are provided with the means to enjoy intellectual and artistic pursuits; all members of society receive a thorough education,

having no social duties until the age of twenty-one. In response to West's concern that such a complete education would leave the young people entering the workforce disinclined to pursue any kind of manual labor, Leete explains that the purpose of this education is not to prepare one for a particular kind of work; instead, "the highest education is deemed necessary to fit a man merely to live" (129). In this way, Bellamy's society is focused on producing what Marx calls "fully developed human beings" (*CV.I* 614). The worker is no longer the "one-sided implement" he becomes in capitalist production (*CV.I* 460), but is free to develop a full range of human capacities. However, the devaluing of manual labor undermines this process of full development; instead of viewing the labor performed by much of his society in the service of providing for social needs as part of this process of development, Bellamy effectively precludes it. Thus, in Bellamy's conception, the average worker's daily activity is separated from his growth as a human being.

It is likely that Marx did not intend for the "realm of necessity" to be defined as broadly as Bellamy's utopia imagines it. As Eagleton argues, for Marx, "we are most human and least like other animals when we produce freely, gratuitously, independent of any *immediate* material need. Freedom for Marx is a kind of creative superabundance over what is materially *essential*" (6, my emphasis). While Marx may have intended that only "immediate" and "essential" needs must be met before the individual can begin to produce freely, there is no practical way to define what constitutes either of these terms on a social scale. In Bellamy's utopia, a life full of comfort and beauty is considered a *necessity*; it is the bare minimum of life allowed. Thus, all production in service of this end becomes necessary production. What occurs, then, when labor in what Marx terms

“material production proper” becomes devalued as a mere means to an end is that the continual expansion of the “realm of natural necessity” leads to an increasing variety of labor that is divorced from the realm of freedom. Further, Marx’s insistence that labor performed in the realm of necessity be accomplished with “the least expenditure of energy” becomes problematic in light of his earlier assertion in *Capital Volume One* that the labor process should unite the mental and physical capacities of the worker (643). Can the worker, who is to expend the least amount of energy possible in the production of social necessities, not bring her intellectual and artistic energies into the physical creation of the material world in which she lives? Can she not produce objects that are both a necessity and an expression of her creative human powers? If so, then why would this production hold any less value than the development of human powers as “an end in itself”? While Bellamy’s distinction between mental and intellectual labor runs counter to Marx’s fundamental understanding of human productive activity, the latter’s insistence that necessary production is to be valued only for its efficiency forms the basis for Bellamy’s belief that the individual need not express her full range of human capacities in the performance of her work.

In many ways, Bellamy’s utopia actively combats the presence of alienated labor produced by the capitalist system of production. The early Marx defined alienated labor as that which separates man from the products of his labor, from other human beings, and from his own “vital activity” (*Manuscripts* 328-9). In Bellamy’s society, the worker is no longer divorced from the products of his labor; the elimination of class means that those who produce the goods are no longer barred from their consumption. Furthermore, the making visible of the labor process through the education of each individual as to its

workings connects the processes of production and consumption, thus uniting labor with its product on a social scale. Bellamy's utopia also eliminates the estrangement of the worker from his fellows by creating a society built on solidarity and cooperation and establishing the worker's production as social activity. However, the way in which he defines "vital activity" undermines the potential of his utopia to fully eradicate alienated labor. Bellamy's utopia sets up a society in which all labor has the potential to be a self-fulfilling activity for the worker. Labor is not forced, but voluntary, and every worker is educated in such a way as to choose employment for which he is well-suited and from which he can derive enjoyment. Further, there is no indication that manual labor in Bellamy's utopia must be divorced from mental activity. The goods in Bellamy's utopia are associated not just with utility, but with beauty; West's description of the "broad streets, shaded by trees and lined with fine buildings" in between which "statues glistened and fountains flashed" marks a blending of utility and aesthetics that carries over into the "bewildering variety" of fabrics that he finds at the massive and elegant shopping center (22, 60). Bellamy's material world suggests not utility and uniformity, but beauty and variety; thus, the active creation of it, the labor performed in its production, need not be wholly divorced from an aesthetically-motivated craftsmanship or a variety of activity. Furthermore, while the worker in Bellamy's utopia usually remains in the same trade for his entire career, there is no indication that he is subject to a monotonous repetition of activity; in fact, Leete tells us that advancement of position is common in the industrial army and that this advancement is facilitated by knowledge of one's trade and skill in its execution (75). There are therefore significant indications that manual labor in Bellamy's utopia is not just mindless, mechanized activity. However, by separating labor in the

material realm from the “higher activities” that “alone mean life,” in denying this labor the status of “vital activity,” Bellamy suggests that the worker is ultimately alienated from his labor. His labor is not considered, in the words of the early Marx, part of his “essential being” (*Manuscripts* 326). It is thus the insistence on the separation between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom, shared by both Bellamy and the late Marx, that allows for the continued presence of alienated labor. In classifying “vital activity” as only that which occurs outside the realm of material production, both thinkers put forth a societal vision in which much of the work performed is philosophically proscribed from contributing to the “full and free development” of the individual. In the next chapter, I will examine the way in which Morris and the early Marx, in eschewing the distinction between necessary human production and free human production, move beyond this limited definition of “vital activity” and thus move beyond alienated labor in a way that Bellamy and the Marx of *Capital* do not.

CHAPTER TWO: LABOR AS LIFE-ACTIVITY IN *NEWS FROM NOWHERE*

While Bellamy shied away from an association with socialism, Morris left no doubt that he was a passionate socialist. He publicly announced his conversion to socialism in 1883 and remained active in various socialist organizations for much of his life. Morris also directly acknowledged his debt to Marx; in his “The Hopes of Civilization,” Morris credits Marx for making “modern Socialism what it is” through his historical analysis of class struggle and his conception of the inevitable evolution that would bring Socialism into being (323). In “How I Became a Socialist,” Morris explains that he turned to Marx for a better understanding of the “economical side of Socialism” (380). Morris’s relationship to Marx was established primarily through his reading of *Capital Volume One*; adopting the Althusserian conception of the epistemological break, scholars such as Rob Breton and Ruth Kinna have noted that Morris only had access to the “scientific” Marx and thus consider his contributions to Morris’s thought as being primarily structural, as opposed to ethical (47, 500). Judging by his own account, this seems to be the way in which Morris read Marx: as an historian and economist, not a philosopher. As Stanley Pierson explains in his insightful history of British Socialism, the Marx to whom Morris had access “left little room for the questions which engaged Morris most deeply;” thus, Morris, like other “Ethical Socialists” of his time, “inserted his own ideas and values into the Marxist framework” (80).

While Morris’s historical relationship to Marx has often been discussed, what has not been thoroughly examined is the way in which Morris, in seeking an ethic to supplement the “scientific” socialism of the later Marx, comes to adopt a philosophy that significantly aligns with Marx’s early works, namely the *Economic and Philosophical*

Manuscripts and *The German Ideology*, which were not published until years after Morris's death. Furthermore, as I have argued in my introduction, the conception of the Althusserian break, which postulates that the later Marx abandoned his early philosophical humanism, is problematic. Instead, I have read Marx as remaining faithful to his notion of a human essence that should be allowed to flourish in every individual and have argued that the significant shift in Marx regards his understanding of the role of labor in this process of human emancipation: while the early Marx presents all unalienated labor as a fundamental component of human development, the later Marx severs the realization of the human essence from necessary material production. In this chapter, I will seek to establish that Morris's philosophy of labor, as expressed in *News from Nowhere*, aligns with that of the early Marx and will thus argue that through this alignment Morris necessarily (while perhaps not consciously) does not simply fill a void left by the "scientific" Marx, but places himself in opposition to the philosophy of labor that underlies Marx's later works. Peter Smith has recently acknowledged, in an important move away from a strictly historical understanding of the relationship between Morris and Marx, that Morris "reinstated some of the key principles in the early writing of Marx" (139); however, he also assumes that the "ontological significance of labor" recognized by Morris and the early Marx remains unchanged for the Marx of *Capital* and thus aligns Morris with a monolithic vision of Marx's philosophy of labor (131). In reading Morris's utopia as an expression of the early labor philosophy of Marx, I will highlight the important distinction between the early and late Marx overlooked by Smith and will show that Morris's separation from the labor philosophy of both the later Marx and Bellamy is the key to his utopia's success in practically overcoming the alienation of

labor: In refusing to acknowledge a distinction between the “realm of necessity” and the “realm of freedom,” Morris presents a society in which all labor can be understood as connected to the human essence. Furthermore, I will argue that while Morris, unlike Bellamy, echoes Marx’s vision of the way in which socialism would be achieved through political revolution, he comes into conflict with the Marx of *Capital* in his hesitancy to employ the collective productive forces of capitalism as the economic foundation for his socialist utopia. In doing so, Morris further removes himself from the vision of the socialist future presented by both the later Marx and Bellamy. In the case of Bellamy, I have argued that it is his limited view of the role of labor that compromises his utopia; in this chapter, I will argue that, for Morris, it is his desire to completely break with the economic foundations of capitalism that imposes limitations on his utopian vision.

As with *Looking Backward*, the reader sees Morris’s imagined future through the eyes of a visitor from the nineteenth century. William “Guest” (as he gives his surname to the inhabitants of Nowhere) is a socialist who falls asleep in nineteenth-century London and mysteriously awakes in the year 2102 to find that the city in which he fell asleep has been radically transformed: In place of “smoke-vomiting chimneys” and the clamor of “riveting and hammering,” he finds a sparkling, unpolluted Thames lined with “quaint and fanciful little buildings” (48). As with Bellamy’s West, Guest is helped to understand his new surroundings by friendly inhabitants of the new society. Guest quickly comes to understand, through both his own observations and the explanations of his new companions, that the world in which he finds himself is one in which humanity’s relationship to labor has been fundamentally changed. Instead of being a necessary burden, labor has become one of the primary pleasures of life. Much of Guest’s journey

through *Nowhere* is the process of learning how labor came to be viewed in such a way; as Daniel Shea has cleverly noted, Morris creates “a quest tale whose goal is unalienated labor itself” (158). One of the first things Guest discovers is that labor in *Nowhere* is not performed for monetary gain; his first encounter with an inhabitant of *Nowhere* is the young and handsome Dick, who is working as a boatman on the Thames. After having “employed” Dick to take him out into the water for a swim, he attempts to pay him for his services. Dick is confused by the offered coins and explains that he would feel strange about taking a “gift” from Guest in exchange for his services because “giving people casts about the water is my *business*, which I would do for anybody; so to take gifts in connection with it would look very queer” (50). The absence of monetary exchange in *Nowhere* is confirmed for Guest when he is taken by Dick, who becomes his guide, to a market, where he discovers that the young girl running the shop is equally as confused about the subject of payment (74). So, neither services rendered nor materially productive labor is tied to the laborer’s subsistence: there is no system of exchange to purchase the worker’s time or product. Guest also discovers that inhabitants of *Nowhere* are engaged in a variety of employments. When he asks if Dick will be able to quit his employment as a boatman to act as his guide, Dick informs him that he has a friend who would be very pleased to take over the task while he is away: “He is a weaver from Yorkshire, who has rather overdone himself between his weaving and his mathematics, both indoor work, you see; and being a great friend of mine, he naturally came to me to get him some outdoor work” (51). Dick’s friend, though already engaged in both a materially productive activity and an intellectual one, is still in search of further variety that will allow him time to work outdoors. Guest also learns from this exchange that labor is self-

directed; in Nowhere, one may move fluidly from one employment to another as one feels inclined to do so. It thus becomes clear that labor in Nowhere is not only freed from any ties to the worker's subsistence but is also freed from the external pressure of a societal system that structures employment. Guest soon learns that, in the absence of external pressures, the only motivating force behind the individual's decision to work is his desire to do so. While Dick acknowledges that, in the past, there was a "disease called Idleness," he says that now the idea that someone might not like to work is "too ridiculous" (75-6). Dick refers to employments such as "house-building, and street-paving, and gardening" as "genuinely amusing work" (68). This is confirmed when he and Guest come upon a group of workers mending a road, and Guest notes that after moving out of the travelers' way, they return eagerly to their employment "like men with a pleasant task at hand;" Dick explains that group tasks like this are considered "good sport" and carry with them a great amount of merriment because "everything seems like a joke when we have a pleasant spell of work on" (83).

Guest's journey leads him to the home of Dick's great-grandfather, Hammond, who is to act as Guest's primary source of direct information about the transformed role of labor in Morris's utopia; as Leete acts as the voice of Bellamy, guiding the reader through the underlying ideals of his utopia, so Hammond acts as the voice of Morris. Claiming to be traveler from a far-off place, Guest explains to Hammond that he should speak to him of their society as though he were "a being from another planet" (89). Furthermore, as someone interested in history who possesses a much greater knowledge of the past than Dick, Hammond is able to act as a bridge between Guest's time and his own. It is to Hammond that Guest puts the pressing question of "how you get people to

work when there is no reward of labour, and especially how you get them to work strenuously?” (122). Hammond’s reply reveals the philosophy of labor around which Morris’s entire utopian vision is structured; he tells Guest that “the reward of labour is *life*,” and that the payment for “especially good work” is “the reward of creation” (122). He goes on to say that being paid for “the pleasure of creation, which is what excellence in work means” would be akin to having “a bill sent in for the begetting of children” (122). In response to Guest’s rebuttal that people have a “natural desire” to procreate but no such innate desire to work, Hammond asserts that this is “wholly untrue” (122); their society, he explains, is built on the premise that “happiness without happy daily work is impossible” (123). In Morris’s imagined future, labor is understood to be a fundamental element of human existence; it is as “natural” to the species as procreation. Like procreation, it is necessary for the continuation of species-life, it is the means through which existence itself is created. Labor, however, is not just a necessity; it is the way in which the individual expresses her innate human desire to create. Because of this natural desire to create, labor is a process of making visible the worker’s human essence; she thus strives in her work because her product is an extension of herself. Without the means to express her human desire to create, the individual would be incomplete; thus, there is no happiness without daily productive activity. In removing external pressures to labor, Morris’s imagined society has simply allowed human nature to flourish by reuniting the individual with her innate desire to work.

It is in this understanding of labor as a fundamental human activity essential to the full development of the individual that Morris aligns his utopian vision with the early writings of Marx. For the Marx of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, the

worker is alienated from his labor under the capitalist system because “the labor is external to the worker, i.e. it does not belong to his *essential being*; [...] he therefore does not confirm himself in his work, but denies himself, feels miserable and not happy, does not develop free mental and physical energy, but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind” (326, my emphasis). As Marx makes clear, it is only through a reunification with his own production that the worker fully realizes his “essential being.” For Marx, the human essence is not an abstract conception but is shaped by the active interaction of the individual with the material world: “The whole character of a species, its species-character, resides in the nature of its life activity, and free conscious activity constitutes the species-character of man” (328). This “life activity,” for Marx, takes the form of production and labor; as he explains, “The practical creation of an objective world, the fashioning of inorganic nature, is proof that man is a conscious species-being [...] It is therefore in his fashioning of the objective that man really proves himself to be a species-being. Such production is his active species-life” (329). Thus, for both Morris and Marx, the individual, in order to realize her humanity, must engage in productive activity; she must participate in the “fashioning of the objective” to realize her essence as a creative being. As Marx argues, while the worker engages in such production in the capitalist system, his own life-activity appears as alien to him because he is compelled to work by another, thus “he feels that he is acting freely only in his animal functions—eating, drinking and procreating;” therefore, his labor constitutes not “the satisfaction of need but a mere *means* to satisfy needs outside itself” (326-7). In other words, what should *constitute* his life, his productive activity, becomes merely something he does in order that he might live when he is done working; because this life for which the worker strives

is separated from his essentially human activity, it is only “animal” life. It is for this reason that Marx, in *The German Ideology*, stresses that material labor must not be viewed as merely a means to an end; he argues that because human beings “begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence,” this “mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of individuals. Rather it is a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part” (37). Production, the foundation of human “life-activity,” is inextricably tied to the meeting of material needs; therefore, there can be no separation between the creation of the material world and the expression of the human essence. This is the meaning of Hammond’s assertion that “the reward of labour is life;” it is the recognition that labor creates life in the sense that it produces the material conditions of existence while simultaneously embodying human life-activity. Because of this recognition that labor *is* life-activity, not merely a means to an end, daily work in Morris’s utopia, the meeting of everyday needs, becomes a source of pleasure which carries with it the “reward of creation.” The fact that labor has become a central pleasure of life signifies that the worker has been reunited with his “essential being” and is no longer alienated from his labor: the worker now “confirms himself in his work,” no longer “denies himself” or “feels miserable and not happy,” but is free to fully develop his “mental and physical energy.”

Thus for Morris, as for the early Marx, the individual does not fully develop as a human being until she can freely express her creative essence through the production of her material existence; the meeting of material necessities is not an obstacle to be overcome so that real life may begin, but a fundamental life process. It is in this way that

the understanding of labor shared by Morris and the early Marx diverges from that shared by Bellamy and the later Marx. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the latter present a vision of a socialist society in which labor performed in the “realm of necessity” is divorced from activities performed in the “realm of freedom” which constitute the individual’s essential human activity. In Bellamy’s utopia, this creates a situation in which much of the labor performed in his imagined society is precluded from contributing to the development of the individual as a creative species-being; while his citizens voluntarily engage in material production, and this daily activity is made as pleasurable as possible by matching individuals with the job for which they are best suited, material production is still considered fundamentally as a duty to be performed, as a means rather than an end-in-itself. In contrast, in Morris’s utopia, all labor is celebrated as essential human activity which contributes to the happiness of the individual. This philosophical difference does not remain in the realm of the abstract but forms the respective underlying structures of the two utopias; a thorough examination of the way in which Morris imagines labor to be carried out in his utopia and the way in which his vision differs from Bellamy’s will highlight the practical differences in application of the two philosophies.

Morris’s reimagining of labor in *News from Nowhere* has often been considered as advocating a return to the principles of medieval handicraft. As Smith argues, Morris embraced a “nostalgic aestheticism” which “saw in the craftworkers of the Middle Ages a level of imaginative agency quite lacking in the modern artisan” (146). Likewise, for Kinna, Morris seeks “to reestablish work on the basis of a craft-specialism” that is distinctly “pre-capitalist” in nature (511). There are certainly grounds for a reading of

Morris's utopia that highlights his attention to craftwork; his vision of a socialist future clearly prizes skilled handicraft over the industrialized production of the capitalist present. From Guest's first vision of the sparkling Thames, it is clear that the factories which once lined its waters have been eliminated. As Hammond explains to Guest, a return to handicraft after the revolution that brought about the new order (which I will discuss in more detail later) constituted a blending of art and utility that contributed significantly to the new vision of labor as fundamental life-activity. According to Hammond, once the worker was freed from the imperative to produce "slave-wares for the poor and mere wealth-wasting wares for the rich," he began to put that saved time and energy into the production of goods that were both useful and beautiful, the production "of what used to be called art, but which has no name amongst us now, because it has become a necessary part of the labour of every man who produces" (160). No longer forced to overwork by the demands of capitalist production, workers were allowed the freedom to "do the best they could with the work at hand—to make it excellent of its kind" and this manifested itself as the infusion of beauty into all goods produced (160). This attention to aesthetics resulted in a decided move away from mechanized production because it came to be understood that "machines could not produce works of art" (201); thus, industrial production in Nowhere was largely supplanted by pre-capitalist handicraft. To return to Hammond's earlier statement, this blending of material production with artistic expression in the labor of the skilled artisan carries with it the "reward of creation" which makes it a pleasurable activity. This blending of art and utility in the production of goods is one of the primary ways in which Morris's utopia transcends a distinction between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom. The

everyday production of useful objects becomes an opportunity for the individual to express her creative human essence. As Guest learns when he stops at a shop to acquire a tobacco pipe, goods in Nowhere are clearly marked by artistic production; the pipe given to him by the shop girl is “pretty and gay,” “carved out of some hard wood very elaborately, and mounted in gold sprinkled with little gems”; Guest protests that it is “too grand for me, or for anybody but the Emperor of the World” (73). When Guest suggests to Dick that the pipe may be “too valuable for its use,” the latter does not understand him (81); in Nowhere, aesthetically-motivated production is the norm, so the idea of any useful object being “too grand” for its use (or its user) is a foreign concept.

While much attention has been given to the role of handicraft in Morris’s utopia, and this blending of art and utility is one of the primary ways in which the worker of Nowhere is united with her creative human essence, it is not only in the skilled production of beautiful goods that the worker finds individual fulfillment in labor. As was seen with the workers Guest encounters on the road, necessary physical labor whose end goal is not an aesthetic object is also considered a pleasurable and fulfilling task. Guest’s journey with Dick, while an opportunity for the stranger to learn of the society in which he finds himself, also has a tangible end-goal: Dick is taking Guest upriver to a hay-harvesting in which he has promised to participate. Hay-harvesting in Nowhere is considered a “festival,” a great social event that brings with it much merriment. Guest learns that the prospect of doing such “easy-hard work” is appealing to the inhabitants of Nowhere; as Dick explains, “easy-hard work” is the type of labor that “tries the muscles and hardens them and sends you pleasantly weary to bed, but which isn’t trying in other ways”; such work, he says, “is always pleasant if you don’t overdo it” (195). As with the

road mending, the hay-harvest is appreciated as a pleasant form of exercise; the very act of physical exertion in the service of a socially useful task is itself prized. In the words of Hammond, this form of work is a source of “sensuous pleasure” (123). It is not devalued because it does not require mental exertion or a finely-tuned skill, but is appreciated as one form of meaningful labor in a society in which inhabitants are encouraged to engage in multiple productive activities: it is one facet of the full development of the individual. Unlike physical exercise for the purpose of leisure, the physical exertion of the inhabitants of Nowhere is itself a productive activity; the act is a sensuous pleasure, but it is also a necessary one that results, to return to the words of Marx, in “the fashioning of the objective.”

It must also be noted that while the labor of many of the hay-harvesters is considered “easy-hard work,” a pleasure primarily for its physical exertion, the finer points of agriculture are themselves considered the work of the artisan. As an old man present at the harvest explains to Guest, at the time of the revolution, “everything in and about the fields was done by elaborate machines used quite unintelligently by the laborers,” but as the people began to realize the pleasure of labor, they began to want to take intelligent control of the process once again; thus, they began to “pick up the *agricultural arts* by carefully watching the way in which the machines worked” and the older workers “managed to teach the younger ones gradually a little *artanship*” (199, my emphasis). An active turning away from agricultural machinery ensued, and the skill and knowledge that had once been a necessary part of such tasks were regained. While I will discuss Morris’s attitude towards machinery later in the chapter, I wish now to highlight the way in which the sense of artistry in his utopia is not limited to the

production of beautiful objects. The abandonment of machines because they could not produce art means not just that they were viewed as incapable of producing properly aesthetic objects, but that they were seen as impeding the artistry inherent in the skilled execution of all forms of labor. In *Nowhere*, one need not be producing an object of beauty to be engaged in artistic production; even the production of food, perhaps the most basic necessity, is considered not as mundane necessary labor but as the creative execution of the “agricultural arts.”

Many of the readers of *News from Nowhere* have focused on the way in which labor is made fulfilling in Morris’s utopia through its embodiment of artistry and sensuous pleasure. As Smith rightly notes, Morris reinvents the human relationship to labor through his blending of artistic and necessary production, which results in a breaking down of “the false dichotomies of the practical and the aesthetic, the utilitarian and the poetic” (136); and, as Beaumont notes, Morris’s focus on the pleasure of everyday tasks “effectively deconstructs the difference between work and play” (48). As both scholars note, the organization of labor in *Nowhere* is notable for its ability to break down divisions; these acts of deconstruction, the collapsing of the dichotomies utility/art and work/play, are important components of what I am arguing is Morris’s larger project: the blending of necessary and free production. Necessary labor, in Morris’s utopia, is capable of carrying with it both the enjoyment of artistic expression and the pleasure of play; thus, it is not merely the performance of a duty, but a free exercise of the human powers that contributes to the full development of the individual. It is easy to see how, in Marx’s terms, material production becomes united with the “life-activity” of the worker. However, Morris’s utopia does not consist solely of labor that is pleasurable for its

artistic expression or its sensual enjoyment. As Hammond tells Guest, “*all* work is now pleasurable,” and while this is primarily because most work is done by “artists” and there is “conscious sensuous pleasure” in the work itself, this is not the only way in which work becomes free activity for the inhabitants of Nowhere: labor can also be made pleasurable by “the hope of gain in honour and wealth with which the work is done, which causes pleasurable excitement, even when the actual work is not pleasant” or “because it has grown into a pleasurable *habit*, as in the case with what you may call mechanical work” (122-3). Critics have often overlooked these two forms of labor in Morris’s utopia, and they warrant further examination; it is, in part, through this more comprehensive understanding of labor as presented by Hammond that Morris moves beyond, to return to the words of Smith, a mere “nostalgic aestheticism.”

To consider firstly Hammond’s claim that labor is made pleasurable through the “hope of gain in honour and wealth,” it must be realized that “wealth” in Morris’s utopia can mean nothing other than a contribution to the social accumulation of useful products. Dick’s inability to understand Guest’s suggestion that the ornate tobacco pipe might be “too valuable for its use” points to the fact that there is no value in Morris’s utopia other than the direct utility of the object. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, Bellamy employs exchange-value for the purpose of regulating production, but in Nowhere, exchange-value has been wholly eradicated. Thus, an accumulation of goods cannot be transformed into monetary wealth. Furthermore, as Guest notes, the “sacred rights of property” are no longer a structuring element of society in Nowhere (91); as Hammond explains further, private property laws were abolished along with class: once everyone had equal access to both the means of production and the goods produced thereby, it

became “easy for us to live without robbing each other” (112). The attitude towards private property in *Nowhere* is perhaps best expressed by the shop girl who sells Guest his pipe: when Guest expresses his fear of losing such a fine object, she replies simply, “What will it matter if you do? Somebody is sure to find it, and he will use it, and you can get another” (74). Because goods are only appreciated for their immediate utility, once that a pipe loses its utility for Guest (i.e. he loses it), it will simply assume a utility for someone else. Thus, wealth in Morris’s utopia, as in Bellamy’s, means the production of useful objects which are considered more collective than private in nature. Because there is no value outside of the properties of the object itself, the individual accumulation of goods would become, in the words of Bellamy’s Leete, “merely burdensome the moment they exceed what adds to real comfort” (69). The pleasure derived from the production of wealth in Morris’s utopia must thus be understood in terms of Hammond’s assertion that “the reward of labour is life;” the production of wealth means the creation of the material conditions of existence, the creation of all things, as Morris says elsewhere, that “serve the pleasure of the people” (“Useful Work” 291).

What, then, of the gain of honor through labor to which Hammond refers? This, too, is intrinsically tied to utility, to both the production of useful objects and the performance of useful services: work done, in other words, in the service of a collective good. As Beaumont correctly notes, in *Nowhere*, “all work is useful” (43). What needs to be understood is the way in which this attention to usefulness is, for Morris, largely lacking in the capitalist society against which he poses his alternative vision of life and how the centrality of usefulness is an important part of the way in which work is reunited with life-activity in *News from Nowhere*. In his essay “Useful Work Versus Useless

Toil,” Morris argues that much of the work performed under the capitalist system is devoid of usefulness because it is performed by those who are not concerned with the “production of utilities” but instead “spend their lives and energies in fighting amongst themselves for the respective shares of the wealth” which others produce (290). In other words, while these individuals perform what is considered work in a capitalist society, the goal of their activity is not production itself. Morris here speaks primarily of those who are involved in manufacturing and commercial endeavors, those who own the means of production and those who are responsible for the distribution of the goods produced. Here we see a parallel to Marx, who establishes in *Capital Volume One* that those who control the means of production are concerned with the production of use-values only in as much as they lead to an increase in their personal store of capital: “Use-values are produced by capitalists only because and in so far as they form the material sub-stratum of exchange-value, are the bearers of exchange-value” (293). The goal of the commercial worker, as Marx establishes in *Volume Three*, is to aid the industrial capitalist in the process of valorization, to help him in his exploitation of the surplus-value produced by the workers (407). In addition to the members of the capitalist economy who directly benefit from the exploitation of productive labor for profit, Morris also speaks of the wage-workers who are “engaged in the service of the private war for wealth,” the clerks and assistants and those engaged in “competitive salesmanship,” otherwise known as “the puffery of wares” (291). For Morris, these are all jobs which qualify as “useless toil” because they do not contribute to the real wealth of society, which includes for Morris not just tangible objects, but also the “storing up of knowledge of all kinds, and the power of disseminating it” (291). Thus, one need not be engaged in material production to be

employed usefully, but one must contribute to the betterment of society. Because capitalist production is concerned primarily with the creation of profit, it relegates a large portion of workers to the meeting of this goal and thus deprives them of engagement in truly productive labor. Again this parallels Marx, who notes that the capitalist mode of production creates “a vast number of functions at present indispensable, but *in themselves superfluous*” (CV.I 667, my emphasis). The elimination of these employments which are “superfluous” once the “production of utilities” becomes the only goal of labor is one of the primary focuses of Morris’s utopian vision.

For Morris, the usefulness of labor, its ability to contribute to the real wealth of society, is central to the elimination of alienated labor; as he goes on to say in “Useful Work,” “The first step towards making labour attractive is to get the means of making labour fruitful, the Capital, including the land, machinery, factories, etc., into the hands of the community, to be used for the good of all alike, so that we might all work at ‘supplying’ the real ‘demands’ of each and all—that is to say, work for livelihood, instead of working to supply the demand of the profit market” (298). To return once again to Hammond’s claim, the “reward of labour is life,” so for labor to carry with it this reward, it must contribute to the real conditions of existence, not the abstract realm of monetary gain. How, then, does this meeting of the “real demands” of society translate, for Morris, into the “hope of honour”? As he explains in “Useful Work,” labor in the service of meeting social needs carries with it “the consciousness of benefiting ourselves and our neighbors,” which can be “counted on in sweetening tasks otherwise irksome, since social morality, the responsibility of man towards the life of man, will, in the new order of things, take the place of theological morality, or the responsibility of man to some

abstract idea” (299). In Morris’s utopia, his representation of the “new order of things,” necessary labor carries with it the satisfaction derived from a humanist desire to improve the conditions of social life. This desire *transforms* the act of labor: it is not simply that the work is performed as a necessary duty that, despite its desirable outcome, remains a burden, but that the very sense of the work’s importance makes the act of labor itself a pleasurable activity. Morris goes on to make the connection between utility and honor clear, noting that “rougher work” otherwise burdensome can be made attractive to the worker “by the sense of special or peculiar *usefulness* (and therefore *honour*) in the mind of the man who performs it freely” (305, my emphasis). In Morris’s conception of labor, utility is equated with honor, and this sense of honor, which imbues necessary tasks with meaning, creates a connection between the worker as humanist and the labor he performs in the service of humanity.

As I noted in the previous chapter, this sense of honor also underlies necessary labor in Bellamy’s utopia. Because Bellamy’s workers understand their labor as social activity and themselves as social beings, intrinsically connected to the social whole, they are driven by a “passion for humanity” that “animates” them with “the ardor of self-devotion” (56-7). However, as I argued, the potential for socially necessary work to promote individual fulfillment is compromised by Bellamy’s insistence on a separation between material production performed in the realm of necessity and individual growth carried out in the realm of freedom. Morris, in his equally unequivocal insistence that no such divide exists, realizes the potential inherent in Bellamy’s understanding of the worker as social being. In Bellamy’s conception, while the sense of honor derived from performing socially necessary work adds a dimension of meaning, and by extension

attractiveness, to the act of labor, he still understands this labor to be separated from the free development of the individual. Because Morris realizes individual fulfillment as intrinsically tied to necessary production, the satisfaction derived from the meeting of social needs becomes just another way, in addition to artistic expression and sensuous pleasure, that the individual expresses her human essence through labor.

As I have shown, Morris's utopia showcases an active turning away from mechanized production; after the "Great Change," "machine after machine was quietly dropped under the excuse that the machines could not produce works of art, and that works of art were more and more called for" (201). As I have also discussed, this turning away from mechanized production in favor of skilled handicraft extends to every type of production, even that of the most basic necessities, such as food. However, machines have not been altogether eliminated in *Nowhere*; furthermore, as Hammond suggests, "mechanical work" can still hold pleasure for the laborer "because it has grown into a pleasurable *habit*" (122). In a recent article, R. Jayne Hildebrand has convincingly argued that *News from Nowhere* positions habit as "a behavioural substrate for the support of creativity and adaptability" (16). For Hildebrand, Morris combats the nineteenth (and arguably twenty-first) century notion that habit is oppositional to "aesthetic consciousness" (11). She notes that, in *Nowhere*, it is only after the worker has achieved "deftness" in his task that he can begin to express his artistry: "[T]he habituated dexterity of *Nowhere*'s labourers support their aptitude for infinitely complex and varied kinds of labour, much in the same way a jazz musician's habitual familiarity with jazz scales enables unthinkably complex and beautiful improvisations upon them" (17). As opposed to life under the capitalist system, in which the increased efficiency of the worker is

exploited for the “maximization of production,” the habitually-formed skill of the worker in Nowhere “unleashes the expression of aesthetic exuberance in the work process” (17).

While Hildebrand’s reading does much towards understanding the role of habit as it lends itself to the type of artistic handicraft with which Morris is so often associated, it must also be understood that not all habitual work in Nowhere leads to a more complex form of aesthetic production. When Hammond speaks of the pleasure to be derived from “mechanical work,” he does not speak of habitual action as the *foundation* of a pleasurable activity but of the habitual act as a source of pleasure in itself. It should be noted that what Hammond means by “mechanical work” does not necessarily imply actual mechanization; it could refer to work that is merely mechanical in nature, i.e. work that is done by hand but with repeated, precise actions, any work, in other words, that lends itself well to habitual motion. However, Morris makes clear that the role of mechanization in his utopia is the carrying out of tasks that do not lend themselves to the particular joys of handicraft: “All the work which would be irksome to do by hand is done by vastly-improved machinery; and in all work which it is a pleasure to do by hand machinery is done without” (127). Given that handicraft derives its importance from its ability to allow for artistic variation (even in the case of the “agricultural arts,” which must respond constantly to varying conditions) and the use of specialized skill, this passage suggests that the work which is not a pleasure to be done by hand is that which does not allow for artistic variation or require a finely-honed skill. Even in Nowhere, in which the dichotomy of art/utility has been deconstructed, there are clearly still objects whose production does not allow for such variance and intellectual engagement. Thus it is that in Morris’s utopia, which has often been viewed as “one of the most backward-

looking novels of the nineteenth century” (Beaumont 35), machinery finds a place: in keeping with the spirit of Morris’s vision, its employment is part of the making-pleasurable of labor that would otherwise be tedious. Ruth Kinna has recently argued that in Morris’s future, “the productive capacity of machinery would be released in order to reduce the amount of necessary labor time” (502); mechanized production is, for Morris, “not suitable for voluntary labor” but could be used to “relieve the burden of necessary work” (508). However, as I hope I have shown, Morris’s utopia is not concerned with the reduction of necessary labor time; in fact, there is a fear amongst the inhabitants of Nowhere that there will not be enough useful work for everyone in the future (122). Furthermore, there is no such thing as labor that is not voluntary in Nowhere: all labor is undertaken for the purpose of individual fulfillment as well as the meeting of societal needs. Machinery can therefore not be said to reduce the amount of necessary labor in Nowhere; instead, it is responsible for the transformation of otherwise tedious work into a “pleasurable habit.” In other words, it is another way in which labor in Morris’s utopia is removed from the realm of alienation: to return to the words of Marx, labor that might otherwise have caused the individual to deny himself in his work, to feel “miserable and not happy,” becomes another means to express his “active species-life.”

As I have noted in the previous chapter, the “full and free development” of the individual, which would, for Marx, form the “ruling principle” of any “higher form of society” is predicated on the turning of the worker from a “one-sided implement” of capitalist production into a being that is capable of exercising a variety of human powers (*CV. I* 739,458). Bellamy seeks to accomplish this through his attention to the full education of every individual and his shortening of the time spent on material production;

the citizens of Bellamy's utopia have both the knowledge and the "free time" to engage in a variety of employments that allow for the exercise of their intellectual and artistic faculties. Furthermore, within the realm of material production itself, Bellamy has allowed for the individual to become fully-developed within his trade; no worker is left unskilled. However, as I have shown, because of his separation between socially necessary labor and the truly free activity of the individual, Bellamy has undervalued the realm of material production and, as such, much of the labor performed in his utopia is seen primarily as a means to an end: it is seen "not as the satisfaction of a need but as a mere *means* to satisfy needs outside itself" (*Manuscripts* 326). While, as I have argued, the Marx of *Capital* did not intend for the "realm of necessity" to include all material production, the practical outcome of an attempt to define such a realm leads to the conditions of Bellamy's utopia, in which the "full and free development" of the individual is divorced from her daily labor. In Morris's utopia, on the other hand, in which there is no distinction between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity, every act of labor contributes to the development of the individual as a creative species-being. *There is no separation between the means and the ends of labor*: the fulfillment of societal needs acts simultaneously as the means by which the individual fully realizes the vast array of her human powers. Guest summarizes the role of labor in Nowhere eloquently: "I looked, and wondered indeed, at the deftness and abundance of beauty of the work of men who had at last learned to accept life itself as a pleasure, and the satisfaction of the common needs of mankind and the preparation for them, as work fit for the best of the race" (201). Morris's equation of "life itself" with the "satisfaction of the common needs of mankind" is the key to the elimination of alienated labor in

Morris's utopia: his utopia accomplishes what Marx terms in *The German Ideology* "the transformation of labour into self-activity" (97). In *Nowhere*, the creation of the material conditions of life and life itself are one in the same.

The parallel between *News from Nowhere* and *The German Ideology* also holds the key to understanding how the practical application of Marx's early philosophy of labor is carried out in the organization of work in Morris's utopia. In the *German Ideology*, we get what Eagleton has called one of Marx's "few frankly utopian speculations" (24):

[A]s soon as the division of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; whereas in a communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity, but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic. (53)

This image of life beyond capitalist production has often been derided for its utopian quality, for the impossibility of its actualization, and it has been suggested that even Marx himself did not take this vision seriously. In addition to claiming that the eradication of the division of labor as Marx imagines it here is "plainly not reasonable," Renzo Llorente

expresses his belief that this view is not “plausibly attributable” to Marx, especially “if one takes into account his later writings” (238). While Llorente does not go on to explain why Marx would include this vision in his writings were it one he did not support, Beilharz suggests that this “playful image” was merely Marx’s attempt at a “paraphrase of” or “pun upon” Fourier’s utopian vision (598-9). I wish to argue, however, that this image is not merely a playful one (though one cannot deny the humorous tone in phrases like “critical critic”) but is a practical extension of the philosophy of labor present in Marx’s early works. In a society in which labor is not separated from self- activity, in which “necessary” work time in the social realm is not divided from “free” time in the individual realm, the life of the individual is expressed through her socialized production. Thus, “the development of individuals into complete individuals” becomes equivalent with engagement in various productive employments (*GI* 97). When labor is a fundamental aspect of life, the fullness of one’s life depends upon the variety of one’s labors. This understanding structures both the brief vision of labor in a post-capitalist society as put forth here by Marx, as well as the extended vision brought into being by Morris’s utopia. In Nowhere, every individual actively pursues a variety of productive activities which vary along the spectrums of artistic to pragmatic, mental to physical, and varied to routine. Morris recognizes that none of these activities, taken alone, would result in the full development of the individual. Unlike Bellamy’s utopia, in which the individual is expected to realize her full development outside the realm of socially necessary labor, the individual in Nowhere embraces the full scope of her human powers *as* she contributes to the needs of society. Thus, the underlying philosophy that it is only through the active creation of her material world that the individual expresses her

species-being becomes practically expressed in Morris's utopia as the need to allow every individual to engage in a variety of pursuits, all of which are considered a useful contribution to the betterment of society.

Both Morris's utopia and the above passage from *The German Ideology* have been understood as largely pastoral; indeed, the glorification of the hay-harvest which forms the culmination of Guest's journey is distinctly Georgian, and the activities Marx chooses to highlight in his vision of the communist future are all, with the exception of criticism, rural in nature. However, while Morris's utopian vision, with its active rejection of *most* mechanized production, can be rightly read as largely anti-industrial, Marx, even in the early works, cannot be understood as such. It is in their respective views on large-scale, mechanized production that Morris and Marx most dramatically diverge. While Bellamy is distinguished from Marx for his unwillingness to embrace revolutionary political change, Morris was an ardent believer in the necessity of political revolution. *News from Nowhere* contains a brilliantly detailed recounting of the protracted class war that gave birth to the "Great Change." In this way, critics such as Raymond Williams are correct in their assertion that socialist visions like Bellamy's must be "radically distinguished from the revolutionary socialism of Morris and Marx" (60). However, as I argued in the previous chapter, Marx's vision of the transition from capitalism to socialism is not one of complete rupture: the socialist future must be built on the material foundations of capitalism. Morris, in his zealotry to wholly reconstruct the role of labor in his future society, abandons these material foundations, arguably to the detriment of the viability of his vision. As Hammond tells Guest, the great civil war which ended capitalism contained a level of destruction never before seen, both

of already produced “wares” and, more significantly, of “the instruments for making them” (157). While the previous owners of the means of production, once they saw that they were going to lose control, had no incentive to protect them, the “rebels” were equally unconcerned; in fact, the latter viewed the existing material structures as one with the social relations they were attempting to supplant and thus welcomed their destruction. This mindset was embodied in a common saying at the time: “Let the country be cleared of everything except valiant living men, rather than we fall into slavery again!” (157). Thus, Morris’s utopian future begins with a virtually clean slate, and of the machinery that survives the revolution, much of it is actively phased out in the beginnings days of the new civilization. One of the first things Guest notices is the absence of factories along the Thames, and Dick later explains to him that while there are structures somewhat like factories, they are now called “Banded-workshops” and are for the performance of “hand-work in which working together is necessary or convenient” (81). While Hammond attests to the presence of “immensely improved machinery,” he also makes clear that it is *only* employed when the task is not pleasurable to be performed by hand. While some labor may be performed with the aid of machinery, and there are often small groups of laborers who band together for the completion of tasks, the vast collective “social powers of production” which Marx saw as the fruitful legacy of capitalism are noticeably absent (*CV*. 3 375).

In fact, Hammond tells Guest that, in Nowhere, “we discourage centralization all we can” (101), and Morris’s utopian vision holds true to this maxim. While this discouraging of centralization affects many aspects of life in Nowhere, I am particularly interested in how it influences the organization of labor, namely, how it leads to a *lack* of

organization in both production and distribution. When Dick chooses to leave his employment as a boatman to accompany Guest as his guide, he simply finds a friend to take his place. Laborers in Nowhere seemingly move freely from employment to employment; it is self-direction which primarily structures production and the carrying out of necessary services. Tasks that require collective labor, such as the hay-harvest, are organized through an informal network of neighborly aid: Dick tells Guest that he has “promised to go up-stream to some special friends of mine, for the hay-harvest” (51). Hammond tells Guest that while there is obviously no “individual exchange,” there are “regulations of the markets” carried out by those “whose delight is in administration and organization, to use long-tailed words; I mean people who like keeping things together, avoiding waste, seeing that nothing sticks fast uselessly” (116). However, as Darko Suvin has rightly noted, there is no indication of such organizational structures in Morris’s utopia: Morris’s vision embodies “a total refusal to envisage any machinery, technological or societal. This amounts to leaving the future society without any economic or organizational basis” (81). While I have noted that there is *some* usage of technology in Nowhere, Suvin’s argument is still a valid one: Morris’s commitment to radically breaking with industrial capitalism leads him to abandon economic structures all together.

In Marx’s terms, Morris’s utopia marks a return to the pre-capitalist conditions of small-scale production and privatized labor. In *Capital Volume One*, Marx speaks of “a new productive power, which is intrinsically a collective one” which arises from capitalist production; it is through these collective acts of large-scale production that the worker “strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his

species” (447). While the worker under the capitalist system cannot recognize the potential of this collective power because it is imposed upon him as an outside force, this socialized production, when brought under the control of the workers, is the key to the creation of society in which the individual can truly develop as a species-being. Small-scale production, on the other hand, “[a]s it excludes the concentration of these means of production, so it also excludes co-operation, [...] the social control and regulation of the forces of nature, and the free development of the productive forces of society” (927-8). For Marx, then, Morris’s return to small-scale production in his post-capitalist future would constitute an abandonment of human potential. While Morris’s laborers do work together on a small scale in a cooperative manner, and all work contributes to the needs (material and otherwise) of society, they are not a socialized productive force in the way that Marx imagines; far from being a “comprehensive organization” of “scientifically-arranged processes of production” (780), the workforce of Nowhere is a loose collection of individuals who have no structural means of regulating their productive powers.

It is undoubtedly Morris’s commitment to the transformation of labor as life-activity that motivates his desire to move away from centralized production. He critiques *Looking Backward* for what appears to him as a coercive system of labor; he questions Bellamy’s assertion that labor is freely undertaken in his “tightly drilled” army (356). For Morris, the systematic organization of labor as Bellamy presents it becomes unnecessary when “the true incentive to useful and happy labour is [...] pleasure in the work itself” (357). However, as I have argued in the last chapter, Bellamy’s “industrial army” is not established for the purpose of coercion; it is the means by which Bellamy’s society harnesses the collective power of its socialized productive force for the meeting of social

needs. The “industrial army” does not represent forced labor, but the organization of voluntary labor. In the absence of these organizational structures, labor in Morris’s utopia cannot be coordinated beyond the interaction of workers who come into direct contact with one another. Morris was also largely unconcerned with efficiency of production; he believed that once incentives to produce for the purpose of profit had been removed, once production was focused on the meeting of “real demands,” things actually useful to society, the meeting of these demands would be easily accomplished. As I have noted, the inhabitants of Nowhere are so completely satisfying these demands that they fear they will run out of useful work. Just as efficiency need not be a factor in the meeting of societal needs, there is also no need, for Morris, to reduce the amount of labor time spent in production because of his vision of useful labor as fundamental life-activity. Because meeting the material needs of society is not something that must be accomplished before life can begin, because labor is not a burden but the primary pleasure of life, the reduction of labor time for the betterment of life is an irrelevant concept. Thus, we return to Morris’s criticism of Bellamy, that “his only idea for making labour tolerable is to decrease the amount of it by means of fresh and ever fresh developments of machinery” (357). It is true that, for Bellamy, the productive efficiency of his society is carried out in service of the creation of more “free” time for the individual to explore her full development outside the realm of material production. This is also the case with the Marx of *Capital*, who sees the social benefit of mechanized large-scale production as a “greater reduction in the overall time devoted to material labour” (V.3 958). Because, for Bellamy and the later Marx, the realm of freedom exists outside the realm of necessity, the

reduction of time spent in service of the latter means more time for the individual to fully express herself in the former.

As I have argued, Morris's ability to break down the barrier between necessary and free production is an essential component of moving beyond the alienation of labor as experienced by the worker in the capitalist system. However, his utopia is limited by its confidence that self-directed, small-scale production could meet the needs of society. While Morris equates productive efficiency with a devaluing of necessary labor, there arguably cannot be a modern society that can meet the needs of its citizens without a highly-organized, efficient labor force. Is there, then, a way in which a necessary efficiency of production can accommodate an understanding of labor as life-activity? Or does large-scale socialized production intrinsically entail a division between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom? The final section of this thesis will be dedicated to the answering of these questions.

CONCLUSION

While *Looking Backward* and *News from Nowhere* are often read as oppositional, Darko Suvin, in his classic *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, makes an eloquent argument for the way in which these two texts might be the “perfect complement” to one another:

Staying within the bourgeois—or indeed WASP—existentialist horizons, Bellamy had pursued the everyday need for security to its logical conclusion and ended up with a socialist dawn as an order of things, a *societas rerum*. Reneging on the bourgeois existential horizons but opposing them to unrealistically idealized—indeed bohemian—horizons, Morris pursued the arrested timeless moment, the visionary dream [...] of Earthly Paradise to its logical conclusion and ended up with another aspect of that same dawn: creative and therefore beautiful human relations, a *societas hominum*. Between them, they covered the technical premises and the sensual horizons of that dawn: *each lacks what the other has*. (185, my emphasis)

In Suvin’s conception, Bellamy provides the material structures and Morris the human conditions for a complete socialist vision that presents a holistic alternative to life in a capitalist society. My reading of the role of labor in these two texts fits, in significant ways, into this paradigm put forth by Suvin. While Morris transcends alienation in his understanding of labor as fundamental to the development of the individual as a creative being, his unwillingness to employ the collective power of centralized production leaves his utopia without the support of a material foundation. While Bellamy provides these

material foundations through the harnessing of a centralized system of production to the equal benefit of all his citizens, his understanding that true human development happens only outside the realm of material production limits his ability to move beyond alienation. In this way, each lacks what the other provides. Can we then, following Suvin's pattern, graft Morris's philosophy of labor onto the economic structures of Bellamy's utopia? If so, what might it look like?

While Suvin imagines Bellamy's utopia as a "society of things," the latter's vision is not simply a materialistic one. His material conditions of production are structured by a humanist philosophy: like Morris, his end goal is a society in which every individual would be free to develop a full range of human capacities. Because, for Bellamy, material comfort is the *precondition* for this development, his focus on efficient production is intrinsically tied to this goal. The highly-regulated system of labor he imagines is designed to reduce the amount of time spent by each individual in the meeting of social needs to allow for her growth outside of this realm. While Morris holds the same humanistic goal, his belief that the individual can realize her human potential only *through* the active creation of her material world makes his means of achieving this end radically different. Therefore, any attempt to imagine a combination of the two socialist visions must contend with this fundamental philosophical difference. However, despite this rift, both thinkers open up possibilities in their respective utopias to allow for a merging of the two worlds.

As I have argued, Bellamy's utopia already significantly overcomes many aspects of the alienation created by capitalist labor relations. Bellamy's creation of a society structured around mutual interdependence and the voluntary participation of each

individual in the meeting of social needs radically breaks with the competitive individualism which underlies capitalist production. There is also much potential for the workers in Bellamy's society to feel that they are expressing their humanity in the labor they perform: because they realize themselves as an intrinsic part of a unified social whole, acts of labor in the service of social needs become an expression of their essentially social being. Further, the matching of workers with employments for which they feel they are best suited, as well as the encouragement that each individual become skilled in his trade, act as additional means through which the worker can achieve self-fulfillment in his labor time. However, because Bellamy still realizes necessary production as primarily a duty to be performed before life can begin, he is not concerned with integrating the full development of the individual with her acts of production. This is where Suvin's conception of the complementary nature of the two utopias becomes problematic in application. Bellamy's worker devotes his life to one trade; while the skilled nature of his labor makes him more than a "one-sided implement," he is still limited in the scope of his productive activities. In Bellamy's conception, one serves the nation either with "hands" or "brains" (42). While this distinction between physical and mental labor is certainly not as definitive in Bellamy's utopia as his language suggests, a practical divide still exists between those who engage in primarily manual labor and those who engage in intellectual or artistic work. For Morris, the relegation of an individual to one type of labor would compromise the entire philosophical basis of his utopian vision. Because, in Morris's conception, labor is life-activity, the development of the individual is intrinsically tied to the way in which she contributes to the needs of society; thus, in order to be a fully developed human being, to express her full range of

human capacities, she must be engaged in a variety of useful productive activities. The question then becomes: Can Bellamy's highly regulated system of labor allow for the variance of productive activity that Morris imagines as essential? The answer, I believe, is yes. Morris's system is predicated on individuals, without any structural guidance, determining social needs and meeting them through purely individual initiative. While this works in Morris's small communities, this is not a feasible system on a large scale. Bellamy's centralized organizational structure, which determines social demands and regulates production accordingly, does not disallow the engagement of the individual in multiple employments throughout his life. Bellamy's extended, holistic educational period already provides the individual with an arsenal of skills and knowledge; instead of assuming that the individual will choose one employment for which they are best suited, and then employ the rest of that skill and knowledge in their "free" time, a system can be imagined that would allow the individual to integrate more of this holistic education into her work through the selection of three or four employments that span a range of labor types. The existence of Morris's weaver/mathematician, for instance, could just as easily find a place in Bellamy's socially-regulated labor force as in Morris's wholly self-directed one.

Another problem that must be addressed in the merging of the two visions is the question of machinery: since Morris actively moves away from machine production in favor of handicraft, is this an intrinsic part of his labor philosophy that would clash with Bellamy's reliance on industrial production? While Morris would likely not approve of the type of mass production that Bellamy imagines, it is not wholly incompatible with his understanding of labor as life-activity. While he was skeptical of an overreliance on

mechanized production, Morris does not preclude this type of labor from contributing to the full development of the individual. While mechanical labor does not allow for the kind of creative variance that Morris undoubtedly favors, he argues that it can still become self-fulfilling both through the intrinsic pleasure of habitual activity as well as in the broader sense in which all useful labor is tied to self-fulfillment: through the sense of honor that arises in the individual who is contributing, as a social being intrinsically connected to her fellows, in a meaningful way to social existence. Thus, the efficiency of production in the meeting of social needs which industrial production allows need not be sacrificed in the service of eradicating alienated labor. As long as the individual can engage in a variety of productive activities, both within a particular trade and amongst various types of professions, mechanized labor can become one avenue for the individual's full and free development.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx argues that in a capitalist system, the existing socialized productive force of which the worker is an active part appears instead as something external to her; thus, she is alienated from her labor, which in reality unites her with these forces, because her own productive activity feels external to her: it loses "all semblance of life-activity" (96). The only way, then, in which the worker's labor can become life-activity is through the unification of the worker with the means of production, and it is through this unification that she explores the full range of her human development: "The appropriation of these [productive] forces is itself nothing more than the development of the individual capacities corresponding to the material instruments of production. The appropriation of a totality of instruments of production is, for this very reason, the development of a totality of capacities in the individual's themselves" (96). In

this text, Marx imagines that the appropriation by the workers of the vast and varied means of production which arise with industrial capitalism is equivalent to the full expression of their human capacities. In uniting her productive activity with a wide range of material instruments of production, her productive activity becomes just as varied. Because she is now expressing her full range of human capacities through her labor, her labor is no longer external to her self-fulfilling development; this results, for Marx, in “the *transformation of labor into self-activity*” (97, my emphasis). This, I believe, is the potential inherent in a merging of the utopian visions of Bellamy and Morris: the employment of all the material productive forces of capitalism by a collective labor force comprised of individuals who view their labor, not as a necessary burden to be overcome before life can begin, but as a means to fully develop their human capacities.

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