Visions of Evolutionary Theory in the Political Thought of British Socialists, 1880-1901

Mary Elizabeth Gearen

Magdalene College

July 2024

This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any work that has already been submitted, or is being concurrently submitted, for any degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

Abstract

This thesis examines the fissiparity of Socialist groups in the last two decades of nineteenth-century Britain. I reject the predominant view in scholarship that their inability to coalesce was caused by inter-personal conflict and posit instead that the failure was rooted in disparate interpretations of human nature, which emerged through a Darwinian rhetoric. The writings of four Socialist groups; the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, the Socialist League, and the Anarchists connected to Peter Kropotkin; form the basis of my research. Though the knowledge of Darwin's scientific argument was variable among Socialists, the language of Darwinian evolution was adopted by each group as a means of expressing differences between groups and increasing the intellectual legitimacy of their cause. The digitisation of archives for the weekly or monthly journals produced by each group allows this thesis to examine a wider breadth of primary source material from these periodicals than has been achieved in previous scholarship. The centrality of a Darwinian language of evolution to the conflict between these groups, and the methodologies of reform which they propose, has not been explored adequately before now. This thesis seeks to supply a gap in the foundational understanding of these Socialist groups which will support scholarship on their work in the twentieth century, both focused on Britain and on her imperial interests, in understanding the motivation for their methodology of reform or revolution.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been supported in many ways, tangible and intangible, by the richness of the community of Political Thought and Intellectual History at the University of Cambridge. My methodology, the vigour and inspiration with which I have sought to pursue this work, and the joy I have found in its writing are rooted in the encouragement and example of so many of my peers and teachers. This thesis also benefitted from the presentation at the 14th annual London Graduate Conference in the History of Political Thought in 2023 of my introduction, and the feedback I received there. This thesis has been guided by the brilliant hand of my supervisor, Professor Duncan Kelly, whose wisdom, breadth of knowledge, and unfailing encouragement have been vital in its realisation. I am grateful to Dr Sylvana Tomaselli, whose rigorous eye for detail and unfailingly high expectations for my work during my MPhil in Political Thought and Intellectual History improved my writing and research immeasurably. To my dear friends, Dr Madeleine Armstrong, and future Drs Aine Maher and Paula Darwin, I owe debts of gratitude for the hours devoted to the discussion and sharp-eyed editing of this work. It remains only to thank my parents, Mary and Jim Gearen, without whose support and love this project could never have been ventured upon. Thank you, all, for your years of support—I am lucky.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Darwin first published his scientifically ground-breaking *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. By the last two decades of the nineteenth century, it was regarded as being *politically* ground-breaking by British Socialists. The 1860s saw many of the theories put forward in the *Origin* assimilated by the scientific establishment, and the veracity of Darwin's biological claims achieved widespread acceptance by the public, save for some reluctant Anglican forces, and for that public, 'Darwin's was *the* face of evolution'.[1] The 'Socialist revival' of the 1880s thus happened not only against the backdrop of economic depression, but also in the context of a Darwinian thought-revolution.[2] Many voices, scientific and political, attempted to lay claim to being the heirs of Darwinian thought.[3] Socialists, too, were faced with arguing for their own programmes of reform or revolution on the premiss that there was truth in Darwinism. From this premiss, their modes of assimilating Darwinian evolution differed—particularly when it came to the place of competition in human nature. And, though the level of deep engagement among Socialists with the science of evolution was varied, the use of evolutionary terms to explain and promote social change was ubiquitous. So too were claims from each group that their method for effecting revolution was superior *because* of their evolutionary interpretations, and the details of the futures they envisioned, sometimes identified

---

1 Piers J. Hale, *Political Descent: Malthus, Mutualism, and the Politics of Evolution in Victorian England,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 155; Peter J. Bowler, 'Scientific Attitudes to Darwinism in Britain and America', *The Darwinian Heritage,* ed. David Kohn, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), 641-682, p. 655; Peter J. Bowler, 'Christian Responses to Darwinism in the Late Nineteenth Century', *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity,* eds. J. B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett, (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2012), 37-47, p. 38; Peter J. Bowler, 'Evolution, History of', *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* 2.8, (2015), 382-387, p. 385; Peter Morton, *The Vital Science: Biology and the Literary Imagination, 1860-1900,* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), pp. 10, 15, and 23; Evelleen Richards, *Darwin and the Making of Sexual Selection,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 475.
2 For the 'Socialist revival' see Willard Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism: Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines, 1881-1889,* (London: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 67; Steven Parfitt, *Knights Across the Atlantic,* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), p. 28; Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 173 and p. 343; Mark Bevir, 'H. M. Hyndman: A Rereading and a Reassessment', *History of Political Thought* 12.1, (Spring 1991), 125-145, p. 125; Haia Shpayer-Makov, 'Anarchism in British Public Opinion 1880-1914', *Victorian Studies* 31.4, (Summer 1988), 487-516, p. 488. For the economic depression see: Morton Cowden, 'Early Marxist Views on British Labour, 1837-1917', *The Western Political Quarterly* 16.1, (March 1963), 34-52, p. 41; Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism,* p. 123.
3 Morton, *The Vital Science,* p. 2. Piers J. Hale, 'Rejecting the Myth of the Non-Darwinian Revolution', *Victorian Review* 41.2, (2015), 13-18, p. 16.

as Utopias, were rooted in their understanding of evolution. This thesis examines the perpetual disunity of these Socialist groups, the role that their disparate evolutionary interpretations played in ensuring their ultimate failure to achieve the Utopian vision which they all propounded, and the futures they foresaw as possible, following the Darwinian revolution.

Science was a great disruptor for Victorians across the political spectrum; scientific innovation and discovery acted as a catalyst for upheaval of much existing knowledge, both secular and religious, and an understanding of contemporary political and social revolution necessitates an examination of the sciences 'promoted' by different political groups.[4] Victorians, inspired by the process of investigation of a scientific method developed a historicist approach to understanding contemporary events as unfolding because of a logical progression and sparked wide debate over the teleological or dysteleological nature of evolution.[5] Ideas including eugenics emerged in this period out of the idea that 'science was of necessity reformist in its intentions and aspirations.'[6] Religion was no longer so widely accepted as the source for explaining the world; Positivist discourse, infused with historicist retrospection, challenged the old ways of seeing and understanding.[7] Evolutionary rhetoric, used by 'outsider groups', argued for the end of religious control in favour of secular, State powers.[8] As we will find in the course of this thesis, the deployment of political rhetoric infused with evolutionary terminology occurs at least as often as the actual examination of evolution from a scientific perspective in Socialist journals.

The early 1880s saw a profusion of Socialist societies in London—as Matthew Thomas has observed, in this period 'the word "socialism" seemed to count as many definitions as there were socialists'.[9] While it is true that no formal strictures emerged in this period by which true Socialists could be distinguished from pretenders, four societies emerged in London which

---

[4] Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900,* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 27; Adrian Desmond, *The Politics of Evolution: Morphology, Medicine, and Reform in Radical London,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 30 and p. 373.

[5] Mark Bevir, 'Historicism and the Human Sciences in Victorian Britain', *Historicism and the Human Sciences in Victorian Britain,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1-20, p. 2.

[6] Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, 'Introduction: Eugenics and the Modern World', *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3-24, p. 10.

[7] Mark Bevir, 'The Long Nineteenth Century in Intellectual History', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 9, (2001), OpenAccess, 1-39, p. 22.

[8] Desmond, *The Politics of Evolution,* p. 24, and also generally as an excellent examination of the destruction of religion and revolution of medicine through science. Contemporary thinkers also blurred the bounds of secular and religious life. See J. Ernest Jones, *The Case for Progressive Imperialism* (2nd Ed. 1902), pp. 1-24, qtd in Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 210, who suggested that organisers for Socialism could be 'celibate' and modelled after priests in the Catholic Church, for instance.

[9] Matthew Thomas, 'Anarcho-Feminism in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, 1880-1914', *International Review of Social History* 47.1, (April 2002), 1-31, p. 4. I will follow the norm of the Victorian period in capitalising words including 'Socialism', 'Anarchism', 'Capitalism', and 'Utopia', Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain,* p. 154.

claimed the majority of self-identified Socialists. The Social Democratic Federation, led by Hyndman, formed in 1881 under the name 'Democratic Federation'. The word 'Social', used to connote the group's commitment to Socialist policy, was adopted in 1884. That same year the Fabian Society and the Socialist League were founded. The journal *Freedom,* the project of Anarchists Peter Kropotkin and former-Fabian-turned-Anarchist Charlotte Wilson, began publication in 1886. I will take these four groups as the exemplary bodies of Socialist thought in London, and I will use their policies and interaction with evolutionary language to examine the impact of Darwin on the Socialist movement in Britain.[10]

Each of these groups oversaw the production of at least one regular (that is, as regular as the funds allowed) publication. The circulation of these, though never large, was nonetheless helped by the dissolution of the so-called 'Tax on Knowledge' in the 1850s, which saw duties lessened and then abolished on newspapers and pamphlets, and the profusion of writing which emerged from these groups is characteristic of Victorian trends in publication.[11] I will use the writings produced in the journals and pamphlets of these groups; *Justice, To-Day, Our Corner, Commonweal, Freedom,* and the *Fabian Tracts*; supplemented by very occasional longform texts or contributions to other publications by key members, as the measure of the contribution to public dialogue by these four groups, and in order to assemble a collective portrait of their thought.

The last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a fever pitch of agitation in anticipation of the coming Great Change in the social order. In the SDF's organ, *Justice,* Hyndman claimed that while he did not encourage a 'hasty outbreak' or a 'premature and violent attempt' to accomplish the revolution, he saw right to advise his readers 'to prepare for a complete International Social Revolution before the end of the century.'[12] The Anarchists, too, promised that '[b]efore the end of this century has come we shall see great revolutionary movements breaking up our social conditions'.[13] The Anarchists also suggest that the impending revolution is, as most revolutions are, 'more the result of the blind pressure of events than the conscious work of individual men'. [14] This assertion serves to underline their contention in the inevitability—and naturalness—of the Revolution. The Revolution they envisioned never

[10] Darwinian thought caught on in Britain much faster than in the US. This proliferation of his thought, as well as the geographic concentration of interested parties of Socialists informs the focus of this study on British Socialism rather than British and American groups. Bowler, 'Scientific Attitudes to Darwinism in Britain and America', p. 663.
[11] Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 8; Bernard Lightman, 'Darwin and the Popularization of Evolution', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* 64, (2010), 5-24, p. 7.
[12] H. M, Hyndman, "The Work of the Future", *Justice,* (06 August 1887), 1, p. 1.
[13] "The Coming Revolution", *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (October 1886), 1-2, pp. 1-2.
[14] "Another Turn of the Screw", *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (June 1889), 25-26, pp. 25-26.

materialised, and what remains is to examine the root of their frustrated fervour. I will confine my study to the last two decades of the nineteenth century, informed by the promise of these groups that the revolution would happen by its close.

This thesis is not a high-level overview of the political life of Victorian Britain, nor is it a review of Victorian science. Rather, it is an extremely close reading of the language used by four prominent Socialist groups to define their missions. The methodology of this research is rooted in periodical history. The figures who emerge as prominent players throughout this thesis; H. M. Hyndman, Annie Besant, George Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb, William Morris, E. Belfort Bax, Edward Aveling, Peter Kropotkin, and Charlotte Wilson; acted as editors and gatekeepers of the ideas published in these journals. Some of these thinkers; Aveling, Besant, and Kropotkin in particular; engaged with the science of evolution with a great degree of understanding. Aveling published extensively on Darwin, including *The Student's Darwin* (1881), *The Darwinian Theory: Its Meaning, Difficulties, Evidence, History* (1884), and *Darwin Made Easy* (1885). That high-level scientific arguments are not to be found in the overwhelming majority of articles about evolution in the journals in question, even in the contributions of these three thinkers, speaks to the non-expert level expected by these authors and editors in their intended audience. This thesis, rather than seeking to pass judgement on the rectitude of Darwinian analysis expressed by these Socialists, emphasises the deployment of a Darwinian vernacular in the journals. It is in the interest of the construction of a collective portrait of the thought of each group that the books published by individual authors not in concert with the groups of which they were members, even on material relevant to evolution, including Besant's *The Law of Population: Its Consequences, and Its Bearing upon Human Conduct and Morals* (1878), are not included in this study. It is the proliferation of an evolutionary language rather than a correctness of evolutionary theory within these journals with which this study is concerned.

We will examine the thought of these Socialists alongside that of other contributors, some of the latter of whom express views in conflict with the former. These conflicting views were, however, deemed worthy of publication by the leadership of each journal, and thus form an important part of the discourse of each group. The methodology of this work is indebted to periodical histories written in the latter part of the twentieth century. It has, however, been the beneficiary of a mode of research unavailable to those previous scholars; each of the journals which are here investigated have been digitised, and it has been possible to narrow the scope of examination to relevant articles by keyword search. It has also been enormously useful in proving negatives; the *Commonweal* never published any variant of the word 'eugenic' in its pages,

for instance. More than anything, the digitisation of these journals allows for the breadth of use of evolutionary terminology to be readily apparent, and for some surprising omissions also to come to light. While 'evolution' appears in more than a thousand articles across the journals in question, and Darwin's name in more than four hundred articles, Alfred Russel Wallace's name appears in fewer than ten. This co-discoverer of natural selection, himself sympathetic to the Socialist cause, did not figure into the conception of evolutionary theory propounded in these pages. 'Natural selection' is mentioned in just fifty articles, and most of those in *Justice,* highlighting the separation of Darwin's name from his scientific theory. 'Sexual selection', *On the Origin of Species* (1859), and *The Descent of Man* (1871), garner mentions in about a dozen articles each. *The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals* (1872) appears in no article across any of these journals. Darwin is, for these journals, synonymous with a broadly interpreted message of evolution, fitted for their non-specialist readership.

The use of these journals allows for a clear view of the weekly or monthly articulation by these Socialists of their methods of reform. That each of these groups defined their methods through the deployment of evolutionary rhetoric, and that these groups use that same rhetoric in their critiques of each other, has not been sufficiently examined in scholarship until now. The understanding held by these groups of human nature is explicitly formed through their engagements with Darwinism. The imperialist thought of these groups, explored in some scholarship, will benefit particularly from this close reading of human nature as defined by each of these organisations.[15] After the turn of the twentieth century, and thus after the period with which this thesis engages, most of these groups turned their attention abroad, and began to apply themselves to the discourse around empire.

SDF and Fabians are understood to have occasionally pro-imperialist views. Marx, majorly influential on Hyndman, 'viewed imperialism as essentially a necessary stage in capitalist development'.[16] Hyndman's interest in imperialism was translated into several books in the early twentieth century which are necessarily excluded from this study's consideration. Gregory Claeys suggests quite compellingly that 'expanded national efficiency', rather than racism, is the root of imperialist thought in the Fabian case.[17] Imperialism, however, was not a focus of Fabian writing

[15] See Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain* and Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics* for excellent explorations of the Socialist engagement with empire. See also Peter Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Re-Interpreting a Historical Myth,* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
[16] Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics,* p. 129, p. 132.
[17] Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics,* p. 188. Goodlad also shows herself amenable to this interpretation, Lauren Goodlad, 'Moral Character', *Historicism and the Human Sciences in Victorian Britain,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 128-153, p. 152.

in the nineteenth century and came to the fore only in the early twentieth century.[18] Shaw's *Fabianism and the Empire*, for instance, was not published until 1900, and it marks the turning of Fabian attention outwards beyond European concerns. The Webbs developed their conception of Empire as a 'benevolent necessity' during their travels through Asia in the early twentieth century, before the First World War.[19] In the context of Socialism being 'the highest stage of human aspiration, assisting others to reach it could hardly be wrong, or mistaken for an extension of exploitative capitalist imperialism.'[20] To this end, Bax believed that there was no 'English socialism'; rather, there was 'but one Socialism, based on history and the laws of economic development'.[21] Morris's interest in self-sufficiency within communes, expressed in *News from Nowhere,* could be taken as a sign of some innate Little Englanderism, though he did not explore empire at length in his own writings.[22] This study lays useful groundwork for further discussions of Socialist imperialism, although it does not itself engage with the topic.

The abundance of ink spilled in academic articles and books in analysing the fissiparity of Socialist groups of the 1880s and 1890s has produced a variety of explanations, some more satisfactory than others. Mark Bevir's plethora of articles in the 1990s, which culminate in his 2011 book, *The Making of British Socialism*, finds the source of the delineation in the reception by these groups of Marxism—be their response radical, romantic, or sceptical. Though Bevir offers many insights into the character of the players involved and reveals much that is true about their political inclinations, I concur with Claeys' review of the book in being critical of Bevir's almost total neglect of the importance of Darwinian theory to these groups.[23] Willard Wolfe likewise neglects utterly the importance of Darwinism to the Fabian movement in his 1975 book *From Radicalism to Socialism: Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines, 1881-1889,* and Florence and William Boos elide over the biological and evolutionary implications of Morris's mention of the compulsions of nature in 'The Utopian Communism of William Morris'.[24] No picture of Victorian Socialism can be complete without a thorough understanding of the Socialist movement's engagement with evolution. Evelleen Richards explores the interplay of Socialism,

---

[18] Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics,* p. 180.
[19] J. M. Winter, 'The Webbs and the Non-White World: A Case of Socialist Racialism', *Journal of Contemporary History* 9.1, (January 1974), 181-192, p. 182.
[20] Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics,* p. 234.
[21] Ernest Belfort Bax, *Justice,* (14 September 1895), 4, p. 4.
[22] Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics,* p. 171
[23] Gregory Claeys, 'REVIEW: *The Making of British Socialism* by Mark Bevir', *The English Historical Review* 128.530, (2013), 188-190, pp. 188-190.
[24] Florence Boos and William Boos, 'The Utopian Communism of William Morris', *History of Political Thought* 7.3, (Winter 1986), 489-510, see in particular p. 499.

eugenics, and birth control, particularly for Besant and Aveling, in her *Darwin and the Making of Sexual Selection.* She acknowledges Darwin's direct intervention, in a now-lost letter to Besant's co-defendant at trial and in his correspondence with Aveling before the latter's declaration for Atheism. All of this is done without making a single reference to *any* Socialist periodical. This absence means that her analysis of the role of evolution for Victorian Socialists, while insightful in its dealing with the books of Aveling and obscenity trial of Besant, cannot present a thorough engagement with the nuances of their political and evolutionary thought for these groups.

Piers Hale offers an illuminating account of evolutionary politics in the period, in which he seeks to pay 'the relationship between socialism and evolution [. . .] the attention it merits.'[25] Indeed, the opening lines of his text, *Political Descent,* would well-befit this thesis. He argues there that '[h]uman nature is a political problem as much as it is a philosophical one. However, since the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, it has also become very much a question of biology.'[26] This promising start never quite comes to fruition for Hale. His account of Socialist thought divides groups based on their allegiance to Malthusian or Lamarckian frameworks for evolution. It is true that this debate raged hotly through the journals and speeches of this period, but Hale's analysis stops short of examining how different conceptions of human nature informed the political stratagems of Socialist groups. Though he hints at the implications of this thought, he does not go far enough in examining it. Where Hale seeks to uncover the search for scientific, evolutionary truth among the Socialists, I will take this analysis to its logical conclusion in revealing the vital role of this search in creating the political philosophies of these groups.

Many scholars have been contented with crediting Hyndman's difficult personality for Morris's decision to leave the Social Democratic Federation, the 'first society of the socialist revival of the 1880s', with several other members of the executive to found the Socialist League in 1884.[27] Bevir and Hale, at least, point to divergences in policy which accelerated the split beyond a clash of personalities. Bevir credits the 'main difference' as one of 'political policy'; that

---

[25] Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 343.
[26] Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 1.
[27] Bevir, 'H. M. Hyndman: A Rereading and a Reassessment', p. 125; See for example Joseph O. Baylen, 'George Bernard Shaw and the Socialist League: Some Unpublished Letters', *International Review of Social History* 7.3, (1962), 426-440, p. 426; Trevor Lloyd, 'The Politics of William Morris's *News from Nowhere*', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 9.3, (Autumn 1977), 273-287, p. 275; Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism,* p. 107; Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics,* p. 142; Caroline Sumpter, 'Anthropology, Socialist Prediction and William Morris's *Commonweal*', *Cultural and Social History* 9.3 (2012) 349-367, p. 353; Ruth Kinna, 'William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism', *History of Political Thought* 15.4, (1994), 593-613, pp. 607-608.

is, the parliamentarism of the SDF versus the anti-parliamentarism of the League.[28] Several years later, Bevir makes explicit that rather than 'his dislike of Hyndman', 'Morris's anti-parliamentarianism derived from his aesthetic and moral ideals.'[29] For Hale, it was the SDF's 'turn away from the strategy of making socialists' that precipitated Morris's departure.[30] As I will demonstrate below, Morris takes both his ideals and his preferred strategy from his understanding of evolutionary theory—a nuance that neither Bevir nor Hale appreciates—and for these reasons his split from Hyndman is rooted in their interpretations of evolutionary theory.

'We have enough to do in fighting the landlord and the capitalist', Annie Besant of the Fabian Society argued in 1888, 'without ranging against us in our economic battle those who agree with our economics, but differ—in one direction or the other—from social views held by individuals in our ranks.'[31] In 1886, William Morris appealed to socialists who belonged to groups other than his Socialist League, writing that while he was not advocating for a 'formal union', he thought it was a 'great mistake for Socialist bodies to hold aloof from each other' when the 'principles [. . .] are practically the same' between them.[32] In the Anarchist Peter Kropotkin's obituary, his elegist laments that Kropotkin forewent what he supposes would have been a 'most friendly reception' by Morris and Edward Aveling of the Socialist League, and instead founded an independent group.[33] As Morris and Besant hint, the fractiousness of London's most prominent Socialist movements, despite sharing a common enemy and common aim for the shape of the future, never coalesced meaningfully to pursue this end.

Nevertheless, these Socialist groups were linked closely to one another, and the exchange of members and resources between groups was not uncommon—including shared printing facilities for their (rival) presses.[34] There was also an understanding that, though the principles of Socialism were deeply informed by evolutionary theory, it was also to the benefit of Socialists to link their movement to the Darwinian revolution. Aveling and Besant, indeed, found their way to

---

[28] Mark Bevir, 'The Marxism of George Bernard Shaw 1883-1889', *History of Political Thought* 13.2, (Summer 1992), 299-318, p. 310.
[29] Mark Bevir, 'William Morris: The Modern Self, Art, and Politics', *History of European Ideas* 24, (1998) (republished by UC Berkeley: Previously Published Works), 1-33, pp. 2 and 24.
[30] Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 188.
[31] Annie Besant, "Divide and —?", *To-day,* (May 1888), 134-137, pp. 134-137.
[32] William Morris, 'Our Policy', *The Commonweal,* (March 1886), 17-18, pp. 17-18.
[33] Max Nettlau, 'Peter Kropotkin at Work', *Freedom* (Februay 1921), 11-13, p. 12. Nettlau also describes Morris as an 'authoritarian revolutionary', seemingly ignoring the lack of government in Morris' utopian *News from Nowhere.*
[34] Matthew Adams, *Kropotkin, Read, and the Intellectual History of British Anarchism: Between Reason and Romanticism,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 3.

Socialism through their scientific engagements, and developed a relationship that pre-existed their Socialist commitments through this. Aveling helped Besant to 'deepen her biological insights', and her influence in favour of birth control is evident in his writings. They followed diverging paths to Socialism, as Richards notes, 'Besant with George Bernard Shaw, Aveling in the company of Eleanor Marx.'[35] As society adjusted itself to the huge upheaval necessitated by an acceptance of evolutionary principles, there was a moment for a movement of political, social reform to attach itself to Darwinism before the dust had settled. In this line, Aveling posits that 'Socialism is the only logical, perhaps one may say the only, application of the principles of Evolution to economics and to history.'[36] He attempts here to intertwine the fortunes of evolutionary theory with Socialist principles. Socialism, if it could be successfully tied to evolution, need only appeal to logical and scientific precepts to advocate its veracity and necessity and ensure its proliferation.

Each of these movements articulated a vision of the future which elaborated the place of labour, property, morality, and law. Similar, too, are their oft-searing descriptions of the Capitalist state, which all of them characterise as a devolutionary threat to human development. It is un-rigorous to allow the suggestion that the SDF, the Fabians, the League, and the Anarchists never united because their leaders were not on friendly personal terms. To explain their recalcitrance away by pointing to the different methods by which each group pursued the revolution sought by each for all is to overlook an important nuance. Their disparate methods in the pursuit of revolution emerged not from private whims, but from each groups' disparate interpretation of human nature, informed by their assimilation of Darwinian evolution into their programmes of reform.

There has not yet been adequate weight given to the importance of Darwinism to the context out of which Anarchists sought to raze the State to dust in a mere 'twenty-four lively hours'[37], and in which Fabians sought to use legal reforms to make steady (and consciously unceleritous) change, both in pursuit of the same goal, what George Bernard Shaw of the Fabians articulated as 'Justice, Virtue, Truth, Brotherhood'. [38] In this thesis, I demonstrate that the SDF, the Fabians, the League, and the Anarchists explain, in a most strongly Darwinian vocabulary, not only the rectitude of their own social programme, but also the failings of their rivals. Despite the many attempts by scholars to understand the disagreements of these groups,

35 Richards, *Darwin,* p. 495 and p. 499.
36 Aveling, 'Lessons in Socialism', *The Commonweal,* (July 1885), 57-58, p. 57.
37 Walter C. Hart, 'The Folly of Anarchism', *Justice,* (15 January 1898), 2, p. 2.
38 George Bernard Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', *Fabian Tract* 45, (1893) 3-27, p. 5.

no one has, before now, looked to the evolutionary explanation offered by the Socialists themselves in the pages of their own publications.

Hyndman, the founder and leader of the Social Democratic Federation, condemned the survival of the fittest as a 'cant scientific phrase' used only by 'sciolists to justify or extenuate all the monstrous inequalities and wrongs of our present society.'[39] Karl Kautsky, also of the SDF, suggested that those who wished to 'combat, scientifically, the revolution, [do so] in the name of the scientific theory of evolution'. These opponents used evolutionary theory to dismiss the naturalness of 'leaps' and 'sudden change'—and to argue that it was only through an 'accumulation of the smallest changes', or 'social reforms', that change could happen. The opponents in this case were Fabians as much as Capitalists. Kautsky rejected the criticism that the revolution was 'unscientific', and he argued that 'a strict parallel between social and natural processes' was not necessary. He also made the point that even evolutionary theories have room for what he called 'catastrophic changes'. These catastrophes, which might in nature have been natural disasters, might in society have taken the form of huge social upheaval.[40] T. Rothstein, in addressing the same issue of evolution and revolution that Kautsky does, suggested a similar theme in evolution. He posited that,

> To [Social Democrats] a revolution is as much a legitimate moment in the evolutionary process of development of an organism as that piecemeal, slow, and often imperceptible change with which the idea of evolution is generally associated. [. . .] [T]hat organism which has its growth impeded by the determined reaction of the surrounding conditions will work out its inner destinies silently, though with difficulty, till the old forms are no longer able to withstand the pressure of the mighty forces from within. The whole fabric then begins to shake like the crust of the earth from the action of the volcanic forces, and at last bursts like the frail chrysalis envelope, not able to resist the attacks of the enclosed butterfly. The revolution is accomplished. [41]

He presented two natural processes, volcanic eruption and the emergence of a butterfly from its chrysalis, as evidence of the potential for what might seem to be sudden change which is actually the result of a long-gathering force. He characterised the revolution sought by the SDF as the societal equivalent of this volcanic or lepidopterological transformation. It was from the SDF's

[39] H. M. Hyndman, 'The Survival of the Fittest', *Justice,* (19 December 1885), 2, p. 2.
[40] Karl Kautsky, 'The Social Revolution', translated by J. B. Askew, *Justice,* (18 October 1902), 6, p. 6.
[41] T. Rothstein, 'Social-Democracy and Revolutionary Action', *Justice,* (03 October 1896), 2, p. 2.

specific understanding of evolution, and its expression in human nature, that their revolutionary programme developed.

When the Social Democratic Federation sought to discredit the Fabians, Hunter Watts argued that the timidity of the Fabians ensured that their agenda,

> [I]s too often now sicklied o'er with the pale cast of the reflection that capitalism has been a necessary stage in the evolution of society, that the same evolutionary force will carry us inevitably to collectivism. We hear too much to-day about the peaceable transformation of a society based on the robbery and degradation of the workers into one which is to be established on justice, based upon brotherhood. What is the use of crying Peace! Peace! where there is no peace?[42]

The Fabians were philosophers, interested in the theoretical framework by which poverty emerged in society, and the theoretical framework by which it might be rectified. Other Socialist groups alleged that their pale sickliness of thought was not that of miners forced to labour below the earth, weak from over-work, but rather of indolent aristocrats, weak from *under*-work. Though they might discuss action, the Fabians would fail to act. Though they might discuss scientific theories for societal improvement, they would fail to move to implement them. In attacking the Anarchists, the SDF bewailed that they were an 'impractical set of visionaries', who were 'lamentably deficient in a proper knowledge and understanding of the sciences of evolution and economics.'[43] Again, the rival was reviled as failing to understand evolution.

Bax, while a SDF member, argued that the goal of the Anarchist was 'social dissolution'. This would 'hardly endure for a day', he believed—'the old society would *re*form' into an older world order; Bax implied that the 'social organism', and thus the instinct for society, is too firmly imbedded to ever exist without some sort of collective.[44] He explained this instinct, positing that while the Anarchist's 'goal and that of the collectivist is the same substantially', 'the collectivist would take the sure historical highway of organisation to that Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity which the Anarchist would seek in vain to reach by the abrupt but suicidal plunge of dissolution.' [45] The goal was the same; the method was different. The Anarchist disregarded the historical

---

[42] J. Hunter Watts, 'Pennyworths of Socialism', *Justice,* (24 March 1894), 4, p. 4.
[43] Hart, 'The Folly of Anarchism', (January 1898), p. 2. I will retain month and year in all subsequent citations of primary source material from periodicals, in order to help to orient the reader to the temporal trajectory of these arguments across journals.
[44] Ernest Belfort, Bax, 'Unscientific Socialism', *To-day,* (March 1884), 192-204, p. 202.
[45] Bax, 'Unscientific Socialism', *To-day* (March 1884) p. 203.

precedent set by human nature and instead sought to promulgate a new one disconnected from fact and history.

When the Fabians applied scientific rhetoric to the explanation of contemporary social ills, they found Socialism as the natural solution. Besant, for instance, argued that just as 'Evolution' moves the 'chaos of biological facts' into 'an intelligible and correlated order', so 'Socialism, dealing with the chaos of sociological facts, brings a unifying principle, which turns Radicalism from a mere empirical system into a reasoned, coherent, and scientific whole.'[46] Here, Socialism was not just the natural partner of evolution, but acted in society as evolution does in nature. The Fabians not only presented their programme for steady Parliamentary changes in evolutionary terms; they also dismissed the proposals of their rival Socialists as evolutionarily non-viable.

Shaw's statement that Kropotkin 'too optimistically [. . .] disposes of the average man by attributing his unsocialism to the pressure of the corrupt system under which he groans' exemplifies the pith of the Fabian objection. 'Remove that pressure', and Kropotkin believed the man 'will think rightly'. If this assessment of human nature were true, and 'natural man' was 'social as well as gregarious', then Shaw asked how 'the corruption and oppression under which he groans' evolved.[47] If human nature is given to communalism, Capitalism ought never to have arisen. That it did was, for Shaw, evidence that Kropotkin's understanding of human nature, and implicitly of evolution, was faulty. This is vital. For Shaw, 'man' was not a 'fallen angel'. Rather, he was 'an obstinate and selfish devil, who is being slowly forced by the iron tyranny of Nature to recognise that in disregarding his neighbor's happiness he is taking the surest way to sacrifice his own.'[48] It was only by inculcating a belief that the happiness of the neighbour was tied inextricably to the happiness of the individual actor that this actor would be motivated to pursue the best interests of the group. Shaw believed that Communist Anarchism was 'impracticable' for a society which was governed by the 'morals developed under existing Unsocialism'.[49] The lesson that man's happiness was to be guaranteed by the success of the group must be universally recognised and must be reinforced by a State which prevents man from returning to a pre-history of incivility and lawlessness. Thus, if 'all the evils against which Anarchism is directed are caused by men taking advantage of the institution of property to [. . .] seize their subsistence without working for it', then why should they not 'attempt to take exactly the same advantage of

[46] Annie Besant, 'Radicalism and Socialism', *Our Corner,* (November 1886), 266-272, p. 266.
[47] Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', *Fabian Tract* 45, (1893), p. 14-15.
[48] Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', *Fabian Tract* 45, (1893), p. 15.
[49] Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', *Fabian Tract* 45, (1893), p 23.

Anarchist Communism?'.[50] The root of Anarchist policy came from a misunderstanding of human nature, in the Fabian view, which imputed an unproven interest in the collective over the personal onto the wider population. Shaw declared the Fabians, in contrast with the Anarchists, to be desirous of working within the limits of 'human nature', 'national character', and 'political circumstances'.[51] The evolution towards Socialism must, for the Fabians, occur with no undue haste or chaos; it must be the equivalent of a steady biological evolution. They, like the other groups, argued that their method of reform was the most natural because it best reflected their understanding of human nature.

Though the League emerged from a split with the SDF with the intention of focusing their attention on making Socialists through education, both the leadership of the League and their journal *The Commonweal* became increasingly Anarchistic. Eventually, founder William Morris was pushed out for someone of firmer Anarchistic convictions. His replacement as editor of the *Commonweal* proclaimed, '[l]et others talk of evolution and development, but I shall see with pleasure the dawn of a day of reckoning with these cowardly, cruel ill-treaters of the poor.'[52] This language was certainly more divisive than any used by Morris, and it indicates the shift in direction for the journal; here 'evolution' has taken on the Fabian meaning of steady progress, rather than the SDF's view of having the potential for ruptures.

The League criticised the lukewarmness of the Fabian calls for reform, and the programme of action—or inaction—that they intended to follow. Halliday Sparling wrote searingly of what he characterised as Besant's 'half-hearted, purblind preachment' on Socialism at an 1885 Fabian meeting, which he asserted could have been 'delivered in the House of Commons with applause.'[53] Sparling ensnared not only Besant for advocating for a Socialism not radical enough, but also the Fabians as a whole for their desire to effect change through government channels.

The Anarchists, led by Kropotkin and Wilson, believed man to be naturally communal; freed from the fetters of law and Capitalism, he would live peacefully with his neighbour. Kropotkin believed Darwin's work to be unfinished and his legacy open to continuation by his 'followers'.[54] In an 1891 article for *The Nineteenth Century,* Kropotkin named Huxley as one of

---

[50] Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', *Fabian Tract* 45, (1893), p 15.
[51] George Bernard Shaw, 'Report on Fabian policy and resolutions presented by the Fabian Society to the International Socialist workers and Trade Union Congress, London, 1896', *Fabian Tract* 70, (July 1896), 3-15, p. 4.
[52] Kitz, 'Bastille, Bourgeoise, and Bumble', *The Commonweal* (November 1885), 95, p. 95.
[53] Halliday Sparling, 'Pseudo-Socialism', *The Commonweal,* (February 1886), 9, p. 9.
[54] Peter Kropotkin, 'The Theory of Evolution and Mutual Aid', *The Nineteenth Century and After,* (1910), 86-107, p. 87.

Darwin's followers who use the scientist's 'terminology' rather than his 'leading ideas' to support their arguments.[55] Kropotkin contended that 'self-sacrifice' was quotidian in the animal world and so too in the human world.[56] For him, Darwin's evolution provided the 'strongest possible scientific evidence' to support an Anarchist future as a 'viable proposition' where an 'ethos of mutual aid counterbalancing the propensity to individual competitiveness' could thrive.[57] He held an 'unwavering and deep-seated respect for Darwin's thinking', and even used Darwinian rhetorical style in *Mutual Aid* to help to 'build' his scientific theory.[58]

Kropotkin observed that in tribal societies, 'self-restriction and self-sacrifice' are a 'daily occurrence' for the benefit of the tribe.[59] His intimation was that such acts were not viewed as of personal detriment to the individual because the maintenance of the tribe's well-being was held as such a vital duty. The code of conduct with those external to the tribe, however, was quite the opposite. Inter-tribal relations were based on a different moral code, where personal sacrifice is not expected.[60] He claimed that '[s]ociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle,' and asserted that he had seen 'mutual aid and mutual support carried on to an extent which made [him] suspect in it a feature of the greatest importance for the maintenance of life'.[61] Contrary to the depiction of nature as 'red in tooth and claw' accepted by many of his contemporaries, mutual aid was, in his assessment, the natural state of social groups.[62] Operating upon this premise, it was only natural that Kropotkin would view the dissolution of the State as the most expedient method of achieving social harmony. It was Capitalism which had fostered discord, and the fall of Capitalism which would ensure the restoration of social harmony. Thus, the political programme of the Anarchists emerged from the context of Darwinian evolution.

In each of these societies; the SDF, the Fabians, the League, and the Anarchists; Socialists grappled with the method by which they would move society forward. Rhetoric was all-important in a movement for which revolution never came to fruition, and their rhetoric was

---

55 Peter Kropotkin, 'Mutual Aid Among Savages', *The Nineteenth Century,* (April 1891), 538-559, p. 539.
56 Peter Kropotkin, 'The Morality of Nature', *The Nineteenth Century and After,* (1905), 407-426, p. 412.
57 Adams, *Kropotkin,* p. 50.
58 John Hall and Svetlana Kirdina-Chandler, 'Towards and intellectual history of evolutionary economics: competition and struggle versus cooperation and mutual aid', *Brazilian Journal of Political Economy* 37.3, (2017), 551-564, p. 558; Riccardo Nicolosi, 'The Darwinian Rhetoric of Science in Petr Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*', Ber. Wissenschaftsgesh 43, (2020), 141-159, p. 156.
59 Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution,* ed. Paul Avrich, (London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1972), p. 110.
60 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 111.
61 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 30 and p. 18.
62 Alfred Tennyson, *In Memoriam,* (London: Edward Moxon, 1850), pp. 80-81. Tennyson coined the phrase with reference to evolution, and it came to be used widely by scientists and thinkers who concurred with the assessment of evolution as struggle.

sown with Darwinian argument. That revolution and upheaval might be *natural* gave violent uprising the potential for meritorious colour. That human nature could be trusted to protect the peace of the group, unfettered by the Capitalist state, gave rise to Anarchism and the later iteration of the League. The Fabians believed that *staying* change, change that might stand as time passed and revolutionaries faded, must be accomplished gradually. They also believed that human nature was inherently competitive. Their solution was to advocate for parliamentary reforms which would incentivise the individual to serve his or her own interests by serving the group. The policies of the SDF fell between the Anarchists and the Fabians and professed themselves virulently opposed to both.

Scholars have for the most part been satisfied to conclude that individual disputes caused the irreconcilability of British Socialists. They have generally accepted that the methods of British Socialists differed, without asking *why* they did. This thesis examines the impact on the political stratagems of Socialist groups wrought by their interpretations of human nature in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, rooted in and expressed through an evolutionary vocabulary. To use a biological metaphor worthy of these thinkers, disparate interpretations of human nature, expressed in explicitly evolutionary terms, ensured that the sects of Socialism became as distinct species, unable to combine, and ultimately fruitless in their pursuit of a society re-born.

My argument is structured in three parts. In the first chapter, I examine the explicit responses to Darwin and contemporary evolutionary scientists in the pages of *Justice, To-Day, Our Corner,* the *Fabian Tracts Commonweal,* and *Freedom,* in order to construct their understanding of the relevance of evolution to Socialist thought. This includes the interaction, or lack thereof, of the SDF, the Fabians, the League, and the Anarchists with the language of eugenics and the dangers of devolution. A fear of devolution acted as the impetus for celeritous action by these groups; not only were they witness to the severe suffering of the working poor and destitute, these groups also believed themselves witness to the dooming of future generations to share in a biologically pre-determined life of toil and poverty. This chapter also examines the argument put forward by each of these groups for working with human nature as it already existed, and with the principles of evolution that guided that human nature.

Whereas in my first chapter I explore the *fact* of evolutionary language in each group, in the second chapter, I explore how the reception to evolutionary theory shaped the different *methods* of reform advocated for by each of the four groups. The SDF's pursuit of parliamentary reform, with an openness to violent revolution, stemmed from their understanding of human nature and evolutionary processes. It was made explicit in the pages of *Justice* and *To-Day* that

their policies were informed by these understandings. So too does the gradual reform advocated for by the Fabians reflect their evolutionary understanding, and this was also made explicit in the *Fabian Tracts* and Besant's *Our Corner*. The League's shifting allegiances from a policy of reform by education to an Anarchist affiliation was justified in the pages of the *Commonweal* by changes in evolutionary rhetoric. For the Anarchists, too, particularly in the writing of the noted naturalist Kropotkin, their belief in the natural inclination towards cooperation and mutual aid was intrinsic to their advocacy of a society without a State. I also examine in this chapter the critiques offered by each of the four groups towards the methods of their rival organisations, especially those critiques based in explicit evolutionary language.

In my third and final chapter, I offer an exploration of the futures advocated for by the SDF, the Fabians, the League, and the Anarchists. These futures, all rooted in a desire for increased communalism and greater equality, are presented on different timescales, in different degrees of social change, as teleological or ever-changing, and in terms of Utopian or anti-Utopian thinking. The League, for instance, led by the arch-Utopian William Morris, expended much more energy in imagining the completed society of the future than did the Fabians, whose focus on gradual political reform did not include a Utopian vision of where such reform would end. In the case of each of these four groups, where they do offer insight into the future beyond the success of reform or revolution, such a society is explicitly rooted in a language of evolutionary theory.

The SDF, the Fabians, the League, and the Anarchists never combined because the stakes for which they were fighting were too high. Each group believed that it was only by understanding human nature correctly that a policy for reform or revolution could be created which would succeed in toppling the forces of Victorian Capitalism that condemned so many thousands to lives of squalor and degeneration. It was because their conceptions of human nature so radically differed that each group charted a separate course towards Socialist Utopia.

Chapter I

Socialism in a Darwinian Vernacular

Evolution and science were terms with formal implications for Socialists in the last decades of the nineteenth century, but they were also terms which, even when used in their broadest possible sense, lent an air of legitimacy to radical arguments. 'Evolution' could mean Darwinian selection, or social change. 'Science' could mean laboratory work, or the examination of the past with a methodological approach. In this chapter, I demonstrate the different uses of these and other related terms in the pages of Socialist publications. What Bell calls 'the scientific method, broadly understood' and 'quasi-scientific social theorizing' I will term 'low science'. [63] There was, as Bernard Lightman has explored, an effort in this period towards the popularising of Darwinism for a general public, and writings by scientists, sometimes at Darwin's behest, which aimed to translate his scientific theory for public consumption.[64] The Socialists who deployed Darwinian theory did so as a language by which to explicate their world view, and, in doing so, related his theory with varying degrees of complexity and also of authorial understanding. I advance the existing scholarship by conducting close readings of dozens of articles across the two-decade period of my study, allowing the Socialists to speak for themselves in explaining their cause and the role which Darwin and Darwinism played within it. Darwinism had already gained enormous influence and broad acceptance in

[63] Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain,* p. 81 and p. 246. This is used in the same spirit as 'low politics' to define the diffusion of evolutionary theory into areas of life not obviously scientific. 'Low science' includes the application of principles of the scientific method, for instance, in the construction of a political argument; it differs from my understanding of 'popular science' as content which reduces scientific principles to make them accessible to public understanding, while maintaining their particularly scientific application.
[64] Lightman, 'Darwin and the Popularization of Evolution', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* 64, (2010), 5-24; Karl Pearson himself complained of this loose use of 'evolution', bemoaning the idea that 'all that terms itself evolution must be scientific'. He points to a real phenomenon, however, of the use by Socialists of an evolutionary vernacular to bestow validity and relevance upon their political ideals, 'Socialism and Natural Selection', *The Fortnightly Review* 331 (1 July 1894), 1-21, p. 1.

Britain, and, though Darwin's intended audience had been the scientific community, it was vital that these groups engaged explicitly with it if they were desirous of joining the political debate.[65]

Socialists in this period understood a more nuanced version of the 'survival of the fittest' than that held by the majority of the scientific community and the broader public. For them, it was the urge for survival which was held as intrinsic to human nature. The understanding of one individual as more or less 'fit' than any other, however, was held to be a malleable principle which rested upon economic context. Thus, rather than an instinct towards competition being inherent to human nature, it was, for most of them, inherent to a society that distributed wealth and resources in a way which ensured that some elements of society were continually wanting. If society reorganised to meet the basic needs of survival, then the 'fittest' would no longer be the most competitive but could rather be those who demonstrated their 'fitness' in their service to the community. In the only mention of sexual selection in the whole *Commonweal,* R. W. Burnie posits, '[w]omen will be ashamed to love a loafer. [. . .] General dislike and sexual selection will bring about their elimination. Here as elsewhere, if we only leave natural laws unfettered, the race will develope [*sic*] on true lines'.[66] Here, sexual selection is not presented as the complex and controversial theory put forth by Darwin and disputed by many of his contemporaries in the scientific community, but rather as a tool of social change to be aligned with the Socialist cause. In other instances it is 'natural selection' which is deployed to make similar points. On the basic understanding that the circumstances into which an individual is born require of them specific, situation-dependent characteristics in order to thrive, Socialists planned to create a system, or alter the existing system, in ways which would reward communal instinct compatible with Socialism. They wrote of changing the traits for which nature selected.

In the pages of these publications, nature is posited severally as combatant or guide, evolution as inevitable or malleable, Socialism as option or destiny. These groups presented themselves as Darwin's pupils and argued that their work sprang directly from the principles he taught. They asserted themselves, sometimes explicitly, as the rightful heirs to- and interpreters of- Darwin's thought. In some cases, Darwin was praised uncritically, and his work was seen as totally compatible with the aims and interpretations of the movement. In other cases, particularly where Darwin's Malthusianism posed an issue, they positioned themselves as understanding the implications and truths of Darwinism better even than the man himself. Socialists also engaged

---

[65] Duncan Bell, 'Pragmatism and Prophecy H. G. Wells and the Metaphysics of Socialism', *American Political Science Review* 112.2, (2018), 409-422, p. 410; Bowler, 'Scientific Attitudes to Darwinism', p. 663; Morton, *The Vital Science,* p. 44; Bowler, 'Christian Responses to Darwinism', p. 39.
[66] R. W. Burnie, 'Anarchist Morality', *The Commonweal,* (8 November 1890), 356, p. 356.

critically with Huxley and Spencer, indisputably important evolutionary thinkers, whose interpretations of Darwin were sometimes contrary to that of these groups.[67]

Socialists were unified in claiming evolutionary forces as the justification and impetus for their work. This was expressed in terms of devolutionary fears; Lamarckian arguments forewarning the impending or ongoing dissipation of those living in squalor, or Malthusian suggestions of population controls. As I demonstrate, it was the Anarchists alone among the four groups who presented an unwavering support for either Lamarck or Malthus; in their case, it was the theory of the former which was assimilated into their revolutionary programme.

Though population controls were mooted in the publications of the SDF and the Fabians, they were never adopted as the official policy of either group. Arguments abound which flirt with eugenic principles for the League as well as the SDF and Fabians; Galton's work, first published in 1865, began to attract increasing attention in the 1880s.[68] As the future was becoming increasingly regulated by science, genetic stock seemed a prime target for further adjustments. In some cases, these are made through use of Lamarckian principles for the improvement of the race by improved living conditions, and the increased beauty or intellect which will inevitably follow. In others, it is the improvement of the lot of the poor through the regulation of population numbers—arguments made with Malthus in mind. Though the Socialists were united in their desire for a people made better by improved circumstances, this was not expressed in a desire for a 'singular ideal physical type'.[69] Though eugenic principles are implied in these cases, it is a term used extremely rarely in the pages of these Socialist publications.

This chapter, in examining the writings of the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, the Socialist League, and the Anarchist movement led by Kropotkin, lays the groundwork for the use of evolutionary arguments by these groups. Evolutionary language was used in constructing their methods for reform or revolution, and in projecting the future, both of which form the subjects of my later chapters. Other scholarship has acknowledged evolution as important to the Socialist movement, and this chapter is conscious of its agreements with—and debts to—that work.[70] It is, however, vital to construct the context in which the Socialist movement engaged with evolutionary language to return to the sources of the scholars who have

---

[67] Bernard Lightman, 'Life', *Historicism and the Human Sciences in Victorian Britain,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 21-47, p. 26.
[68] Goodlad, 'Moral Character', p. 145
[69] Michael Freeden, 'Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity', *The Historical Journal* 22.3, (Sep., 1979), 645-671, p. 649.
[70] See in particular Hale, *Political Descent* and J. W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

preceded me in this field. In so doing, I demonstrate the engagement with evolution not just as a high scientific principle, but also as 'low science'. In this movement, Darwin was a 'figurehead'.[71] 'Evolution' is a password, a clue, a reference to a legitimate principle to which the Socialists hoped to attach themselves. It was deployed both tactically and casually, its meaning could be elucidated, or obscured. In the proceeding pages, we delve into the many uses and abuses of Darwinism which served to fortify the Socialist cause.

I.i *The Social Democratic Federation*

Hyndman, the leader of the SDF, proclaimed, 'Darwin's great elucidation of evolution through natural selection [. . .] served to illustrate and confirm the truths so strikingly set forth in the Communist Manifesto and to enforce the great lesson of its conclusion "Workers of the World Unite"!'[72] The SDF tied explicitly their thinking with equal reverence to Marx and to Darwin, whose theories were in their view not only reconcilable but inherently compatible. It was from the combined theories of Marx and Darwin that the programme for reform emerged for the SDF—their role was to bring these reconciled philosophies to bear on Victorian society.

The term 'scientific Socialist' usually refers to the Marxist understanding of a scientific Socialist as someone who forecast the society of the future based on the careful analysis of historical data about economics and society. In the pages of journals published by the Marxist SDF, however, it is also used to imply an understanding of evolutionary as well as economic science. SDF members are characterised as 'scientific Socialists, whose sociological theories are based upon recorded facts of evolution and development' and to whom 'Darwin's work serves as a sure foundation.'[73] They accepted the truth of Darwin's thinking about natural selection, and they also understood Victorian society to reward as 'fittest' those whose competitive, self-serving instincts were strongest. Thus, it was made difficult for those with predominantly communalist instincts to prosper within the movement.

In 1898, *Justice* suggested that they were 'passing through one of the crises which divide one system of society, one stage of evolution, from another.'[74] The SDF coincided with the Anarchists, as is explored below, in embracing the idea of 'crises' as innate to evolution. Evolution, for the SDF, was not just steady, slow progress. Rather, it could also occur in great

---

[71] Bowler, 'Christian Responses to Darwinism', p. 40.
[72] H. M. Hyndman, 'Introduction to the Communist Manifesto', *Justice,* (07 January 1888), 2, p. 2.
[73] 'Critical Chronicle: Darwin', *Justice,* (13 June 1885), 1, p. 1.
[74] J. Hunter Watts, 'Signs of the Times', *Justice,* (13 April 1889), 2, p. 2.

leaps or fracture points.[75] The openness of the SDF to radical social revolution was supported by this understanding of evolution. Developments in scientific knowledge, both biological and mechanical, sped this development along. Socialism in its early stages, before a scientific framework was applied to its development, was comprised of 'mere dim gropings after the light we now possess, mere inchoate attempts at better social organisation'.[76] Thus, Darwinism was not only compatible with, but was also the foundation upon which the SDF sought to build its agenda of reform. The SDF believed that it was vital to promote the communal instinct rather than the competitive one. In order to facilitate this re-shaping of society, the SDF foresaw the potential for change wrought through parliamentary action, though it did not rule out the potential for supplementary violent action. These two methods of reform are played out across the pages of their journals.

Another current of thought which ran through the SDF was that mankind struggled against nature in order to develop civilisation.[77] Thus, the natural inclination of man might be to slip back towards animality and degeneration. This created a temporal imperative to act with haste to save mankind. While there existed no unanimous line on the veracity of Malthusianism within the SDF, the general tone was hostile, as we will explore below. The SDF is recognised by scholars as having been driven by the force of Hyndman's personality, and this understanding was indeed shared by his contemporaries. This section will explore Hyndman's perspective on evolution and will also examine the voices in both *Justice* and *To-Day* which contributed to the evolutionary discourse.

The SDF was conscious of their movement as operating within a shifting landscape. An 1887 article in *To-Day* acknowledges that 'a generation ago', social questions were not answered by biologists. So much had changed, however, that the 'biological key is now held competent to unlock every social problem.' With such weight given to science as the guide to addressing the ailments of society, it was of vital importance that such a science be understood correctly. Thus the SDF believed that Darwinism applied as the 'final argument of the doctrine of *laissez-faire* [. . .] encourages the self-complacency of the well-to-do'. If it was, as many non-Socialist Darwinists suggested, the fittest citizens who would rise to the top of the social order, then it followed that

[75] This belief is held contra-Darwin, who did not think that evolution occurred in leaps. See Lightman, 'Life', p. 37.
[76] A Socialist Politician, 'The Present Crisis in the Socialist Movement', *To-day,* (June 1887), 159-170, p. 160.
[77] In line with the Victorian habit, and so as to foster cohesion with the language used in quotations from these groups, I will use 'mankind', 'man', and derivatives of these forms in place of the modern habit of gender neutral language.

it was the least fit who languish at the lowest rungs. If it was merit that had assured the rise of the most successful, then the responsibility to aid those whose demerits have condemned them was absolved. The article continues with the argument that natural selection, as it operated in the late Victorian period, worked 'against, and not for, the survival of the best men.' The SDF understood Socialist and Capitalist societies to be constructed upon incompatible bases of human behaviour.

In the system of Capitalist industry in which these late Victorians found themselves, it was more often the 'most unscrupulous', 'most self-assertive', and 'least social' who won out as the fittest.[78] Under a Socialist regime, by contrast, the characteristics most highly rewarded would be those which made a person most compatible with communal, non-competitive living. Hyndman concurred, and he argued forcefully that '[u]nder capitalism, competition, and the degrading domination of purely pecuniary interests those survive and do well who are specially cunning, astute, miserly, and dexterous'.[79] This translates the ideas of natural selection into a language and concept which might be understood by a wider readership. The SDF believed that under the conditions of the time, society risked a continued degradation of moral character. Capitalists and the aristocracy were to be understood as equivalents in degeneration to the working man, though in their case they had driven themselves wilfully into decline. Carpenter termed those men who took from society more than they contributed to it 'a vacuum and a minus quantity [. . .] a beggar, alms-receiver, or thief.' He argued that this lack of balance, of endeavouring to take much and give nothing, was the '[i]deal of England to-day'.[80] So long as Capitalism continued as the dominant economic system, such characteristics would continue to be rewarded and those who displayed these characteristics would pass them to their offspring.

Society was not in stasis, however; in the same way that man could with a 'lightning conductor [. . .] preserve[] buildings from being destroyed by [lightning]', so as W. Willis-Harris wrote in *Justice,* he 'reacts against the laws of Darwin [. . .] by building hospitals to preserve the sick, crippled and infirm.'[81] To engineer a lightning conductor is to better the lives of all those who might otherwise be the victims of random chance; to make progress in the medical and social care for those at the mercy of illness or hardship is likewise to guard against fate. The SDF

---

[78] William Boulting, 'Misapplied Darwinism', *To-day,* (February 1884), 91-97, pp. 91-93. See also 'Critical Chronicle: Darwin', (June 1885), p. 1; G. Clifton, 'The Brutal Middle Class', *Justice* (1 October 1887), 2-3, p. 2

[79] Hyndman, 'The Survival of the Fittest', *(* December 1885), p. 2. See Clifton, 'The Brutal Middle Class', (October 1887), p. 2 and E. M. Geldart, 'Socialism as a Religion', *Justice,* (01 November 1884), 3, p. 3 for concurring sentiments.

[80] Edward Carpenter, 'England's Ideal', *To-day,* (May 1884), 321-339, pp. 325-326.

[81] W. Willis-Harris, 'Survival of the Fittest', *Justice,* (28 April 1888), 2, p. 2.

positioned itself against those complacent minds, referred to above, who have pointed to the 'survival of the fittest' to excuse their indifference to social care, but who certainly would have thought it ludicrous to risk their own homes to a lightning strike if they might have been saved by using a conductor. *Justice* equated the lightning conductor with the lifesaving innovations of medicine; though both might divert the course of nature, both are benefits wrought by human ingenuity. To do battle with the forces of nature to change the course of human evolution was the duty which the SDF assigned to itself. It was by this logic that they justified interventions in the evolution of society under the name of Darwinism.

The SDF believed that Darwinism and Socialism were compatible, despite criticism to the contrary.[82] Just as Darwinism could be undercut for the better with hospitals, so too could Darwinism be disrupted for the worse by poor conditions of living. To this end, the SDF believed that 'the processes of evolution are very largely dependent upon the conditions of the environment.'[83] The SDF saw their role defined clearly as needing to act to create an environment in society which would reward the qualities which they considered emblematic of the 'best' men.

Socialism was thus a tool to be used in guiding the direction of evolutionary change. *Justice* called Socialism 'the most striking of evolutionary forces affecting mankind today. [. . .] [I]t is recognised by all as economic warfare against conditions of life in which the few are enriched by the labour of the many.'[84] Socialism had become a force, more powerful even than nature because it was enacted with purpose and drive, in shaping the future of humanity. Socialism was for the SDF 'in the highest sense a scientific conception of society, organised on the co-operative principle'.[85] Socialism, and particularly scientific Socialism, thereby became the logical and necessary order. Even when the word 'evolution' was deployed without direct reference to Darwin, it was a word so associated with him in the period and by this movement, that it should be understood as an invocation of Darwinian evolution.

It was not only forces of nature against which the Socialism of the SDF was arrayed. So too was civilisation itself seen as a detrimental influence on a desire for equality:

---

[82] J. Lewis, 'Science and Socialism', *Justice,* (26 October 1895), 3, p. 3.
[83] The Lady Cook, 'Moral Environment', *Justice,* (13 August 1898), 3.
p. 3.
[84] J. M. O'Fallon, 'Anarchy and Anarchism', *Justice,* (19 September 1896), 2, p. 2.
[85] Lewis, 'Science and Socialism', *(* October 1895), p. 3.

> Socialists accept the Darwinian theory of evolution, with its struggle for existence, and its survival of the fittest, but they point out that generally throughout Nature the struggle for existence is fiercest where the means of existence is scantiest, whereas among civilised people the more plentiful the means of life, the more intense becomes the struggle for existence.[86]

Such an understanding emphasised the importance for the implementation of Socialism within the framework of Darwinism. It was not enough to ensure that resources are plentiful; civilisation formed around Capitalism was a guarantee of extreme disparity of wealth, no matter the total capital available within a society. Socialism was the means by which such resources as do exist might have been distributed to diminish the necessity for struggle.

Part of the SDF's assimilation of evolutionary theory within their social policy was their understanding of the potential for the interaction of evolution with teleology. They rejected repeatedly the idea that there could exist any final truth which could be found and known and lived by. An article in *To-Day* argued that the 'fittest', as an ideal towards which humanity evolved, 'has never come into existence', and, should it ever, 'evolution will cease'.[87] The only 'absolute' of which that author could conceive was 'the direction and rate of change of human society at a particular epoch.'[88] The only constant was change. Though Bax sought explicitly to outline the '*telos*' of Socialism, he was unable to envision any perpetual stasis. The vision he suggested includes,

> [A] co-operative social state, in which use was for each and possession for all, in which the powers of nature employed for the common advantage, the maximum of production with the minimum of labour; a society of equals interpenetrated by a true culture.[89]

Communal ownership, the harnessing of nature, and the minimisation of work spell out the ideal towards which the SDF was working. Bax acknowledged, however, that once this *telos* which he could envision had been achieved and became quotidian, 'new longings' would inspire a 'new process' in pursuit of a 'still higher "good"'.[90] Even Bax's attempted *telos* is not really an end.

---

[86] 'Letters to the Editor: Science and Socialism', *Justice,* (18 July 1896), 6, p. 6.
[87] P., 'Socialism and Sex', *To-day,* (Feb 1887), 42-55, p. 42.
[88] P., 'Socialism and Sex', (Feb 1887), p. 43.
[89] Ernest Belfort Bax, 'A Free Fantasia on Things Divine and Human', *To-day,* (Oct 1888), p. 112.
[90] Bax, 'A Free Fantasia', (Oct 1888), p. 112.

The majority of members of the SDF arrayed themselves against Malthus, some even going so far as to critique Darwin personally for his acceptance of Malthusianism—something which was avoided in other societies. One such article asserted that,

> [E]veryone is involuntarily influenced by the mode of thinking of the class in which he lives, and everyone carries a certain amount of it into his scientific views. In the case of Darwin we know for a fact that his scientific hypotheses were strongly influenced by the economic views of Malthus, a decided opponent of the revolution.[91]

The author positioned 'class' as a group aligned in thought— 'class' then was formed not just by heritage or wealth but by ideology. Darwin, born into comparative wealth, produced a scientific theory which suited his class-based ideology. Revolution posed a threat to the comfort of Darwin's life, and that his theories therefore seemed to discourage revolution cannot be wondered at.[92] Darwin's support of Malthus was not rooted in reason, according to that author, but to the bias of his birth. It could therefore be separated from his biological principles without undercutting their validity.

This line of argument presented against Malthus was advanced by A. P. Hazell, who criticised Malthus's personal bias towards a law which explained and justified the status quo. He suggested that where Malthus 'jump[ed] at a conclusion which suited his prejudices', Marx presented a more carefully reasoned construction. Marx attributed over-population to 'artificial causes created by society', whereas Malthus held that it was a 'purely physical law'.[93] Hazell argued, in opposition to contentions put forward by the Fabian Besant below, that 'poverty is not due to over-population'. Rather, the 'surplus population' were a 'product of capitalism', and only surplus because of artificial conditions imposed by Capitalism.[94] Hazell believed that starvation and struggle were not innate and inescapable elements of human life, but that they were fostered by a society which functioned through competitive rather than cooperative principles. These members of the SDF organised themselves against Malthus and turned the problem of insufficient food and shelter to the State instead.

Others within the Federation accepted as true Malthus's theory of population, and they set out a programme for living which might yet have alleviated suffering and essentially diverted the

---

91 Kautsky, 'The Social Revolution', (Oct 1902), p. 6.
92 Kautsky, 'The Social Revolution', (Oct 1902), p. 6.
93 A. P. Hazell, 'The Law of Population According to Malthus and Marx', *Justice*, (01 January 1898), 2, p. 2.
94 Hazell, 'The Law of Population', (Jan 1898), p. 2.

consequences imagined by Malthus. One contributor to *Justice* believed that, in a Socialist future, 'Malthusianism would be practiced by man and wife universally.' To 'practice' Malthusianism would be to revoke the conditions which made Malthus' theory true; that is, to limit the size of families. The author believed that the result of a failure to restrict family size would 'inevitably' mean a return to 'struggle for existence' and 'survival of the fittest.'[95] It was through an evolutionary, biological discourse that the Socialists engaged with theories of population. *Justice,* though it did not endorse in general the principles of Malthus, nevertheless saw fit to allow arguments made in line with his theories to be published in its pages.

Another such Malthusian, C. R. Drysdale, contended that 'large families are the only real cause of low wages and dear food in [England]', and that the Government could, if it wished, 'suppress the source of evil'.[96] Though Drysdale, like Hazell, looked to the Government to resolve a social issue, the true solution to his plan would require more action (or, in this case, inaction) in the general population than by the government. A 'law to regulate population', Drysdale argued in *To-Day*, 'is the only law by which the State can at once do away with poverty, and can shorten the hours of toil, and raise wages'.[97] To allow the State so much reach in determining the size of families would be to make public what was and is one of the most closely-held intimacies; the State would be granted rule over sexual intimacy, in exchange for a huge improvement in the quality of life of those whom it determined were allowed to be born. Drysdale himself acknowledged that such a move would be 'far too sweeping an innovation; and too despotic an interference with personal liberty.'[98] He also did not go so far as to advocate in this article for an evaluation process to which each prospective parent would submit individually. Rather, he suggested one rule to be applied as standard across the wider population.

A contributor to *To-Day,* writing several years later, took a less egalitarian view of the fitness of potential parents. This author suggested that '[b]y physique and mental power a particular man and woman may be fitted to carry on the race, or they may not.' Even if a man or woman may, the author argued, 'it does not follow that they have a social right to an unlimited family.'[99] This veered closer than any other contributor to *To-day* in making a eugenic argument for the Socialist future, and it pushed Drysdale's proposal to its logical authoritarian conclusion. Other articles in *Justice* delved into the details of favourable or unfavourable physique, premised on the assumption that physique characterised as favourable would win out; a 'swarthy Scythian

---

95 'Letters to the Editor: Malthusianism', *Justice,* (18 July 1896) 6, p. 6.
96 C. R. Drysdale, 'The State Remedy for Poverty', *To-day,* (Sep 1884), 284-294, p. 289.
97 Drysdale, 'The State Remedy for Poverty', (Sep 1884), p. 290.
98 Drysdale, 'The State Remedy for Poverty', (Sep 1884), p. 291.
99 P., 'Socialism and Sex', (Feb 1887), p.. 57.

or Tartar, of a short and squat make' transported to Germany, would within a century or two be 'infallibly tall, lusty fellows, of fair complexions'. These changes would be wrought inevitably through 'selection'.[100] Other arguments made in the period trusted, perhaps 'unwittingly', in Lamarckian influence over development rather than the selection argument; 'less favoured races, placed under happier circumstances, may in time be brought to the level of the more favoured'.[101]

Despite the ill-informed optimism of the preceding article, the prospect of devolution or degeneration of the human race under the system of Capitalism resounds through the pages of *Justice* and *To-day*. Arguments for the innate degeneration of character and spirit, typically supported by a Lamarckian conception of inheritance, abound—and certainly supersede the less usual argument above regarding complexion. Both the destitute and the dilettantish were at risk of irreparable dissolution. One contributor exhorted, 'Capitalism has damned the parents; let us save the children!'[102] Carpenter warned that 'England stands on the brink of a crisis in which no wealth, no armaments, no diplomacy will save her—only an awakening of the National Conscience.'[103] The stakes were high, and immediate action was necessary to prevent human devolution. Standards of living in the late nineteenth century had placed the population in peril, and here again the SDF laid the groundwork for the necessity of a swift evolutionary process—the volcanic eruption rather than the steady erosion.

The case for devolution was made across the SDF. While one author expressed a belief in the 'lesser physical strength and general intelligence of the average woman', he or she contended that '[t]he student of the history of civilisation will find that there was a time when the woman *physically* was on a par with the man, while *mentally* she was his superior.'[104] It was the deficiencies in the education of women, and the opportunities available to them, that had led to the degeneration in the sex in the Victorian period. This is an argument distinctly tinged with Lamarckian sympathies. It was presented as concrete evidence not just for the necessity of bettering the position of women, but also for the risks which are run by men who remain uneducated and destitute across generations.

---

[100] Cook, 'Moral Environment', *Justice,* (Aug 1898), p. 3.
[101] Goldwin Smith, 'The Greatness of England', *Contemporary Review* 45, (1878), 1-19, p. 9 in Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain,* pp. 190-191.
[102] J. Kent, 'Shall the State Maintain its Children?', *Justice,* (25 November 1899), 4, p. 4.
[103] Carpenter, 'England's Ideal', (May 1884), p. 337.
[104] That author here adds a footnote to explain that there is too much evidence of this for any of it to be cited, but that 'suffice it to say', women invented agriculture and religion. P., 'Socialism and Sex', (Feb 1887), p. 52.

While still an SDF member, Morris argued that 'the inborn instinct for beauty is checked and thwarted at every turn'. It was 'degradation' which marked London in his time. Even the trees planted to replace fallen ones were 'worse' than their predecessors. This is a Lamarckian argument insofar as man was stunted by the faults in his environment. But Morris went further even than this—he argued for a reciprocal decay. As man devolved due to the surrounds of filth and foul environs, so too does the devolved man degrade the world in which he lives. Morris predicted no end to the degradation so long as the 'system of competition' continued to characterise the 'production and exchange of the means of life'.[105] Cooperation and communal living were the solutions for which Morris advocated in the stead of competition; and at stake for him was both the state of mankind, and the state of the natural world, which are here characterised as symbiotic. This conception of the future as a rebirth of both human and natural beauty will be revisited in the third chapter, which explores Morris's conception of the Utopian future.

For Hyndman, a tolerable—even an enjoyable—standard of living was necessary across the whole population. This was the goal envisioned as the culmination of all of the work of the SDF: 'until the mass of the population are living in such wise that physical degeneration from preventable causes is rendered impossible, and mere existence and daily work become pleasurable, nothing important in the way of improvement has been effected'.[106] Improvement must be measured in changes to the daily life of individuals rather than to ideological shifts across the broader population in Hyndman's view. Hale astutely points to this 'focus upon effecting change in the quality of individuals' as one of the key factors in the disintegration of relations between Morris and Hyndman, the former of whom was more concerned with 'making socialists'.[107] Both men believed that the environment in which a person lived informed their mind, character, and health. Hyndman's ideal of intervention was at a higher level than Morris's; for the former, if improvements to the environment were undertaken, man would develop in the direction of Socialism—or at least be amenable to living in a Socialist way. For Morris, the Socialist society of the future was possible only through the active participation of the population in fostering this future. A communal effort must be made towards communal living, with workers uniting against the class of oppressors.

---

[105] William Morris, 'Art under Plutocracy', *To-day,* (Feb 1884), 79-90, pp. 83-87.
[106] H. M. Hyndman, 'No Rent', *Justice,* (02 September 1899), 4, p. 4.
[107] Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 188.

The commandeering of the 'instruments of labour' by the State, according to another contributor to *Justice,* was 'a question of evolution, of human advancement.'[108] As the threat of devolution was used as an imperative to protect the race, so the promise of improvement through the adoption of Socialist principles by the government was used to incentivise the shift. In both cases, the stakes were presented as extremely high; more than just the life or death of one individual, or even of society, readers of *Justice* and *To-Day* were presented with the advancement or destruction of the race. Socialism is also here equated totally with evolution, and as the clear path towards positive evolution. 'It is', one author in *Justice* argued, 'in accordance with his physical and social evolution that [a worker] should co-operate with his fellows in the expenditure of his activities to obtain subsistence.'[109] Cooperation was ordained by evolution. The society for which the SDF agitated would not only pull the destitute from squalor, but also raise the potential of the whole human body. The SDF would do battle against nature and Capitalism to create the circumstances necessary to evolve.[110] Only under those conditions could an inherently competitive people be motivated to protect the good of all.

One author argued that while '[s]elfishness is inherent to our nature', and it was 'a law of nature that we should seek our own interests', but because communities were 'mutually dependent' for aid, 'it is our interest also to study the welfare of the community.'[111] This desire to seek the good of the community was something that must be taught or fostered. The SDF knew that Socialism 'cannot be fitted on to the nation from outside by a minority or even a bare majority. The people must be wishful for it, and know what it is before there is any chance of the change being a success.'[112] This quotation elucidated key elements of the SDF's plan. They believed that they must gain widespread support, that they must do so not just by handing down ideals but by inculcating them within a population, and they must ensure that these ideals were thoroughly understood. The task set by these goals was a monumental one.

The SDF acknowledged that cooperation required trust within a population, and that working men were liable to reject Socialism because they believed in the propensity for laziness among fellow workers. This 'lazy man' was, the *Justice* contended, 'a figment of the imagination.' Those workers who would shirk their duties given the opportunity were reacting against the current climate of work, no better than a 'mitigated prison'. It was the 'tyranny of present conditions' rather than an innate dislike of toil. And even should man be inclined towards

---

[108] Will Thorne, 'The Nationalisation of the Instruments of Labour', *Justice,* (01 May 1898), 10-11, pp. 10-11.
[109] The Sage of the Northern Heights, 'The Lazy Working Man', *Justice*, (07 November 1894), 7, p. 7.
[110] W. S. Rennie, "Equality", *Justice* (24 March 1894), 2, p. 2.
[111] Egeria, 'The Ethics of Socialism', *Justice,* (08 February 1896), 2, p. 2.
[112] Raymond Unwin, 'Socialist Tactics', *To-day,* (Dec 1887), 180-186, p. 184.

laziness, 'social ostracism' was considered an adequate curb to any selfish impulse to shirk labour.[113] The author insisted man shirked suppression and tyranny rather than hard work. Morris agreed, and he commented on 'how much the self-respect born of the consciousness of usefulness must sweeten labour.'[114] There was pride to be taken in serving the community. This pride, satisfied with success at the expense of one's fellows, might also be found in a self-consciousness of the usefulness one offers to them, should serving one's neighbour not necessitate a diminution in respect and social standing.

The capacity for cooperation and for the improvement of individual lives was tied by the SDF to the dignity of labour. An article in *Justice* suggested that those engaged in middle class office work might find themselves immeasurably improved by a widening of their kind of labour:

> If all the people seen in the streets, including those imprisoned in hard, white, starched shirts, like myself; all the people seen in cabs, trains, hotels, and drinking saloons; if they were all freed from the tyranny of Rent, Profit, Interest, Salary, Wages, Money, their hands and brains would at once begin to work as naturally as their lungs and stomachs.[115]

For this author, the instinct to labour was innate; and the pursuit of manual labour was encouraged in so far as it facilitated self-sufficiency. The middle-class workers he described had no natural affinity to their labour; rather, they were as entranced and captive by it. Remove the conditions which forced them into labour, and these men would be freed to think and act for themselves; they would be restored to dignity and humanity as much as would the factory labourer who had likewise been wrested of dignity and intelligence by the drudgery of his labour. It was because of the unwholesome environment of labour that the 'intellectual faculties of the worker under capitalist economy have no opportunity for exercise'.[116] The SDF looked to improve the conditions of labour in order to enliven the minds and spirits of all men.

In this section we have examined the use of the language of biology and evolution by the SDF to form, support, and further their particular brand of Socialism. Darwin was tied to Marx as the co-basis for the thought of Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation, and many voices across both *Justice* and *To-Day* joined together to demonstrate the importance of Darwinism to the SDF's understanding of Socialism. The discourse around Malthus in the SDF was generally

---

113 The Sage of the Northern Heights, 'The Lazy Working Man', (November 1894), p. 7.
114 Morris, 'Art under Plutocracy',, (Feb 1884), p. 90.
115 Dan Baxter, 'Labour v. Rent of Ability', *Justice,* (27 March 1897), 2, p. 2.
116 The Sage of the Northern Heights, 'The Lazy Working Man', (November 1894), p. 7.

dismissive, though they showed themselves willing to hear arguments like those from Drysdale which supported Malthus's theories. The SDF engaged with the devolutionary fears which were rife in the Victorian period and suggested that it was under current conditions that man was set to evolve negatively. The SDF believed that under altered social conditions, the course of civilisation and nature might be diverted along lines which would ensure the positive evolution of the race. The conditions of labour were also identified as a devolutionary force, and targeted, particularly by Hyndman, as a matter of high priority for SDF policy. We will explore in chapter two the methods of reform for which the SDF advocated, exercising their evolutionary understanding to its greatest efficiency.

I.ii *The Fabian Society*

Like the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabians engaged explicitly with the language of Darwinian evolution to offer solutions to the poverty, disparity, and squalor of the working classes. The case they made for themselves was rooted in a perceived reasonability; the Fabians proposed to work with human nature as it was, rather than seeking to reform or reshape it. They made this effort in contrast with the SDF, who, as we have seen above, predicted that the nature of man could be changed for the better if his environment was suitably altered. Shaw asserted that the Fabians favoured 'gradual, peaceful changes' as opposed to the 'revolution, conflict with the army and police, and martyrdom' which they attributed to the other Socialist groups.[117] The Fabians, in contrast to their Socialist peers, were proponents of a gradual shift towards social reform through legal, parliamentary action. The evolution towards Socialism must, for the Fabians, occur with no undue haste or chaos; it must be the equivalent of a biological evolution. This was another striking difference from the SDF's interpretation of the issue; evolution as understood by the Fabians had no room for eruptive leaps or swift accelerants.

The Fabians used the language of science to assert and propound their social theory. Besant, one of the leaders of the Fabian movement, claimed that, 'I am a Socialist because I am a believer in Evolution'.[118] Besant had greater scientific credentials than her Fabian fellows in this period, certainly prior to H. G. Wells' joining in the early twentieth century. She used her high level of scientific understanding to simplify complex ideas for their middle-class readership. The

---

[117] This emphasis on 'national character' perhaps foreshadows the Fabian engagement with imperialism which came to the fore in the first decades of the twentieth century. Shaw, 'Report on Fabian policy',(July 1896), p. 4; Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics,* p. 180.

[118] Mark Bevir, 'Annie Besant's Quest for Truth: Christianity, Secularism and New Age Thought', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 50.1, (1999), 62-93, p. 81; Besant, *Why I am a socialist,* (1886), p. 2.

Fabians, like each of the other groups, argued that their method of reform was the most natural because it best reflected their understanding of human nature. The Fabians engaged directly with the ideas of Darwin, Spencer, and Huxley, and sought to propound their scientific credentials even out of the sphere of evolutionary language; Besant's paper *Our Corner* always included a science section which was not limited to evolutionary theory—and which certainly did not constrict itself to science in the mainstream. In one of the earliest editions, she explored the case of a 'dog who had been taught to articulate two words', with advice that readers seeking to train their dogs similarly should ensure that 'only the very simplest words' are chosen, and extolled the wonders of microscopes, offering specific instructions for the examination of water from a flower vase.[119] Science and the pursuit of scientific knowledge proliferated in the journal, though its quality was of varying degrees. This reflected Besant's personal interest in science and also the culture of the late nineteenth century, where scientific fluency was highly prized.

Webb, Shaw, and Besant all wrote extensively on the role of evolution in justifying the inevitability and naturalness of the Socialist cause, and, more importantly than that, in justifying their method of achieving Socialism. Webb and Shaw both engaged directly with Darwinian ideas. Bevir emphasises Webb's sometimes-overlooked study of Darwinism, while J. R. Pfeiffer points to Shaw's explicit advocacy of selective breeding, in addition to Besant's established scientific credentials.[120] Eugenic Socialism existed on the fringes of Fabianism, and often coexisted with their grim warnings and examples of the distress that could be and was caused by the Capitalist system of the Victorian period. They exampled various ways in which this system fostered the devolution of mankind into greater brutality, or which exacerbated existing instincts for competition and supremacy to be expressed in forms most detrimental to the good of wider society. In contrast stood their writings on the potentials for the positive evolution of human nature under Socialist conditions, and the advantages promised by such an evolution. The Fabians understood—or purported to understand—Socialism through its evolutionary justification and offered their plan for the pursuit of a Socialist future with the lessons of evolution in mind. Human nature as they understood it was not naturally communal, but rather pursued the individual or familial interest as a primary concern. They hoped that through gradual changes to legal and social praxes—but *not* to human nature itself—they could harness the competitive energies of the worker for the betterment of society.

---

[119] Annie Besant, 'Science Corner', *Our Corner,* (January 1883), 41-43, p. 41; Annie Besant, 'Peeps through a Microscope', *Our Corner,* (January 1883), 32-36, pp. 32-36.
[120] Mark Bevir, 'Sidney Webb', *The Journal of Modern History* 74.2 (June 2002), 217-252, p. 251; J. R. Pfeiffer, 'Evolutionary Theory' in *George Bernard Shaw in Context,* ed. B. Kent, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) 273-280, p. 274; Richards, *Darwin,* p. 495.

Science was regarded as carrying with it the potential for a universal curative and solution by the Fabians. Besant opened an article in *Our Corner* with a quotation from Darwin, who suggested that '[i]t is those who know little, and not those who know much, who so positively assert this or that problem will never be solved by science.'[121] The enlightened mind views science as the key for otherwise insoluble problems; it can provide order and meaning where previously only incomprehensible chaos reigned. It was only natural, this view being held, that the Fabians would look to science as offering the solution to the rife inequality between the working classes and the aristocracy.

The Fabians emphasised that it was through scientific advance that, in other aspects of life, potential ills had been obviated or lessened. That 'one part of the year is bitterly cold' could not be changed, but 'when primeval man learnt how to produce fire' he was able to markedly improve his condition during these cold months. It was in this 'simplest possible manner' that 'science aids mankind'.[122] As with the SDF example of the lightning rod, scientific knowledge is the equivalent of power over nature. Unlike the SDF, however, the Fabians did not seek to use this power to alter the nature of man; rather, they sought to nudge society into better accord with the extant nature of man. Science was positioned as not only a natural partner in bettering the lives of men, but also the *traditional* partner. When the Fabians turned to science to explain contemporary social ills, they found Socialism to be the natural solution. Besant, for instance, argued that just as 'Evolution' moved the 'chaos of biological facts' into 'an intelligible and correlated order', so 'Socialism, dealing with the chaos of sociological facts, brings a unifying principle, which turns Radicalism from a mere empirical system into a reasoned, coherent, and scientific whole.' [123] Here, Socialism was not just the natural partner of Evolution, but also acted in society as Evolution does in nature. Willard Wolfe asserts that Besant was 'probably [. . .] the first English Socialist to use Social Darwinism in such a fashion'.[124] That is, to use scientific terminology for evolution as the basis and justification of Socialism. If this is so, she certainly introduced a trend; this language can be demonstrated across the journals of the SDF and the League, and it was certainly present in Kropotkin's writing (Wolfe probably excludes him from consideration here as not being an Englishman, though he lived in England).

---

121 Besant, 'The Genesis of conscience, (January 1887), p. 25.
122 W. H. Utley, 'The Scientific Aspect of Socialism', *Our Corner,* (February 1887), 82-87, pp. 82-83.
123 Besant, 'Radicalism and Socialism', (November 1886), p. 266.
124 Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism,* p. 265.

Webb pointed to Darwin and Spencer as turning the social ideal away from the image of an 'unchanging State.'[125] It was in their name and their tradition that Webb argued that the 'philosopher' of their time was chiefly interested in the 'gradual evolution of the new order from the old, without breach of continuity or abrupt change of the entire social tissue at any point during the process.' So much for the violent revolution of the Anarchists and the upheaval of the Socialist League. Webb invoked the State as a body—something which has 'tissue'—in his argument that change should be 'gradual' as evolution is.[126] Evolution was not only gradual, but eternal. This principle of Darwinian evolution, as Graham Wallas argued, led Socialists to be less certain of an ultimate, static form of Socialism.[127] Thus, Socialism, held correlative with evolution, would be a gradual process of change which might never reach a conclusion; no definitive revolution would mark the beginning of a Socialist age, and no carefully delineated Utopia could be achieved to mean that the work of the movement was finished. In an 1896 tract from the Fabian Society, Webb emphasised this view:

> [M]odern Socialists have learnt the lesson of evolution better than their opponents, and it cannot be too often repeated that Socialism, to Socialists, is not a Utopia which they have invented, but a principle of social organisation which they assert to have been discovered by the patient investigators into sociology whose labor have distinguished the present century.[128]

The 'opponents' of so-called 'modern Socialists' were not just Capitalists—Webb included by implication Socialists who advocated for a Socialism moved towards an invented (and therefore arbitrary) end point by external actors. Among the most prominent Utopian Socialists of Webb's contemporary was Morris, by this time the former editor of the Socialist League's *Commonweal*—we will come to explore more of Morris's views in the next section of this chapter. The Socialism of the Fabians was the 'modern', the future-facing; it was also the careful and considered work of scientific investigation. In this way did Webb disassociate the group from the Social Democratic Federation and the Anarchists. W. H. Utley contended in *Our Corner* that science's 'supreme function' for 'human life' was 'guiding action'. Socialism, for Utley, was based in this 'science of society'. 'Modern Socialism', he argued, 'is the logical outcome of the scientific progress of

---

[125] Hale also acknowledges the Spencerian reception among the Fabians, and notes particularly Beatrice Webb's personal relationship with Spencer. Hale, *Political Descent,* pp. 190-192.
[126] Sidney Webb, 'Historic', *Fabian Essays in Socialism,* (The Fabian Society: London, 1889), 30-61, p. 31.
[127] Graham Wallas, 'Property Under Socialism', *Fabian Essays in Socialism,* (The Fabian Society: London, 1889), 131-149, p. 131.
[128] Sidney Webb, 'The difficulties of individualism', *Fabian Tract* 69, (June 1896), 3-19, p. 3.

mankind'.[129] Utley too turned away from a wishful, Utopian ideal of Socialism in favour of the emphasis of logic and scientific reason so central to the character of the Fabian movement.

Besant defined evolution in the 'physical world' as the 'gradual progress from the simple to the complex'.[130] Society, too, was 'evolving towards a more highly developed individuality of its units, and towards their closer co-ordination.' This is not, despite first appearances, paradoxical. Besant believed that individuality was asserted through autonomy; improved working conditions for the labourer allowed for this latent individuality to be more widely asserted. By the same token that a more Socialist society allowed for greater autonomy, so too did Socialism of the Fabian model promote the cooperation of many individuals within society. It was only when the labourer regained his or her individuality that they could engage truly in what she called elsewhere the 'social tendency'.[131] Besant seems to have concurred with Webb's argument that '[t]he whole history of the human race cries out against the old-fashioned Individualism.'[132] It was instead for a collective society, chosen by individuals, that she advocated.

Besant believed that as greater access to education and a better quality of life freed the worker to a greater sense of self, or a more 'developed individuality', the power with which each worker was imbued would allow them to choose Socialism for themselves. This constituted a more complex social formation than that of the industrial master and economically enslaved labourer and was thus the more highly evolved mode of living—though not, because of its complexity, to be understood as unnatural. 'Association of the common weal', Besant claimed, was 'by no means confined to man.' She argued, as did many of her Socialist fellows even outside of the Fabian movement, that the choice of animals to live in herds and to protect the weaker members of the group was indicative of the naturally communal nature of humans.[133] She also drew an analogy of single cells, the 'lowest forms of life', organising as family units and tribes do into a 'social organism'.[134] Besant, by choice of metaphor, neatly excluded the possibility both of violent Anarchy and oppression as the natural state of things, because to war between people would be to war within the social body, and thus to risk damage to all cells.[135]

---

[129] Utley, 'The Scientific Aspect of Socialism', (Feb 1887), p. 82.
[130] Annie Besant, 'The Evolution of Society', *Our Corner,* (July 1885), 8-11, p. 8.
[131] Annie Besant, 'The Evolution of Society', *Our Corner,* (October 1885), 200-204, p. 204.
[132] Sidney Webb, 'English progress towards social democracy', *Fabian Tract* 15, (December 1890), 3-15, p. 3.
[133] Besant, "The Evolution of Society", (July 1885) p. 8.
[134] Besant, "The Evolution of Society", (July 1885) p. 8.
[135] Marc Stears notes that this 'organic analogy' for society as the body and individuals as cells came into popular use in this period; *Progressives, Pluralists, and the Problems of the State,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 36-37.

Webb propounded another characteristically Fabian, gradualist perspective on the development of Socialism. 'Just as every human being has an ancestry, [. . .] so every idea, every incident, every movement has in the past its own long chain of causes, without which it could not have been.' He presented a chain of incidence, traceable through history, which gave shape to the Socialist movement. He made equivalent, biological and political heredity. Webb observed that the 'historic ancestry of the English social organisation during the present century stands witness to the irresistible momentum of the ideas which Socialism denotes.'[136] Socialism was in the genes of England—it was not artificially imposed, but rather the movement towards it was the culmination of a natural development. The Fabians assimilated the language of evolutionary science to present Socialism—*their* brand of Socialism—as the natural and best fate for society. Fabian Socialism would be a dynamic concept, continually evolving and perfecting, as biological evolution would too.

An argument for population health, both explicitly and implicitly eugenic, was made by the Fabians from both Malthusian and Lamarckian perspectives. Besant advocated for both views, a fact unacknowledged in Hale's study of Besant's Malthusianism.[137] 'A high human type', she claimed, 'cannot be bred in a back slum, trained amid filth and ugliness and clanger, sent to labour ere maturity; it must be bred in pure air, trained amidst sights and sounds that are harmonious and beautiful, educated until mature'.[138] By this assessment, the influence of surroundings on the heredity of the race was paramount. Thus, Besant believed that the poor conditions of the working classes had led and would lead towards their hereditary devolution, and thus towards an ultimately negative impact for the human race.[139]

Almost one year later, Besant's argument in *Our Corner* was expressed in Malthusian terms. Besant defined the 'law of population' as the 'scientific truth' that 'all organisms tend to increase faster than their means of subsistence', and therefore the 'struggle for existence' arises in competition for food, and results in the 'killing out of the weaker plants and animals, and the survival of the strongest, the hardiest, the most enduring'.[140] Rather than experiencing an alteration in views, Besant had reconciled Lamarckian and Malthusian concerns. She was not one

---

136 Webb, 'Historic', (1889), p. 30.
137 Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 191-194.
138 Annie Besant, 'The Evolution of Society', *Our Corner,* (August 1885), 71-75, p. 74.
139 I will use 'devolution' as a shorthand for the evolution of an individual or society towards an end which might loosely be defined as 'bad'. This term was used by Socialists to indicate a similar meaning, though they also acknowledge that there was nothing inherently positive about the direction of 'evolution'.
140 Annie Besant, 'The Law of Population and its relation to Socialism', *Our Corner,* (June 1886), 324-332, p. 325.

of those Malthusians whom Sydney Olivier critiques as regarding 'starvation and misery as part of the inevitable order of nature', and viewing these as 'necessary conditions of progress', for the survival of the fittest.[141]

Besant advocated instead for the *birth* of only the fittest, and thus for obviating the struggle during life for survival among those ill-equipped to flourish.[142] The population must be cultivated towards better health and hardiness, first by population control, and then by the contingent improvement of material conditions.[143] It was overpopulation, in her view, which led to poverty, and with poverty came squalor, and with squalor devolution. She argued that in contrast to the 'marriage relation', which was essentially of only reflexive consequence, becoming a parent had wide social impact, and that 'no unhealthy babies ought to be born' because 'for unhealthy persons to become parents is a crime against humanity'.[144] Reproduction must be acknowledged as having wider social impact, and no longer as a personal pursuit. The family might be a 'natural' rather than an 'artificial' group, but it could not be allowed to develop without some artificial checks.[145] Besant advocated for a control in the birth-rate for and by the poor, in order to promote and latterly to preserve the benefits of a Socialist State.[146] Increased sanitary conditions would prolong the lives of all workers under Socialism, as well as a higher rate of survival among children born to working parents. If reproduction were allowed to occur unchecked by any controls, Besant feared that the population might increase exponentially and outstrip the food supply. Donald MacKenzie contends that it was the 'urban crisis' in the penultimate decade of the nineteenth century, and the increased prominence of Fabianism which gave 'context for serious consideration of negative eugenics.'[147] Whereas positive eugenics sought to promote healthy birth, negative eugenics sought to prevent the unhealthy from being born by controlling reproduction among the unfit. Besant recognised a 'lessening of preventable mortality' as both a boon of, and a potential difficulty for, Socialism.[148] As Morton observes,

---

[141] Sydney Olivier, 'Moral', *Fabian Essays in Socialism,* (The Fabian Society: London, 1889), 102-128, p. 103.
[142] Her thought on this is representative of a common principle of eugenic thinking in the period, which sought to undertake a 'working at both ends' of positive and negative eugenics. Morton, *The Vital Science,* p. 121.
[143] Besant's belief in population control even resulted in her standing trial for distributing material considered obscene on birth control in 1877. F. H. Amphlett Micklewright, 'The Rise and Decline of English Neo-Malthusianism', *Population Studies* 15.1, (July 1961), 32-51, pp. 39-40; Richards, *Darwin,* p. 492.
[144] Besant, 'The Law of Population and its relation to Socialism', (June 1886), pp. 327-328.
[145] Besant, 'Divide and —?', (May 1888), p. 136.
[146] Besant, 'The Law of Population and its relation to Socialism', (June 1886), pp. 331-332.
[147] Donald MacKenzie, 'Eugenics in Britain', *Social Studies of Science* 6, (1976), 499-532, p. 517.
[148] Besant, 'The Law of Population and its relation to Socialism', (June 1886), p. 332.

most social planners who engaged with a discourse of positive versus negative eugenics did so through an advocacy of 'working at both ends'.[149]

Elsewhere, it was a purely Lamarckian analysis which exemplified Fabian future planning. Olivier betrayed his distaste for the working classes in his Lamarckian contribution to the *Fabian Essays in Socialism,* positing that:

> [The] schools of the adult are the journal and the library, social intercourse, fresh air, clean and beautiful cities, the joy of the fields, the museum, the art-gallery, the lecture-hall, the drama, and the opera; and only when these schools are free and accessible to all will the reproach of the proletarian coarseness be done away.[150]

His appeal was not to save the lives of these people because they are suffering, but rather to raise them at arms-length to a level of behaviour and deportment less distasteful to the educated classes. He certainly did not address this chapter to the people about whom he wrote. Though he offered condemnation of rich idlers, Olivier referred in unflinching terms to the 'residuum of unskilled, unemployed, unprofitable and hopeless human beings which in all great cities festered about the base of the social pyramid.' The children of such people would become 'street Arabs' or 'corner-boys' or 'child-whores' or 'sneak-thieves' who would, as adults, 'resume the existence of the wild beasts that fathered man'.[151] After one generation of idleness in poverty, devolution had returned humans to the status of animals. This did not seem to happen, in Olivier's estimation, at the upper end of the social hierarchy, where people were also idlers. It was therefore only the combination of poverty with idleness, in his view, that ensured devolution.

This snobbery was not exclusive to Olivier among the Fabians, and it would certainly seem to explain their reputation among contemporaries for an inflated sense of self-importance. According to Webb it was an 'evil inequality' which resulted in, among other things, 'the breeding of degenerate hordes of a demoralized "residuum" unfit for social life'.[152] In another article, Webb argued that the basis for a programme of 'National Efficiency' must be the 'condition of the people'. He asked how an 'efficient army' could be formed from 'stunted, anæmic, demoralised denizens of the slum tenements'.[153] Unlike other Socialist publications

---

[149] Morton, *The Vital Science,* p. 121. See also Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
[150] Olivier, 'Moral', (1887), p. 103.
[151] Olivier, 'Moral', (1887), p. 123.
[152] Webb, 'The difficulties of individualism', (June 1896), p. 6.
[153] Webb, 'Twentieth Century Politics : A Policy of National Efficiency', *Fabian Tract* 108, (1901), 1-15, pp. 8-9.

which, at least nominally, sought to connect with a working class readership, the Fabians were unapologetically middle class and for the middle classes.[154] Though Hale argues that the Fabians believed in the maintenance of social classes and did not believe in a Socialism that was the 'levelling up of everyone to a position of equality', it is certain that they *were* desirous of a levelling up of the lower classes to a position at which they no longer risked devolution within their class nor the contamination of other classes by their own degradation.[155]

The Fabians' critique of the current system was that it promoted the worst manifestations of human nature. Shaw argued that 'the more you degrade the workers', by which he meant the removal of 'artistic enjoyment', 'respect', and 'admiration' in their lives by the circumstances of their labour and standard of living, what was promoted in its stead was the 'one human tie left to them'. This 'gratification of their instinct for producing fresh supplies of men' being the only possibility for happiness, it must necessarily be done to excess. Thus the 'supply [of men] becomes a nuisance', or a 'plague', and would be recognised by the reformer as bad; nevertheless, the increase of population could not be checked in current circumstances. Shaw warned that they 'breed like rabbits; and their poverty breeds filth, ugliness, dishonesty, disease, obscenity, drunkenness, and murder.'[156] The humanity of the worker, beyond their capacity for sexual reproduction, must be restored (or, perhaps, granted for the first time) to them. Thus did Shaw see culture as an improving 'agent of evolutionary change', as Michael Boulter observes.[157] This argument was carefully balanced by Shaw; he made no claims about changing the inherent potential of human nature which might be dismissed as Utopian. Instead, he argued that by suppressing the higher part of human nature by systemic, economic inequality, the whole of the nation might suffer. That he described overpopulation among the poor as a 'plague' is particularly evocative. Plagues do not stay in slums, but rage rampant throughout a population, regardless of wealth or class. Shaw emphasised the danger to each level of society, and the necessity for action, through this semantic implication.

The Fabians offered clear policy solutions to the social ills they diagnosed; in advocating for free education and free school meals, Webb exhorted his readers to consider that the 'future welfare of the State depends on the health and education of its future citizens'.[158] The call to give

---

[154] George Bernard Shaw, 'The Fabian Society: what it has done: and how it has done it', *Fabian Tract* 41, (1892), 3-30, p. 4.
[155] Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 195-196.
[156] George Bernard Shaw, 'The Basis of Socialism: Economic', *Fabian Essays in Socialism,* (The Fabian Society: London, 1889), 3-29, p. 21.
[157] Michael Boulter, *Bloomsbury Scientists: Science and Art in the Wake of Darwin,* (London: University College London, 2017), p. 54.
[158] Sidney Webb, 'The Workers' Political Programme', *Fabian Tract* 11, (1891), 3-19, p. 9.

the working classes the humanity to enjoy their lives beyond carnal pleasures did not necessitate a violent upheaval; rather, Shaw, Besant, Olivier, and Webb promoted a social salve and spiritual uplift through the improvement of material conditions by legal means. '[U]nrestricted accumulation' by Capitalists was an 'anti-social tendency', according to Besant, and an impediment or opposing force to evolution. It was not, then, that the businessman was more evolved than the miners, but rather that the greed of the businessman caused the devolution of his workers.[159] Besant protested in a later article against the 'business morality', which 'tended to regard men too much as mechanical instruments of production, significantly calling men, women, and children "hands", instead of human beings.'[160] The Fabians implied the innate capacity of all men to flourish with the exposure to better material circumstance; the fate of the working man to a life of squalor and sin was not inherent to his being, but rather to his circumstance. In contrast to the grim analysis of prevailing conditions, the Fabians had much to say in praise of policy, effected and proposed, which sought to work with human nature and evolutionary theory to promote the best manifestations of mankind.

The Fabians believed strongly in the power and merits of government, at least when directed towards good cause. Webb suggested that '[i]t is now generally admitted to be a primary duty of government to prescribe the plane on which it will allow the struggle for existence to be fought out, and so to determine which kind of fitness shall survive.' Webb's interpretation of the role of government worked perfectly to promote the Fabian imperative. He attributed both the current economic climate, in which many labourers worked for a bare subsistence with the result that the owners of industry accumulated enormous wealth, and the potential economy, in which hard work ensured survival and flourishing, to governmental policy. It must be the government which creates this change, for '[n]o individual can safely choose the high plane ['for combat'] so long as his opponent is at liberty to fight on the lower.'[161] If the government, as Webb characterised it, held the power for social reform, then it followed that Democracy was the route to Socialism—the 'increase in the political power' of the 'proletariat' could be used by them to ensure their 'economic and social protection.'[162] But this was not an easy prospect in itself; Shaw wrote, in critique of the working class, that '[s]lavery is popular in England provided the wages are regular.'[163] Complacency among the workers was the biggest impediment to Fabian, that is,

---

159 Annie Besant, 'The Evolution of Society', *Our Corner* (September 1885), 134-137, p.135.
160 Besant, 'The Evolution of Society', (October 1885), p. 201.
161 Webb, 'The difficulties of individualism', (June 1896),. 16.
162 Webb, 'Historic', (1889), p. 61.
163 George Bernard Shaw, 'The Fabian election manifesto', *Fabian Tract* 40, (1892), 1-16 and George Bernard Shaw, 'The Fabian election manifesto: PROOF', *Fabian Tract* 40, (1892), 1-16, p. 15.

gradualist, change. Webb advised that 'in the language of politics' (and, demonstrably, also in his own language) 'people who have no votes are roughs, scum, dregs, mob, riff-raff, and residuum', while those who do vote are, among other honorifics, 'Friends and Fellow Citizens.'[164] If only the Fabians could motivate the worker to act in their own interests by voting, the power they could exert would confer upon them the respect from lack of which they were suffering. Not only had 'suffrage' worked to make the 'industrial masses articulate', it was even credited with their 'consciousness' by Hubert Bland.[165] Perhaps Bland's argument would be amended by Shaw to limit this consciousness to those 'industrial masses' who exercise their right to suffrage. It was the most difficult task for each of the Socialist movements to motivate the workers to strive for better conditions.

Webb suggested that the 'perfect and fitting development of each individual is not necessarily the utmost and highest cultivation of his own personality, but the filling [. . .] of his humble function in the great social machine.'[166] This statement sits somewhat uncomfortably with Besant's assertion above that the realisation of individuality will lead to an increase in cooperation. These views can be reconciled if 'personality' is understood to mean 'whim' or 'personal comfort' rather than a more deeply held human nature. Both Webb and Besant promoted the realisation of this ultimate human nature, already present in each person though perhaps latent due to some external pressures. Olivier offered this precis: the 'object of every living creature [is] to do as he pleases'.[167] If this was so, the Fabians had to conceive of a social structure in which the individual was motivated to act in benefit of the group. His own ends had to align with the betterment of his community if a Socialist future was to be achieved—this was not to be constructed by relying on the gratification of 'personality', but rather upon the appeal to natural impulse. Shaw believed that human nature was evolving towards altruism and kindness, with culture as the 'agent of evolutionary change'[168] This culture might be made manifest in both the legislation proposed and enacted by Members of Parliament elected by the enfranchised workers, and also by a shift in social praxes.

Webb regarded the defining difference of the Victorian period from preceding ages as the awareness that 'we are not merely individuals, but members of a community'. Thus, 'freedom'

---

[164] Sidney Webb, 'The Workers' Political Programme', *Fabian Tract* 11, (1891), 3-19, p. 6.
[165] Hubert Bland, 'The Outlook', *Fabian Essays in Socialism,* (The Fabian Society: London, 1889), 202-220, p. 204.
[166] Webb, 'Historic', (1889), p. 58. Webb's sentiment emerged from a wider societal understanding of duty, evolution, and the concept of self in the period. See for instance F. H. Bradley, 'Essay V – My Station and Its Duties', *Ethical Studies (1876),* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 145-192.
[167] Olivier, 'Moral', (1889), p. 112.
[168] Boulter, *Bloomsbury Scientists,* pp. 54-55.

sought by the Victorians was freedom of, for instance, a 'Trade Union to bargain collectively'.[169] This conception of freedom was in a sense Hegelian; the highest and best end of 'freedom' for Webb was the collectivisation of rights for the protection of all. This was inherently linked to the Fabian belief in the necessity of government for the best expression of human nature. Besant referred to the 'enforcement of authority' as 'a chief factor in the evolution of conscience.'[170] Conscience, rather than being innate, was thus for Besant a socially constructed guide to participation in the social structure. Society could build itself, but to do so correctly required the influence of the authority of representatives chosen by the entirety of the social body, thus to be guided by the best of themselves. 'The whole point of Collectivism', argued another Fabian, 'is the recognition by society of its interest as a society in a certain type of character and quality of existence.' He suggested that, actually, Socialists *did* want a struggle for existence, they just want a re-writing of terms which allowed for the most physically fit and mentally able to enjoy the most success—and they wished to foster the growth of the population which could be fit and able.[171] Webb argued that the 'free struggle for existence among ourselves menaces our survival as a healthy and permanent social organism.'[172] Besant concurred: 'one of the first essentials of successful social existence is that the lives of the members of the community shall be respected by each other, and that mutual help shall be afforded'. She argued that tribes of 'savages' are 'most helpful towards members of their own tribe, and at the same time utterly indifferent to all lives outside it.'[173] The individualism of the Victorian age split the population into the equivalent of different tribes along class lines. The Fabians understood that, if these divisions could be ameliorated, the population would be motivated to offer 'mutual help' to *all,* rather than just to members of their limited social group.

The Fabians viewed man as ultimately self-serving, competitive, and hierarchical. The Socialism for which they advocated was therefore designed to be compatible with those inherencies of human nature. It was through the promise of collective wealth and ownership, the rewards of hard work with material benefit, and the continuity of Parliamentary authority that Fabian gradualism was conceived. This gradualism was directly connected with the language of evolution. As I will explore in a later chapter, the Fabians disregarded explicitly Anarchism and Utopian Socialism for their incompatibilities with human nature. It was through the reform of

[169] Webb, 'Twentieth Century Politics', (1901), pp. 3-4.
[170] Besant, 'The Genesis of conscience', (January 1887), p. 31.
[171] Sidney Ball, 'The moral aspects of socialism', *Fabian Tract* 72, (November 1896), 3-23, p. 5.
[172] Webb, 'Historic', (1889), p. 60.
[173] Annie Besant, 'The Genesis of conscience', *Our Corner*, (February 1887), 101-113, p. 104.

education, the limitation of births, and greater access to art and refinement that the group which the Fabians so often identified as the 'residuum' could realise its fullest evolutionary potential. If, Ball asserted, 'Socialism remains true to its scientific conception', then its goal was the 'freest and fullest development of human quality and power.'[174] This is what the Fabians sought to identify and promote, by means of evolutionary language and evolutionarily informed tactics of social and political reform.

I.iii *The Socialist League*

Charles Mowbray put the crux of the League's evolutionary argument succinctly when he stated in 1890 that '[e]volution is the incubatory state of revolution.'[175] For the League, revolution was the natural outcome of the evolutionary cycle, and evolution justified revolution. Just as eggs incubated until maturity, so revolution would brew until it was ready to burst forth. A few months after Mowbray's article, another article in the *Commonweal* exhorted '[w]hat next, ye scientific evolutionists or evolutionary social scientists? We are in the midst of an evolution [. . .] you say. [. . .] I beg to submit that we are at the *end* of an evolution. The time *is now* ripe for the change'.[176] The author addressed himself to scientists rather than to the worker, the League's usual intended audience. In so doing, he implied participation in a scientific discourse which offered legitimacy to his political statements. In his view, evolution had incubated in the revolutionary state long enough—the Fabian cycle at its close. The League continually aligned the concepts of evolution and revolution as linked rather than existing in dichotomy, which was one of the key contentions of the Fabians.[177] They believed that 'Socialism is essentially a science—*the* science of human life.'[178] The League certainly positioned evolution as the science in question, with an importance equal—and often greater—to that given to economic science. Socialism was repeatedly depicted by the League as natural, inevitable, and necessary. Its authors engaged explicitly with the writing of major scientific players of their day, and they also sought to explain their programme for Socialism as being essentially aligned to human nature.

A concern about the manner in which evolution would influence the future of revolution runs through each year of the *Commonweal*'s publication. A poem containing the lines, 'when the world stands still the world will rot' and '[f]ight then beneath this banner, and be bold /

---

174 Ball, 'The moral aspects of socialism', (1896), p. 11.
175 C. W. Mowbray, 'Socialism as Defined by Parsons', *The Commonweal,* (1 March 1890), 67, p. 67.
176 H. Samuels, 'What Next?', *The Commonweal,* (10 May 1890), 146-147, p. 147.
177 J. Sketchley, 'Evolution versus Revolution', *The Commonweal,* (11 December 1886), 292-293, p. 292.
178 D.C. Dallas, 'Correspondence: Evolution versus Revolution', *The Commonweal,* (25 December 1886), 311.

Knowing that Fate, though silent, never sleeps' was published in January of 1888, just two months after the Bloody Sunday riots, which we will explore in more detail in the next chapter.[179] The banner this poet had in mind was that of evolution, and the fight was for a Socialist future. He used a reading of evolution as teleological to underscore what he believed was the fatefulness of a socialist revolution. The author also explicitly desired this revolution to happen under the auspices of science and with scientific justification. For him, a failure to act was a condemnation of society to putrefy.

The stated object of Aveling's April 1885 'Scientific Socialism' article, the first in the *Commonweal* to mention Darwin, was to 'give some evidence of the fact that Socialism is based on grounds as scientific and as irrefragable as the the [*sic*] theory of Evolution.' Indeed, Aveling contended that it was the scientific methods of Darwin's 'observation, recorded reflection and generalisation', when applied to Socialism, which convinced him of the rightness of that theory.[180] There was an explicit endeavour in Aveling to ground Socialism in a language of science and fact which would make it irrefutable; no longer a system of values, but one of natural truth. Aveling expostulated on 'formulæ and definitions' to explicate the relationship between money and commodities, as well as the 'results' of numbered case studies, in a further effort to apply scientific language to a social and political problem.[181]

In two articles in the April 1885 issue, Aveling suggested Darwin and Marx as concomitantly important theorists in his conception of the world. Aveling first referred to Marx as the 'founder' of scientific socialism, 'on which the conclusions of his followers are based as securely as the biological science of to-day on the doctrines of evolution.'[182] In the other article, Aveling described Darwin as his 'master in biological science', and to Marx as his 'master in economics, and for exactly the same reasons.'[183] They were the great minds behind movements which expanded the world of knowledge. It was Marx who first approached history with a scientific conception, and Darwin who provided the biological science which might be used in that framework to analyse the past and project the future. Their theories, at least for the League, were inseparable.

---

[179] Reginald A. Beckett, 'Evolution', *The Commonweal,* (7 January 1888), 5, p. 5.
[180] Edward B. Aveling, 'Scientific Socialism', *The Commonweal* (April 1885) 21-22, p. 21.
[181] Aveling, 'Lessons in Socialism', (July 1885), p. 57.
[182] Edward B. Aveling, 'Sign of the Times', *The Commonweal* (April 1885), 23, p. 23.
[183] Aveling, 'Scientific Socialism', (April 1885) pp. 21-22. Aveling had engaged with Darwinian evolution directly in two books: *Student's Darwin,* (London: Freethought publishing company, 1881) and *The Darwinian theory: its meaning, difficulties, evidence, history,* (London: Progressive Publishing Company, 1884). In these, he sought to distil an evolutionism comfortably distant from religious sentiment, and thus more compatible with Aveling's own atheistic feeling.

Morris believed that to deny the 'significance and [. . .] continuity' of 'facts of history' was to make a 'practical denial of the doctrine of evolution.' He made this claim in the context of a correspondent of *The Commonweal* who was critical of the Socialist project, but who made no reference to science. Morris extrapolated a teleological view of evolution—which meant that the natural world was evolving along a course towards a final goal, as he believed society was evolving towards an inevitable and necessary Socialist revolution.[184] Scholars have been too quick to agree with Morris when he contended in the *Commonweal* that he suspected of himself an 'unscientific mind'.[185] Florence and William Boos take him at his word, remarking upon his supposed 'indifference' to science.[186] In his introduction to *A Modern Utopia,* Francis Wheen suggests the key difference in Wells' and Morris' Socialism is that Wells approached Socialism as a scientist, whereas Morris approached it as an artist.[187] This oversimplification ignores Morris' engagement with contemporary science in the *Commonweal,* and in particular his engagement with evolutionary science. Morris was certainly an anti-Malthusian, and an admirer of Lamarck. This antipathy towards the former has been used to identify Morris as not a Darwinian, but it is more useful to understand Morris as a man who learned his Darwin from Kropotkin.[188] Sumpter refers to the *Commonweal*'s 'fascination with anthropology', but even she does not engage satisfactorily with the huge importance of evolutionary justification to the League's revolutionary programme.[189] Jessica Kuskey and Hale rightly argue that Morris' scientific references are largely unacknowledged by critics, and that his claims to a lack of scientific literacy should be regarded with suspicion.[190] Morris' close association with both Kropotkin and Aveling, as well as his role as editor of the *Commonweal,* mean that he had significant exposure to evolutionary ideas from men who engaged directly and deeply with Darwin and evolution. His own work reflects an understanding of the principles of Lamarckian biology, even if he does not engage with evolutionary theories at a formal level. It is right to rank Morris' formal knowledge of evolution lower than that of Aveling's, and yet Morris' work demonstrates the proliferation of evolutionary rhetoric found across the Socialist movement.

---

184 William Morris, 'Bourgeois versus Socialist', *The Commonweal,* (6 August 1887), 252, p. 252.
185 William Morris, 'The Society of the Future', *The Commonweal*, (30 March 1889), 98-99, p. 98.
186 Boos and Boos, 'The Utopian Communism of William Morris', p. 504.
187 H. G. Wells, eds. Gregory Claeys and Patrick Parrinder, *A Modern Utopia,* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), Francis Wheen's introduction, p. xxvi.
188 Piers J. Hale, 'Of Mice and Men: Evolution and the Socialist Utopia. William Morris, H. G. Wells, and George Bernard Shaw', *Journal of the History of Biology* 43, (2010), 17-66, pp. 31-32.
189 Sumpter, 'Anthropology, Socialist Prediction and William Morris's *Commonweal*', p. 351.
190 Jessica Kuskey, 'Bodily beauty, socialist evolution, and William Morris's *News from Nowhere*', *Nineteenth-Century Prose* 38.1, (2011), 147-182, p. 165; Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 260.

Fluency in the scientific discourse of the day was a family tradition for the Morrises; May Morris, William Morris's daughter, referred to the 'quasi followers of Darwin' whom she said wittingly or not 'travestie [*sic*]' the 'concepts' set forward by Darwin and 'twist and turn the truths' of his work in order to both 'witness against' and 'condemn' the socialist future desired by League members.[191] According to the *Commonweal*, Darwin's followers did this even when they hold otherwise diverging opinions, as in the case of Huxley and Spencer.[192] It was either an active deception of the public, or else an incapacity to see the full picture of Darwinian implications that restricted the correct interpretation of Darwinism by the likes of Spencer and Huxley. In either case, May Morris's argument attacked the foundations of credibility of the scientific establishment.

Andreas Scheu characterised Huxley as having an 'inability to comprehend the drift of contemporary thought and sentiment'.[193] The *Commonweal* presented a united front of disapproval on Huxley, and one author suggested that 'there is no internal evidence in any of [Huxley's writing] that he has ever read, and, much less, understood, any work of authority on [Socialism]'.[194] Spencer, too, of whom other Socialist groups were less critical, faced the author's disapprobation; he contended that 'many expressions' which Spencer had lately put forth 'imply that he is aware that he has misinterpreted the laws of social evolution', and he was called upon 'candidly [to] acknowledge it.'[195] While Socialists felt compelled to read, understand, and engage with the latest scientific discoveries, scientists seemed to feel no such compulsion about Socialism.[196]

The League, much like the Anarchists, positioned themselves as the natural inheritors of Darwin. One *Commonweal* article referred to Socialists as the 'true scientific prophets, the only clear-seeing practical thinkers of the day, capable of drawing right conclusions from England's past to England's future.' The author promised '[w]e have not come to destroy but to fulfil.' This language was teleologically charged and consciously religious. These advocates saw in science the potential to replace Christianity. It was evolution and not Genesis which answered the question

---

191 May Morris, 'REVIEW: Il Socialismo', *The Commonweal,* (7 May 1887), 147, p. 147.
192Arthur J. Dadson, 'Huxley and Spencer', *The Commonweal,* (22 February 1890), 60-61, p. 60.
193 Andreas Scheu, 'Prof. Huxley and His Natural Rights', *The Commonweal,* (15 March 1890), 84-85, p. 84.
194 Dadson, 'Huxley and Spencer', p. 60.
195 Dadson, 'Huxley and Spencer', p. 60.
196 John Kucich notes that it was common practice for literary journals to apprise readers of scientific advancements alongside columns dedicated to fiction, a practice which both forced authors to compete for readership with scientists and which ensured that the 'educated reading public' were well-informed on matters of science as well as prose, 'Scientific Ascendancy', *A Companion to the Victorian Novel,* eds Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002), 119-136, p. 132. Richards notes the same phenomenon, observing the positive interplay of Darwinian sexual selection tropes in Victorian fiction, and in *Descent* of the novel-style language of 'courtship plots'. Richards, *Darwin,* p. 492.

of human origin; the passage of genes and not heaven which promised survival after death; morality grounded in group survival instinct rather than handed down from the heights of Mount Sinai which should govern society. This was the phenomenon which John Kucich calls the 'conceptual reorganisation of the knowable world' by Victorian scientific advancement.[197] In this vein, the League sought to construct a 'scientific conception of morality'. They believed the clue to what this morality might look like was instinct; more specifically the 'social instinct' which incentivised the 'preservation' of an individual and his or her community.[198] Lawrence Gronlund, a Danish-American activist, claimed in exclamatory fashion that 'Socialism is the logical outcome of the highest and deepest modern British thought!' during his two-year sojourn in England. Gronlund, who lectured academic and political audiences alike during this stay, wrote that he had recently told his students at Oxford:

> [The] grand doctrine of Evolution which English scientists have installed on the throne of the human mind is the greatest intellectual revolutionary achievement since Copernicus, since it is nothing less than the divine basis on which the splendid edifice of Socialism is to be reared.[199]

Gronlund framed evolution as replacing God, and Socialism replacing religion in direct relation to the quasi-divine inspiration of evolutionary theory. To carry his metaphor one step further, Gronlund and his fellow Socialists were the beneficiaries of a Darwinian Pentecost, which enabled them to teach the masses how to live by the new scientific religion. Beyond even replacement, it was, in his reference to Copernicus, the discovery of a profound truth rather than any revolution. In 'twenty to twenty-five years', Gronlund believed—a period slightly longer than most of his fellow Socialist imagined—the revolution would occur and, (he quotes Tennyson) they would be 'ringing in the Christ that is to be'.[200] 'Christ' in this instance, the saviour foretold and promised but not yet realised on Earth, was Socialism, and Gronlund and his fellows were therefore living in Old Testament times—and as such were as yet unsaved. Elisee Reclus further emphasised this Old Testament correlation when he exhorted, '[r]ace of Cains, what have we done with our brothers?'[201] It was their duty to instigate the pursuit of justice, often wrought with wrath in the Bible before the teachings of Christ, in anticipation of an era of benevolence. A religious framework in which to understand the political and scientific landscape could go both

---

197 Kucich, 'Scientific Ascendancy', p. 119.
198 R. W. Burnie, 'Anarchist Morality', *The Commonweal,* (8 November 1890), 356, p. 356.
199 Laurence Gronlund, 'The Work Before Us', *Supplement to The Commonwealm* (July 1885), 61-62, pp. 61-62.
200 Gronlund, 'The Work Before Us', (July 1885), p. 62.
201 Elisee Reclus, 'An Anarchist on Anarchy', *The Commonweal,* (10 October 1891), 126-127, p. 127.

ways; Reclus argued that 'Darwin's theory', and its interpretation as competitive, had replaced Christian religion as the justification for unavoidable and preordained inequality.[202] In Reclus's engagement with religion, he was preoccupied with the intricacies of one system of belief, whereas Gronlund engaged with the innate desire for belief in a greater truth—though both framed their ideas in a Christian vocabulary.

Evolution was likewise used to foretell the end of days which threatened humanity if devolution was allowed to continue, orchestrated by the inequality of the Capitalist state. One author observed in the *Commonweal* that 'evolution is not always an advance, so evolution of our present society means degradation and retrogression.'[203] This statement seems restrained when compared to some other published in the journal; Frank Kitz argued compellingly that '[a]s a foul and dank hole will engender noisome creatures, so will the horrible surroundings of the poor breed monsters'.[204] Kitz's language is striking—it was calculated to play on the fears of devolution current in Victorian society, and to forewarn readers of the dangers to come if action is not taken. Monsters are not only dangers to themselves. Kitz's argument was rooted in Lamarckianism, and in the danger to society that a lack of action would assure. The reverse of the world that Kitz warns against was also possible—another article observes 'how much superior to [the worker] the men and women will be who are born in an environment favourable to the development of their best qualities.'[205] This environment would certainly not be wrought without the enormous upheaval of society; current conditions were agreed by all League members to be conducive more to devolution and disintegration of the human stock than to its elevation.

In a review of a book in the *Commonweal,* Reginald Beckett critiqued the book's author for failing to acknowledge that the people whom the latter terms the 'unfittest' have been created rather than born, and that it was 'centuries of social wrong' which have rendered them unfit.[206] In this sense of *creation* taking precedence over birth, Beckett opened the door to an allusion to poverty as original sin—a tarnish endowed to a people by the will of their makers and missteps of their predecessors. It was also a deeply Lamarckian perspective, and, as with the SDF's rebuke of the complacency of those who rose as fittest under current conditions, readers are reminded

[202] Elisee Reclus, 'Evolution and Revolution', *The Commonweal,* (4 July 1891), 70-71, pp. 70-71.
[203] W. A. Carlile, 'Correspondence', *The Commonweal,* (24 March 1888), 93, p. 93.
[204] Francis Kitz, 'A Safe Investment', *The Commonweal* (13 October 1888) 324, p. 324.
[205] James Blackwell, 'Dreams and Nightmares', *The Commonweal,* (15 June 1889), 186, p. 186.
[206] Reginald Beckett, 'REVIEW: The Service of Man', *The Commonweal,* (11 June 1887), 189, p. 189.

that the 'unfit' were not intrinsically bad—they simply were not fitted to the conditions of competition and ruthlessness required of them by Capitalism.

In contrast to the Lamarckian arguments above, the *Commonweal* published an article which suggested satirically that the nation which wins Huxley's race for the survival of the fittest which would be the one whose

> [W]orking-classes have the best physique to stand against the starvation which over-population renders necessary in order that the upper class may make profit, and competition amongst the workers is the sure way to reach the starvation limit of wages.[207]

The author's reference to 'overpopulation' intimated a potential for a Malthusian reading of the quip. It was not just that the upper classes were abusing the labour of workers, but also that there were too many workers in the first place. This Malthusianism was not characteristic of the majority opinion of the League, but it did demonstrate that, as with the SDF, there was a willingness to publish articles which were incompatible with Lamarckianism—and thus that divisions between Malthusian and Lamarckian perspectives were not adequate means of analysing divisions between groups.

Despite a Socialist inclination to foster equality to the greatest extent possible, the League acknowledged that total equality was not possible, nor did they seek it. Scheu argued:

> [N]o two newborn babies are "equal." On the contrary, and just because we know they are *un*equal, not only as to their inherited physical and mental endowments, but also as to their surroundings and facilities of existence in a society in which all are at war with each other; just because we know that the use by a few of their cunningly and lawfully *acquired* rights and privileges is in effect far more injurious to the public welfare than the abuse of any natural right could possibly be,—it is just because we are so painfully aware of all this, that we demand the abolition of all such rights and privileges. [Original italics.][208]

Scheu here advocated for the righting of the wrongs that *can* be helped in social inequality; he did not go so far as some Socialists interested in eugenics, for whom 'inherited physical and mental endowments' were also up for alteration and rectification. For him, 'natural right[s]' ensured the continuation of some level of inequality, but by no means inequality to such an extent as external factors create—those 'lawfully *acquired* rights'. He proposed to abolish all artificial conditions

---

[207] George Sturt, 'The New "Saviour', *The Commonweal,* (12 May 1888), 148, p. 148.
[208] Scheu, 'Prof. Huxley and His Natural Rights', (March 1890), p. 84.

which fostered inequality. For him, a refusal to act to rectify these inequalities was as good as imparting hardship to the next generation. This hardship would be written into more than just their external circumstance; it would be written into the very fabric of their being.

In response to the eugenicist Karl Pearson's contention that '[h]uman society cannot be changed in a year', Bax argued that at least the 'economic conditions' of a society could be 'radically modified in a very few years' by a 'Socialist administration.'[209] Like his Lamarckian fellows, Bax believed that an alteration in economic conditions would be the catalyst for an alteration in physical, genetic conditions. Morris suggested that it was 'poverty' and 'hunger' which cause 'disease'. He argued that this 'disease' was perpetuated by 'mechanical work' and 'anxiety', as well as the deprivation of 'natural beauty' and 'amusement'. Having pointed to the causes of this disease, Morris suggested a treatment plan. He argued that 'good conditions' across 'several generations' would make a population 'really healthy'—and in addition to being healthy, they would be 'happy' and 'beautiful'.[210] Morris' argument was rooted in his belief in the correlation of 'beauty' to goodness and social benefit. His aesthetic proclivities already indicated a belief in the importance of beauty, but here he laid it out in explicit terms. It also emphasised his belief, perhaps contra-Bax, that such change would require several generations.

In a discussion of the Utopian work of Morris and Galton, Patrick Parrinder rightly argues that it is impossible to imagine a better society without envisioning a better people, and that therefore Utopianism is inherently linked to eugenic planning.[211] Hale joins Parrinder in this contention, and asserts that *News from Nowhere* (1890) is exemplary of the 'socialist eugenicist ideal of the agrarian.'[212] Kuskey refers to the 'seductive physical beauty' of the people in *News from Nowhere,* though she (wrongly) disputes any reading of Morris' Utopia as eugenic, disagreeing with Peter Morton, Parrinder, and Hale.[213] I am inclined to agree with the interpretation of the majority; in Morris's Utopia there is indubitably an undercurrent of physical, mental, and moral improvement which is consciously supported by the overhaul of social mores and legal order. Kuskey offers as support for her argument that Morris denigrated the idea of an 'aristocracy of intellect'.[214] So he did. One of the paths noted by the old man and guide in Nowhere down

---

[209] Ernest Belfort Bax, 'The Two Enthusiasms', *The Commonweal,* (February 1886), 9-11, p. 10.
[210] William Morris, 'How We Live and How We Might Live: III', *The Commonweal,* (18 June 1887), 194-195, p. 195.
[211] Patrick Parrinder, 'Eugenics and Utopia: Sexual Selection from Galton to Morris', *Utopian Studies* 6.2 (1997) 1-12, p. 1.
[212] Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 257.
[213] Kuskey, 'Bodily beauty', p. 173; Parrinder, 'Eugenics and Utopia', p. 1; Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 257; Piers J. Hale, 'Finding a place for the anti-Malthusian tradition in the Victorian evolution debates', *New Perspectives on Malthus,* ed. Robert J. Mayhew, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 18; Morton, *The Vital Science,* p. 129.
[214] Kuskey, 'Bodily beauty', p. 174. Morris, *New from Nowhere,* p. 120.

which their society did not proceed is in the breeding of an 'aristocracy of intellect'.[215] Aristocracy of intellect was a pet theory of Galton's, and it was a popular idea among many contemporary eugenicists.

It was not a eugenics of intellect in which Morris displayed interest, but rather one of beauty and communalism which he pursued. In *News from Nowhere,* Morris explicitly conflated architectural goodness and beauty with physical beauty, virility, and desire. His character Guest finds the beauty of the women in Utopia 'at least as good' in his eyes as the 'gardens, the architecture, and the [. . .] men.'[216] Rather than assimilation to mediocrity, the people of Morris' Utopia are hale and hearty, good-natured, clean, and well-dressed, and, as in Galton's *Kantsaywhere,* the ' 'arry and 'arriet class' are completely absent.[217] They are conscious of their heredity and its expression in their progeny. In a discussion between Morris' time traveller and a resident of Nowhere, the latter suggests that the 'cross' between the people who reside in the country and those in the city 'generally turns out well.'[218] His reference here was unmistakeably to offspring. Indeed, across Nowhere, the people are more beautiful than their Victorian predecessors.[219]

As with each of the Socialist groups examined in this thesis, the League did not engage explicitly with eugenics. Instead, they hinted at it through more neutral language. The closest reference to eugenics in the pages of the *Commonweal* was an anonymous footnote in 1890. This footnote references an article by Francis Galton which sought to answer the question 'why do we measure mankind?'. The author suggested that it 'might be made the text for a good deal of Socialistic moralising' and that '[t]here is a good deal of material to be got; could not some of our scientific comrades put it in shape for us?'[220] This request went unfulfilled in the pages of the *Commonweal.* Scepticism towards implicitly eugenic thinking was instead the norm. Walter Crane asserted of evolution that 'no man can do much either to impede or accelerate' the process, though even the 'action of the least [. . .] counts in the total sum'.[221] In Crane's view, evolution was a process not to be mastered by man, though its advance was rooted in all men. Attempts by eugenicists to manipulate evolution, therefore, would be fruitless.

---

215 Morris, *News from Nowhere*, p. 120.
216 Marcus Waithe, 'Building Utopia: The Structural Medievalism of William Morris' *News from Nowhere*', p. 593.
217 Francis Galton, 'The Eugenic College of Kantsaywhere', *Utopian Studies* 12.2, (2001), 191-209, p. 33. (Using original page numbers, as noted in the *Utopian Studies* text).
218 Morris, *News from Nowhere,* p. 63.
219 Morris, *News from Nowhere,* p. 57.
220 'Note', *The Commonweal,* (22 February 1890), 59, p. 59.
221 Walter Crane, 'The Advancement of Art, and Its Application to Industry', *The Commonweal,* (5 January 1889), 1-2, p. 2.

A review appeared in *Commonweal* of a text in which the original author had argued that 'habitual criminals' should be 'locked up' in order to prevent the 'propagation of their species'. The reviewer derided this idea as a 'modern application of the ancient fable of Danaë' and asserted sneeringly that he relied on Jove to offer 'means of deliverance'.[222] Though Danaë's father imprisons her in order to protect her purity, Jove manages to reach her anyway—in this case in a shower of gold from the roof of her cell. Here again was a rejection of the idea that human intervention can be sufficiently powerful as to impede the progress of nature.

These currents for and against eugenics ran concurrently through the pages of the *Commonweal*. Morris was read as promoting eugenic ideas by recent scholarship, though it was not a word he used to describe his plans. Rather than being a concept accepted or rejected by the League, eugenic action was one of a plethora of options for improving the lot of the working classes, and its merits and demerits were examined implicitly by a variety of League authors in the *Commonweal*.

Bax warned that the 'struggle for existence' would bring out the 'individualistic side' of the character of a 'savage.'[223] Scheu likewise warned of the dangers of the 'struggle for existence' in human society, which he said was 'not conducive to the evolution towards perfection of the human kind.'[224] Here too was a compelling argument—not only was Socialism the logical application of evolutionary theory, but to prevent Socialism was to promote social devolution. It was also the implication that cooperation would support evolution towards 'perfection'—a teleological reading of the direction of evolution. Ostensibly, Scheu believed that there existed a perfection for mankind which can be defined and sought and realised. Bax's suggestion that it was among Anglo-Saxons that the 'competitive capitalist system' came to its 'earliest development' also took on additional weight in this interpretation; if this was so, the English population had been the longest exposed to devolutionary conditions.[225] Unwin contended that people had eschewed of societies 'held together by mutual fear' and were instead desirous of an 'organic principle', for which he suggested 'mutual helpfulness'.[226] Fear was not innate to society, but 'mutual helpfulness' was —it must simply be allowed to flourish. Capitalism, structured on fear, will fall to the 'organic' ideal of cooperation, which was not just better, but also the more natural state of society.

---

222 Beckett, 'REVIEW: The Service of Man', (June 1887), 189, p. 189.
223 Ernest Belfort, Bax, 'Early Communal Life and What It Teaches', *The Commonweal,* (7 May 1887), 148-149, pp. 148-149.
224 Andreas Scheu, 'What's to be Done?', *Supplement to The Commonweal,* (June 1885), 50, p. 50.
225 Ernest Belfort, Bax, 'The New Ethic: II', *The Commonweal,* (11 February 1888), 42-43, p. 42.
226 Raymond Unwin, 'Positivism and Socialism', *The Commonweal,* (30 July 1887), 243, p. 243.

Much was written in the *Commonweal* about the natural disposition of man towards work. Morris suggested that 'attractive labour' was done 'not for the profit of a master', but rather was done for the 'production of wealth for the use of ourselves and our neighbours.' He used 'attractive' in both the sense of the labour being appealing, but also in contrast to labour which is 'compelled'.[227] Morris described 'attractive' conditions of labour which he supposed would appeal to all but

> [M]onsters of vagabondage and loafing who are now bred by the excessive overwork which is the general lot of the workers or by the privileged idleness of the rich, and whose descendants might last through a few generations, but would soon melt into the general body of people living in the happy exercise of energy.[228]

Morris was doing a couple of things in this quotation. Firstly, he asserted that a total disinclination towards work could occur in both the lower and upper classes, and as the result of either far too much work or none at all. Secondly, he implied that idleness was a heredity fault, which might last a 'few generations' before it could be bred out of a society—as it would be in his later Utopian text. In this view of indolence as a hereditary fault he differed from Kropotkin, who believed that the child of idle wealth and privilege could easily be made into a good Socialist if planted in different circumstances.[229] Kropotkin also argued in the *Commonweal* that it was '[o]verwork' rather than 'work' which was 'reluctant to human nature'.[230] He saw nothing innate in mankind to dissuade them from reasonable conditions of labour.

Gronlund, on the other hand, imagined himself doing battle not so much against the 'selfishness of the well-to-do classes', but rather against the 'sluggishness of human nature' for the Socialist future.[231] For Gronlund, it was laziness rather than oppressive labouring conditions which prevent the worker from achieving equality. As for the future of this 'sluggishness', one contributor argued that '[g]eneral dislike and sexual selection' would bring about the 'elimination' of the 'loafer' and 'anti-s[o]cial individuals'.[232] As we have seen elsewhere, there was a eugenicist tinge to the League's vision of the future, but never an explicit engagement. In a similar vein, Bruce Glasier offered a parabolic short story of his encounter with a man who believed human

---

[227] William Morris, 'Attractive Labour', *Supplement to The Commonweal,* (June 1885), 49-50, pp. 49-50.
[228] Morris, 'Attractive Labour', (June 1885), p. 50.
[229] Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread and Other Writings,* ed. Marshall Shatz, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 63.
[230] Peter Kropotkin, 'Objections to Anarchism', *The Commonweal,* (17 October 1891), 129-130, p. 130.
[231] Gronlund, 'The Work Before Us', (July 1885), p. 61.
[232] Burnie, 'Anarchist Morality', (November 1890), p. 356.

nature indisposed towards Socialism and who uses Darwin to undergird his assertions. Glasier countered the man's arguments with his belief that both 'genius and special ability' and 'stupidity and indolence' emerge from 'conditions anterior to and outside the individual', and that Socialistic equality would 'tend to make men much more equal, physically and mentally' over time. Glasier's argument was implicitly a eugenic one, positing the improvement of the race through improved living conditions. It was also an interpretation in agreement with Lamarckianism.[233] Reformers who based their argument in the Lamarckian importance of environmental conditions for genetic expression, and whose explicit goal was the improvement of the physical and mental ability of the poor, participated in the eugenic discourse which came to prevalence concurrently with the *Commonweal,* even if they did not apply that term to their theorems.

Sumpter correctly observes that 'many articles in the *Commonweal* focus on the need to forward an evolution towards socialism that is nevertheless inevitable'.[234] It is certainly true that arguments abound which define Socialism as both the teleological necessity, and also as the ideal which must be fought for and protected. Socialism was, for the League, the 'next stage in the evolution of society.'[235] Whether this would be the final stage or one step along the way is not clear. Gronlund asserted that Socialism was neither the 'best' nor the 'wisest' system, but that the 'conditions are ripe' for it and that it was the 'inevitably *next* stage' in the development of society. 'Socialism', he argued, 'will be but the necessary historical product of English life, philosophically, religiously, industrially, politically and socialist.'[236] Gronlund positioned Socialism as an inevitable, *natural* consequence of evolution—but not the final one.

For Reclus, evolution was the catalyst for revolution. He asked '[m]ust not Revolution necessarily follow Evolution, as action follows the desire to act?'[237] Evolutionary changes in human society would, in his view, prepare the ground for a revolution—one made inevitable by those changes. Reclus argued that 'the great majority of men', being aware of scientific and political ideals formerly beyond the scope of knowledge of all those but the elite, understood that the 'virtual equality bestowed by evolution must be changed into real equality, thanks to a revolution.'[238] Thus Reclus believed that with knowledge came renewed autonomy and the

---

[233] J. Bruce Glasier, 'Men who are not Socialists', *The Commonweal,* (13 August 1887), 257-258, pp. 257-258.
[234] Sumpter, 'Anthropology, Socialist Prediction and William Morris's *Commonweal*', p. 359.
[235] Thomas Binning, 'Organised Labour', *The Commonweal,* (28 August 1886), 173, p. 173.
[236] Gronlund, 'The Work Before Us', (July 1885), p. 62.
[237] Elisee Reclus, 'Evolution and Revolution', *The Commonweal,* (18 September 1886), 197, p. 197.
[238] Elisee Reclus, 'Evolution and Revolution', *The Commonweal,* (27 June 1891), 65-66, p. 66.

obligation to free oneself from fetters imposed by the ignorance of previous generations. The democratisation of knowledge undergirded the possibility of revolution.

The League argued for a Socialist revolution grounded in the principles of evolutionary theory. They used the language of Darwinism to make this point. Socialism was time and time again linked explicitly to the logic and legitimacy of evolutionary theory. The League joined the Anarchists, whose writings we will examine below, in claiming that they were the rightful interpreters of a Darwinian intellectual tradition, and contributors to the *Commonweal* attempted to prove this both through positive expostulations on Darwinism and negative attacks on prominent scientific voices with whom they disagreed. The League engaged with eugenicist principles current to their scientific discussions, though it avoided explicit mention of them as eugenic. They cherished fears, prominent in each of the Socialist groups, that current conditions threatened the genetic future of the race. This lent urgency to their reform programme. Finally, the League positioned revolution as the natural fellow of evolution. They explored human nature as lending itself, in its best moments, to a Socialist system, and they predicted the increasing predilection in society for Socialist ethics of hard work and selflessness for the good of the wider community. These arguments were grounded in evolutionary language. Whatever Morris's claims about his own scientific disinclinations, the arguments of the society he founded and journal he funded, edited, and to which he contributed, betrayed a desire to participate in the discourse of Darwinism.

I.iv *The Anarchists*

In the following section, I will examine the Anarchist journal *Freedom,* as well as some other writings of its co-founders, Peter Kropotkin and Charlotte Wilson. I will extend the examination of Kropotkin's writings one year beyond the temporal bounds for the rest of the project to include his 1902 *Mutual Aid,* which was the culmination of several decades of thought and writing on his part. Evolutionary theory confirmed for Kropotkin that the cooperative future he had long hoped to achieve was possible. More than possible, he believed that it was written into the basic instincts of humans, and as Caroline McCulloch rightly notes, this cooperative fellowship took on a moral status for Kropotkin.[239] An anonymous article in *Freedom,* likely written by Kropotkin, asserted that 'the whole rationality of Anarchism' was 'the profound conviction that the nature of man is essentially social, and that, if we deliver it from the moral

[239] McCulloch, 'The Problem of Fellowship in Communitarian Theory', p. 439.

and political fetters [. . .] the result will be [. . .] closer and more brotherly social union.'[240] Kropotkin moved forward into the study of evolution looking for evidence of the conclusions he had reached in his own observations of wildlife and of human nature. He argued that Darwinism had been misinterpreted by those who saw it as confirming the competitive nature of humanity; instead, the history of our species was a story of the victory of the most social over the individualist. Kropotkin and Darwin were united against Huxley, Wallace, and Spencer in believing that animals as well as humans had innate capacity and instinct for cooperation and care.[241] Kropotkin asserted that Darwin's work was 'not limited to biology', and that Darwin was aware from the inception of his theory of the origin of species that it would not only revolutionise the sciences but would also produce a 'new philosophy'.[242]

Kropotkin referred to Anarchy as the 'no-government system of socialism'.[243] He contended that Anarchism had emerged out of the belief, held by all socialists, that 'all requisites for production' should be owned in common by the 'producers of wealth', and from the belief that the role of government should be radically reduced.[244] He viewed Anarchy as a 'synthesis of the two powerful currents of thought which characterise our century', by which he meant evolution and Socialism.[245] Kropotkin leaned into the narrative not just that Anarchism is right and fair, but that it was absolutely necessitated by the circumstances of the Victorian world. He was not calling for action against instinct, but rather for the triumph of instinct over State stricture.

Kropotkin believed Darwin's work to be unfinished and his legacy open to continuation by his 'followers'.[246] Unlike many other Anarchist voices, Kropotkin's was allowed some currency within the mainstream. He was a runaway prince and a scientist of some renown in Russia, and this doubtless contributed to the fascination of the public who provided his platform.[247] He used this notoriety to further Anarchist ideals in Britain and was at the centre of many discussions of Anarchism and evolutionary theory. Kropotkin argued that it was a failing in Darwin's work that the latter does not further explicate the metaphor of the struggle for existence. Leaving it up to interpretation allowed what Kropotkin considered to be Huxley's gross misunderstanding of the

---

240 'Mutual Aid Amongst Animals', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (November 1890), 50, p. 50.
241 Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 234.
242 Peter Kropotkin, 'The Morality of Nature: I, II, III' *The Living Age,* (22 April 1905), 193-211, p. 193.
243 Peter Kropotkin, 'The Scientific Basis of Anarchy', *The Nineteenth Century,* (February 1887), 238-252, p. 238.
244 Kropotkin, 'The Scientific Basis of Anarchy', (February 1887), p. 238.
245 Kropotkin, 'The Scientific Basis of Anarchy', (February 1887), p. 243.
246 Kropotkin, 'The Theory of Evolution and Mutual Aid', (1910), p. 87.
247 Haia Shpayer-Makov, 'Anarchism in British Public Opinion 1880-1914', p. 501.

concept.[248] Where Paul Crook asserts that Kropotkin was a 'Darwininst who sabotaged Darwin's key concept of natural selection, and tried to substitute it for a more socialist idea of mutual aid', I argue that Kropotkin believed sincerely in the Darwinian foundation for the mutual aid principle.[249] Kropotkin asserted that Darwin 'saw in man's social qualities the chief factor for his further evolution', and that it was 'Darwin's vulgarizers', among whom he chiefly included Huxley, who 'maintain the contrary.'[250] Instead, Kropotkin contended that 'self-sacrifice' was quotidian in the animal world and so too in the human world.[251] He praised Darwin for having the 'courage' to identify the social instinct as stronger than the individual, and credited Darwin as the founder of an 'ethical school' as much as Hume or Hobbes or Kant.[252] In an 1891 article for *The Nineteenth Century,* Kropotkin named Huxley outright as one of Darwin's followers who used the scientist's 'terminology' rather than his 'leading ideas' to support their arguments, and he cited Huxley's February 1888 article as his locus of grievance.[253] Kropotkin implicitly advanced himself as an heir to this legacy of evolutionary interpretation.

It was this lecture by Huxley, published in *The Nineteenth Century* as an article titled 'The Struggle for Existence' which so ignited Kropotkin's indignation—and subsequently his own first contribution to *The Nineteenth Century,* a searing critique to which Huxley never replied publicly. Kropotkin's critique of Huxley lasted thirty years and resulted in the posthumously published *Ethics: Origin and Development* (1924), which had been intended as the first of several volumes. This was facilitated by his replacement of Huxley as the 'recent science' columnist for *The Nineteenth Century* upon the latter's retirement, which lent Kropotkin's Anarchist views some mainstream credence.[254] Huxley sat at the hub of British science as the founder of the so-called 'X' club. He and his fellow club-members exerted huge influence over scientific development, research, and publishing. Much like Kropotkin, Huxley sought to use science to forward an agenda of social improvement, though Huxley was no Anarchist.[255] He predicted Anarchic society to be 'chaos [. . .] the brute struggle for existence'.[256] Huxley's scepticism of innate goodness and the naturalness of morality was so antithetical to every notion of human nature

---

248 Ruth Kinna, 'Kropotkin and Huxley', p. 43.
249 Paul Crook, *Darwin's Coat-Tails: Essays on Social Darwinism* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007), p. 71.
250 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 109.
251 Kropotkin, 'The Morality of Nature', (1905), p. 412.
252 Kropotkin, 'The Morality of Nature', (1905), p. 407.
253 Kropotkin, 'Mutual Aid Among Savages', (April 1891), p. 539.
254 Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 209 and p. 226. Daniel P. Todes, Kropotkin's Theory of Mutual Aid' in *Darwin without Malthus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) 123-142, p. 125.
255 Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 206.
256 Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 219; Haia Shpayer-Makov, 'The Reception of Peter Kropotkin in Britain, 1886-1917', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 19.3, (Autumn 1987), 373-390, p. 389.

which Kropotkin held dear that it fired the latter's creativity for three decades—his ire was stopped only in death. In the offending article, Huxley criticised the human inclination to imagine the fleeing deer 'good' and the hunting wolf 'bad'.[257] He continued, in extremely anti-Kropotkinian terms, to assert that among primitive mankind, '[l]ife was a continual free fight, and beyond the limited and temporary relations of the family, the Hobbesian war of each against all was the normal state of existence.'[258] For Kropotkin, however, human nature was suited to the style of living which he commended—human nature had the innate capacity to be *concordium omnium cum omnes*.

It was Huxley's belief that morality was, in Hale's words, a 'thin veneer over man's deeper natural propensities', and that therefore nature was to be fought against in favour of the constructed way of living made possible by civilisation.[259] Huxley intimated that 'private and public morality' undercut the natural progress of evolution.[260] The evolutionary theory propounded by Anarchists ran directly contrary to this line of argument. The Anarchists suggested that the 'mutual aid tendency in man has so remote an origin, and so deeply interwoven with all the past evolution of the human race, that it has been maintained by mankind up to the present time, notwithstanding all vicissitudes of history.'[261] Kropotkin himself wrote that '[i]t would be easier for a man to accustom himself to walk on all fours, than to get rid of the moral sentiment. It is anterior, in animal evolution, to the upright posture of man.'[262] Not only was mutual aid a natural element of human social life, and thus not the result of a conscious or 'thin veneer' of action, but morality was itself a natural and primordial element of human evolution, rather than an impediment to it. For Kropotkin, the 'moral sense is a natural faculty in us, like the sense of smell or touch.'[263] For Kropotkin, morality makes man. To be without moral sentiment was to be as much impeded as if by deafness or dumbness. Huxley's divergent interpretation of the place of morality in human evolution do not lead him to suggest that society ought to leave people to starve—rather, he advocated for social sanitary reforms for better housing and nourishment for the class verging on what he calls '*la misère*' as necessary for the

---

257 T. H. Huxley, 'The Struggle for Existence', *The Nineteenth Century,* (1888), 161-180, p. 162.
258 Huxley, 'The Struggle for Existence', (1888), p. 165. Kinna interprets Kropotkin as writing primarily against Malthus, with his refutation of Huxley taking a secondary position. While this may be so, this did nothing to quell Kropotkin's volume of protest against Huxley. Kinna, 'Kropotkin and Huxley', p. 45.
259 Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 208.
260 Huxley, 'The Struggle for Existence', (1888), p. 167.
261 "The State at Work", *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (June 1896), 81, p. 81.
262 Peter Kropotkin, 'Anarchist Morality', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (March 1892), 19-20, p. 19.
263 Kropotkin, 'Anarchist Morality', (March 1892), p. 19.

continuation of production for a society.[264] He described himself as an 'individualist', though he was also not anti-state.[265]

Huxley's ideas were pervasive. George Romanes, an evolutionary biologist and contemporary to these movements, referred in his writings to the 'battle of life' where only 'one in a thousand survives'.[266] Romanes's analysis of group versus individual competition could not lead him to a more different answer than it did Kropotkin. Romanes wrote of a 'perpetual civil war' within a species between individuals, concurrent with a 'foreign war' of each species against another, though he also argued that '[i]t is only where the interests of the one clash with those of the other that natural selection works against the individual.'[267] Romanes does not perceive his argument as existing in contradiction to Kropotkin's, however different their linguistic framing of the phenomena which they examine. He asserted that 'mutual aid or co-operation, whether within or beyond the limits of species, are cases which fall under the explanatory sweep of the Darwinian theory', and pointed to two articles by Kropotkin in *The Nineteenth Century* on mutual aid which he believed delivered a strong argument on the subject.[268]

Spencer, a contemporary of Darwin's though never one of his inner circle, was essential to 'uniting the physical and humans sciences' for Kropotkin, and for 'invest[ing] anarchist political philosophy with the language of the latest social scientific thinking.'[269] Though Spencer's reputation as an advocate for free market competition and his coining of the phrase 'survival of the fittest' may seem at odds with Kropotkin's advocacy for mutual aid, Kropotkin found commonality in his 'multifaceted' reading of Spencer.[270] Indeed, as Hale and Bowler note, Spencer's reputation for ruthlessness is not entirely merited—he first used the phrase 'survival of the fittest' to explain not his own theory, but Darwin's.[271] Kropotkin referred to him as a 'pretty fair expounder of the philosophy of evolution', and noted the similarity of his conclusions that society was developing towards a minimal government to those of Proudhon and Bakunin.[272]

---

264 Huxley, 'The Struggle for Existence', (1888), p. 172.
265 Huxley, 'The Struggle for Existence', (1888), p. 176.
266 George Romanes, *Darwin and After Darwin (1893),* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 262.
267 Romanes, *Darwin and After Darwin,* (1893), pp. 266-267.
268 Romanes references articles by Kropotkin in the February 1888 and April 1891 editions of *The Nineteenth Century*. While Kropotkin did contribute 'Mutual Aid Among Savages' in April of 1891, the February 1888 journal is home to Huxley's vigorous argument for the struggle for existence. He likely intended to make reference to the February 1887 edition of the journal, where Kropotkin does contribute an article in defence of mutual aid. Romanes, *Darwin and After Darwin,* (1893), p. 269.
269 Adams, 'Formulating an Anarchist Sociology: Peter Kropotkin's Reading of Herbert Spencer', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77.1, (2016), 49-73, p. 51. Kropotkin first encountered Spencer's work in his youth, and his influence extended throughout Kropotkin's life, see Adams, *Kropotkin,* p. 54.
270 Adams, 'Formulating an Anarchist Sociology', p. 51.
271 Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 105; Bowler, 'Evolution, History of', p. 386
272 Kropotkin, 'The Scientific Basis for Anarchy', (February 1887), p. 244.

Kropotkin believed, however, that 'Spencer would do infinitely more for human progress' by turning his focus from 'the invention of panaceas for preventing workers from "jealousies" in the sharing of profits', to an investigation of 'the substance of those institutions which breed jealousies, and of those which diminish them.' [273] Kropotkin believed these jealousies to spring not from any innate failure in human nature, and rather from an artificially heightened necessity for competition which Capitalism fostered. In the context of Spencer's individualism, Adams contends that '[i]f state protection of the poor was injurious to freedom, then the same must logically apply to these guarantors of bourgeois wealth.'[274] Kropotkin agreed. Both men believed that society was experiencing an increase in 'interdependence'.[275] It was Spencer's belief that this interdependence was best inspired and maintained by 'contractual agreement', whereas Kropotkin believed that it was the diminution of authoritative interference that best fostered social cohesion.[276]

Kropotkin used Darwin's own language to examine the battle between individual and social instincts for morality.[277] He argued that moral principles exist unrelated to law and religion, which can 'only formulate them and endeavour to enforce them by their sanction.'[278] He took Darwin's examination in *Descent of Man* of the guilt experienced by a person who has stolen bread to save themselves from starvation as evidence that the social instinct is more 'enduring', but that the two instincts must coincide. Kropotkin praised Darwin for having the 'courage boldly to assert that of the two instincts—the social and the individual—it is the former which is the stronger, the more persistent, and the more permanently present.' In *The Descent of Man,* Darwin presented 'sympathy', understood by Kropotkin as 'fellow-feeling' and 'mutual sensibility', as the first of four tenets of evolutionary ethics.[279] He quoted Darwin on the next tenet, 'moral sense, or conscience', which presented itself in 'highly developed' species like humans.[280] Finally, Darwin posited susceptibility to public opinion and habit as evolutionarily explicable tenets of 'social instinct' which was articulated as ethical action.[281]

---

273 Peter Kropotkin, 'Co-Operation: A Reply to Herbert Spencer', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (January 1897), 1-2, p. 2.
274 Adams, *Kropotkin,* p. 19.
275 Adams, 'Formulating an Anarchist Sociology', p. 67.
276 Adams, 'Formulating an Anarchist Sociology', p. 67.
277 Kropotkin, 'The Morality of Nature', (1905), p. 412.
278 Kropotkin, 'The Coming Anarchy', (1887), p. 162.
279 Kropotkin, 'The Morality of Nature', (1905), p. 412, p. 200, and p. 193.
280 Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man,* (London: Murray, 1901), pp. 149-150.
281 Kropotkin, 'The Morality of Nature', (1905), p. 194.

A core element of Kropotkin's interpretation of Darwinian theory was the validity of Lamarckianism.[282] Kropotkin attacked August Weissman in defence of Lamarck, claiming that Weismann's credibility was undermined by his assertion that there was a divine power guiding evolution, and he even referred to him as the 'Karl Marx of biology', a most damning insult from the Anarchist.[283] A rejection of Wiessman was another unifier between Spencer and Kropotkin.[284] Kropotkin also asserted that Darwin had converted to Lamarckianism by the end of his career, which Kropotkin took as an implicit rejection by Darwin of his former Malthusianism.[285] This assertion was contentious, for Darwin 'hated to have his name linked with Lamarck's'.[286] Kropotkin based his claims in Darwin's amendments to the last editions of *Origin of Species* published in the latter's lifetime. In those editions, Darwin sought to reconcile natural selection with Lord Kelvin's heat loss model of dating, later disproved, which estimated 100 million years for the Earth's existence. This significantly decreased the number presented by Charles Lyell's modelling in *Principles of Geology,* which had allowed for 300 million years. Kelvin's 100 million years necessitated the compression of evolution, and Darwin was forced to adopt Lamarckian principles to explain the more celeritous evolution of species. Kropotkin's view of Darwin as Lamarckian offers an alternative to the 'anti-Darwinian version of Lamarckism' which flourished after Darwin's death.[287] Bowler asserts that Lamarckism proved attractive because 'whatever Spencer might think' it did not require struggle and allowed for the fostering of an 'evolutionary worldview' where 'altruism' was 'built into nature.'[288] It was criticised, however, by Romanes. The biologist derided Lamarck's explanation of inherited characteristics for its failure to explain evolution in flora, which could hardly be imagined to consciously acquire characteristics.[289]

---

[282] As Hale notes, 'given his anti-Malthusian views, some historians of science have asked whether it is really legitimate to classify Kropotkin as a Darwinian at all.' Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 229.
[283] Kinna, 'Kropotkin's Theory of Mutual Aid in Historical Context', p. 277 and p. 280. Spencer also rejected Weismann as noted in Adams, 'Formulating an Anarchist Sociology', p. 62 and supported Lamarckism Bowler, 'Evolution, History of', p. 386. Bowler asserts that there is 'no room for even an indirect form of design' in natural selection in *Monkey Trials and Gorilla Sermons: Evolution and Christianity from Darwin to Intelligent Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).
[284] Adams, 'Formulating an Anarchist Sociology', p. 62.
[285] Kinna, 'Kropotkin's Theory of Mutual Aid in Historical Context', p. 276. Kropotkin dates Darwin's cession to 'the of physical conditions', and thus to Lamarckism, to c1863 in 'The Theory of Evolution and Mutual Aid', p. 97. Darwin himself wrote of his very first inkling of the principle of natural selection and the survival of those most fitted to living conditions as emerging during his reading of Malthus. Gregory Claeys, 'The "Survival of the Fittest" and the Origins of Social Darwinism', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61.2, (April 2000), 223-240, p. 223.
[286] Janet Browne, *Charles Darwin: The Power of Place,* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 283.
[287] Bowler, *Monkey Trials,* p. 138. According to Bowler, these anti-Darwinians took the view that Lamarckism without Darwin allowed for 'moral purpose'.
[288] Bowler, *Monkey Trials and Gorilla Sermons,* p. 139.
[289] Romanes, *Darwin and After Darwin,* (1893), pp. 254-256.

Kropotkin praised Darwin for his rhetorical style, which avoided 'overt determinism' that would have left Darwin open to being challenged by later developments. As Adams notes, Kropotkin was not always so reticent as Darwin in avoiding these rhetorical corners, though he was praised for being 'patient and placid' rather than 'angry and revolutionary' by an 1887 reviewer.[290] The scientific credibility of Kropotkin's work was not universally agreed—where one reviewer lauded Kropotkin from a 'purely scientific standpoint' for his achievement with the text, another argued that Kropotkin not only failed to produce a scientific text, but also to 'prove that mutual aid is the antithesis of mutual struggle'.[291] Even the former reviewer, though less sharply critical than the latter, considered *Mutual Aid* a 'cheerful, delightful' book whose conclusions contained no relation to practicality or a likely future.[292]

While Miller's academic biography of Kropotkin does much to combine Russian, English, and French sources to examine the life of the prince-turned-Anarchist, Miller does little to demonstrate the importance which Darwin and Darwinism had on Kropotkin's political thought and moral philosophy. For instance, Miller describes Kropotkin's study of local flora and fauna on an expedition in Siberia as 'temporary detours' from his life as an '[A]narchist revolutionary.'[293] Crook sees this more clearly: Kropotkin 'was seminally influenced (well before he encountered anarchist theory [. . .]) by his naturalist observation'.[294] Miller, on the other hand, fails to realise the importance of Kropotkin's findings during this period in informing his theory of mutual aid, which was the culmination of his political and scientific sensibilities. Miller uses a quotation from a letter from Alexander to Peter Kropotkin, in which Alexander complained that the government had placed him under surveillance, while allowing '[t]he book of Darwin, [which] as you well know, will soon be published in Russian' though it was 'more dangerous [to the government] than a hundred A. Kropotkins'.[295] Miller does not proceed to examine this supposed threat to the government from Darwin's *Origin of Species,* nor the implications of Peter Kropotkin's close reading of the text implied in his brother's 'as you well know'. Darwin's name is mentioned only once more in the entire biography, which is inexplicable given the wide assertions of Darwin's centrality to Kropotkin's own writing.[296] Though an 1890 article in

---

290 Adams, *Kropotkin,* p. 108.
291 William Thomas Stead, 'REVIEW: *Mutual Aid', London: Office of the Review of Reviews* 26:155, (1902), 533, p. 533; Vladimir G. Simkhovitch, 'REVIEW: *Mutual Aid a Factor of Evolution* by P. Kropotkin', *Polticial Science Quarterly* 18.4, (1903), 702-705, p. 702.
292 Stead, 'REVIEW: *Mutual Aid*', (1902), p. 533.
293 Martin A. Miller, *Kropotkin,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 65.
294 Crook, *Darwin's Coat-Tails,* p.72.
295 Miller, *Kropotkin,* p. 66. Miller notes that there was as yet no police file on Alexander on the time of his writing this.
296 Hall and Kirdina-Chandler, 'Towards and intellectual history of evolutionary economics', p. 558; Nicolosi, 'The Darwinian Rhetoric of Science', p. 156.

Freedom asserted that Kropotkin was 'freshly under the impression of the *Origin of Species*' when he went to Siberia, Miller does not include Darwin's name in a list of the authors who 'strongly influenced' him in those years.[297]

In his text *Darwin without Malthus,* Daniel Todes correctly pushes back against any understanding of Kropotkin as attaching himself to scientific convictions as the conclusion rather than the inspiration for his aims for society. Todes asserts that Kropotkin cannot have sought to manipulate Darwinian theory for his own ends because his first encounter with Darwin's writing happened many years prior to his political affinity, and it did more to spur him on as a 'celebrated naturalist' than as a political actor. Haia Shpayer-Makov and Hale concur.[298] Nicolosi puts it aptly when he suggests that *Mutual Aid* was a 'scientific argument in favour of a particular interpretation of Darwin's theory of evolution' rather than a 'refutation of social Darwinism from the standpoint of the political theory of anarchism.'[299] Kropotkin's engagement with Darwin's theory was sincere. As evidenced by his continuing to write tracts on geology during his solitary confinement for Anarchist agitation in Russia, Kropotkin's naturalist interests and his Anarchist ones very often coincided. So vital did he consider his naturalist career that he could not resist giving one last lecture at the Imperial Russian Geographical Society before fleeing Russia, and it was because of this delay that he was captured and imprisoned in the first instance.[300] Todes disregards that Kropotkin understood the risk to his person represented by delaying his departure in order to give the talk, and thus he does not appreciate fully the primacy of scientific interest in Kropotkin's worldview.[301]

Kropotkin put forward his book on mutual aid in 1902. He had already spent decades advocating for cooperation and Anarchism (and decades arguing that the two occur naturally together). *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* consolidated these ideas and used scientific language to advocate for their validity. Kropotkin first examined the mutual aid he observed in animals while working in the harsh climate in Siberia, where his scientific interest was piqued, and then moved on to appraise the mutual aid tendencies in societies which he deemed primitive.[302] He argued that it was in these societies, which existed without a large bureaucratic or legal system, that human nature could be best observed. In Kropotkin's view, evolution had shown that the most fit were

---

297 'Mutual Aid Amongst Animals', (November 1890), p. 50; Miller, *Kropotkin,* p. 70.
298 Shpayer-Makov, 'The Reception of Peter Kropotkin in Britain, 1886-1917', p. 389; Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 222.
299 Nicolosi, 'The Darwinian Rhetoric of Science', p. 142.
300 Todes, *Darwin without Malthus,* p. 123.
301 Todes, *Darwin without Malthus,* p. 125.
302 Avrich introduction to Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 4.

those who 'combine intellectual knowledge with the knowledge necessary for the production of wealth' rather than those who had accumulated power or wealth through being themselves, or being descended from ancestors who were, 'momentarily the strongest.'[303] An article in *Freedom* contended that,

> Men must obey natural laws in their relation to each other as well as in relation to matter, but artificial laws (man made laws, Acts of Parliament) are seldom if ever in accord with natural laws, and that is where the difficulty comes in.[304]

Thus were the laws and hierarchy established by government found to be artificial impediments to the true course of human nature and evolution. The Anarchists sought not lawlessness, but rather true obedience to the laws of nature.

Wilson believed that '[l]ife in common has developed social instinct in two conflicting directions'; one, 'domination', encourages the 'lesser, sensuous self' to assert power over others. The second, 'equal brotherhood' or 'self-affirmation and fulfilment of the greater and only true and human self' (and clearly the side which Wilson hoped to foster) functions to 'dissolve[] the illusion of mere atomic individualism.'[305] Kropotkin too acknowledged what he termed the 'two dominant currents' of human relations; one, mutual aid; and the other, 'the self-assertion of the individual'.[306] He claimed that both currents are important to an understanding of evolution, but that the latter has been 'analysed, described, and glorified from time immemorial.'[307] Kropotkin did not deny competition as an important and natural part of human nature; rather, he wished for mutual aid to be 'fully recognised' in order to more accurately compare the importance of the two strains.[308] It was only through the more full recognition of the importance of cooperation that it could be evaluated against competition. Avrich asserts that while Kropotkin arrived in Siberia only too ready to have Darwin's observations in *Origin of Species* confirmed, his own findings seemed quite opposed to the assertions of struggle for survival. Instead, the animal interactions which he observed informed his theory of mutual aid. Kropotkin contended that the sociability of primitive mankind could only have been reinforced by their observations of mutual aid within the animal species amongst whom they lived.[309]

---

303 Kropotkin, 'The Scientific Basis of Anarchy', (Feb 1887), p. 243.
304 'What is Anarchism', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (September 1889), 39-40, p. 39.
305 Charlotte Wilson, 'What Socialism is', *Fabian Tract* 4, (1886), 1-12, pp. 9-10.
306 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 247.
307 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 247.
308 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 248.
309 Kropotkin, 'The Morality of Nature', (April 1905), p. 205.

Kropotkin described early humans as 'defenceless' and thus dependent on the sociability of the tribe for survival, and he also argued that the first 'social life' for humans was the 'band' rather than the family unit.[310] In 1897, six years later, Kropotkin reiterated this point; he contended that the 'clan' or 'tribe' was the 'starting point of humanity', rather than the 'family'.[311] He also posited that '[m]an did not create society; society is anterior to man.' Society was being positioned by Kropotkin as natural, while the State was unnatural. Importantly in relation to Malthus, Kropotkin delineated between the natural tribal unit in which sacrifice for the protection of the whole tribe is typical and the artificial State apparatus under which poverty could be allowed to fester. For Malthus, poverty was 'not the result of an artificial social hierarchy', but rather 'natural and inevitable.'[312] Kropotkin argued, contra-Malthus, that 'the productive powers of the human race increase at a much more rapid ratio than its powers of reproduction.'[313] It was technology which makes this true. 'The accumulation of a means of subsistence and comfort', he argued, 'is going on at a much speedier rate than the increase of population'.[314]

In a surprising point of harmony, however, both Kropotkin and Malthus argued that the State should cease to intervene on behalf of the poor.[315] Malthus made this argument because he believed that it would minimise the eventual deaths caused by a dearth of resources. Kropotkin believed that removing the safety net of the State would encourage the restoration of the mutual aid impulse in societies, which he argued the rise of State power had caused to diminish.[316] Kropotkin contrasted 'charity' unflatteringly with mutual aid.[317] He claimed that while 'every savage considers [mutual aid] as due to his kinsman', charity 'implies a certain superiority of the giver upon the receiver.'[318] This superiority was antithetical to the community fostered by mutual aid. Todes captures this phenomenon well when he writes that by 'becoming the repository for cooperative tendencies, the state had reversed the historical trend toward increasing cooperation among the citizenry.'[319] An unidentified contributor to *Freedom* contended that 'in proportion as the oppression of law is removed, the true binding force of the influence of social feeling upon individual responsibility becomes apparent and is increased.' It was through the destruction of

---

310 Kropotkin, 'Mutual Aid Among Savages', (April 1891), p. 538 and p. 540.
311 Peter Kropotkin, 'The State: Its Historic Role', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (May 1897), 38-39, pp. 38-39.
312 Bowler, *Monkey Trials,* p. 92.
313 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 21.
314 Kropotkin, 'The Scientific Basis of Anarchy', (Feb 1887), p. 246.
315 Bowler, *Monkey Trials,* p. 92. Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 197.
316 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 197.
317 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 238.
318 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 238.
319 Todes, *Darwin without Malthus,* p. 135.

the State apparatus that people became free to act upon their true social instinct. This was the 'free scope for the social impulses, now distorted and compressed by Property' for which the Anarchist author of this piece advocated.[320] It was the State, in the view of the Anarchists, which imposed upon humanity the false contentiousness of competition.

Kropotkin argued that when 'cooperation' replaced 'struggle', 'intellectual and moral faculties' develop and flourish, to the benefit of the species.[321] He also argued that 'struggle for existence' was often misconstrued—it was not against others of the same species which an animal struggled, and sometimes not against other animals at all—it was the struggle of the animal to adapt to its environment better than its competitor for food.[322] It was the species best-adapted to their physical environment which thrived while the other fails. Romanes asserted that the perpetual struggle for existence was 'a matter of observable fact' and underlined this argument by his belief that species reproduce at rates insupportable by available resources.[323] This line of reasoning demonstrated the influence held by Malthus over Darwin and his fellows. This view, though seemingly in contradiction to the interpretations of Darwin prevalent in England, was not a controversial view among Russian scientists interested in evolution.[324] As far as Kropotkin was concerned, '[u]nbridled individualism' was a new aspect of human interaction, 'not characteristic of primitive mankind.'[325] Kropotkin made the excellent point that sociability was so natural to humans that the story teller 'makes no legends to explain life in societies, but he has one for every case of solitude.'[326] Individualism unhampered by cooperation is therefore not inherent to human society. In *The Conquest of Bread* Kropotkin posited that idleness and luxury are not inherent either—that if a 'child of luxury' was 'thrown on the street and comes into contact with the masses', that child would come to understand the duty of care to the elderly, sick, and young in priority to the hearty and healthy.[327] Even those members of society born into wealth and power were not lost causes; they could still access their instinct for mutual aid—it was not even a characteristic which would require the right societal conditions and several generations to re-emerge. Kropotkin's assertions about the dual importance of individualism and cooperation in the conclusion of *Mutual Aid* support Kinna's assertion that he

320 "Freedom", *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (October 1886), 1, p. 1.
321 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 28.
322 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 72.
323 Romanes, *Darwin and After Darwin,* (1893), p. 259.
324 Todes, *Darwin without Malthus,* p. 123.
325 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 92.
326 Kropotkin, 'The Morality of Nature', (April 1905), p. 209.
327 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 63.

favoured '[A]narchist individualism' because it fostered 'the full development of the individual whilst also creating strong communal bonds between individuals.'[328]

Evolutionary language was pervasive in *Freedom*, co-founded by Kropotkin and Wilson. One contributor described a time when the 'slow evolution which has been going on during the second part of our century [. . .] will break through the obstacles lying in its path and will try to remodel society according to the new needs and tendencies.' This depiction of the culmination of evolution as a rupture was entirely reminiscent of the promises made by the Federation of the butterfly of Socialism bursting forth from its chrysalis, or of the volcano erupting.[329]

Wilson referred to the 'evolution of economic conditions', by which she meant the transition to industrialisation and wage labour, as 'degrading' both to the 'idle' and the 'working population'. She played on fears current in the 1880s about the devolution of society resulting from the squalor in which the labouring class lived, and from the lack of gainful employment by the aristocracy.[330] One author in *Freedom* observed that the worker risked falling into the 'Residuum' by even the slightest stumble. The wage labourer existed in a space of precarity where the descent into 'that wretched, struggling mass of human beings whose one interest in life is how they shall get their next meal' was ever-looming. The author compared the workers who were entrapped within the Residuum to 'beasts', though 'without a beast's careless enjoyment of the present'. These were they 'who in the midst of the pleasures and luxuries, the knowledge and culture of our modern civilisation would have been ten thousand times happier if they had been born savages.'[331] This was a stark and a demeaning depiction of the life of the working classes. It was also an implicit engagement with discourses around evolution and devolution. It was a reminder that humans have not risen so far beyond their bestial past that reversion to the worst habits and instincts of that stage in the evolutionary process would be impossible. Romanes explicitly engaged with these devolutionary fears. He suggested that there was a 'complete and perfect adaptation' possible as the pinnacle of the evolutionary process, though he also echoed the concern that evolution does not necessitate improvement and could also lead to denigration of a species.[332]

---

328 Kinna, 'Kropotkin's Theory of Mutual Aid in Historical Context', p. 267.
329 'What Revolution Means', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (November 1886), 1-2, p. 1.
330 Wilson, 'What Socialism is', (1886), p. 6.
331 'The Revolt of the English Workers in the Nineteenth Century', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (April 1889), 20, p. 20.
332 Romanes, *Darwin and After Darwin,* (1893), p. 260 and p. 269.

For Enrico Malatesta, it was '[t]hrough cooperation [that] man has been enabled to evolve out of animalism'.[333] Cooperation was positioned here as not just the social programme favoured by the Anarchists, but as the grace which has raised humans from their aforementioned four-legged past and into a higher realm of being. 'Therefore', Malatesta continued, 'as now evolved, man could not live apart from his fellows without falling back into a state of animalism.'[334] Cooperation remained important for the preservation of humanity. 'Knowledge cannot long be monopolised', one author in *Freedom* claimed, 'and social feeling is innate in human nature'. The author contended that 'both are fomenting [. . .] as the yeast in the dough'. This dough, once risen, will be marked by the 'revolt against property', and the 'common claim of all to a common share in the results of the common labour of all.'[335] The yeast was already mixed into to the dough of society. The simile here deployed emphasised the inevitability of the revolt, and of the revolt as an essential element in the realisation of a finished society. The bread must rise before it was done; so too must the Socialists rise before their work was finished.

The Anarchist movement in Britain, which coalesced around Peter Kropotkin and found voice in *Freedom,* used a reinterpretation of Darwinism to lend credence to, and to justify, their desire for revolution. Kropotkin believed that human nature inherently suited communalism, and he believed that it was by artificial means that such communalism had ever been disrupted. Kropotkin made repeated assertions to this effect. He believed that the 'growing tendency of modern society is precisely towards communism'.[336] He claimed that 'Anarchist Communism' satisfied a societal 'tendency towards economic equality' and 'towards political liberty.'[337] His Anarchist society, far from being an upheaval and a disruption would be a return to the natural order. Kropotkin trusted in his Lamarckian interpretation of Darwinism to return society to its rightful order without the intervention or guidance of any hierarchy. In contrast to both the SDF and the Fabians, Kropotkin's evolutionary discourse expended no energy into ruminations on how human nature might be manipulated or redirected towards more communal tendencies. He did not write about battling against nature, or against human nature, to form the society of the future. His evolutionary theory was characterised by his trust that, should government be razed, a society would emerge built exactly along the principles of which he was desirous. As we will

---

333 Enrico Malatesta, 'Anarchy', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (December 1891), 92, p. 92.
334 Malatesta, 'Anarchy', (December 1891), p. 92.
335 'Freedom', (October 1886), p. 1.
336 Kropotkin, 'The Coming Anarchy', (Aug 1887), p. 151.
337 Peter Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution: An Address Delivered in Paris,* tr. Henry Glasse, (London: William Reeves Bookseller Limited, 1884), p. 14.

find in the next chapter, this understanding of human nature directly informed Kropotkin's plans for political reform.

I.v *Conclusion*

This chapter set out to examine by close reading the deployment of evolutionarily-tinged language by the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabians, the Socialist League, and the Anarchists. We have seen Darwin apotheosised by the SDF as equivalent with Marx. By that group, we have seen nature regarded as malleable, we have seen the imperative to manipulate the economic context under which evolution runs its course in order to promote the progression rather than dissipation of mankind. By the Fabians, we have seen the gradual quality of evolutionary development come to the fore. Again, human intervention has been viewed as necessary to direct evolutionary forces into the profit of the species. Crucially, we have also found that the Fabians predicted no teleological end to their movement; they did not believe that evolution will ever cease, and they therefore predicted no stasis for society. Against the Fabian view of evolution as the bedfellow of gradualist change, the League argued for evolution as revolution that will end in Utopia.

Where the Fabians and the SDF recognised a certain inherent competitiveness in human nature which must be carefully manipulated to support the Socialist future, the League saw the inherent selflessness and desire for positive labour as the natural state of man. The Anarchists concurred with this view, and in their publications we have witnessed this belief in the innate selflessness of man taken to its extreme. The Anarchists believed that the razing of society would assure the rebirth of a communal spirit which has been supressed—but not extinguished—under the burden of Capitalism. In each of these groups, evolutionary language was used to inform and to support the validity, inevitability, or necessity of Socialist reform. In the following chapter, I unfold the methods which each group constructed out of these interpretations of evolutionary theory. Each group used its understanding of human nature, shaped by their interpretation of Darwinian thought, to craft the means by which they would bring about a Socialist future. Each of these groups also looked to their interpretations of Darwinism as the foundation for criticism of the methods of other groups. We will find that these groups criticised each other not just as fighting by a means that was incorrect, but one that was *unnatural*.

Chapter II

Conflict in Socialist Methodologies of Reform and Revolution

In the preceding chapter, we examined the evolutionary rhetoric used by the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, the Socialist League, and the Anarchists. We explored their explicit engagements with Darwin and other prominent evolutionary scientists, as well as with the discourse of devolutionary fears. At the close of each section, we saw how each group put forward their argument for working with human nature to foster the realisation of Socialism in Britain. In this chapter, we see those arguments come to fruition in the strategies for which each group advocated. More than 'partisan differences', to which Hale attributes their divisions, the fractures between these groups were based in the most fundamental understanding of human nature.[338] Both the SDF and the Fabians referred to competition as intrinsic to human nature, and their methods of reform correspondingly included parliamentary, regulatory means as the most expedient mode of optimising the natural inclination of man. Both perceived human nature as in need of strong guidance from a governing force to express itself in a mode compatible with communalism. In order for the competitive nature of man not to descend into chaos and fighting, regulatory checks needed to be enacted to tie the good of the individual to the good of the wider population. Such a hierarchy was also to the benefit of organising the reformist forces—if Socialists were so fundamentally to alter the social order, they should do so with as formal and as well-oiled a machine as the government had.

For the Fabians, this led to the effort to appropriate the machine of government for themselves as the most expedient solution. While the Fabians were inclined to view the nature of man as unchanging, and therefore to understand their role as reformers to be the adjustment of laws around human nature as it is, the SDF believed nature to be malleable. To this end, they advocated the reform of society with the goal of reshaping the expression of human nature in

338 Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 20.

preparation for revolution and communal living. Their policy of reform culminated in an openness to violent revolution.

For those groups for which competition was an extrinsic element of human nature, imposed on a people by the artificial pressures of a Capitalist system, parliamentary reform was rejected as yet another curtailment of the expression of man's innate communalism. Parliamentary reform, even that made by Socialists, was a continuation of the oppression of hierarchies and not a necessary step along the way to the Socialist future, according to Kropotkin's Anarchists and sometimes also according to the League. In their view, man needed no further preparation of his nature to live by the principles of Socialism; he was ready from birth, and destined by biology, to be willing to live for the good of his community. Anarchists in particular believed man's nature to be inherently communalist and inclined towards generous acts in support of the community. This being the case, they viewed any intervention from external forces as impediments to the expression of this benevolence. Capitalism, rather than being the expression of human nature under unruly circumstances, was for the Anarchists human nature ruled by unnatural forces.

In each section, after we have explored the method and logic of each group, and their evolutionary justifications for it, we will examine the language with which they critiqued the others Socialist organisations.[339] Though the Fabians and the SDF shared a willingness to make parliamentary reform, they offered to each other virulent censure. Their vitriol was expressed in evolutionary terms, as well as in the personal ire which has been noted by most scholars who have examined the issue. The Fabians rejected the SDF's willingness to allow for the possibility of violent revolution as a tool should parliamentary reform cease to be effective. The SDF rejected the Fabians for what they regularly termed cowardice and a middle-class distaste for hard work. The Fabians, in the consideration of the SDF, the League, and the Anarchists, advocated for a slow reform because they theorised as intellectuals from the comfort of, as Shaw readily admitted, drawings rooms, rather than from the perspective of the suffering worker. Though the Fabians gained a reputation for a half-hearted engagement in practical action, they accomplished, as this chapter demonstrates, reforms which other groups had anticipated possible only after much bloodshed.[340]

---

339 For the divided nature of Socialist groups on a range of issues, see, for instance, Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics,* p. 131; Noel Thompson, 'Socialist Political Economies and the Growth of Mass Consumption in Britain and the United States, 1880 to 1914', *Review of Radical Political Economies* 39.2, (Spring 2007), 230-256, p. 234.

340 Hyndman's reputation was further sullied by his past as both a pro-Tory journalist and Tory candidate for Parliament in 1880. In the same year, he read Marx's *Capital* and converted to a 'complete and thorough-going revolutionary socialist' in the immediate years which followed this, using his powerful

The League struggled throughout its existence to resolve its internal tension between parliamentary action and opposition to parliament itself. Its founders included those sceptical of Hyndman's parliamentary programme at the SDF, and those who agreed with the programme and yet were sceptical of Hyndman.[341] This conflict proved insurmountable and resulted in the eventual combustion of the group.[342] Along its path to self-destruction, the League became increasingly Anarchist in sympathy. Despite the friendship between Morris and Kropotkin, and despite Morris's amenability to much of the Anarchist argument, he was ultimately unwilling to declare himself as an Anarchist and was thus ousted from the League towards the end of the group's existence. Though Morris and Kropotkin agreed in their dislike for centralised government, Morris believed revolution to be merely the best—but not the only—means for achieving Socialism. This lukewarmness from him was his political downfall within the League, and it was characteristic of the wider sense of the League as being without firm direction.

The Anarchists and the Fabians present the starkest contrast of all the groups, in no small part because they offered the best-articulated views of human nature and of the evolutionary justification for their methods. Though it hardly needs to be acknowledged that the Anarchists and the Fabians envisioned vastly different routes to Socialism, and such a point has been well-covered by scholarship, too few have explained adequately the *reason* for the incompatible routes to the goal of a Socialist society. Despite the many differences between these groups, each acknowledged that the success of the movement would likely depend on a unification between them which never materialised. As the following sections demonstrate, calls for this unification, though impotent, appeared across each publication and are written by the foremost members of each group. Given the knowledge that each group had as to the imperative to unify, their ultimate failure so to do ought to be of the utmost scholarly interest, and readers should be suspicious of any historian satisfied with the explanation that the divisions of these groups who believed themselves to be fighting for the survival or disintegration of their species were based in anything as frivolous as personal dislikes. In this chapter, I set out the divergences in the methodology of each group from the others, and I demonstrate that the cause of these

influence over the SDF to bring the organisation with him. Mark Bevir, 'Fabianism, Permeation and Independent Labour', *The Historical Journal* 39.1, (1996), 179-196, p. 184 and p. 196; Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 189-190; M. S. Wilkins, 'The Non-Socialist Origins of England's First Important Socialist Organization', *International Review of Social History* 4.2, (1959), 199-207, p. 199; Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics,* p. 143, pp. 206-207.

341 Graham Johnson, 'Making Reform the Instrument of Revolution: British Social Democracy 1881-1911', *The Historical Journal* 43.4, (Dec 2000), 977-1002, p. 983.

342 Baylen, 'George Bernard Shaw', p. 427.

divergences can be traced directly to the evolutionary language and interpretations which we examined in the previous chapter.

II.i *Social Democratic Federation*

The SDF favoured Parliamentary action combined with the potential for violent revolution. In Graham Johnson's words, 'SDF strategy was not a question of reform versus revolution, it was a case of reform and revolution.'[343] The SDF believed in maintaining a central governing body to administer the future Socialist state. They were hostile to both the Fabians and the Anarchists and note with satisfaction the return of many Socialist League members to the ranks of the SDF following the dissolution of that splinter group; they viewed themselves as the true Socialist movement in Britain.[344] They were certainly 'England's first important socialist organization'—and they believed themselves England's *only* Socialist organisation of any import.[345] Hyndman asserted that while the SDF 'do not deny [. . .] good work' by the Socialist League and the Fabians, 'no one can pretend that when the workers of Great Britain really wake up [. . .] they will look to either of these bodies for counsel and an active lead.'[346] The SDF characterised themselves as men of action, as well as men of reason, and as having a defined programme of policy, in contrast to the Fabians, Anarchists, and League members, respectively. In this section, I lay out the beliefs and strategies of the SDF. Their relationship with ideas of reform and revolution are examined closely, with particular focus on the relationship of the State apparatus and education to those ideas. We will then turn our attention to the critiques offered by the SDF of the Fabians, the League, and the Anarchists.

The SDF extolled its virtues unabashedly and pointedly; in January of 1885, following the 27 December 1884 founding of the Socialist League, a letter appeared in *To-day* which claimed that the SDF 'with its affiliated bodies forms the only Socialist organization in this country.'[347] This letter was undersigned not only by Hyndman, but also by Morris, Bax, and the Marx-Avelings, who later left the SDF in order to found the League. These defecting members of the executive council who signed the article presumably did so prior to their decision to split from

---

[343] Johnson, 'Making Reform the Instrument of Revolution', p. 1001.
[344] Despite the departure of several leading members to form the Socialist League in 1885, the SDF experienced its highest recorded membership in 1886, at 700 people. Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics,* p. 157.
[345] Wilkins, 'The Non-Socialist Origins', p. 199.
[346] H. M. Hyndman, 'The Work of the Past. The Opportunities of the Future', *Justice,* (06 June 1891), 2, p. 2. For similar sentiments, see H. M. Hyndman, 'Our New Year's Work', *Justice,* (02 January 1892), 2, p. 2, and F. G. Jones, 'How I Became a Socialist', *Justice,* (14 September 1895), 2, p. 2.
[347] 'The Meaning of Socialism', *To-day*, (Jan 1885), 1-10, p. 9.

Hyndman, and the SDF's publishing of this claim despite the defection demonstrates a vindictiveness which repeats itself across the pages of *Justice*. Hyndman reiterated the importance of the SDF in the middle of 1887; '[l]et us never forget [. . .] that ours is the only organisation, absolutely the only organisation [. . .] which makes the slightest attempt to advocate the cause of the workers in such manner as really to benefit them.'[348] Hyndman positioned the SDF as 'absolutely' alone in understanding the plight of the worker and in seeking to address it with realistic solutions. In an 1891 article which took stock of the SDF achievements in the first decade of the group's existence, Hyndman lauded the 'indefatigable propaganda' of their movement. Because of this propaganda, he contended, 'Socialism has taken firm hold in London.'[349] The first stage of the movement, gaining notoriety for the cause, was deemed a success in these contributions; what remained, then, was for this notoriety to be channelled into support and action.

In an interview given on the occasion of his retirement from the executive of the SDF, Hyndman offered praise for the group, which, he contended, 'has pluck, discipline, and knowledge, and its members are ready to fight.'[350] The SDF was characteristically differentiated from the chaos of the Anarchists in its discipline, and the timidity of the Fabians by its own bellicosity. Hyndman's 1901 praise concealed a less-optimistic truth, however; the SDF had been 'ready' for the revolution for two decades. His assurances, above, that the revolution should be expected by the turn of the century proved false. Hyndman had long believed in the imminency of revolution; he pointed to 1889 as the centenary of the 'Great Revolution' in France, and he suggested that 'the idea that in that year Social-Democrats and Socialists generally ought to be prepared to take united International action in the interests of the disinherited classes is firing the imagination of the workers of the civilised world.' Though he did not advocate for a 'hasty outbreak' or 'premature and violent attempt' to accomplish the revolution, he nevertheless advised his readers 'to prepare for a complete International Social Revolution before the end of the century.'[351] Hyndman promised two different dates here for the revolution—1889, and after that a window of more than a decade to secure the Socialist revolution. Hyndman's vacillation between 'action', coded as violence, and cautious lobbying was a theme in *Justice*. In 1884, for instance, Hyndman urged readers to '[p]ush harder, [. . .] agitate more, stir up discontent. Fan the awakened hopes of the workers. Nothing will be got without. We have to educate, agitate,

---

348 Hyndman, 'The Work of the Future', (Aug 1887), 1, p. 1.
349 Hyndman, 'London and the Provinces', (Sept 1891), 2, p. 2.
350 H. M. Hyndman, 'Hyndman on the SDF and Socialism in England', *Justice,* (17 August 1901), 3, p. 3.
351 Hyndman, 'The Work of the Future', (Aug 1887), 1, p. 1. For similar sentiments, see the following: H. J. Lay, 'H. M. Hyndman at Reading', *Justice,* (06 October 1894), 2, p. 2 and J. Hunter Watts, 'Pennyworths of Socialism', *Justice,* (24 March 1894), 4, p. 4.

organise unceasingly.'[352] To 'push' and to 'educate'; to 'agitate' and to 'organise'. Hyndman advocated for order and disorder.

The extent to which Hyndman believed in the violent revolution to which he sometimes referred is a matter of debate in the scholarship which has emerged around the SDF. Wolfe, for instance, argues that Hyndman and his followers 'only half believed' in the revolution, and that Hyndman's main objective with the SDF was to 'frighten the government'.[353] Bevir goes one step beyond Wolfe—in his view, Hyndman believed that the 'statesman's task was [. . .] to ensure that the inevitable social revolution would occur without violence.' [354] Thus, Hyndman did not believe in violence at all. In another article, Bevir argues similarly: 'Hyndman's aim was to ensure that the necessary change was peaceful', and also that Hyndman's 'revolutionary rhetoric was intended not to galvanize the workers but to induce the ruling classes to accept the statesman-like actions that he believed necessary to avoid bloodshed.'[355] These later twentieth century interpretations of Hyndman's meaning depart from the views of Hyndman's contemporaries. Besant, for instance, was critical of the SDF precisely because of its violent rhetoric. She believed Hyndman's rhetoric represented his real belief and intention, as Bevir himself admits.[356] I am inclined to disagree with Bevir's argument that Hyndman was not attempting to galvanize the worker by his rhetoric. I believe him to have been sincere in his hope of inciting the worker to action, and violent action at that. That his efforts never came to fruition is no evidence of their insincerity, but rather of the lack of success of his methods.

The SDF was not 'prejudiced against physical force or revolt'. They believed 'it will occur', and that it was 'inevitable.'[357] The impediment to inciting action was the preparedness of the followers of the SDF to maintain a good life after the success of the revolution. The 'most rabid rebel' must acknowledge 'that to shoot a few landlords, separately or in batches, would not give the people any more knowledge of farming, or of usefully applying themselves to the land, than they possess.' Rather, '[l]andlordism or land-owning as an idea necessary to human existence must be eradicated from the minds of the people first, and not mere blind antagonism to a result of the people's helplessness and apathy.'[358] Such a position perfectly elucidated the

352 H. M. Hyndman, 'The Progress of Socialism', *Justice,* (04 October 1884), 4, p. 4.
353 Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism,* pp. 101-102.
354 Mark Bevir, 'Republicanism, Socialism, and Democracy in Britain: The Origins of the Radical Left', *Journal of Social History* 34.2, (Winter 2000), 351-368.
355 Bevir, 'H. M. Hyndman: A Rereading and a Reassessment', p. 139 and p. 141.
356 Bevir, 'Annie Besant's Quest for Truth', p. 23.
357 H. B. Samuels, 'Socialism and Physical Force', *Justice,* (13 February 1897), 2, p. 2.
358 Samuels, 'Socialism and Physical Force', *Justice,* (13 February 1897), 2, p. 2.

balance which the SDF sought to strike between the Anarchists and Fabians. Revolution was inevitable, and, in the meantime, reform was more expedient.

Aveling, prior to his departure from the SDF, argued that the 'changes desired by Socialists can only be brought about by a revolution. We hope that the revolution may be one of thought.' Language like this from Aveling diffused the potency of the word 'revolution'. He disassociated the word from inherent violence and used it only in the sense of great change. He did not even seem to mean that it would be fast change.[359] Ultimately, the SDF opted for a policy of less provocation. '[W]hatever the future may have in store for us, with our hand on the legislative machine, the transition to a state of Social-Democracy will be much easier than could otherwise be the case', *Justice* argued in 1895.[360] The article went on to emphasise that the SDF 'neither desire to achieve Socialism, vi et armis, nor advocate it.' And '[f]or the present the best method of propaganda and the best policy to pursue, lies in constant appeals to the ballot box.' There was no thirst for unnecessary bloodshed; instead, the SDF pursued a policy of reform and political activism through official channels, with an acknowledgement that the use of violence might be an eventual necessity to the revolutionary effort. This aligns exactly with the SDF's belief that evolution operated both as slow development and as rapturous progress. It was in maintaining the usefulness of political reform that the SDF distanced itself from the Anarchist movement, and in emphasising the possibility—sometimes even the likelihood—of violence that they alienated the Fabians.

An anonymous contributor acknowledged in 1897 the charge from 'opponents' that the SDF was 'less revolutionary than formerly' and was now 'attaching altogether too much importance to politics and political action.' But, he or she contended, it was 'misleading and untrue' to suggest that the SDF sought revolution only through 'the ballot box'. The author pointed to the work of the SDF, 'ardently, [. . .] steadfastly, [. . .] unselfishly' with Trade Unions as evidence of non-electoral methods of agitation and reform.[361] The late 1890s saw a continuation of an advocacy for reform with the potential for revolution. '[a]nyone [. . .] with ever so small a knowledge of the tremendous forces wielded by the Government of to-day, must recognise the utter impossibility, the criminal absurdity, of an armed revolt', another anonymous contributor posited. He or she continued that while it may be Utopian to advocate for such a revolution under current circumstances, 'it is equally utopian to suppose that it is impossible for circumstances so to change as to make such a revolt not only possible but essential.'[362] The

---

359 Edward B. Aveling, 'The Atheists and Socialism', *Justice,* (09 February 1884), 6, p. 6.
360 Joe Chatterton, 'R-Evolution', *Justice,* (06 April 1895), 2, p. 2.
361 'Social-Democracy and Politics', *Justice,* (09 January 1897), 4, p. 4.
362 'Utopianism', *Justice,* (15 April 1899), 4, p. 4.

needle of rhetoric for the SDF moved towards moderation near the end of Hyndman's tenure, but it always maintained its openness to revolution.

The SDF took a low view of what they perceived as the lukewarmness of the Fabians, a society which they claimed was 'composed almost exclusively of aesthetic dawdlers'.[363] This criticism took the form of explicit attacks on the group, as well as implicit critiques of the Fabians through attacks on their values. The Fabians were characterised repeatedly by the SDF in terms which emphasised their strong association with the middle-class, with a disinclination for undertaking the unpleasant aspects of campaigning, and with an unseriousness of mission. The SDF criticised as 'goody-goody middle-class twaddle' the political agenda that the Fabians were putting forth.[364] Hyndman denounced not only the 'gang of capitalist slave-drivers' as the enemies of the SDF, but also the 'supremacy of the middle-class'.[365] He claimed of a man whom he looked to condemn that he was guilty of the 'same error as the Fabian Society'. In other words, 'he wants to make all the world nice middle-class Socialists'.[366]

Hyndman compared the 'present position of our landlord and capitalist class' with the 'old French nobility', who were excised because they were 'useless', and 'they absolutely stood in the way of human progress.' Like these Frenchman of the previous century, the 'corrupt bourgeoisie' of England were 'mere luxurious parasites'. It was not just that they were cruel, or selfish, but that they were impediments of improvement that so rankled Hyndman. When Hyndman associated the Fabians with privileged classes, he coded them as these 'parasites', likewise impinging upon the Socialist movement. This argument was an evolutionary one—their stagnation at the top of the social order had drastically undermined the natural evolutionary one; these 'parasites' had every capability of devolving the whole population.

Hyndman derided 'Social Reformers' and differentiated them firmly from 'Socialists'—the former, he asserted, could 'make the best omelette gourmet ever smacked lips over, without breaking a single egg.'[367] These people, Hyndman was sure, were not revolutionaries at all—and they sounded very much like his characterisations elsewhere of Fabians. One contributor in *Justice* hearkened back to an earlier period of Socialism; '[t]here was no talk in those days', he

---

363 'Union is Strength!', *Justice,* (12 December 1885), 1, p. 1.
364 'A Fabian on Fabian Tactics', (March 1890), p. 3.
365 H. M. Hyndman, 'Revolution or Reform', *To-day,* (August 1884), 180-198, p. 196.
366 H. M. Hyndman, 'Socialism as a Whole', *Justice,* (10 January 1891), 4, p. 4.
367 Hyndman, 'Revolution or Reform', (Aug 1884), p. 181. Foulger responds to Hyndman's article in Foulger's own simile, like a fly who disturbs a slumbering giant—to criticise Hyndman for the lack of nuance in his criticism of reformers. J. C. Foulger, 'Revolution by Reform', *To-day*, (Oct 1884), 412-428, p. 413.

recalled, 'of permeating this skunk capitalist society with Socialist attar of roses, and so making things pleasant all round.'[368] This attar, this covering of an unpleasant smell, would serve only to save passers-by from awareness of the foul smell, and would do nothing to alleviate the cause or the sufferers.

The Fabians 'were playing marbles', while the SDF 'risked prison and penal servitude for their principles and their class'.[369] The SDF became ready men of action in contrast to the well-heeled lily-livered middle-class flimsy personages of the Fabians. *Justice* suggested sardonically that the Fabians 'so hate the SDF' because it is from them that the Fabian society mines 'all its practical ideas'.[370] The choice of society for the worker was thought plainly to be obvious by SDF members, who believed that the worker could have nothing in common with Fabians and could not legitimately be helped by Fabian tactics.

An 1896 article in *Justice* expressed a view in the extreme minority in which, though the author clarified that he was not a Fabian and had been publicly critical of them, he admitted that he 'regarded them as Socialists whom [he] believed to be in their way as honest and devoted as any in England.'[371] This is one of the warmest endorsements the Fabians could have expected in the pages of *Justice*. So too was the 1890 admission that the publication of *Fabian Essays* was a 'useful service'.[372] In the main, however, the SDF was unwavering in its snide remarks and open besmirchment of Fabian values and character.

Justice quoted Keep's article on the Fabians which appeared in an American paper called *The People*. Keep wrote that the Fabians were 'remarkably dressed and effeminate looking', that Webb was 'pompous' and Shaw was 'fond of sneering at the proletariat'. He asserts that in England, Fabians 'are not recognised as Socialists', that their 'propaganda [. . .] is essentially middle-class'; that they are, in fact, 'dead in England', where they 'may have been able to check the progress of Socialism in England for ten or twelve years', but that they will find no success in America.[373] The Fabians were dismissed not just as out of touch with the working man, but also as 'effeminate'. In a society so caught up in biological implication, such a criticism of virility smacks of devolutionary language.

---

368 Hunter Watts, 'Pennyworths of Socialism', (March 1894), p. 4.
369 'Socialism of the Sty', *Justice,* (26 July 1890), 2, p. 2.
370 'Socialism of the Sty', (July 1890), p. 2.
371 E. Bernstein, 'Amongst the Philistines: A Rejoinder to Belfort Bax', *Justice,* (14 November 1896), 6, p. 6.
372 H. Quelch, 'Fabian Scribes', *Justice,* (25 January 1890), 3, p. 3.
373 Arthur Keep, 'An American Socialist on the Fabians', *Justice,* (13 March 1897), 6, p. 6.

Shaw was characterised personally as 'the clown of English Socialism',[374] as a man whose 'principles translated into action would simply kill themselves',[375] and who must practice 'intellectual gymnastics' to rationalise these principles.[376] Quelch mused searingly that '[w]hether Mr. Shaw believes in anything is more than he should care to say', but that Shaw was certainly wrong in saying that 'Socialists have abandoned the idea of physical force. Mr. Shaw must know that the men of the SDF at any rate, are as fully convinced as ever that force is the midwife of progress.'[377] Six years later, however, *Justice* noted,

> Both [the Fabians and the SDF] believe that Parliament may be forced to pass laws beneficial to the masses, but it is curious to note how some perturbed congress spirits try to fasten on to the S.D.F. the stigma of holding to that institution as a finality, forgetting, or not knowing, that its object, programme and palliatives were at first intended, as they yet are, to destroy the twin political frauds organised against the rights and liberties of the people and calling themselves the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party.[378]

While both societies viewed Parliamentary action as a necessity, the SDF believed that the work which the Socialists must undertake extended beyond merely a revolution in legislation. Both the SDF and the Fabians displayed a tendency to centre themselves and their theories as the mainstream of the Socialist movement, and other interpretations as not just incorrect but as fringe. Even Shaw's theatrical ambitions came under SDF fire; an anonymous contributor suggested that whatever Shaw's assertions that he had written 'a propagandist play', they believed '[s]omething stronger is needed' if it was to arouse a response in the 'average Britisher'.[379] Shaw was not just craven in propagandist efforts; he was blind to the best methods by which to move the public.

Quite importantly for this argument, the SDF differentiated themselves explicitly from the Fabians on the grounds of their differing interpretations of evolutionary theory. The Fabians would trust in the forces of evolution to surmount the barricades erected by the Capitalist State. An 1896 article in *Justice* dismissed this possibility when the author asked what chance there was that the 'exploiting classes will give in at the due moment, and, laying down their arms, throw in

---

374 'Socialism of the Sty', (July 1890), p. 2.
375 'Tell Tale Straws', *Justice,* (26 July 1890), 2, p. 2.
376 'Socialism of the Sty', (July 1890), p.), 2.
377 H. Quelch, 'Fabian Scribes', (Jan 1890), p. 3.
378 J. M. O'Fallon, 'Social-Democratic Federation Socialism v. Anarchism and Its Sympathies', *Justice,* (05 September 1896), 4, p. 4.
379 'Stage Socialism, Review: Widowers' Houses by George Bernard Shaw', *Justice,* (20 May 1893), 6, p. 6.

their lot with the proletariat'. This idea, he argued, 'thus stated in all its nakedness, stripped of all those magnificent drapings with which our sweet and chaste friend, the Fabian, is so fond of coveting it, is too absurd to need any answer.'[380] The motif of Fabian weakness and wealth was here repeated. The supposed 'chasteness' of the Fabians also implied the impotence of their movement; if they remained as they were, they would never create the next generation of revolutionaries. The SDF advocated the view that human forces have become equal, or superior, to natural ones, and the man was empowered to channelise the force evolution carried out over human development. Their intervention was necessary, because Capitalism was a weapon wielded by a class used to their power and luxury, and who would be totally unwilling to forfeit these privileges with any paltrier incentive than necessity.

The SDF seems to have cherished a relationship to Annie Besant much more mercurial than their perpetual and invariable derision of Shaw—an animosity perhaps driven by Shaw's defection from their ranks in 1884.[381] An article titled 'Conversion' appeared in 1885 announcing that Mrs. Annie Besant had joined the Fabian Society, 'thereby pledg[ing] herself to Socialism'. The article noted with approval her personal advocacy of the 'abolition of wages, of production for profit, and classes', and of an article in *Our Corner,* 'in which she is a socialistic as the most revolutionary Socialist could desire' about the 'evils' of 'the monopoly of machinery by capitalists' and the impact on the labourers.[382] In 1890, an anonymous author remarked, 'I have yet to meet the man who has ever been persuaded by Fabian lectures or teaching ethically to help his brother man or elevate his sister woman, always excepting Annie Besant's ideas.'[383] She alone cut through the aforementioned 'middle-class twaddle' to stir her listeners to action. The SDF were clearly quite open to Besant's joining their ranks. To poach so prominent a member of the Fabian society for themselves would have been a strong victory. In 1886 an anonymous author asked, '[h]ow long is Mrs. Annie Besant going to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds?' Though she was a Fabian, and though two 'prominent members [of the Fabians] spoke most anti-Socialistically the other night', she remained 'always personally friendly with the Social-Democrats.' This personal friendship did not, the author noted with disappointment, preclude her 'injuring [the SDF] when she can'.[384] The SDF did not allow these injuries to go without appropriate riposte. An 1887 summary of a lecture by Hyndman on Marx noted that 'Mr. Sidney Webb, Annie Besant and George Bernard Shaw criticised Marx severely. In fact, it must be said [.

[380] Rothstein, 'Social-Democracy', (October 1896), p. 2.
[381] Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences,* (Macmillan & Co., 1912), p. 7; Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism,* p. 149.
[382] Hunter Watts, 'Conversion', (August 1885), p. 1.
[383] 'Socialism of the Sty', (July 1890), p. 2.
[384] 'Tell Tale Straws', (April 1886), p. 3.

. .] that they all three seemed somewhat confident of their intellectual superiority to the great German thinker.' These aspersions were answered by Hyndman who 'disposed satisfactorily of the objections raised.'[385]

The virulent criticisms to which the SDF subjected the Fabians did not prove true through passing years. In 1884, in *To-Day*, Hyndman argued in relation to the 'reduction of the hours of labour', that while there was a 'unanimity of sentiment' across all industries that the workers found themselves to be 'suffering from excessive toil', yet an Eight Hours Bill had 'no chance whatever' of becoming legislation. He contended that this would remain the case '[u]ntil the classes which are now the mere wage-slaves of capital are able to dominate the causes of their own imbrutement and injury'. Until 'reform' was 'pushed contemptuously aside' in favour of 'national revolution', he posited, the worker would be at the mercy of the Capitalist class.[386] Hyndman was wrong that an eight-hour workday would follow only violent revolution, however. Just five years later, the pages of *Justice* admitted that the Fabians had 'done good service by putting the Eight Hour Law in the form of a projected Bill.' The author could not resist, though, the caveat that '[t]here is no difficulty in doing this'.[387] It seemed that for all the effeminacy, for all the pomposity, for all the indolence with which the Fabians were maligned by the SDF, they had accomplished a feat in five years which Hyndman imagined only possible after the mass shedding of blood.

The Socialist League, founded by William Morris, came to life expressly in opposition to the SDF. Morris left the SDF because he felt that Hyndman was out of touch with the inclinations of the workers, and the need to create converts to the Socialist cause which, as Hale notes, was a plan rooted in evolutionary principle.[388] Morris did not think the worker was ready for revolution, and yet Hyndman persisted in calling for immediate reforms to improve the lot of individuals. The League was founded with the goal of educating workers about Socialism and thus converting them.[389] This delineation between the groups was foundational and not, as I. M. Britain contends, merely a matter of 'surface differences'.[390] Rather, as Trevor Lloyd observes, 'the division between the League and the SDF was serious, but it was not dwelt on at

---

385 'The Fabian Society', *Justice,* (05 March 1887), 3, p. 3.
386 Hyndman, 'Revolution or Reform', (August 1884), p. 194.
387 'The Draft of an Eight-Hour Bill', *Justice,* (23 November 1889), 1, p. 1.
388 Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 177.
389 Kinna, 'William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism', pp. 607-608.
390 I. M. Britain, 'Bernard Shaw, Ibsen, and the Ethics of English Socialism', *Victorian Studies* 21.3, (Spring 1978), 381-401, p. 386.

unnecessary length.'[391] Though the groups separated for good reason, they each expended more ire for those groups with whom they were more fundamentally opposed than for each other. Neither group committed themselves entirely to violent overthrow or parliamentary reform, and in this liminal space between the Fabians and the Anarchists they remained in some degree of sympathy with one another.

Lloyd divides the members of the League into four subgroups at the risk, he remarks, 'of dividing a small party into infinitesimals'. Eleanor Marx, her husband Edward Aveling, and, in the periphery, Engels, formed the Marxist contingent. The 'anti-Hyndmanites' were led by Bax, Morris's own subgroup dedicated itself to 'making socialists' and advocating against the 'electoral involvement' favoured by Hyndman, and the Anarchists formed the final group. These last were 'closer', Lloyd notes, to Morris and his contingent than to the other groups.[392] Though Lloyd characterises Bax as being most opposed to Hyndman, it was Morris whom the SDF critiqued for his Anarchist sympathies. This was in itself evidence of the importance of ideological rather than personal delineations between groups. At the League's annual conference, 'assembled delegates rejected a resolution brought forward by Mr. Bax in favour of political action and passed another endorsing "the policy of abstention from parliamentary action hitherto pursued by the League."' The League rejected parliamentary action as a method. Instead, they would pursue extra-political channels to create the Socialism of the future. The SDF attributed this decision to the League's dependence on 'Mr. Morris's pockets' and suggested that he 'has only to tap his purse significantly with his forefinger' to affect any policy which he favoured and prevent any of which he disapproved. This assertion played to the SDF's conviction, explored above, that they were the only group taking real action for the betterment of the condition of the worker. If the League was in the total control of Morris, any action taken by the League could have only the lasting power of one man's commitment to its pursual. As the SDF might have predicted, the League dissolved shortly after Morris ceased to be involved with it. When this happened, many League members returned to the SDF ranks. Lloyd performs a close reading of delineations in Socialist thought much in line with the spirit of this thesis. His mode of inquiry, informed by periodical history, is consistent with the methodology of this project. A return to periodical history, now with the aid of digital platforms, allows this mode of study to delve more deeply into the minutiae and nuance of Socialist publications in the period.

---

391 Trevor Lloyd, 'Morris V. Hyndman "Commonweal" and "Justice"', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter* 9.4, (Dec 1976), 119-128, p. 122.
392 Lloyd, 'Morris V. Hyndman', p. 122.

Though Hyndman admired Kropotkin personally, the Anarchists faced an assertive dismissal by the SDF.[393] One member of the SDF who confessed himself a recovered 'victim to Anarchist hallucinations', called the Anarchists an 'impractical set of visionaries', who were largely 'lamentably deficient in a proper knowledge and understanding of the sciences of evolution and economics.' A key complaint of his was also that the Anarchist imagined the Revolution would take a mere 'twenty-four lively hours'.[394] It was expressly evolutionary grounds on which the aims of Anarchism, and the methods of Anarchists, were disputed. Their programme for revolution, according to this reformed Anarchist, failed to allow for any slow progression or planning, and did not offer a plan for the revolution beyond the assumption that it would occur. Another article in *Justice* held that Anarchism 'has become a crying menace [. . .] to scientific Socialism'. [395] Kropotkin's wide interpretation of Darwinism was surely the root of this condemnation. While the Fabians held that evolution was a force stronger than society and capable of overcoming it, and the SDF hoped that evolutionary principles could be manipulated for a Socialist end, the Anarchists believed that the total removal of government was the salve necessary for the society of the future in which evolution would runs its course to create a peaceful and harmonious communalism among all people.

To-Day warned that 'Social Revolution by revolutionary methods means Social Dissolution'.[396] In the same year, while he was still an SDF member, Bax argued in a similar line that the goal of the Anarchist is 'social dissolution'. This would 'hardly endure for a day', he believes—'the old society would *re*form' into an older world order; Bax implied that the 'social organism', and thus the instinct for society, was too firmly imbedded to ever exist without some sort of collective.[397] The goal was the same; the method was different. The Anarchist disregarded the historical precedent set by human nature and instead sought to promulgate a new one disconnected from fact and history.

We have seen that the SDF positioned itself as a proponent of reform up until the point when such efforts ceased to be useful. When reform was no longer expedient, the SDF believed in the necessity for revolution. They set out this programme of reform explicitly in the pages of *Justice* and *To-Day*. The SDF also emphasised their dual commitment to reform and revolution in consciously differentiating themselves from the Fabians, the League, and the Anarchists. Their

---

393 Shpayer-Makov, 'The Reception of Peter Kropotkin', pp. 376-377.
394 Hart, 'The Folly of Anarchism', (1898), p. 2.
395 O'Fallon, 'Anarchy and Anarchism', *Justice,* (19 September 1896), 2, p. 2.
396 Foulger, 'Revolution by Reform', (Oct 1884), p. 427.
397 Bax, 'Unscientific Socialism', (March 1884) p. 202.

rejection of the Fabians was particularly vehement, because it was this group whose method most closely mirrored what the SDF saw as the initial phase of their own action. It was vital to the SDF message to make clear that their agreement with the Fabians about the usefulness of parliamentary reform existed only ephemerally. They used critiques of this group to remind readers of their own commitment to eventual revolution. The League and the Anarchists they criticised for being too hasty to reject the opportunity for parliamentary reform. The SDF viewed this haste as foregoing an easily accessible means of preparing the political groundwork for revolutionary action. Through their assertions about their own programme of action, and through the kind of critiques levelled at other groups, we have been able to see more clearly the goals and commitments of the SDF.

II.ii *The Fabian Society*

Having established that the Fabians looked to evolution to guide them in forming their understanding of society, of the rightness of Socialism for that society, and the method by which their form of Socialism might be achieved, it is now important to examine how this method took shape, in what action it was made manifest, and what criticism arose from the Fabians of the method and actions of other groups. The Fabians, as is perhaps not surprising in light of their dedication to gradualism, were willing to embrace the potential for a coalescing of Socialist groups formed through some degree of compromise. Indeed, Joseph Clayton observed of the Fabians of the late nineteenth century that their 'policy was conciliation, the minimising of differences, persuasion.'[398] They even hosted a conference to that effect in 1886, though Shaw attested afterwards that the event went so poorly as to have been afterwards struck wilfully from his memory.[399] Nevertheless, the Fabians were conscious of the necessity of finding common ground if the movement was to succeed.

'We have enough to do in fighting the landlord and the capitalist', Besant bewailed, 'without ranging against us in our economic battle those who agree with our economics, but differ—in one direction or the other—from social views held by individuals in our ranks.'[400] But it was these social views, if we included an understanding of human nature among them, which ensured the divisions within the Socialist cause. The economic focus of Besant's statement was

---

[398] Joseph Clayton, 'The Passing of Socialism in England', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 14.55, (September 1925), 425-436, p. 427.
[399] Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 11; further mention of the riots in Mark Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 134.
[400] Besant, 'Divide and —?', (May 1888), p. 136.

typical among the Fabians; Shaw acknowledged that he had been criticised for drawing the bounds of Socialism as too narrowly economic, and yet continued to believe that doing so was in the best interest of the movement.[401] The protests raised by the Fabians to the methods of the SDF, the League, and the Anarchists, were based firmly in disparate interpretations of the innate instinct of man. Nowhere was this better-exemplified than in Shaw's rejection of Kropotkin's social theory for 'too optimistically' assessing the tenor of conflict in an Anarchist future, which I will explore in further detail below.[402] The purpose of this section is to unfold the origins, method, and action of the Fabians, as well as their critique of other methodologies.

Shaw contended that the 'Fabian Society is warlike in its origin', for it sprang out of disruption in pursuit of vigour. The Fabians emerged from a schism with the Fellowship of New Life, called rather amusingly by Claeys the 'spiritual mother of the Fabian Society'.[403] Whereas the Fellowship, in Shaw's words, sought to regenerate humanity through the 'perfection of individual character', the Fabians sought to be more active and practical in their reform, and much less introspective. Perfection was too high a bar, and the ills which needed to be addressed too pressing to be allowed such a torpid rate of evolution.[404] The same 'practical vein' which assured their split, however, eventually led to the Fabians becoming 'the most resolute opponents of Insurrectionism'.[405] Shaw's careful unfolding of the argument served to contrast the Fabians favourably with both the sluggish reformers of the Fellowship, and the over-hasty Anarchists.

Shaw also contrasted the Fabians with the League and the SDF. Rather than being 'wise from the hour of its birth', Fabianism had grown into the wisdom which begets reticence of violence. Shaw acknowledged that, 'for a year or two', the Fabians were 'just as Anarchistic as the Socialist League and just as insurrectionary as the [SDF].'[406] This early propensity for upheaval was demonstrated in the second *Fabian Tract,* published in 1884, in which Shaw concluded with the declaration that 'we had rather face a Civil War than such another century of suffering as the present one has been.'[407] It was the Fabians alone who considered and occupied such a variety of branches of method, and who had constructed themselves with the most practical of these. Shaw positioned the Fabians as the most highly evolved of the Socialist organisations in London. His argument as to the 'war-like' origins of the group was made somewhat brittle when one

401 Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), p. 3.
402 Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), pp. 14-15.
403 Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 3; Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics,* p. 215.
404 Adams, *Kropotkin,* p. 17.
405 Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 3.
406 Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 3-4.
407 Shaw, 'A Manifesto', *Fabian Tract* 2, (1884) 1-2, p. 2.

considers that they took their name from Fabius Maximus, an Ancient Roman who earned the moniker 'the Delayer' for his use of peaceful tactics to diffuse violence.[408] Whatever the original intent, it is true that the Fabians shifted through time totally away from any violent rhetoric, even that used in conscious hyperbole.

Shaw professed that it was 'solely by an instinctive feeling' that he would find his kindred spirits among the Fabians rather than the SDF that he joined the former. The Fabians did not ally themselves at their inception with the League or the SDF because, as Shaw acknowledged, the Fabians were 'middle-class all through', holding meetings 'in one another's drawing-rooms'. The other societies, in contrast, were 'quite proletarian in their rank and file', and Shaw did not regard the proletariat as having within themselves the ability for revolution.[409] He was not the only member to join the Fabians with this incentive.[410] Shaw's frankness about the snobbery which attended the birth of the Fabian movement is superficially surprising. In actuality it is exactly this frankness which allowed the movement to execute their reforms with more practical success than their fellows. The Fabians sought to improve the lot of the worker from the highest rungs of society. Though they needed the vote of the worker to effect this change, they did not need to unify themselves with him more profoundly than as his political advisors. They did not seek to motivate him, as the other groups did, to abandon his livelihood and risk his life to rise up in a potentially violent revolution. They asked of him his mind, and not his body. The goal of the Fabian movement was, according to Webb, to 'convert the great mass of the English people to our own views.'[411] The dearness with which these views must be held by the 'great mass' need only be enough to motivate them to vote in their own interests, and thus the Fabians could hold safely their policy conversations within the middle-class intelligentsia.

The Fabians' lack of a strong following in the working class sometimes caused them practical difficulties, particularly financial ones. '[N]o power on earth', complained Shaw, 'can make free men and women of people who will not spend a shilling a year on their political business.'[412] Without what might now be termed grass-roots support, the Fabians turned elsewhere for money. The tone in which these benefactors were described was an uneasy one, as can be seen from the adjustments made between drafts of Shaw's 1892 election manifesto for

---

408 Boulter, *Bloomsbury Scientists,* p. 95.
409 Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 4; Bevir, 'The Marxism of George Bernard Shaw 1883-1889', p. 311; Mark Bevir, 'Fabianism and the Theory of Rent', *History of Political Thought* 10.2, (Summer 1989), 313-327, p. 326.
410 Peter Weiler, 'William Clarke: The Making and Unmaking of a Fabian Socialist', *Journal of British Studies* 14.1, (November 1974), 77-108, p. 89.
411 Sidney Webb, 'Socialism: true and false', *Fabian Tract* 51, (1894), 3-19, p. 9.
412 Shaw, 'The Fabian election manifesto', (1892), p. 10.

the Fabians. The 'sympathetic capitalists' who funded a Fabian leaflet campaign in the first draft, have become the society's 'comparatively rich friends' for the final draft. Likewise, the 'Liberal' support required to run candidates for Labor in the first draft has become 'middle-class' support in the final.[413] The Fabians had to appeal to the middle-class voters and benefactors for sympathetic support because they did not garner—or seek—adequate sympathy among the working class.

The Fabians sought to foster a 'State Socialism', where the interests of the majority were protected and advanced by an elected few. The 'difficulty in England', Shaw contended, 'is not to secure more political power for the people, but to persuade them to make any sensible use of the power they already have.'[414] The work of the Fabians was to gain enough popular sway to take control of the powers readily available to the majority of the electorate. People being 'too dishonest' for a Communist system with no laws, and 'too insubordinate' to be dictated to about their action by the State, the only route to the values sought by Anarchists and Fabians alike was, Shaw argued, 'Democracy'.[415] And, of the oft-touted critique for Democracy, tyranny of the majority, Shaw answered the following: '[a] couple of men are stronger than one: that is all.'[416] While 'Socialism means equal rights and opportunities for all', in Shaw's estimation, a Democracy by its very nature could not artificially suppress the majority will.[417] The Fabians believed that human nature inclined towards an innate hierarchy, the best expression of which was Democracy. Democracy was the culmination of evolutionary fact, and as such it was the most natural political system for the expression of human nature.

The State 'cannot be reduced to "Society" or to "Government," which is only one of its functions, but is Society organized and having force.'[418] Society without order could not be considered as one entity, in Sidney Ball's estimation. Nor can a government purport to speak for a whole people. It was only in the concept of the 'State', the coalescing of individuals together to protect their common good, that such a good could be sought and protected. If the workers could be convinced to use the force of their majority not to storm the halls of Parliament themselves—as an unruly 'Society'—but rather to fill up the 'Government' with representatives who would advocate for better working conditions, social protections, and sanitary regulations, then the 'State' which would be formed would be one which defended the people. This position

---

413 Shaw, 'The Fabian election manifesto', (1892), p. 10; Shaw, 'The Fabian election manifesto: PROOF', (1892), p. 10.
414 Shaw, 'Report on Fabian policy', (July 1896), p. 5.
415 Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), p. 17.
416 Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), p. 21.
417 George Bernard Shaw, 'What socialism is', *Fabian Tract* 13, (1890), 1-3, p. 3.
418 Ball, 'The moral aspects of socialism', (November 1896), p. 12.

contrasted with a contemporary British idealism which saw the concept of the State as crucial, and which worked towards reform. British idealists were more philosophically concerned with the vocabulary of the State as the idea through which one expresses a particular vision of the community.[419]

When it comes to the selection of these candidates who could be trusted to defend the worker, the theoretical ease met with practical difficulty. Shaw argued that the creation of a third party, such as might advocate a nominally Fabian agenda, was not a viable path forward; their candidate would only split the vote with the Liberal one, and therefore ensure the victory of the Conservative. He advocated for a requirement of the majority vote for the winning candidate, even if that required a second ballot, though he acknowledged that it suited neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives to advocate for such a method.[420] The lamentable fact that the Liberal party only offered 'safe Tory seats' to candidates of the Labour persuasion ensures that the path to Parliament was made more difficult, though some clamorous voices for reform might have been partially appeased by even these frustrated candidacies.[421] The selection of a candidate to run in these sham elections, and in elections where they stand a chance at success, was not straightforward. Members of Parliament were not paid for their work, which excluded anyone without independent wealth from being able to hold the role sustainably.

In 1887, Shaw advocated for the payment of Members of Parliament, to enable working class members to participate in government. [422] This advocacy was not met with immediate success. In 1892, Shaw still had cause roundly to criticise the Liberal Party for their refusal to add wages for members of Parliament to their party platform.[423] The labourers could not seek safely a solution in the candidacy of men of independent wealth, however. Shaw encouraged workers to be suspicious of a middle class, educated man who was willing to be a Fabian 'agitator' and to stand as a politician, because any man of education should be able to have more commercial success elsewhere. Therefore, if he was still interested in working selflessly, it was because he was not good enough to get better work, or because he was willing to sacrifice a small space of time to the movement rather than to dedicate himself fully to it.[424] Shaw professed no delusions about

---

419 For more on this interaction, which falls outside of the scope of this thesis, see David Runciman, *Pluralism and the Personality of the State,* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2009), p. 197 and Ch. 10, 'The return of the state' generally; and Stears, *Progressives,* pp. 41-44.
420 Shaw, 'The Fabian election manifesto', (1892), p. 5; Shaw, 'The Fabian election manifesto: PROOF', (1892), p. 5.
421 Shaw, 'The Fabian election manifesto', (1892), p. 6; Shaw, 'The Fabian election manifesto: PROOF', (1892), p. 6.
422 Shaw, 'The True Radical Programme', *Fabian Tract* 6, (1887), 1-9, p. 7.
423 Shaw, 'The Fabian election manifesto', (1892), p. 2.
424 Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 27.

human nature; rather than hoping and expecting selflessness of a man who had the potential to be commercially successful, the best way to attract such a man to the role was to make the role a lucrative one. This was yet another instance of the Fabians seeking to motivate Socialist reform by working *with* rather than *against* human nature. The Fabian society, according to Shaw, worked to promote 'existing forces', regardless of the 'name' or 'principles' the force—in this instance, a political party—purported to have, but rather by 'having regard solely to the tendency of its actions, supporting those which make Socialism and Democracy'.[425] This programme was in total opposition to the hard-line position of the SDF, who supported only candidates who ran explicitly from within their camp.

The Fabian programme for Socialism sought the following: 'the control by the community of the means of production for public advantage, instead of for private profit', or 'the absorption of rent and interest by the community collectively.'[426] The Fabians sought to use the framework of the existing system in the new Socialist order, and simply to reform the distribution of the benefits of that system. Factories and rent would still exist in the future envisioned by the Fabians, contrary, as we find below, to the League's Utopian vision. Besant would have it that all 'cultivatable land kept uncultivated and not used for public purposes should be forfeit to the State', thus characterising all land as means of production.[427] The distribution of land was a concern across the Fabian agenda. Webb suggested that '[s]ince we cannot all live on the best sites, those who do must contribute, for the common benefit, the equivalent of the extra advantage they are enjoying.' Thus, 'a Socialist State or municipality will charge the full economic rent for the use of its land and dwellings, and apply that rent to the common purposes of the community.'[428] The State would not grant ownership or the right to inheritance of any piece of property or land; Webb, rather than seeking to empower the working classes to become landlords themselves, sought to do away with idleness of the upper classes while still incentivising production by the individual. In this way would he combat the inclination to indolent enjoyment while working positively with the competitive instinct; man would retain the incentive to labour more successfully, or more innovatively, with the direct result of a more pleasant and perhaps more prestigious home. Similar trappings of wealth would exist after the advent of the Socialist State as before it, but the methods of access would change.

Shaw concurred; all land not being equal, and all locations not equally trafficked (and therefore not equally profitable to shop keepers), inequality would exist even without the State's

---

425 Shaw, 'Report on Fabian policy', (July 1896), p. 3.
426 Webb, 'English progress towards social democracy', (Dec 1890), p. 4.
427 Annie Besant, 'The Redistribution of Political Power', *Our Corner,* (May 1885), 260-265, p. 263.
428 Webb, 'Socialism: true and false', (1894), p. 19.

continuing protection of the owners of monopolies of industry and property.[429] Shaw thus suggested that the goals of Socialism insofar as property was to give the cost of rent not to 'private pockets', but rather to the 'people's pocket', and, to simplify this distribution, for the State to collect the funds as the 'representative and trustee of the people.'[430] The method for reform advocated by the Fabians was consistent with their evaluation of human nature. They sought to work within the bounds of the competitive spirit and selfish impulse of man. Now, let us examine how Fabian theory manifested in practical terms.

The Fabians offered concrete data to emphasise the rectitude of their methodology. In explanation for this departure from the more emotive rhetoric of some of their fellows, Shaw explained '[t]he Fabian Society [. . .] concludes that in the natural philosophy of Socialism, light is a more important factor than heat.'[431] Explanation and education are more important than agitation in supporting the advent of a Socialist state. Webb argued for State ownership of 'public services', which, he claimed, would save £1,500,000 annually, 'enough to cover half the expenditure on the relief of London's poor.' The numbers of these poor were large, with 300,000 of London's 4,300,000 residents living in 'a state of chronic want', and 43,000 children without sufficient food.[432] With figures like these, the Fabians were motivated to seek solution through compromise. They invited a convention of speakers with representatives from the divided Socialist parties to a June 1886 conference in 'repudiation of political sectarianism'. [433] The invitations were addressed to 'all the great Trade Societies' and 'Radical Associations' in England and proposed to hold a conference expressly to 'afford an opportunity to those interested in the cause of labor to discuss the present commercial system, and the better utilisation of national wealth for the benefit of the community.' The Fabians invited delegates selected by each society to meet and exchange ideas for the furthering of what they clearly perceived to be their united desire.[434] The event was not a success. Shaw, by his own admission, 'never had the courage even to read the shorthand writer's report, which still remains in [manuscript]', and was not published by the Fabians.[435]

---

429 Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), p. 7.
430 George Bernard Shaw, 'Transition', *Fabian Essays in Socialism,* (The Fabian Society: London, 1889), 173-201, pp. 180-181.
431 Shaw, 'Report on Fabian policy', (July 1896), p. 8.
432 Sidney Webb, 'Figures for Londoners', *Fabian Tract* 10, (1889), 1-3, p. 3.
433 Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 11.
434 Annie Besant, 'The Fabian Society and Socialist Notes', *Our Corner,* (March 1886), 187-192, p. 189.
435 Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 11.

The closest London's Socialists ever came to a revolution was a day known to posterity as 'Bloody Sunday'. On the 13th of November 1887, representatives of all the leading Socialist organisations led a demonstration into Trafalgar Square. A violent clash with police was followed by the trial and imprisonment of many working men. Even before that infamous Sunday, Besant referred to the 'persecution' of public speakers convening outdoor rallies. The police, she claimed, 'only summon[] the Socialists', though '[h]undreds of meetings are held in the streets every Sunday in London'. Speakers at these Socialist gatherings, including William Morris, faced fines for their participation.[436] This anti-Socialist sentiment was brewing in the autumn of 1886, and reached a boiling point in 1887.

In Besant's account of the events related to the Trafalgar Square rally, she painted the picture of an initially peaceful demonstration overblown in the press and mishandled by the government. Prior to the planned demonstration, the Home Secretary had declared that '*bonâ fide* political meetings would not be interfered with' by police. The day before the planned gathering, however, two 'proclamations' were issued. The first, 'forbidding meetings in the Square' and the second, any 'procession to approach' it. After a 'long discussion' between organisers, the decision was made to hold the rally as planned. Besant was at pains to explicate and imply the reasonable, thoughtful approach of the Socialists in contrast to the unpredictable reelings of the State. Besant described the attendees of the rally as 'peaceful' and 'unarmed', and the police as 'falling upon them' with 'truncheons', 'used mercilessly'. She recounted at least two deaths and one hundred and thirty injuries treated in hospitals and writes bitterly of the sham trials given to these protestors, many of them given lengthy sentences or unanswerable fines.[437]

Besant asserted that the gatherings of 'half-starved men' in Trafalgar Square were made into a 'manufactured panic' among the public by the 'senseless clamor' of the popular press, whom she termed the 'penny-hunting tribe'. The description of the riot offered by *The Spectator*'s author was certainly different not just in tone and sympathy to Besant's account, but also in factual content. 'No life was lost', the author claimed. Only 'one policeman was stabbed', but 'no dangerous case among the mob was treated in the hospitals'. This fact in itself was held by *The Spectator*'s commentator to demonstrate the 'moderation with which the public servants acted.' The same article acknowledged that there may exist 'individual cases' where an officer might become 'uncontrollably irritated', but attributed this to what their writers considered very understandable exhaustion.[438]

---

436 Annie Besant, 'The Fabian Society and Socialist Notes', (September 1886), 187-192, p. 189.
437 Annie Besant, 'The Story of Trafalgar Square, 1887-1888', *Our Corner,* (April 1888), 224-233, p. 227, pp. 229-230.
438 'News of the Week', *The Spectator,* (19 November 1887), 1, p. 1.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* stood alone, according to Besant, in reporting with accuracy the numbers and tenor of the men who gathered in the Square.[439] The *Gazette* criticised the overreaction of the State, which swore in '50,000 special constables to exclude the public from a Square which, when closely packed, can, at the outside, hold 15,000 persons', while *The Spectator* claimed the number of new constables was between 20,000 and 30,000.[440] Eleanor Marx Aveling also wrote an article for the *Gazette* criticising the violence clash in which police 'singled out' female protestors as easy targets.[441] *The Spectator* further accused the Socialists of attacking the horses of mounted police, while Marx Aveling has the horses trampling innocent bystanders.[442] The crowd of men, before the police attempted to eject them, were 'despondently indifferent', apart from the occasional 'flickering up into a gleam of hope' at the words of one speaker or another—not the dangerous rioters invigorated for revolution which the mainstream press's reporting of the incident evoked for the public.[443]

Both Webb and Shaw joined Besant in her critiques of the incident. The men laid blame at the feet of the Liberal party, characterised as apathetic to the plight of the Labor movement.[444] Shaw charged them with having 'abandoned' the working men arrested in Trafalgar Square, and levels direct criticism at Gladstone for the latter's praise of the 'excellent police' involved in the incident.[445] The Fabians may not have been in favour of change through revolution, but nor did they look benevolently on the State powers which refused to work to improve the plight of the working man at the hands of a tyrannous use of power.

The closest any scholar has come to positing strategies informed by evolutionary science as the cause and root of division of the Socialist movement in this period occurs in Hale's analysis of the fallout of the Bloody Sunday riots for relations between the SDF and the Fabians. He observes,

> In the aftermath, the Fabians disassociated themselves from the Federation and the advocacy of such revolutionary strategies. In doing so, they sought to emphasize not only that they held to a different strategy to bring about socialism, but that they held to the only scientifically correct strategy to do so. Certainly, Hyndman followed Marx in claiming that they were the scientific

---

439 Besant, 'The Story of Trafalgar Square', (April 1888), p. 225.
440 'Points Gained for the People', *Pall Mall Gazette,* (17 November 1887), 1, p. 1; 'News of the Week', *The Spectator,* (19 November 1887), 1, p. 1.
441 Eleanor Marx Aveling, 'How Women Fared on Sunday', *Pall Mall Gazette,* (16 November 1887), 2, p. 2.
442 'Topics of the Day', *The Spectator,* (19 November 1887), 5, p. 5.
443 Besant, 'The Story of Trafalgar Square', (April 1888), p. 225.
444 Webb, 'The Workers' Political Programme', (1891), pp. 3-4.
445 Shaw, 'The Fabian election manifesto', (1892), p. 2; Shaw, 'The Fabian election manifesto: PROOF', (1892), p. 2.

> socialists, but this much, the Fabians argued, was simply not true. The science in question, of course, was evolution.[446]

Hale is correct and our analyses of this situation concur. It is one instance of many, across a period of nearly twenty years, during which Socialist groups delineated the strategies for which they agitated from those of their peers on evolutionary lines. As I demonstrate below, this was far from a unique instance of an explicitly evolutionary divide—not in terms as formal as Malthusian or Lamarckian, but rather in a low science discourse about human nature.

Though Fabian activism stopped short of violent conflict, members of the Fabians certainly proposed concrete measures for social improvement, despite criticism of other Socialist groups to the contrary. 'Vague talk of "general improvement"', according to Besant, would have no practical impact. She wrote that 'dilettante sympathy' was useless to factory workers, thinking in particular of improving the working conditions of women.[447] It was '[l]aw, and law alone' which could ensure sufficient progress.[448]

It was true that Besant does not seek to move with undue haste; 'however great the impulse for improvement', it would likely take 'more than one Parliament' to institute the legislative change for the redistribution of land and power of which she was desirous. Nevertheless, she did not doubt that 'it is along these lines that the reforming energy will travel'.[449] This gradualism was attributed by their rival groups to complacency and complicity with the forces of the State which sought to protect Capitalism in perpetuity. Besant argued that the social tendency was demonstrable in a plethora of good legislation to which the public either inclines or which had already been passed.[450] It was its status as law that guarantees the reform will last longer than the whim of the public. To this point, regarding the importance of legislation to ensure shorter hours, Webb contended that 'moral suasion' was not enough, nor will mere 'public opinion' effect lasting change.[451] On this basis Webb urged that 'every workman should insist on a promise from his Parliamentary candidate that he will support an Eight Hours Bill', and, further than that, that the worker's support should not be given without a 'public utterance' of the promise from the heads of the party.[452]

---

[446] Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 190-191.
[447] Besant, 'The Evolution of Society', (September 1885), p. 136.
[448] Besant, 'The Evolution of Society', (September 1885), p. 136.
[449] Besant, 'The Redistribution of Political Power', (May 1885), p. 265.
[450] Besant, 'The Evolution of Society', (Sept 1885), p. 137.
[451] Sidney Webb, 'The case for an eight hours bill', *Fabian Tract* 23, (May 1891), 3-15, p. 6.
[452] Webb, 'The case for an eight hours bill', (May 1891), p. 15.

The Fabians looked to arm the worker not just with sentiment, but also with the knowledge to assess a candidate for themselves. Webb listed, beside a facsimile of the 'Official Liberal Programme', questions to ask each candidate before the worker agreed to give him his vote. The political system was routinely explained in simple terms in the pages of the *Fabian Tract*s in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and it was done so with the hope of preparing workers to make use of the power that their vote affords to them.

The 1890s saw a softening of tone in the writing of leading Fabians in order to appeal to a working-class readership, and no longer just to the sympathetic middle class. For instance, Webb had clearly learned a lesson about farm labourers in the years which intervened the publication of his first (1890), second (1893), and third (1894) editions of 'What the Farm Laborer Wants'. The absolutes had been softened, and the labourer had more agency. Where the 1890 edition posited that the labourer, 'like his father before him, will starve on his wages, fall sick in his cottage, often little better than a pig-stye'; in the later editions the labourer 'too often', 'like his father before him, will just drag along with his family on his wages'. The figure drawn by Webb is granted more dignity, less sickliness, and a family. The 'union' which Webb advised the farm labourer to join in 1890 had become a 'Trade Union' in the later editions. This union, in the first edition, would 'fight the farmer for [the labourer].' In the later ones, the Trade Union would 'enable him to fight his [own] battles.'[453] Webb had learned that if he expected the labourer to rise up, he must write like he believed the labourer had it within himself to do so. Engels observed this phenomenon in an 1893 letter: the Fabians 'must now allow themselves to be permeated by the spirit of the workingmen members of their own society. [. . .] [E]ither they remain alone, officers without soldiers, or they must go along.'[454] The Fabians needed the workingman to lend their support and practical action in the 1890s much more than at the group's inception. In the four years between these articles, two notes had been added with contact details for complaints about any infringements to access to commons and solicitation for school fees, and another two with advice about Parish Councils and Allotment access.[455] The pivot to a labourer with personal dignity and agency, as well as the means to take action to protect his rights, marked an evolution in Fabian policy.

---

[453] Sidney Webb, 'What the farm laborer wants', *Fabian Tract* 19, (1890), 1-4, p. 1;
Sidney Webb, 'What the farm laborer wants', *Fabian Tract* 19, (1893), 1-4, p. 1; Sidney Webb, 'What the farm laborer wants', *Fabian Tract* 19, (1894), 1-4, p. 1.

[454] Engels to Sorge: London, March 18, 1893, published and translated in Leonard E. Mins, 'Unpublished Letters of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to Americans', *Science & Society* 2.3, (Summer 1938), 348-375, p. 372.

[455] Webb, 'What the farm laborer wants', (1894), p. 4.

J. Ramsay MacDonald contended in 1895 that to lose an election was 'simple'. The ingredients of a losing party are 'shouting at meetings', 'alienating [. . .] [those] who don't yet call themselves Socialists', and too much time 'talking in the committee-rooms'. These things foretell failure, especially if they are combined with the 'neglect [of] all organisation.'[456] He encouraged participation not just in the workers voting themselves, but also in campaigning for their candidate. '[I]f you cannot canvass a street', he advised, the worker can 'convert' his neighbour.[457] The Fabians had come to a greater policy of action for the working class, though they still fall short of advocating protest. Workers were advised to participate politely in the political system, so as not to alienate genteel society.

The Fabian complaint with the Social Democratic Federation was twofold. Firstly, the SDF's philosophy was grounded in Marxian rather than Millian Socialism.[458] Indeed, Shaw explicitly suggested that '[n]umbers of young men, pupils of Mill, Spencer, Comte, and Darwin', in the image and inspiration of Hyndman and the SDF, 'left aside evolution and forethought' in favour of 'insurrectionary economics' and 'Karl Marx'—and were convinced of the imminency of the Revolution.[459] Hyndman led astray these young Socialists, and, as Shaw made clear, his path and method was the antithesis of a Socialism informed by evolution; it was an unnatural and misguided strain of the theory and a Socialism too 'extreme' for the Fabians.[460] The other issue for the Fabians was the SDF's means of revolution. The SDF purported to see no room for gradualism. They pursued a purity of principle which upset practical measures for improvement. The SDF ran candidates even in districts in which doing so split the Liberal vote and ensured a Conservative victory. In one such election, it was revealed that several SDF candidates had funded their campaigns with money from the Conservative Party.[461] This action received harsh condemnation from both Fabians and members of the League, who recognised that the theoretical commitments of the SDF had stymied real improvement and in fact promoted policies which were detrimental to workers.[462] As Shaw acknowledged, the Fabian's '*views* have always been the same as those of that body [the SDF].' It was their 'organization' and 'methods' which were 'radically different'.[463]

---

456 J Ramsay MacDonald, 'How to lose and how to win an election', *Fabian Tract* 64, (1895), 1-2, p. 1.
457 MacDonald, 'How to lose and how to win an election', (1895), p. 2.
458 George Feaver, 'REVIEW: *From Radicalism to Socialism: Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines, 1881-1889* by Willard Wolfe', Victorian Studies 20.3, (1977), 335-337, p. 336.
459 Shaw, 'Transition', (1889), p. 186.
460 Wilkins, 'The Non-Socialist Origins', p. 199.
461 Bevir, 'Annie Besant's Quest', p. 80.
462 Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 7.
463 Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 21.

The Fabians sought to 'Socialize the [mainstream] Press as [they] hope[d] to Socialise Parliament', and they were therefore willing to publish articles promoting Fabianism in papers which were neutral or unsympathetic to their cause in hopes of reaching a wider readership.[464] The SDF, however, refused to contribute to mainstream media sources. Instead, the SDF-run *Justice* published exclusively propagandist material. Because of the limited scope of the journal, Shaw described it as not having been 'worth a penny to any man whose pence are so scarce as a laborer's'.[465] Why should a labouring man choose to buy *Justice* when he could not learn the weather forecast or follow events beyond the political in its pages? A much better way to reach this reader would be in the pages of the paper he might already be accustomed to purchase. '[T]he Fabian society is a society for helping to bring about the Socialisation of the industrial resources of the country', Shaw argued. Whereas the SDF 'is a society for enlisting the whole proletariat of the country in its own ranks and itself Socialising the national industry.'[466] The Fabians set out to use the structures already in place to improve the lot of the working man. The SDF, the Fabians argued, pursued unnecessary and unrealistic upheaval for the gratification of their ideological commitments.

The Fabians were somewhat warmer, though still critical, of William Morris and the *Commonweal.* Besant criticised both *Justice* and the *Commonweal* for their response to the population crisis; though she noted that the *Commonweal* was generally 'scientific in its treatment of economic questions'. Both papers, however, published 'blatant denunciations of the law of population', which Besant understood as Malthusian. 'Prudential restraint', she argued, was not inherently opposed to socialist values.[467] Besant believed it Utopian to suggest that Socialism could solve overpopulation by means other than the curbing of population growth. Though he did not mention Morris by name, Webb derided the 'fancy sketches' offered by some Socialists who sought to map the Utopian future of the 'Socialist State'. Morris's Socialist Utopia, *News from Nowhere,* had begun to be serialised in the January of the year in which Webb published this December piece. Webb argued that there would 'never' be a time when the work towards Socialism could stop; it was merely the correct method by which 'social improvement advances.'[468] Thus, to promote a static Utopia was to misunderstand not only human nature, but

---

464 Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 24.
465 Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 23.
466 Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 21. He uses almost identical language the next year, when he suggests that the Federation 'proposes to democratise the State and throw upon it the whole work of organising the national industry.' 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), p. 4.
467 Besant, 'The Law of Population', (June 1886), p. 325.
468 Webb, 'English progress towards social democracy', (Dec 1890), p. 4.

also the truth of evolution. The Fabians did not believe that their reform efforts would one day cease to be necessary; rather, and unlike their fellow Socialists, they anticipated an ongoing participation in shaping the law and political system.

Shaw went farthest in his criticisms of Morris as an 'enemy of mankind' for his propagation of an anti-Parliamentary Socialism in September of 1887, just months before the Trafalgar Square riot would begin to sway Morris away from the idea of imminent revolution through violent overthrow. It was, in part, Morris's wide reputation as a Socialist among the non-Socialist public which earned him Shaw's ire; his public notoriety gave undue weight to his ideas, for which the 'whole movement is held answerable'.[469] The 'transition from mitigated individualism to full collectivity [*sic*]' could only be made after 'the capitalist system has worked itself out to its last logical expression', Hubert Bland argued. He went on to suggest that 'all Socialists [. . .] are agreed that until the economic moment has arrived, although the hungry or ignorant may kick up dust in Whitechapel and make a bloody puddle in Trafalgar Square, the Social Revolution is impossible.' Bland seemed conveniently to ignore the presence of speakers from not only the League and the SDF, but also from the Fabians in the 'bloody puddle' of Trafalgar Square's Bloody Sunday.[470] The Bloody Sunday riots, however, certainly proved a turning point in Morris's understanding of the imminency of revolution. It was impossible for Morris to continue to imagine that the violent revolutionary activity of a minority of the population could force change for the majority. Indeed, Shaw described Morris as 'sanely alive' to the need for 'consent of the majority' before a revolution was enacted, as demonstrated in *News from Nowhere*.[471] He also quipped that the 'conflict between ideal Socialism and practical Social-Democracy [. . .] destroyed the Socialist League only the other day.'[472] The Fabians' message was clear: they were the practical alternative to the idealism of the Socialist League, which had already proved destructive to the League and had been abandoned by its founder, Morris.

It was Anarchist methodology which was the most illogical and distasteful to Fabians. As with the SDF and League, it was 'practical measures' of Anarchism, not the 'aims or principles' of the movement with which the Fabians took issue. Shaw explained that in the early days of the movements, that is, in the mid-1880s, '[t]he real reason why Anarchist and Socialist worked then shoulder to shoulder as comrades and brothers was that neither one nor the other had any

469 George Bernard Shaw, 'A Word for War', *To-day,* (Sept 1887), 82-86p. 83 and p. 85.
470 Bland, 'The Outlook', (1889), p. 202.
471 Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), p. 26.
472 Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), p. 4.

definite idea of what he wanted or how it was to be got.'[473] As the groups conceived of themselves with clearer eyes, their divisions became irreconcilable. On these principles, 'Justice, Virtue, Truth, Brotherhood', Shaw asserted, they were 'all agreed'.[474] Indeed, the Anarchist journal *Freedom* was founded by Charlotte Wilson, formerly of the Fabians, who had been a voice for Anarchist agitation from within that group before removing herself from its ranks.[475]

Whatever the groups had in common, the Fabians also demonstrated a fundamental difference from the Anarchists in their interpretation of human nature. Shaw's statement that Kropotkin 'too optimistically [. . .] disposes of the average man by attributing his unsocialism [*sic*] to the pressure of the corrupt system under which he groans' exemplifies the pith of the Fabian objection. 'Remove that pressure', and Kropotkin believed the man 'will think rightly'. If this assessment of human nature were true, and 'natural man' was 'social as well as gregarious', then Shaw asked how 'the corruption and oppression under which he groans' evolved.[476] If human nature was given to communalism, Capitalism ought never to have arisen—a clear rejection also of the SDF's Marxist view of history. That Capitalism did evolve was, for Shaw, evidence that Kropotkin's understanding of human nature, and implicitly of evolution, was faulty. For Shaw, man was not a 'fallen angel'. Rather, he was 'an obstinate and selfish devil, who is being slowly forced by the iron tyranny of Nature to recognise that in disregarding his neighbor's happiness he is taking the surest way to sacrifice his own.'[477] It was only by inculcating a belief that the happiness of the neighbour was tied inextricably to the happiness of the individual that this actor would be motivated to pursue the best interests of the group.

Shaw believed that Communist Anarchism is 'impracticable' for a society which is governed by the 'morals developed under existing Unsocialism [*sic*]'.[478] The lesson that man's happiness was to be guaranteed by the success of the group must be universally recognised. Thus, if 'all the evils against which Anarchism is directed are caused by men taking advantage of the institution of property to [. . .] seize their subsistence without working for it', then why should they not 'attempt to take exactly the same advantage of Anarchist Communism?'.[479] The

---

473 Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 16.
474 Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), p. 5.
475 Mark Bevir, 'The Rise of Ethical Anarchism in Britain, 1885-1900', *Historical Research* 69, (1996), (republished by UC Berkeley: Previously Published Works), 1-42, p. 6 and p. 24; Susan Hinely, 'Charlotte Wilson, the "Woman Question", and the Meanings of Anarchist Socialism in Late Victorian Radicalism', *IRSH* 57, (2012), 3-36, p. 33.
476 Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), pp. 14-15.
477 Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), p. 15.
478 Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), p.. 23.
479 Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), p. 15.

root of Anarchist policy came from a misunderstanding of human nature, which imputed an unproven interest in the collective over the personal onto the wider population.

Webb termed 'spurious Collectivism' any idea which would grant ownership by means of an arbitrary system of any piece of land or house or industry to an individual, who could then find himself at a huge and unearned advantage over his fellows.[480] This flaw in Anarchist theory, that it seemed to ignore that inherent inequalities existed in the attractions of property and occupation, was made much of by the Fabians. Shaw derided Individualist Anarchists for being desirous of a system of 'occupying ownership', by which the occupier of any shop or house at the time of the revolution would be its owner. Shaw pointed out that, in the instance of someone with a beautiful home in an excellent location, even if they won the house by lottery instead of by occupying it at a lucky time, they could not be barred from selling their right to occupy to someone else, and this would be 'unearned' profit.[481] Though the Fabians might have turned away from the veracity of Marxism, this argument certainly lent itself to a Marxist understanding of primitive accumulation. The Anarchists, rather than ameliorating the evils of Capitalism, would simply begin from scratch the system of accumulation which granted the occupying owners of the most arable or conveniently located land an advantage over their fellows in perpetuity.

Besant differentiated Socialism, favoured by the Fabians, from the Communism which tended to be favoured by Anarchists in that the former 'leaves intact a man's control over himself and over the value of his work'—that the 'socialising of land' was employed only to prevent the possibility of one man 'enslaving his fellows'. In contrast, Communism 'implies the complete abolition of private property', and the subsistence of man from the 'common store', regardless of his contribution to it. In an unusual acceptance of the idea of the malleability of human nature, she acknowledged that in 'some future time' it was possible that Communism would be the 'only rational system', and that this would be rendered by a more 'evolved' human race, able to hold 'the scales of justice with a perfectly even hand; his one aim the general good'. '[F]or man as he is', she argued, 'Communism would mean the living of the idle on the toil of the laborious, the rebirth, under a new name, of our present system.'[482] Besant accused the Anarcho-Communists of a policy which would serve to replicate the evils of their current Capitalist system. The Anarchists believed Fabian gradualism would be liable for the same fault. Reform

[480] Webb, 'Socialism: true and false', (1894), p. 18.
[481] Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), p. 9.
[482] Annie Besant, 'Modern Socialism', *Our Corner,* (February 1886), 76-84, p. 81.

which could be made legally within the current oppressive system would never be drastic enough to satisfy the ideological commitments and practical ambitions of the Anarchists.

The Fabians believed inequality was inescapable. To allow for a redistribution of ownership without State oversight would only be to crown new kings, made powerful by a different metric of success. The strongest man might be able to establish ownership of the best house, and, if generations of his family could protect their right to that property, they would eventually accumulate enough unearned advantage to ensure that they need not toil as that ancestor had. The presence of a strong State might mitigate the accumulation of property and disrupt the possibility of advantage not earned through the hard work of the beneficiary. The Anarchists, by contrast, held that power itself was a corrupting force, and that it was only through the protection of the State that power was consolidated and maintained. Anarchism, in dismantling the State entirely, would allow for no stopgap for bad behaviour. Anyone desirous of taking advantage of the system could do so as long as he could bear the 'reproaches of his conscience and his neighbours'.[483] It was the belief of Fabians that the 'average man' could bear this social punishment for material gain, and of the Anarchists that he could not. The advocacy of violent revolution was not exclusive to the Anarchists. Both the SDF and the League foresaw fighting in the streets on the path to a Socialist state, and members of these groups propounded this violence to varying degrees. Webb dismissed those Socialist who suppose that the advent of their movement would see 'sanguinary conflict in the street', and the Fabians continued to promulgate a gradualist programme in opposition to these three groups.[484]

The Fabian movement used their scientific understanding of human nature to lay out their methodological plan for an evolution of society towards Socialism. They explained in both theoretical and practical terms what form such a plan would take. From Shaw's frank analysis of the origins of the Fabian movement, to the searing critiques levelled by leading Fabians against other groups of Socialists, the society made their pitch for the rectitude and efficacy of their approach to revolution. The evolution of Fabian thought, from civil war to middle class appeal to the empowerment of the working man to guide his own political future, occurred within the space of ten years. Though *Freedom,* the Anarchist journal founded by Kropotkin and Wilson, continues to publish an annual issue at time of writing this thesis, the Fabians are the only one of the four groups examined here who continue to operate politically. Their ability to evolve, and their willingness to compromise, ensured their survival. This section has examined how the

[483] Shaw, 'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', (1893), p. 13.
[484] Webb, 'English progress towards social democracy', (Dec 1890), p. 14.

Fabians began, what form their methodology took, how the methodology manifested in concrete action, and their specific critiques of their rival collectives. It has found that both the methodology of the group and its critiques of other Socialist groups were informed by explicitly evolutionary arguments.

II.iii *The Socialist League*

The Socialist League was home to a number of different strains of Socialist thought—Anarchist, Marxist, and, as Lloyd aptly terms it, 'anti-Hyndmanite'.[485] It was also, and perhaps most importantly, home to William Morris, whose personal politics never aligned comfortably with any of those labels, but whose personal 'genius' and status as an 'inspirational writer' marks out the *Commonweal*.[486] Morris was a 'back-to-the-land' as well as a 'revolutionary' Socialist.[487] He could see clearly the Utopia in which he hoped all the efforts of the League might culminate, but his inability to articulate a path to this destination allowed the League, a small group overburdened by too many conflicting philosophies, eventually to splinter and dissolve—though not before ousting Morris himself, their founder and funder. Perhaps this tumultuous existence justified Engels when he referred to League members as 'emotional socialists'.[488] Throughout the existence of the League and the *Commonweal,* Marxists and parliamentarians published beside Anarchist agitators, and vied for leadership within the group. Eventually, the Anarchist element won out. Because it was home to these conflicting voices, the League never articulated a decisive, lasting position for itself. It demonstrated much more interest in the alignment of values between groups than the condemnation of the Social Democratic Federation (Hyndman being the obvious exception) or the Anarchists. The League was definite in its extremely critical view of the Fabian movement, but still advocated for a unification of these groups working towards a common aim.

The *Commonweal* asked, '[w]ith our aim acknowledged to be the same, why cannot each [Socialist] throw himself into the work that lies nearest to his hand, remembering that the work of others might not be the same as his?'[489] Each group, therefore, could play to their strengths with the acknowledgement that they were overwhelmingly aligned. One article even went so far

---

485 Lloyd, 'Morris V. Hyndman', p. 122.
486 Lloyd, 'The Politics of William Morris's *News from Nowhere*', p. 274; Bevir, 'William Morris: The Modern Self, Art, and Politics', p. 3.
487 Sumpter, 'Anthropology, Socialist Prediction and William Morris's *Commonweal*', p. 359.
488 Engels to Sorge: 16-17 September 1886. 'Unpublished Letters of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels', pp. 359-360.
489 Carlisle, 'Correspondence', (March 1888), p. 93.

as to suggest a 'Socialist Free Tribune' column for *The Commonweal,* with the hope of encouraging discussion between Socialist groups. The author contended that 'friendly discussion of our differences of opinion as Communists, Anarchists, and Social Democrats, is decidedly useful to the common cause of the emancipation of labour.'[490] It seems he did not intend to include the anti-Communist anti-Anarchist Fabian movement in these discussions, but even the unification of the three he did mention would have been a clear advancement of the Socialist cause. Below, we will examine the methods for revolution advocated by the Socialist League, as well as the critiques levelled by them towards their fellow Socialist groups, of which there are notably fewer than we find among the other organisations.

Education was at the centre of the Socialist League's plans for fostering the society of the future, though whether this education would lead its beneficiaries towards fighting in the streets or standing for the House of Commons was never settled. This education should have, according to Morris, included 'economics', 'organisation', and 'administration'. He hearkened towards a medieval romance language, and also towards the revolutionary language to which we will come below, in linking this education to forging the 'head of the spear which is to pierce the armour of Capitalism'.[491] Scheu joined Morris in this, rousing the reader to '*Educate!*' (a refrain he repeated more than a dozen times in his single page article) in order to effect the revolution.[492] Morris's educational programme sought to 'make these poor folk conscious of the fact that they are part of a great class which *must* struggle for existence and *should* struggle for a decent life'.[493] He engaged in a Darwinian dialectic with this 'struggle for existence', though Morris flipped on its head the presumption that the winners and losers of this struggle were settled classes. Rather, Morris emphasised that the 'struggle' was not over—workers continued to have the opportunity to succeed in demanding more of life. From this, the worker would have realised that 'true co-operation and privilege cannot exist together.'[494] In order to live communally, all must be the equal of all. The writers of the *Commonweal* foresaw a problem with this exhortation, though, and they take pains to discourage 'middle-class young men' who attempt 'virtuously' to join an 'already overstocked labour-market' to play the 'proletarian'.[495] They believed that the equality of the future should not begin with the privileged playing at being the economic equal of the

[490] James Blackwell, 'Correspondence', *The Commonweal,* (13 April 1889), 117, p. 117.
[491] Morris, 'Our Policy', (March 1886), p. 17.
[492] Scheu, 'What's to be Done?', (June 1885), p. 50
[493] William Morris, 'Anti-Sweating Demonstration', *The Commonweal,* (21 July 1888), 225-226, p. 225.
[494] William Morris, 'Notes on News', *The Commonweal,* (2 June 1888), 169, p. 169.
[495] Bax, 'Early Communal Life', p. 149.

working man. Rather, those with the privilege to speak out and to educate must do so.[496] It was not just the young men who could be guilty of succumbing to the temptation of aping poverty—Bax himself was known to wear a 'silk-and-sealskin imitation of a costermonger's cap', which would traditionally have been a tough leather, in an attempt to assume the costume of a working man.[497]

It was likewise unacceptable for the labourer to fail to support the Socialist cause. Bax referred to the worker who opposed Socialism as 'blind or inert', and he likened the overriding of their disinclination towards Socialism by the League and other organisations to preventing a drunken man from jumping from a speeding train. 'In coercing him', he argued, 'in negativing [*sic*] his *apparent* aims, you are affirming his *real* aims'.[498] Inert and blind—and perhaps not highly evolved enough to appreciate the benefit of Socialism to their lives. The good offered by Socialism was of more importance than the desires of the worker, which Bax perceived as misguided—it was perhaps unsurprising that the *Commonweal* did not have wide circulation among the working class.[499] Bax criticised as 'yet another Bourgeois idol' the 'rights of majorities.'[500] Bax's analogy ignored the obvious issue that the drunkard opted into drink, whereas the non-Socialist or anti-Socialist worker had not opted into anything. His point stood, however, to demonstrate the desire of the Socialist League to lead by education *or* by force the fate of the worker, with little regard to his own inclinations and not much credence given to a democratic solution. Despite this rhetorical turn against majority-rule, Bax favoured reform by parliamentary means, and worked to implement such a strategy within the League.[501] His failed 1887 attempt, ventured jointly with the Marx-Avelings to officially alter the policy of the League in favour of political action, precipitated his 1888 departure from the group.[502] After this, the League moved increasingly towards a policy of Anarchism which eventually alienated Morris's sympathies.

Though the ultimate good of the worker was the acknowledged goal of the League, members understood and accepted that suffering would be necessary before this ultimate success. External circumstances could benefit the pursuit of this cause; Morris confessed himself to 'dread' what seemed to be impending economic recovery in 1886 because it would dismiss the

---

496 George Sturt, 'Voluntary Co-Operation', *The Commonweal,* (14 May 1887), 156, p. 156.
497 Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism,* p. 95.
498 Bax, 'Some Bourgeois Idols', (April 1886), p. 26.
499 Sumpter, 'Anthropology, Socialist Prediction and William Morris's *Commonweal*', p. 351.
500 Ernest Belfort Bax, 'Some Bourgeois Idols; or Ideals, Reals and Shams', (April 1886), 25-26, p. 26.
501 Kinna, 'William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism', p. 603.
502 Kinna, 'William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism', p. 603; Lloyd, 'The Politics of William Morris's *News from Nowhere*', p. 275.

urgency of the Socialist movement. This belief in 'immiseration' separated Morris ideologically from the SDF.[503] It was 'necessity', he believed, which would ignite the worker towards a Socialist revolution, and no amount of 'preaching' or 'enthusiasm' on the part of reformers can simulate that urgency of dire necessity.[504] (This 'preaching' and 'enthusiasm' being concomitant with 'educating'.) Morris acknowledged that an increase of dissatisfaction in already difficult circumstances of life for the working classes was likely to motivate workers to be open to new solutions to old (and worsening) problems. This worsening of circumstances would prompt to action workers who were otherwise accustomed to the hardships they face.

The *Commonweal* suggested two paths forward to a Socialist future: violent or political revolution. The first of these, violent revolution, took precedence in the later days of the *Commonweal*'s existence, particularly after Morris's departure, though its threads were woven into the genesis of the journal. In 1885, Francis Kitz, who was to succeed Morris as editor in later years, proclaimed: '[l]et others talk of evolution and development, but I shall see with pleasure the dawn of a day of reckoning with these cowardly, cruel ill-treaters of the poor.'[505] Kitz rejected evolutionary language entirely, and instead embraced the concept of 'rupture', which the SDF had tied to sudden manifestations of longer-brewing evolutions (recall the emergence of a butterfly from a chrysalis). If it was so that labour under Capitalism was 'legal murder of physical exhaustion', then such ire as Kitz betrayed can well be understood.[506] In a discussion of 'free' or 'State' communism, one contributor suggested that government 'seems to lie at the bottom of all [the workers'] miseries; and we may be sure that when this view of the situation is well established in the minds of the workers, woe betide those who clamour for more government.'[507] When the programme of education and necessity came to fruition, the change would be wrought.

Indeed, within the pages of the *Commonweal*, the argument was advanced that '[w]henever a government endeavours by arbitrary measures to reduce the people to slavery, the government puts itself into a state of war against the people' and that thus the people were 'freed from any further obedience or obligation' to the state.[508] According to this view, the advent of Capitalism was the declaration of war on the working man, and thus the working man had every right to defend himself against its outrages. A further argument which sought to justify bloody revolution was that it would end the 'great periodic wars' between governments of 'persons privileged to sit

---

503 Johnson, 'Making Reform the Instrument of Revolution', p. 989.
504 William Morris, 'Is Trade Recovering?', *The Commonweal,* (18 December 1886), 300, p. 300.
505 Kitz, 'Bastille, Bourgeoise, and Bumble', (November 1885), p. 95.
506 Sturt, 'Voluntary Co-Operation', (May 1887), p. 156.
507 H. Davis, 'Free versus State Communism', *The Commonweal,* (23 February 1889), 57-58, p. 58.
508 Sketchley, 'Evolution versus Revolution', (December 1886), p. 292.

on the thrones of the world'.[509] Such a view as this anticipates a single global revolution followed by the advent of global peace; Socialist states would not seek to promote their interests through violence against fellow Socialist states. In Russia, for instance, the 'violent overturning' of the regime (the 1881 assassination of Alexander II) was considered by an 1886 *Commonweal* contributor to be a worthy use of violent means to force change.[510] The later evolution of the *Commonweal*'s revolutionary thought was expressed boldly by Mowbray, who endorsed the use of dynamite for the revolution. 'Science', he argued, 'has placed within our reach the means to achieve our freedom: are we, then, to refuse to stretch out our hand and grasp the weapon so easy of attainment?'[511] Mowbray's suggestion certainly empowers a Socialist minority to contend with an oppositional majority, but it was not expressive of a unified policy within the League.

The 'highest expression of Socialist morality' or 'Socialist religion' was a 'readiness to sacrifice all'—even to die—for 'the cause', according to an 1888 contribution by Bax.[512] This readiness to sacrifice all did not connote an advocacy by Bax of the circumstances which might invite such a violent end. Indeed, riots in February of 1886, described by Morris as the 'first skirmish of the Revolution', were condemned by Bax for the violence they perpetrated on individuals.[513] He did not criticise roundly the looting that happened as a result of the riots, however. Instead, he contrasted the looters with soldiers in the empire. The latter, he asserted, were looting 'barbarians and their villages' in protection of the 'capitalist's *right to trade*' as opposed to former, who were the 'vulgar London mob' who fought for the '*right to live*'.[514]

Carlisle made a more straightforward critique of Socialists who argued that 'legality must be thrown aside and only physical force used' to enact the revolution. He acknowledged the imperative of timely change in arguing that 'evolution is not always an advance, so evolution of our present society means degradation and retrogression.' Here, Carlisle couched his political argument in explicitly biological terms. He made a total equation of social principles with scientific, and he used this scientific undergirding to emphasise the importance that the Socialists act quickly. '[M]ere evolution', in his view, 'can never bring health to the body politic.'[515] Such health must be fostered by a controlled evolution, with Socialists at the helm. And it must be Socialists at the helm in order to ensure such a beneficial evolution.

---

509 C. 'Law and War', *The Commonweal,* (7 January 1888), 2-3, p. 2.
510 Dallas, 'Correspondence', (Dec 1886), p. 311.
511 C. W. Mowbray, 'Correspondence', *The Commonweal,* (29 November 1890), 381-382, p. 381.
512 Ernest Belfort, Bax, 'The New Ethic: III', *The Commonweal,* (25 February 1888), 58-59, p. 58.
513 Morris, 'Our Policy', (March 1886), pp. 17-18.
514 Ernest Belfort Bax, 'Looting, Scientific and Unscientific', *The Commonweal,* (March 1886), 20-21, pp. 20-21.
515 Carlile, 'Correspondence', (March 1888), p. 93.

Morris and Bax argued in 1886 that 'Communism can never be realised till the present system of Society has been destroyed by the workers taking hold of the political power. When that happens it will mean that Communism is on the point of absorbing and transmuting Civilisation.'[516] It was not Anarchic power to the people, but rather the accession of the people to the powers of established government which would signify the success of the Socialist movement. Through their own evolving—and sometimes opposing—policies, contributors to the *Commonweal* found plenty to criticise and praise in the Socialist movements around them. These contributors engaged with the Social Democratic Federation which formed the roots of their own group, and with the Anarchists with whose policies they would eventually align. They often wrote about, and were consistently critical of, the Fabian programme.

Morris, joined by a group which included Bax and the Marx-Avelings, left the SDF on Christmas Eve in 1884. The League was founded by this splintering of SDF members a few days later, and though they may at first have 'threatened to become a most formidable competitor of the [SDF]', in the end the League dissolved and some of its members, including Bax, returned to the SDF.[517] Most of the ire levelled at the Federation by contributors to the *Commonweal* was directed at Hyndman personally. Morris asserted that he had 'shown himself to be a discredit to his party; and further, that this Council expressed its sincere pity for those who by their action had proved themselves to be Mr. Hyndman's tools.'[518] This disdainful note, published in 1885, was echoed closely in tone even five years later.

An 1890 article asked if Hyndman's advocacy against a dictatorial governmental power, purportedly an about face, was an ideological shift or a practical measure. The (anonymous) contributor wondered if it was 'possible that his dwindling popularity leads him to believe that he wouldn't be the "dictator," and it was this which made him suddenly such a "determined " opponent of "tyranny "'. [519] An 1891 article condemned the whole of the 'stupid Social Democrats, who [. . .] [think] they act the part of good Socialists by looking on at the awful misery and suffering around and doing nothing but waiting for the evolution of Capital itself to end them!!'[520] This was a barb which rang of the League's condemnations of Fabianism, and marks the *Commonweal*'s shifting allegiance towards action-driven Anarchism, in 1891 no longer

[516] William Morris, and Ernest Belfort Bax, 'Socialism from the Root Up: The Utopists: Owen, Saint Simon, and Fourier', *The Commonweal,* (30 October 1886), 242-243, pp. 242-243.
[517] Baylen, 'George Bernard Shaw and the Socialist League', p. 426; Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 188.
[518] William Morris, 'Free Speech and the Police', *The Commonweal,* (November 1885), 99-100, p. 100.
[519] 'Notes on News', *The Commonweal,* (23 August 1890), 267, p. 267.
[520] J. Creaghe, 'Correspondence', *The Commonweal,* (28 November 1891), 155, p. 155.

considered the 'far ideal' that it was in 1885.[521] Hyndman was the subject of a fair share of personal criticism, including from *To-day,* which, though under the umbrella of SDF control, could be harshly critical of the group.

In 1887, a year which saw much adulation for the SDF from Hyndman in *Justice,* 'A Socialist Politician' derided 'Socialist thinkers who would scornfully repudiate any other prophet than Mr. Hyndman, and who seemed to believe that "Das Kapital" (which they have not read) came down, as it were, "from the Mount."'[522] The narrow-mindedness of the Socialists to whom the author referred and their misguided understanding of the philosophy they profess rendered the SDF as gormless. The Editor of *To-day* found it necessary to clarify that the contributor's 'criticism of the Social Democratic Federation was directed personally and particularly against Mr. Hyndman and *Justice*.'[523] Hyndman's supremacy in the SDF made both him and the group vulnerable to accusations of a cult of character rather than any transcendent programme for reform.

With all of these personal attacks, that 'the Federation is practically dead of Hyndmanitis', the accusation that *Justice* 'degenerated into Mr. Hyndman's weekly bulletin, with [. . .] a record for wanton vilification and insults to friends and foes' among them, it would be easy to allow that the fractiousness of the Socialist movements was rooted exclusively in the distaste cherished by many for Hyndman's character.[524] Extensive scholarly literature has taken this view, and this thesis need not further contribute to the argument. Rather, the personal insults exchanged between groups ought to be regarded as symptomatic of their fundamentally different evolutionary philosophies, expressed in the League's determined drift towards Anarchism.

A telling remark appeared in 1890 which criticised 'the Fabian Society, or [. . .] any other body of kid-gloved pedants, with whom Socialism is a kind of high-class amusement—something to talk about, to vary the monotonous ease of their lives.'[525] Fabians were hobbyists, not reformers or revolutionaries. Once again, the Fabians were criticised for an unmanly daintiness. Two years earlier, Morris wrote with bitter humour,

> The lamb going to law with the wolf is a curious spectacle to behold. The lamb must put up with it as long as he *is* a lamb. Perhaps evolution will change his

[521] George Sturt, 'A Query', *The Commonweal,* (20 April 1889), 125, p. 125.
[522] A Socialist Politician, 'The Present Crisis in the Socialist Movement', (June 1887), p. 161.
[523] 'Editorial Notes', *To-day,* (Oct 1887), 93-95, p. 94.
[524] 'Editorial Notes', *To-day,* (July 1887), 1-5, pp. 2-3.
[525] N., 'Notes on News', *The Commonweal,* (12 July 1890), 221, p. 221.

> wool into chain-mail and his feeble little shoulders of mutton into arms and fists with a chopping-stick in them one of these days.[526]

Morris's play with images of sheep and wolves is of interest because of its connection with the Fabians, whose initial symbol was a wolf in sheep's clothing. In this instance, Morris referred to would-be revolutionaries stymied by the establishment. His 'perhaps' satirised those advocates of change who also refused to act—those Socialists who did not believe that evolution would overcome the wrongful steerage which advocates of Capitalism had carried out.

Indeed, animal analogies offered in critique of the Fabians proved popular. In one article, Sparling made two such references. He asserted that the Fabians were 'spineless' and likened them to 'the lady who ordered that her dog's tail should be cut off by degrees—it would hurt so much more if done at a blow!' In addition, Sparling remarked that 'certain monkeys are addicted to nibbling the extremities of their tails, deriving a dreadful pleasure from the uncertainty of the limit to which they can carry the operation without incurring pain or discomfort'. He suggested that 'there are [many] among men and women who approach Socialism in a like shrinking, tentative fashion. This spirit was manifested very plainly at the Fabian meeting [. . .] and found concrete expression in Mrs. Besant's paper.' His anger was inspired by Besant's suggestion that wealth be redistributed upon the decease of the person who accumulated it—that Socialism could be moved forward by an adjustment in inheritance law. This suggestion would certainly rankle those Socialists whose goal was an expedient and permanent equality. Besant's plan would level the playing field only once every generation, and in the meantime allow for the accumulations of massive fortunes during individual lifetimes, along with the advancements an upbringing in such privilege could offer the offspring of these Capitalists. Besant, one of the 'dilettanti Socialists', gave a speech which could have been 'delivered in the House of Commons with applause.'[527]

Some of the critique levelled at Besant in the *Commonweal* was specifically targeted at her gender; Sparling sneered at Besant 'striving to keep back the tide of revolution with her ineffectual besom [broom].'[528] In his own searing commentary on Besant, Morris remarked that she 'made a poor job' of her speech, and was the recipient of only 'the applause that politeness usually awards to a lady.'[529] This ire was not a lasting one—some twenty months later Morris commented favourably upon her pamphlet 'Why I am a Socialist' as 'very bright and clearly

---

526 William Morris, 'Notes on News', *The Commonweal,* (7 July 1888), 209-210, p. 209.
527 Sparling, 'Pseudo-Socialism', (February 1886), p. 9.
528 Sparling, 'Pseudo-Socialism', (February 1886), p. 9.
529 William Morris, 'Monthly Report', *The Commonweal,* (May 1885), 36, p. 36.

written'.[530] A point in the favour of another of Besant's pamphlets, at least in Morris's view, was that it has been 'attacked' with 'eagerness, or [. . .] brutality [. . .] by some of the members of the party with which she has hitherto been identified.'[531] As in the language of the Social Democratic Federation, Morris seemed to offer Besant the chance to realign herself with his group, despite the previous cruelty of his and his fellow contributor's treatment of her work.

It was the ineffectualness of the Fabians, and their supposed detachment from reality, which characterised the majority of the Socialist League's critiques. *The Commonweal* complained, for instance, that 'your children's children in a couple of hundred years time may enjoy the blessings of Socialism' if the Fabian tactic was allowed to prevail.[532] Another referred to the 'God of Fabian idolatry' as 'the small-minded British snob.'[533] A pretty uninspiring idol.

Much fun was also had at the expense of the *Fabian Essays in Socialism,* the decorations of which were designed by Walter Crane with help from William Morris's daughter, May. [534] Morris declared that the 'tactics' laid out in the *Essays* 'could not be carried out in practice'. He complained of the 'fantastic and unreal tactic which the Fabian Society has excogitated of late, and which was at best tentative and temporary; was hardly constructed to last longer than the coming into power of the next Liberal government.'[535] The Fabian ideal of proliferation was both slow-moving and lacks the power to change forever the functioning of the State. The Literary Notice for the *Essays* in *The Commonweal* was humorous, and quoted here at length for the reader's benefit:

> It is [. . .] nicely bound in a paper cover, which is decorated with a cartoon by Walter Crane, representing a capitalist up a tree and two workmen trying to pull him down. The design has more physical force about it than a judicious Fabian would appreciate, as the capitalist is provided with two revolvers, and the workers with two agricultural implements, an axe and a spade, which we fear they may put to a use very dangerous to the capitalist if he does any of his nonsense with those revolvers. The axe will probably split his head open, and the spade will decently bury him. If the Fabians go on in this style Sir Edward Bradford [police commander] will be arresting Sydney Webb as a dangerous character.[536]

---

[530] William Morris, 'Notes on Passing Events', *The Commonweal,* (4 September 1886), 177, p. 177.
[531] William Morris, 'REVIEW: Modern Socialism by Annie Besant', *The Commonweal,* (10 July 1886), 117, p. 117.
[532] N, 'Physical Force', *The Commonweal,* (March 1891), 21-22, p. 22.
[533] D. Nicoll, 'After the Revolution', *The Commonweal,* (11 July 1891), 73-74, p. 74.
[534] William Morris, 'Fabian Essays in Socialism', *The Commonweal,* (1890), 28-29, p. 28.
[535] Morris, 'Fabian Essays in Socialism', (1890), p. 28.
[536] 'Literary Notices', *The Commonweal,* (4 October 1890), 315, p. 315.

The Fabians would, of course, have preferred the labourer unarmed in the face of firearms. The League might also well have argued that the Fabians would not recognise such practical elements as an axe or spade.

When Davis derided Parliamentary Socialists who 'have hitherto regarded the State-machine—the House of Commons—as the undeveloped Hercules, which will, when grown sufficiently strong, take the burdens of the country on its strong shoulders and thus relieve us of any further trouble', he had both the Fabians and the Social Democratic Federation in his sights.[537]

In the early 1890s, the Socialist League had made a decisive turn towards Anarchism, though had not yet openly declared this allegiance. An 1891 piece published as 'Correspondence' complains that '[t]he contributors to the present 'Weal are all Anarchists, and still you do not count amongst Anarchists.'[538] His critique, that the Socialist League did not yet 'count' as an Anarchist group was affirmed by an article a year prior, in which Burnie admitted that 'Anarchism' was 'a word to the use of which the Socialist League is of course in no way committed', though he implied strongly that its ideals were aligned.[539] Morris and Kropotkin had long enjoyed an association, although Morris never endorsed fully Kropotkin's Anarchism. This failure to endorsed Anarchism led eventually to Morris's ouster from the League's leadership.[540] An article highly critical of Morris' response to a movement in the north of England was published in late 1890. Its author found that Morris looked to suppress the movement because it was not under the control of centralised Socialist movements. He accused Morris of recommending 'Fabian tactics.'[541] As League discourse on the Fabians above made clear, this was a most damning contention.

It was around this time that Morris withdrew entirely from the Socialist League.[542] Kropotkin believed that Morris' withdrawal from the League was an acquiescence to his deep-seated 'German influence', by which he meant the principle of Marxist political permeation.[543] Kinna believes that he left the Socialist League when he ceased to consider revolution possible.[544]

---

537 Davis, 'Free versus State Communism', (February 1889), p. 57.
538 A. Coulon, 'Correspondence', *The Commonweal,* (February 1891), 10, p. 10.
539 R. W. Burnie, 'Anarchist Morality', *The Commonweal,* (1 November 1890), 346, p. 346.
540 Sumpter, 'Anthropology, Socialist Prediction and William Morris's *Commonweal*', p. 360.
541 J. Creaghe, 'Where Are We Now?', *The Commonweal,* (29 November 1890), 381, p. 381.
542 Kinna, 'William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism', p. 600; William Morris and Ernest Belfort Bax, *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*, (New York and London, 1984), p. 186.
543 Kinna, 'William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism', p. 601.
544 Kinna, 'William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism', p. 609.

Morris had long been 'an advocate of revolution'.[545] This might have made his views compatible with the Anarchists, had it not been that he could also acknowledge the 'logic of political action'. His reason for rejecting political action was not that he thought it impossible, but rather that it seemed 'an unsuitable tool for implementing the type of socialism he looks forward to.'[546] The truth of Morris's political inclinations is that he was too happy to wade in shades of grey between polarised party platforms. He believed deeply in the betterment of conditions for the working class, but he did so on his own terms—terms which were liable to shift as he absorbed new information and arguments, and which were focused primarily upon the Utopian future after the revolution.

The League was an organisation home to contradictory forces. It was, in many ways, the macrocosmic expression of Morris's personal contradictions. *The Commonweal* published support for parliamentary action and revolution, and it praised and criticised violence. Bax's departure from the League allowed the group to concede to the Anarchist pull—he had been a mainstay for parliamentary action for the group. The League's close ties with both the SDF and the Anarchists prevented a clear articulation of how they were supposed to differ from either. Morris was certain of the human nature he hoped to create in Utopia more than he was sure of how best to use human nature as it was—his most celebrated writings for the League explore that character, as we find in the next chapter.

II.iv *The Anarchists*

Sidney Oliver posited that Anarchists sought 'the unfolding of the true nature of the individual', under conditions which, with the removal of government, allowed for that full expression. Though he admitted that both he 'and other Socialists are not quite in agreement with them as to the safest conditions for such evolution', yet the Anarchists' philosophy acts as a 'reminder [. . .] that the ultimate aim of Socialism is the making of Man, and that we have reason to think that there is enough of noble and lovely in his nature to warrant him worth the making.'[547] By Oliver's explicit acknowledgement, Socialist groups, including the Anarchists, were united in their 'ultimate aim'. Their divergence was related directly to their opposing views of the best way to foster an 'evolution' of man's 'true nature'. The Anarchists, who believed this nature to be

[545] Boos and Boos, 'The Utopian Communism of William Morris', p. 492.
[546] Kinna, 'William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism', p. 605.
[547] Sydney Oliver, 'A Critic of Anarchism', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (October 1887), 50-51, p. 51.

given, without any interference or guide, to communalism, believed that the removal of government would be perfectly safe. Other groups, less sure of the ready goodness of man, looked to cultivate a better human nature through a constructed environment. 'Although we heartily sympathise with our comrades of the Socialist League, Social Democratic Federation, Fabian Society, and all other associations engaged in Socialist propaganda, we by no means consider all the theories they advance or the methods they advocate beyond question', an 1887 article asserts.[548] A teleological agreement between groups as to their shared desire for a more equitable future in no way prevented the exchange of—sometimes extremely inflammatory—criticism by each of these four groups of each of their fellows.

An 1890 article in *Freedom,* the journal of the Anarchist movement, attested that '[a]ll Socialists are convinced of the absolute and speedy necessity of a Social Revolution, and are determined to bring about a change in the economic relations of men to one another'.[549] There existed a real and consistent sense that Socialists had an ultimate unity, disrupted by method. It was, as Kropotkin acknowledged, 'especially on the "State" question that Socialists are divided.'[550] The Anarchists rejected the State as a hindrance more than a help to the evolution of the individual. They wrote of themselves, 'we are Anarchists, disbelievers in the government of man by man in any shape and under any pretext.'[551]

Enrico Malatesta described government as 'the aggregate of individuals who have had given them or have taken the right or the means to make laws, and force the people to obey them.' [552] The rule of government could never be fair and must always depend on coercion—a coercion guided not by some abstract benevolent force, but rather by the steerage of individuals, as likely to tend towards imperfection as the wider social body. Below, I examine the formation of the Anarchist movement around Kropotkin, their own conception of their method for enacting reform, and the specific criticisms offered by them for the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabians, the Socialist League, and, because it represented a significant part of the writing in *Freedom,* their critiques of Marxism more broadly.

Charlotte Wilson won a 'victory' and beat out both Hyndman and Morris in securing a partnership with Kropotkin. Wilson was responsible for bringing Peter Kropotkin and his wife

548 'Socialist Propaganda', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (October 1887), 52, p. 52.
549 'The Politics of Socialism', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (January 1890), 2, p. 2.
550 Kropotkin, 'The State: Its Historic Role', (May 1897), p. 38.
551 'Freedom', (October 1886), p. 1.
552 Enrico Malatesta, 'Anarchy', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (March 1892), 22-23, pp. 22-23.

Sophie from Switzerland, and for co-founding *Freedom* with the Russian Prince.[553] Such an intimate relationship with the Kropotkins, as well as Wilson's own financial advantages and the time she dedicated to the journal, assured the *Freedom* group some cohesion and stability during its foundation.[554] Indeed, when Wilson stepped down as editor in January of 1895 to care for her mother, no edition of *Freedom* was forthcoming for four months. Her editorship and organisation of the journal was vital in the first decade of its existence. Wilson's own relationship with the Fabians, a group of which she was a member before founding *Freedom,* secured ties with that movement, with Besant arranging for their initial headquarters. For the first two years of the journal, *Freedom* published at the Socialist League's printer with Morris's blessing.[555] Such an arrangement, the sharing of spaces and exchanging of members, was not uncommon between Socialist groups.[556]

Whatever the critiques of the Fabians and the League represented below, both groups were instrumental in the formation of the Anarchist movement led by Wilson and Kropotkin. A consciousness of this camaraderie was woven through much of *Freedom.* The 'true Anarchist', an 1887 piece claimed, 'will never forget that he is a Socialist'. Thus, he would never seek to destroy 'Socialist organisations that are as yet mainly [. . .] Collectivist.' So long as the ultimate goal of these organisations was aligned, the Anarchists were willing to avert their ire from the methods by which these groups envisioned achieving that future. The same article claimed that 'consciously or unconsciously, every reformer, improver, Social Democrat, and every Socialist, is Anarchist'. All of them work towards ends which 'imply Anarchism'. This meant that they sought futures in which their organisation would not be necessary, because the form of human relations will have so much improved that their intervention will be rendered obsolete.[557] The Anarchists portrayed a union of purpose under different names which brought the disparate parts of the Socialist movement together—and they positioned themselves as the most far-seeing of all these groups. The Anarchist was reminded that destructive aims should be focused outwards of the Socialist movement. The Socialist who would not identify him or herself as an Anarchist was reminded that the society for which they agitated would tend towards Anarchic. Though the Anarchist movement never represented anything like a majority opinion, even among Socialist groups, their ideas proved intensely influential in the public consciousness.[558]

---

553 Hinely, 'Charlotte Wilson' p. 27. Her role in the journal was certainly more active than is implied by Hale's reference to her 'help' in founding *Freedom.* Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 225.
554 Hinely, 'Charlotte Wilson', p. 25.
555 'A Brief History of *Freedom*', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (December 1900), 49-50, p. 49.
556 Adams, *Kropotkin,* p. 3.
557 'Anarchism as Criticism and Religion', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (January 1887), 15, p. 15.
558 Thomas, 'Anarcho-Feminism', p. 1; Shpayer-Makov, 'Anarchism in British Public Opinion', p. 487.

It was Wilson's contention in 1886 that Socialism developed into either a Collectivist or Anarchist school of thought, and that England's Socialism was then in as yet too inchoate a state to be decidedly in either camp. She contended that there existed enough 'unconscious Socialists' in England that in 'some such fashion [Collectivist or Anarchist]', England would develop towards 'progress and stability', and that this would be facilitated by what she termed the 'conflict of the ineradicable Tory and Whig instincts in human nature.'[559] Wilson here acknowledged a conflicting sense of human nature, which inclined itself either towards individualism or centralised authority, represented in her piece as the conflicting nature of Tory and Whig inclinations. The difficulty in resolving this conflict is represented in the variety of methods suggested by different Socialist movements.

The Anarchists promised that their ultimate success would be assured by the truth upon which their individual movement had hit. Reclus claimed that though the Anarchists were 'weak in numbers, in material strength, and [. . .] money', they would yet prevail over governments because they '[. . .] know that [they] are right and that [their] idea is just'. He asserted that 'we are working and fighting for the equality of men, for the happiness of all human beings.'[560] The philosophical programme propounded by the Anarchists was one of not only the improvement of material conditions, but also an essential restoration of dignity and autonomy to the worker. This was expressed aptly by an author writing under the name of that great classical stoic, Diogenes. He or she asserted that,

> Free organisation is above all spontaneous, elastic, and adaptable. [. . .] Its purpose is not to crush, but to further the individualities of its members, and while it may range as wide as the poles, or be confined to the village street, it will always be but the consensus of individuals, and will exist only as the expression of their wills.[561]

The individual is hereby elevated to the status of a State and is allowed to administer and legislate as they see fit. The community with which they engage is organised in a manner more similar to treaties and alliances between strong powers than the coercive cohesion of the oppressed against an oppressor, in this vision. Government was, anyway, viewed by Anarchists as posterior to the development of man. 'Wherever a government exists, it must wait until the people have first organised everything, and then come with its laws to sanction and exploit that which has been

---

[559] Wilson, 'What Socialism is', (1886), p. 6.
[560] Elysee Reclus, 'Anarchy', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (September 1895), 41, p. 41.
[561] "Diogenes", 'Jottings', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (September 1896), 4, p. 4.

already done', Malatesta asserted.[562] Government never precedes a society. If a dictator declared himself all-powerful on an island devoid of human life, he could not guarantee that it would become populated—and indeed, it is more likely that it would not be. Rather, the dictator attains real power only by asserting himself in a society already populous, and over an economy already in existence. Society could exist devoid of government, but government could not exist devoid of society. Kropotkin himself explored this phenomenon in his own understanding of Anarchism.

He offered an explicit definition of 'Anarchism' in the eleventh edition of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1910).[563] Anarchy for Kropotkin was defined by 'free agreement' within a community rather than 'submission to law' or to any authority at all.[564] Kropotkin contrasted 'free agreement' with 'enforced agreement'. He argued that the latter kind of agreement was found in the worker entering into employment with a company or person which would profit from their labour 'unjustly', but who needed the meagre wage to which they would have accessed in order to feed their family.[565] Even in the first sentence of his entry, he examined how 'harmony' was achieved in an Anarchist society.[566] If harmony was the goal of Anarchy, as Kropotkin implied, it was not 'anarchy' as the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it. The *OED* suggests that 'anarchy' is 'political or social disorder' or, more generally, 'disorder, confusion'.[567] To ground the definition of Anarchism in its potential for harmony is to write against the primary interpretation of the term—in much the same way Kropotkin sought to redefine in his other work the 'struggle for existence' as aligning with mutual aid rather than competition. As in his belief in the instinct for communality evidenced in his argument for mutual aid, Kropotkin believed that humans experience a 'natural tendency' towards Anarchy.[568] It was not disorder or confusion which Kropotkin observed in animal societies without a governmental authority, and it was not disorder or confusion which Kropotkin imagined would reign in an Anarchist society.

This was evidenced even in his etymology of the term. He took the Greek root of 'anarchy', '*ἄναρχος*', to mean 'contrary to authority', rather than the more direct translation of

---

562 Malatesta, 'Anarchy', (March 1892), p. 22.
563 He likely secured this entry through his friendship with the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* editor, Cambridge professor J. S. Keltie. Miller, *Kropotkin,* p. 169.
564 Kropotkin, 'Anarchism' in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica,* published in *The Conquest of Bread and Other Writings,* p. 233.
565 Kropotkin, 'The Coming Anarchy', (Aug 1887), p. 158.
566 Kropotkin, 'Anarchism', p. 233.
567 "Anarchy, *n.*" *Oxford English Dictionary,* accessed 20 June 2021, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/7118?redirectedFrom=anarchy#eid>
568 Kinna, 'Kropotkin's Theory of Mutual Aid', p. 272.

'ἄν-' as 'without' and 'αρχοζ,' as 'chief', and thus 'without a chief'.[569] Kropotkin's subtle linguistic turn here imbued Anarchism with an intentionality absent in the direct translation; it was to be defined against authority—not a state of chaos caused by any *lack* of leadership. The Anarchist made him or herself through active opposition to the State and their refusal to participate in representative government, which Kropotkin terms 'impotent'.[570] Interestingly, his translation also necessitated authority against which to define Anarchy.

In 1887, twenty-three years before the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry, Kropotkin wrote of a 'society without government, to An-archy [*sic*].'[571] His hyphenation of the word 'anarchy' emphasised its Greek roots and encouraged the literal understanding of them. In another 1887 article, he defined Anarchy as 'no-government', and he contested the understanding of Anarchy as 'synonymous with disorder.'[572] This misunderstanding, he argued, was based on the dual assumption that government creates order where there would otherwise be disorder, and that order created by government is good. He pointed to the disorder under Luther for Protestants as preferable to Papal order, as one of several examples of this.[573] Kropotkin's advocacy against effecting change from within government separated him from the Fabians, who advocated for infiltrating and reforming Parliament, and ultimately caused an irreparable rift between Socialists and Anarchists in 1893.[574] For Anarchists, leadership came from within the community, and was borne equally by all members. Kropotkin also argued that 'justice' was tied inherently to the existence of a State. If there existed a body to enforce laws and dole out punishments, then there must exist an apparatus of bureaucracy to facilitate the administration, all of which prove cumbersome to Kropotkin's conception of freedom. Therefore '[t]he need of our time, as of all times, is this full and complete freedom. Anarchy alone met the need fairly and squarely. Anarchy would be, must be, the watchword of the future.'[575] Only Anarchy could emerge from the Socialist movements of the period as the true advocate for the future towards which all other conceptions of Socialism offered but inadequate tendencies.

A tenet of Kropotkin's Anarchist future was 'emancipation' from the 'yoke of government', which would allow for the 'free organisation' of individuals, probably with an eye

---

569 Kropotkin, 'Anarchism', p. 233.
570 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread and Other Writings,* p. 39.
571 Kropotkin, 'The Scientific Basis of Anarchy', (Fe 1887), p. 238.
572 Kropotkin, 'The Coming Anarchy', (Aug 1887), p. 152.
573 Kropotkin, 'The Coming Anarchy', (Aug 1887), p. 153.
574 Kropotkin considered Anarchists the 'left wing' of the Socialist movement, though notably still under the umbrella term at the time of writing in 1910, 'Anarchism', p. 234. Bowler ignores this and erroneously delineates Kropotkin's Anarchists from the Socialist movement. Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution,* p. 161.
575 "Diogenes", 'Jottings', (Sept 1896), p. 4.

to the maintenance of the guilds and unions which he so extolls in *Mutual Aid*.[576] He used the French '*organisation libre'* in this context in the 1887 *L'Anarchie dans L'Evolution Socialiste,* but by the 1910 publication of his *Enyclopedia Britannica* entry on Anarchism, he used the phrase 'free agreement' in its place. In French, this would be '*accord libre'*.[577] This linguistic shift confirmed his dedication to the truest and purest autonomy in the decision-making of a group of people. The freedom of guilds and unions from regulation by government was key to his philosophy. He rejected even a government which might purport to protect communal ownership. Kropotkin considered '[e]lite political bargaining' an 'almost inevitable consequence' of Marxism.[578] Government within a socialist society would, according to Kropotkin, be 'an anachronism, a nuisance.'[579] He suggested that the 'no-capitalist system implies the no-government system.'[580] He rejected parliamentary channels of action as inherently anti-revolutionary, and it was this rejection which caused a rift between Anarchists and Socialists in the late nineteenth century. This view represented a distinct divide during the 1893 Zurich Conference, three years before the publication of this piece, during which the Socialists decided that they would support government participation by Socialist groups.[581] The Anarchists declined to agree to this participation, and they were therefore banned from the conference.[582]

The Anarchists stood oft accused by more moderate Socialists of inciting needless violence. Their own views on the topic tended more towards the view of violence as a likely, or necessary, expedient, rather than as the optimal one.[583] 'Diogenes' offered the following summation of the role of violence in the Anarchist's view of the revolution:

> Violence there may be, but it will be none of its choosing, and will take its due place as an incidental factor in the upward march of mankind, neither to be recognised as a principle, nor to be wholly condemned as the greatest of evils.[584]

---

[576] Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution*, p. 14; See, for instance, Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 153.
[577] Peter Kropotkin, *L'Anarchie dans L'Evolution Socialiste: Conférence Faite À La Salle Lévis (1887),* (Brochure Mensuelle, 1934), p. 21.
[578] Kinna, 'Kropotkin's Theory of Mutual Aid', p. 265.
[579] Kropotkin, 'The Scientific Basis of Anarchy', (Feb 1887), p. 243.
[580] Kropotkin, 'The Scientific Basis of Anarchy', (Feb 1887), p. 243.
[581] Kinna, 'William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism', pp. 596-597.
[582] Kinna, 'William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism', pp. 596-597.
[583] Shpayer-Makov, 'The Reception of Peter Kropotkin', p. 374; Shpayer-Makov, 'Anarchism in British Public Opinion', p. 491; Bevir, 'The Rise of Ethical Anarchism', p. 19.
[584] "Diogenes", 'Jottings', (Sept 1896), p. 4.

The Anarchists viewed violence as a practical measure, and therefore as a tactic not to be assessed as universally bad or good. The context of its deployment was the metric by which its use should be judged. That it was an 'incidental factor in the upward march of mankind' suggested that, more than a social tactic, it was an evolutionary by-product. 'Diogenes' thereby associated violent revolution with the improvement of the human race. He or she suggested also that, '[v]iolence is bad, but starvation, degradation, and the habitual subjection of man by his fellows are a thousand times worse, and if violence can help to remove these, then up with violence.'[585] In the context of a people treated as subhuman, as assessed by a group very sympathetic to the Lamarckian idea that a degraded environment led to inter-generational degradation through biological destiny, violence was to be preferred to meek suffering.

Kropotkin contended that 'the Revolution will be communistic; or it will be drowned in blood.'[586] It must be, then, that the revolution was widely desired in order to come to life without mass violence. Kropotkin's phrasing confirmed the inevitability of revolution. He did not advocate, as the Social Democrats did, for political means until violent ones become necessary. The Anarchists did allow, however, for education as an expedient method by which to prepare the population for the coming revolution.

'Diogenes' suggested that '[e]ducation, the spread of ideas, the raising of new and nobler life-ideals for the people, these are the forces on which Anarchy must rely.'[587] This was a strategy coherent with the importance of personal autonomy that was advocated elsewhere by the Anarchists. People could be taught to be desirous of more than was their lot under Capitalism, and it was by inculcating this desire that the Anarchists could swell the ranks of those warriors of revolution which they believe may be necessary to loose upon the bastions of oppressive statecraft. One article in *Freedom* asserted that the Anarchists 'are not waiting for the majority' in order to begin the process of revolution. Rather, it was by 'pointing out the dangers of private property and law' that they could try to 'hasten the time when the worker will rise in rebellion against the unjust claims of those who have so long lived in idleness on the misery of the toilers.'[588] It was by educating the workers, by empowering them to want more, that the Anarchists could forward their revolutionary ideals. Another aspect of Anarchist revolution which existed between outright violence and the politicking so anathema to them was the proposal for a general strike. As an 1895 article propounded, Anarchists believed '*a victorious*

---

[585]"Diogenes", 'Jottings', (Sept 1896), p. 4.
[586] Peter Kropotkin, 'The Wage System', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (December 1889), 55, p. 55.
[587] "Diogenes", 'Jottings', (Sept 1896), p. 4.
[588] T. Pearson, 'Individual or Common Property', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (May 1890), 21, p. 21.

general strike is the beginning of the social revolution'.[589] Five years later, no such action having yet occurred, *Freedom* still called repeatedly for a general strike.[590] It was not until 1926 that a general strike took place in the United Kingdom, and the Anarchist instinct that it would be an unprecedented disruption of daily life was correct, at least for the span of the strike itself.

The Social Democrats were the recipients of the severest condemnatory language from the Anarchists in *Freedom*. This was, it cannot be doubted, in some part due to the deep esteem in which the Social Democrats held Karl Marx, whom Kropotkin abhorred. *Freedom* considered the SDF 'Marx-mad'. [591] We will come to Kropotkin's rejection of Marxism below, and for now we will focus our attention on the Anarchists' specific disparagements of the Social Democratic Federation.

One article's objection was straightforwardly a rejection of the SDF's dim view of human nature. 'Our friend the Social Democrat', the author suggested, '[. . .] makes use of the usual argument of the democrats that human nature is so bad that we must have years of good government before Anarchy is practicable.' The SDF believed man not to be innately suited to goodness or communalism, and thus they are desirous of a government which would enforce such a habit of living on mankind until they could be trusted to carry the tradition of communalism without the oversight of government. But in the *Freedom* author's view, '[m]ajority rule crushes individuality, initiative, self reliance and reduces the individual to a state slave.' He invoked the power of the State to force the devolution of man to animalistic obedience. He also promised that an endeavour to elect a true representative to protect the interests of a community was doomed to fail; 'it is impossible for your representative to represent you all; in the end he simply represents himself.' Though man was capable of living for the good of his fellows, he was also corruptible given the opportunity of too much power. In summation, 'Anarchists believe people have common sense enough to regulate their own lives in the way they think best, without electing parliaments to rule and regulate their lives for them.'[592] Anarchists were for autonomy, and while they may not have had faith in the governments constructed by men, they do profess a deep-seated faith in the evolution of man towards self-rule. It was with relish, then, that the Anarchists noted of the SDF that 'happily their number is insignificant and, save Hyndman, they are all mediocrities'.[593]

---

589 'A Lesson to Socialists', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (August 1895), 30, p. 30.
590 'Anarchist Propaganda', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (August 1900), 34, p. 34.
591 W. H., 'Regimental Socialism', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (October 1896), p. 106.
592 T. Pearson, 'Anarchist Communism or Social Democracy', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (November 1890), 49-50, p. 49.
593 W. Tcherkesoff, 'Pages of Socialist History', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (April 1898), 21-22, p. 22.

The Anarchists warned that 'one huge army of well-drilled, regulated, adult babies' would exist under State Socialism, and that 'humanity will have sunk to the lowest depths of second childhood should ever it place power in the hands of Socialist martinets of the Hyndman [. . .] type'. [594] A provocative and disturbing image of the future, indeed. It was an especially mordant observation in that the worker was reduced to the senility of age rather than the innocence of youth by government intervention. The Socialist State was in no way the nurturer—it was the provider of palliative care for the incurably subjected, which would see its citizens born into the dependency of old age and robbed in perpetuity of the prospect of the freedom wrought by a vigorous maturity.

In starker critique than any of the groups have offered of any of their fellows, an author in *Freedom* asserted that 'to-day it is we Anarchists who are threatened with the [hangman's] rope should ever those apostles of State slavery [the Social Democrats] gain the ascendancy'. Marx was a 'dictator', and Social Democrats looked to 'stifl[e] all independent thought, speech and action.' For 'opportunity makes the tyrant'. [595] The SDF and the Anarchists were positioned as diametrically opposed enemies. *Freedom* had come a long way towards fractiousness with the other Socialists movements in the six years since it was gently admitted within its pages that '[c]ertainly the differences between Socialists and Anarchists are often magnified, and especially by the unscrupulous politicians of the Social Democratic school'.[596] The Social Democrats were no longer just 'unscrupulous politicians'. They were would-be executioners of their political opponents. Though the SDF certainly published searing critique of the Anarchist movement, they did not assert a bloodthirstiness among the Anarchists for fellow Socialists. The assertion that 'opportunity makes the tyrant' was precisely the sort of charge that the SDF might have laid at the feet of those proponents of Anarchism, with the implication that a Society without a State would be overrun by malign and self-serving influence with no potential for such rampant chaos to be checked. By the Anarchists' charge, the SDF was a would-be slavedriver and suppressor of individualist thought—not just misguided in their methods of achieving Socialism.

The Anarchists' disapproval of Fabianism was straightforward; these groups expressed intrinsically incompatible methods for change, which sprang forth from unequivocally different views of human nature. The Anarchists believed human nature to be essentially given towards communalism, an instinct disrupted by the corrupting forces of government. The Fabians

[594] H., 'Regimental Socialism', (Oct 1896), p. 106.
[595] H., 'Regimental Socialism', (Oct 1896), pp. 106-107.
[596] 'Anarchism vs. Revolutionary Socialism', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (August 1890), 31-32, pp. 31-32.

believed government necessary in curbing competitive, selfish tendencies in human nature, which they took to be innate. The Fabians advocated a gradual, totally nonviolent approach to reform the fabric of society through legislation. They called on the worker to vote—and, if he must agitate, to agitate for the vote. The Anarchists asked for more personal risk—or at least the willingness for personal risk—from their adherents. One article in *Freedom* argued that Socialism which would allow for a continuance of the State was 'nothing better than a compromise with the worst abuses of the past, the evil principle from which those abuses spring.'[597] The Fabian agenda of legislative revolution was not just misguided; it was evil. As we have seen not only in the Anarchist critique of the Fabian movement, but also in the Anarchist critique of the Social Democratic Federation, the Anarchists used much more provocative language in inveighing against their fellow Socialists than did other groups.

One of the founders of *Freedom,* Charlotte Wilson, began and ended her Socialist affiliation with the Fabians.[598] She distanced herself from the Fabians as their affiliation with parliamentary reform became more definite.[599] Her return to the Fabian fold happened at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, which falls outside the scope with which this thesis is concerned. [600] Before this return to the Fabians, Wilson dedicated nearly a decade to producing *Freedom*, and the Fabians considered themselves lucky to be rid of her. Shaw, for instance, described Wilson's influence on the Fabians as an 'influenza of Anarchism', and referred to her *Fabian Tract* 4, 'What Socialism Is' as 'fortunately little-known'.[601] Shaw produced another article in criticism of Anarchism in which he claimed that Anarchism 'is no longer welcome, or even tolerable, to Socialists.'[602] Oliver—who claimed he was not an Anarchist—responded in *Freedom* that it seemed a 'pity' that these sentiments 'should be allowed to pass as expressing what Socialists think of Anarchism.'[603]

Webb was described in *Freedom* as 'the clever propagandist of that watered form of Social-Democracy known as Fabianism'.[604] He was also 'a man of no importance outside of economics, and not much in that'. Shaw, in the same article was 'a man from whom anything may be expected, good, bad or indifferent', and Bland was 'as everyone knows, [. . .] a negligeable

---

[597] 'The Politics of Socialism', (Jan 1890), p. 2.
[598] David Goodway, '*Freedom,* 1886-2014: an Appreciation', *History Workshop Journal* 79.1 (2015) 233-242, p. 235.
[599] Bevir, 'The Rise of Ethical Anarchism', p. 7.
[600] Susan Hinely has Wilson rejoining the Fabians in 1908 after the death of her mother for whom she acted as carer (and while her carer, Wilson in large part from politics). 'Charlotte Wilson', p. 33.
[601] Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', (1892), p. 3.
[602] Shaw, 'A Word for War', (Sept 1887), p. 84.
[603] Oliver, 'A Critic of Anarchism', (Oct 1887), p. 50.
[604] 'The London Commune', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (April 1892), 25, p. 25.

quantity.' 'Such is the trio', this author sneered, whom 'we find singing "Rule Britannia" in the Fabian stronghold to the great admiration of the lady Fabians.'[605] This criticism of the Fabian men as ineffectual is mirrored in the SDF's critique of 'Fabius's followers'. [606] Fabianism was 'the waiting policy', and Shaw, Webb, and Bland were 'stalwarts of Imperialism'.[607]

The innuendo, not delicately drawn, was that the Fabians were really after a maintenance of the status quo. Whereas the Anarchists castigated the monarchy as the home of 'Royal vermin', Webb was the recipient of harsh critique from the SDF for his supposed support of the Jubilee celebrations. [608] Clearly, for the Anarchists, the Fabians faced the corruption of the State with complacency. 'The work before us', so the Anarchists asserted, 'the task which all lovers of humanity desire to accomplish, cannot be done by tinkering. We must set to work resolutely to build up the social edifice anew, on a new foundation and new principles.'[609] To raise a new edifice, the Anarchists must raze the old.

The Fabians, so the Anarchists fear, would find that under their careful curatorship and restoration, the State would remain the same. The edifice would eventually weather to the same state of moral decrepitude, and the process for a Socialist revolution would be renewed again in a generation or so. Though the Fabians might be acknowledged as embarking from a position of care for society at large, they would fail to enact lasting change from within the system. They would also be puppet masters rather than equals in the social hierarchy which Fabianism would maintain; 'if the worker is to be subject to the manipulation at the hands of Fabius's followers in the new society his position will be probably the very reverse of free.'[610] The worker would, under Fabianism, remain a pawn in a system in which he could exercise no influence, and fail to attain the humanity that comes only with autonomy.

The Socialist League was much more congenial with the Anarchist movement, particularly at the end of its lifespan as an independent group. Its founder, William Morris, was on friendly terms with Kropotkin, and had even been part of the movement which worked to free Kropotkin from a stint in French prison prior to the two men meeting.[611] Morris' successor at the *Commonweal*, Kitz, aligned with Kropotkin politically and joined the Anarchist ranks when the League's journal

---

605 'Fabianism 'Furioso'', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (May 1900), 20-21, p. 20.
606 C. Morton, 'The Failure of the Democratic Experiments at the Fabian Society', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (November 1890), 49, p. 49.
607 Morton, 'The Failure of the Democratic Experiments', (May 1900), p. 20.
608 'Notes', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (August 1893), 52, p. 52.
609 'The London Commune', (April 1892), p. 25.
610 Morton, 'The Failure of the Democratic Experiments', (May 1900), p. 49.
611 Adams, *Kropotkin,* p. 25.

ceased circulation. In 1896, Kropotkin asserted that Morris' Socialist Utopia, *News from Nowhere,* was 'the most thoroughly and deeply Anarchistic conception of future society that has ever been written.'[612] Five years earlier, *Freedom* argued that not only would 'the most hypercritical of Anarchists [. . .] have to borrow a pair of spectacles to discover serious points of disagreement', but also, '[. . .] there is not an Anarchist worth his salt who, being acquainted with William Morris, does not respect him as a good comrade and an honest man.'[613] Despite this affinity with particular members of the Socialist League, *Freedom* was not without criticism for the group—particularly for its flightiness in committing to an Anarchist agenda. Kinna puts it aptly when she characterises Kroptkin's view of Morris's engagement with Anarchism as never moving beyond a flirtation.[614]

Where the Fabians and the SDF might be criticised for their political commitments to the preservation of the State and their refusal to support revolution as a favoured means of reform, the League offered no such clarity of mission. *Freedom* called it 'a thousand pities' that the League, '[. . .] with their thoroughly Socialistic and revolutionary economic programme, content themselves with a merely negative position with regard to politics.' The journal argued that 'simple non-parliamentarianism [. . .] paralyses their activity in propaganda. [. . .] It is a mere attempt to shirk the question of authority—one of the root-questions of our day.'[615] The Anarchists resented the inaction of the League members who might have been their natural allies against Parliamentarism for their decision to forgo engagement with politics rather than to agitate actively against it. Just a few months later, *Freedom* predicted,

> [T]here is so little difference of opinion between the majority of collectivists in the Socialist League and the Social Democratic Federation, that it is extremely likely that this year will see them unite for common revolutionary action. They will form the Centre of the English Socialist party, shading into Anarchist-Communism on the left and parliamentarian Socialism by inches on the right.[616]

The League was understood by the Anarchists as having failed to differentiate themselves sufficiently from the SDF, from whom they sprang, and to maintain a position in the political

---

[612] Peter Kropotkin, 'In Memory of William Morris', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (November 1896), 109-110, p. 109.
[613] 'Notes', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (June 1891), 42, p. 42.
[614] Kinna, 'William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism', p. 600.
[615] 'Notes on the Socialist Movement', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (September 1887), 47, p. 47.
[616] 'Notes', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (January 1888), 62, p. 62.

centre—if slightly to the left—of the SDF. The Anarchists existed to the figurative left of the League, and the Fabians to the right of the SDF.

In response to a query from Bruce Glasier of the League, who wrote to ask for some points of clarification from the Anarchists about Anarchist Communism, the response from the Anarchists began that they welcomed the letter, and 'we hope it will lead to the clearing up of some of the points of difference between the Communists of the Socialists [*sic*] League, who have no political ideal, and the Anarchist Communists whose political ideal is clearly defined as opposed to that of the Social Democrats, also clearly defined.'[617] The biting response to Glasier positioned the Anarchists and the SDF as fully-conceived political movements, however much the Anarchists disliked the SDF, and suggested by implication the superfluity of the League.

One point on which the Anarchists acknowledged a policy perspective of the League was as regards wages. Oliver criticised the 'common cant', of which he said the Socialist League was also guilty, of the idea that 'each worker shall enjoy the full fruits of his own labour.' The author characterised this as a 'promise ['held out'] to the proletariat'. He contended that this phrase was meaningless, and that it was impossible to judge the 'value' of work without competition to stand as a comparison. He asked '[w]here the crop of one field has failed through drought, and that of the neighbour has had rain in season, what is the product of the labourer where no crop has ripened, and of him who has reaped abundant harvest?'[618] Under Anarchist Communism, though the failure of one field might mean a dearth of supply, it would be one spread across the whole community and so would be a burden carried lightly by all rather than to the total devastation of one labourer or one family.

Kropotkin sought to define his brand of socialism, aligned with Bakunin, against that propagated by Marx and his followers. Marx, in Kropotkin's view, did not propose a society different enough from the one in which they lived. Under a Marxist future, hierarchy would be preserved along class lines. Though the faces of the people in power might change, their ability to wield authority over the labourer was unacceptable to Kropotkin. It gave itself too readily to a return to subjugation of the working classes. Kropotkin considered that this re-casting of the figures in government had already been tested and found faulty in the aftermath of the French Revolution, and thus must be rejected entirely; indeed, he considered Marxists 'Jacobins' and 'authoritarians'.[619] The State should not simply be recast but razed, and the hierarchy which

[617] 'What is Anarchism', (Sept 1889), p. 39.
[618] Oliver, 'The Logic of Communism', (July 1887), p. 39.
[619] Kinna, 'Kropotkin's Theory of Mutual Aid', p. 261.

existed within a State must never be allowed to redevelop. Todes asserts without citation that Kropotkin thought the Leninist State Socialism in Russia might 'prepare the necessary transition from capitalism to communism.'[620] This is clearly contradicted in Kropotkin's own writing, where he asserted that State-sponsored Communism has no place on the road to an Anarchist State and was no better than a Capitalist one.[621]

Kropotkin claimed that 'most socialists' assumed the continuation of the current division of labour after the revolution.[622] It was not enough for him, as he implied it was for Marx, for the proletariat to continue in their factory work devoid of ingenuity and ruled by a political class entrusted with the governing of the new communist nation.[623] Kropotkin observed that the division of labour prevents workers from accruing knowledge or skills about their craft.[624] He bemoaned the nature of industry which rendered the worker 'only capable of making all day long and for a whole life the same infinitesimal part of something'.[625] They were transformed from machines into mere cogs—and at that, only capable of making cogs—which did nothing to empower them or foster their intellect. Kropotkin lumped Marx in with 'middle-class economists' who drew a definition between '*qualified*' and '*simple*' labour, a distinction which Kropotkin disdained.[626] This would be to place the 'aristocracy of knowledge' in a place of power over the 'horny-handed lower orders', with 'one doomed to serve the other'.[627]

Kropotkin criticised both Marx and Adam Smith for prioritising a discussion of production over a consideration of consumption. He claimed 'necessity' or 'consumption' should precede any production.[628] It should not be the current levels of production of goods which demonstrated the total capacity that must be fought for like scraps among the peasants; rather, it should be the unequivocal goal of a society to produce enough to meet all the needs of its members.[629] To do so would require the employment of all for the benefit of each.

Adams argues that one of Kropotkin's 'fundamental ambitions' was 'the development of a distinctive historical sociology.'[630] Adams refers to Kropotkin's historical vision as 'serpentine', and as being characterised by 'a constant battle between authority and liberty'.[631] Where Marx's

---

620 Todes, *Darwin without Malthus,* p. 126.
621 Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism,* p. 15.
622 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 149.
623 Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism,,* p. 15.
624 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 166.
625 Kropotkin, 'The Morality of Nature', p. 721.
626 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 146.
627 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 149.
628 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 158.
629 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 160.
630 Adams, *Kropotkin,* p. 77.
631 Adams, *Kropotkin,* p.81, p. 89.

understanding of history was rooted in economic conflict, Kropotkin's was essentially social. Kropotkin claimed that the lives of a country's inhabitants 'remain ignored by newspapers if governments have not intervened [in them]'.[632] He criticised this practice as also being an historical phenomenon, observing that while the lives of rulers were well-documented, the lives of the people whom they rule faded to oblivion. Kropotkin engaged with a high- versus low-politics debate. Miller observes correctly that Kropotkin believed all historical writing to be subjective; he asserts '[m]an was shaped by his time and could write about the past only from his particular vantage point, which was shaped by his acceptance or rejection of the political system in which he lived.'[633] This view would later serve Kropotkin's argument that human history has been interpreted as the history of competition by his contemporaries only because of the Capitalism of the Victorian period.

Though Kropotkin disagreed fundamentally with many of Marx's theories, he still used language imbued by Marxism to communicate his own ideas. He explained the wealth of M. Rothschild as having been accumulated through the 'labour of others', while the labourers themselves must fight to earn a subsistence.[634] He wrote '[t]he origin of the wealth of the rich is your misery. Let there be no poor, then we shall have no millionaires.'[635] He anticipated objections that his advocacy for communal ownership and benefit from goods would be considered Communism, asserting that while 'it is Communism', it was a Communism 'which no longer speaks in the name of religion or of the state, but in the name of the people.'[636]

Adams rightly observes that Kropotkin's understanding of Anarchism 'rested on a rich appreciation of the intellectual history of socialism', albeit an often-critical interpretation of prevalent forms of Socialism.[637] In the 1921 issue of *Freedom* which contained Kropotkin's obituary, Max Nettlau lamented that Kropotkin forewent what he supposed would have been a 'most friendly reception' by Morris and Aveling in their Socialist League, and instead founded an independent group.[638] Good feeling did not extend from all Anarchists to Aveling, however: '[a]ny comrade who knows Dr. Aveling knows that he is the English Agent of the German Marxist party and one of the most intolerant of all the opponents of Anarchism', according to

---

632 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* pp. 115-116.
633 Miller, *Kropotkin,* p. 38.
634 Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism,* p. 3.
635 Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism,* p. 4.
636 Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism,* p. 7.
637 Adams, *Kropotkin,* p. 99.
638 Nettlau, 'Peter Kropotkin at Work', p. 12. Nettlau also describes Morris as an 'authoritarian revolutionary', seemingly ignoring the lack of government in Morris' utopia *News from Nowhere.*

one article.[639] Aveling's philosophical and familial commitments to Marxism made him an easy target for anti-Marxist critique.

The Anarchists propounded the innate goodness and altruism of human nature. They constructed a plan for the future, and a method for achieving that future, which relied on that instinct for mutual aid about which Kropotkin wrote so extensively. They looked to animal life, and the history of society, as evidence for their claims. When they engaged with other Socialist groups, the complaints they levied against them were based in what they perceived to be the fundamental misunderstanding of human nature put forth by those groups, particularly of the SDF and the Fabians. The half-way policy of revolution and government propounded by the SDF and the League failed to do enough—in either direction—to have any claim of efficacy. The Fabian idea that human nature required oversight in order to live peaceably was totally anathema to the Anarchist view. The method of the Anarchists, and the critique by them of other groups, was rooted deeply in their interpretation of human nature, itself informed by their understanding of Darwinian evolution.

II.v *Conclusion*

This chapter has demonstrated that the divergent methods of the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, the Socialist League, and the Anarchists were rooted in their evolutionarily-informed understandings of human nature. We have witnessed how the SDF's and the Fabian's view of man as having a nature incompatible with self-governance informed their reformist agendas, and how the Fabian rejection of the SDF was expressed in their view that the latter group misunderstood the nature of evolution when they allowed for ruptures as well as gradual changes. The Anarchists delineated themselves from the other groups in their conception of human nature as inherently cooperative and benevolent; their revolutionary platform was based not in a comfort with—or desire for—chaos, but rather in their trust that mankind, left to our own devices, would offer more communalism than chaos. The conflicting methods of change advocated for within the League are indicative of conflicting conceptions of human nature within the group's leadership. Bax's view of man inclined much more towards the need for parliamentary hierarchy, while Morris rejected centralised government as tyrannous and hoped for the realisation of small, medieval-style communes in their stead. Despite the many explanations offered by scholarship for the divisions of these groups, the pages of their journals,

[639] William Banham, 'Correspondence', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (June 1895), 20, p. 20.

and a multitude of their own writings tell us that their differences were rooted in evolutionary theory. Their disputes must be traced to Darwinian interpretation by historians, as they were by the Socialists themselves. In the next chapter, we explore how the diversity of their methods was made manifest in how, and if, these journals described the Socialism of the future.

Chapter III

Utopia? Socialism after the Revolutionary Dawn

In the following chapter, we examine the fruition envisioned by the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabians, the Socialist League, and the Anarchists of their revolutionary methods. This is the culmination of the evolutionary rhetoric in which the Socialist groups rooted their methodologies, the action taken by each group in putting these methods into practice, and reflects the criticisms levelled by each group against the others. Their engagements with Utopian futures reflected wider debates in the scientific community about the potential teleology of evolution; Spencer himself believed that evolution would eventually result in the 'perfectly adapted human in a utopian society', as Lightman acknowledges.[640] Groups inclined towards the parliamentary method, the SDF and the Fabians, rejected drawing a clear vision of the future as not much more than a fruitless use of time. Their efforts would be spent better in pursuit of tangible changes in the direction of a Socialist future. Though they were divided by their methodology, the Anarchists joined the SDF and the Fabians in rejecting the concept of Utopia as without use to the serious reformer.

Instead, the Anarchists favoured those plans for the future which elucidated the path along which such a future would be reached. In this context, they were much more intentional than the SDF or the Fabians in articulating the details of the future which they imagined after the revolution. Alone among these groups, the Socialist League viewed the forecasting of Utopia not as tarnished by its association with unreality, but rather as a worthy and necessary pursuit. In this line, the League offered praise for Utopia, and used the word to describe the better society towards which they were working. Evolutionary language was usually couched in terms of 'human nature' by these groups with reference to the future society. The groups contested whether this most naturally expresses itself in competitive instincts which must be curtailed,

640 Herbert Spencer, *Social Statistics: Abridged and Revised; Together with the Man versus the State* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896), p. 150 qtd in Lightman, 'Life', p. 23 and p. 28.

reformed, and guided; or in a communalism and mutual aid instinct without need for oversight, as we have explored at length in the previous chapter.

Both the League and the Anarchists looked to the Medieval past as a model for how society could unfold. The communal nature of property in the Middle Ages, particularly of agricultural land, was idealised by these two groups. Where the League included a retreat to artisanal labour in their visions of Utopia, the Anarchists thought Medieval communalism would be much improved and expedited with the advent of Victorian machinery. Where Morris believed that doing by hand the work which was then done by machine would increase the perceived worth of the products made, and would thereby increase the dignity of the labourer, Kropotkin disagreed. In Kropotkin's view, it was by opening the means of mechanical production to use by any and all that the flow of goods could meet the demand of an emancipated society. These debates spoke to the realities of the political climate; unfavourable agricultural conditions had necessitated the migration of much of the rural population into cities.[641] A Socialism which promised a return to farm work, or a bettering of conditions of labour within factories, was designed to appeal to this displaced population.

The place of the machine, and of manual labour, was examined by each of the four groups. So too was man's natural inclination—or lack thereof—for this form of labour. The change which the advent of the Socialist future would foster in the dignity of the working man is another theme which runs through these sections. Elements of Lamarckianism appeared in arguments for the beautifying of architecture and improving of sanitary conditions in these visions of the future. Though it was hoped by these groups that improved living conditions would improve the human stock genetically, it was also acknowledged by some that a 'strategy' must exist for the 'unfit', even in a Utopian future.[642] As Morton notes, eugenics ran through much Utopian writing of the late nineteenth century.[643] We see these eugenicist engagements play out in implicit language in many of the future forecasts of these groups.

Socialists also explored the role of private property, the continuation (or not) of central government, the role of the police, and the relation of religious belief to the society of the future—the last of these responding to a wider contemporary 'obsess[ion] with the challenge to reconcile science and religion'.[644] Many of them offered writings on the educational changes

641 Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 174.
642 Duncan Bell, 'Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as a Social Scientist', *Modern Intellectual History* 16.3, (2017), 863-895, p. 887.
643 Morton, *The Vital Science,* p. 129.
644 Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain,* p. 155.

which must be part of the revolution. Some groups, particularly the SDF, acted in pursuit of this future with the creation of Socialist Sunday Schools, 'complete with socialist catechisms and commandments', by which to teach the 'religion of socialism'.[645] Now let us turn our attention to how the evolutionary commitments of each group were made manifest in the Socialist futures they envision.

III.i *The Social Democratic Federation*

In the following section, we examine the future in which the Social Democratic Federation imagined its efforts at reform would culminate. This was the end of the evolutionary rhetoric on which they grounded themselves and the goal towards which their methods worked. The SDF did not ever articulate a single, choate vision of the future in one place—in fact, at their inception they rejected so-called 'Utopian Socialism' as 'pre-scientific and infantile', in contrast with 'modern Socialism' which found its roots in the 'Science of society'.[646] Instead, I review the scope of their vision of the future with reference to many articles published in *Justice* and *To-Day* which hint at the form which society will take. They hoped for a society which would increase the dignity of the worker; through education, through the bettering of working conditions, through a protection of some ownership of property so long as it did not run to profit. First, we explore the SDF's critical engagement with Utopia as a form and concept. Then, we turn our attention to what we can understand from their non-Utopian writing about the future. Finally, we will root their vision of society in their evolutionary arguments for the future.

Despite the assertion of the irrelevance of Utopia to 'modern Socialism', dialogue about the place of Utopian proposals in the Socialist movement continued in the SDF long past that original 1884 article. Ten years later, one author observed that 'Socialism meandered too long in the realm of Utopia, and we owe a great debt of gratitude to those who translated it into the domain of science.'[647] The rejection of the past of the movement as 'Utopian' seems to excuse inaction, or failed action, and to lend credence to the promise of imminent future action. Utopia became a dream. This attitude aligned with the rejection by Marx and Engels, great influences on the SDF, of Utopian Socialism. For them, the only route to a socialist future was through

[645] Anna Vaninskaya, 'It was a silly system: Writers and Schools, 1870-1939', *The Modern Language Review* 105.4, (October 2010), 952-975, p. 969.
[646] Bax, 'Unscientific Socialism', (March 1884), p. 200.
[647] Hunter Watts, 'Pennyworths of Socialism', (March 1894), p. 4.

'[S]tate-led action'.[648] The SDF claimed that its plans for action were rooted in science, and traded on this sense of legitimacy to promise impending change. Further to this characterisation of Utopia as the broken promise of action was the SDF's claim that the 'Anarchist is nothing if not a utopist.'[649] The Anarchist dreamed of revolution, and wrote of revolution, without ever realising revolution; it was this very fruitlessness which the SDF hoped to avoid by preparing the groundwork for revolution with reform through existing channels of official power.

Utopianism, for the SDF, was impracticality incarnate. An anonymous contributor argued that 'we should be as foolishly Utopian if we undertook never to use any but political means as we should be now if we refused to use these.'[650] To promise only ever to use political reform, rather than revolutionary action is to commit to an unrealistic ideal. So too would it be to hold to the principle of revolutionary action and refuse to take the more expedient method of political reform, as long as it could be taken. In this statement, the SDF dismissed the methods of both the Fabians and the Anarchists as foolish. This was reiterated two years later with the claim that 'to declare that only one method shall, under any circumstances, be adopted, only one means employed, is to be Utopian, whether the utopianism be that of the parliamentarian or the ultra-revolutionist.'[651] The Utopian was again characterised as the anti-realist. It was their amenability to *both* methods of effecting change that delineate the SDF from their fellows, and which, by implication, allowed the SDF to present themselves as the practical Socialists, a title sought also by the Fabian movement.

Political and revolutionary methods of reform were not the only criticised by the SDF as Utopian, in the negative connotation which they assign to that term. Hazell contended that '[p]etty farming and cottage gardening can no more be revived than you can revive the obsolete form of cottage spinning and weaving; or reduce the bootmaking industry to the ancient method pursued by the historic snob and his apprentice'.[652] So, the future which the SDF envisioned, even if they do not characterise such plans as Utopian, rejected the re-medievalising of Morris's Utopian vision, *News from Nowhere,* serialised five years before Hazell's article. Morris imagined a return, a revolution in its most literal sense, to his vision of the pre-Capitalist communal world. Hazell characterised such a revolution as not only impractical but as devolutionary. Reform should not *add* difficulty to life, but rather should ease it. Thus, in defining 'utopian' as that

---

[648] Adams, *Kropotkin,* p. 16.
[649] Hart, 'The Folly of Anarchism", (Jan 1898), p. 2.
[650] 'Social-Democracy and Politics', (Jan 1897), p. 4.
[651] 'Utopianism', (April 1899), p. 4.
[652] A. P. Hazell, 'Malthus Superseded', *Justice* (14 September 1895) 2-3, pp. 2-3.

which is impossible or impractical, the SDF had dismissed the methods of the Fabians, the League, and the Anarchists.

The SDF *did* offer speculation about, and plans for, the Socialist future—even if they did not refer to these plans explicitly as Utopian. *To-day* deemed the following things necessary for a satisfactory life: '[g]ood food, good clothes, decent dwellings, some leisure, certainty of useful work, good education, art, science, and the spiritual life'.[653] The author presented comfort of body and stimulation of mind as the basis for the future society; it was also the means by which the SDF hoped to improve human nature to make it more agreeable to Socialist living.

The method of achieving that future was laid out clearly in 1885 by another article in *To-day*. The unnamed author of the article argued that the 'business [. .] of such organisations as the Social Democratic Federation is not to create revolution, for that is impossible, but to help to regulate and thereby hasten it'. The group's Marxist commitments meant for them that a revolution was inevitable, but they must steward it to its best realisation; they were the midwives at the birth of Socialism. The 'three-fold method' which would make this possible was elaborated as follows: 'showing sympathy with all popular revolutionary movements, by spreading and deepening the vague discontent which is now simmering all through civilised nations.' Then, 'by turning that discontent into an assured hope' through education about the historical causes of that discontent, and finally through the organisation of people for the 'definite single aim of realising Socialism or the freedom of labour, those bodies to form an obvious visible brotherhood instinct with devotion to the cause and the sacrifice of self'.[654] In this author's view, the best basis for a revolution was the widespread desire for that revolution among the whole population—not just among the most politically engaged classes. He or she suggested the SDF must move gradually to foment revolution. This method was the solution to those extreme measures, referred to above as Utopian, for which the Fabians and the Anarchists argued.

Justice suggested that the two elements which were ubiquitous across successful movements were 'a clearly defined object', and a 'clear knowledge of the object' in the members of the movement.[655] The education which the SDF offered must be geared towards the workers whom they wished to mobilise; it would also be the catalyst for evolutionary improvement. Carpenter considered education to be the guarantor of autonomy, for, in his view, it brought a

---

[653] William Clarke, 'An Examination of some Criticism of Democracy', *To-day* 61, (Dec 1888), 161-170, p. 169.
[654] 'The Meaning of Socialism', (Jan 1885), p. 7.
[655] John Tamlyn, 'An Appeal for Definiteness', *Justice,* (06 February 1897), 2, p. 2.

man '*into relation with the world around him*' rather than making him a 'creature of blind wants'.[656] Education made human the worker. This coming into relation with the world was to be marked by an increased concern for the worker's fellows, and thus by the 'brotherhood instinct' identified in the quotation above. Rather than being subject to selfish, animal instinct, the worker may choose to rise above it, and to channel it for his or her own good, and for the good of society—thus did human nature grow towards Socialism in the eyes of the SDF. Their plan for reform relied upon the guided development of human nature towards different instincts than those expressed in the society of their day. Gone would be competition and self-service and in its place this instinct towards brotherhood.

It was exactly this argument which the SDF offered for the power of evolution in a Socialist Society. They hoped to make nature their subject, rather than to be subject to the baser instincts of nature. Education as it stood then was not considered by SDF members to be adequate in ensuring the worker's emancipation from intellectual fetters. The same author who identified the brotherhood instinct also contended that the education offered to the poor by the rich was 'class education'. He or she explained in a direct appeal to the worker that it was merely 'enough education to make you good machines for profit-grinding'.[657] Victorian workers were allowed to rise to the level of inanimate machines by the false benevolences of the Capitalist class. The SDF would raise them from this suppression and inhumanity to a higher plane on which they could learn to want, and to advocate for, the future of equality for which the SDF was so desirous.

Hyndman exhorted the importance of the realisation of the autonomy of workers in their freedom from the tyrannical system of capital. He contended that,

> [U]ntil the mass of the working people of the United Kingdom have learnt to demand, and can combine to obtain, the control by themselves as an educated and organised industrial democracy over those powers of making wealth which now dominate them and their children, no great and permanent good can be done.[658]

These workers could be taught to 'demand', but Hyndman implied that they must learn to organise themselves. They must use the education granted them by the SDF to pursue a better life. Until they do this, the SDF's Utopia-by-another-name could not exist. A term whose relevance to the society was eponymic, and which has not yet formed a central part of our

---

656 Carpenter, 'England's Ideal', (May 1884), p. 336.
657 'The Meaning of Socialism', (Jan 1885), p. 5.
658 H. M. Hyndman, 'Democratic Form and Socialist Substance', *Justice,* (03 November 1900), 3, p. 3.

examination of the SDF, was 'Democracy'. Carpenter referred to the impending 'new Ideal of Humanity' as the 'Democratic Age'.[659] Democracy as the SDF envisioned it would guarantee for all the betterment of their conditions and the autonomy which Hyndman identified as so important to the future of the worker. 'Democracy was an inevitable product of the development of mankind', but the 'rough-and-tumble Democracy', that was, that which begets competition, would 'give way to a Social Democracy', in which tools for production would be owned collectively.[660] Victorian Democracy had so far been suffrage for Capitalists and serfdom for the worker. This article in *To-Day* imagined Social Democracy as equality and universal protection.

Alongside education and democracy, the SDF's visions of the future included the context in which private property would be allowed to exist, which Bax believed 'an essential prerequisite for liberty'.[661] An 1885 article in *To-day* favoured a continuation of private property, though in a limited context. 'Civilisation turned once, in the far-back past, away from the Communism which found no place for private property, and gave no play to individualism. To revert to *that* Communism would be retrogress not progress'.[662] So the SDF's ideal included private property in some capacity, and recognition of the spirit of individuality. The author went further to explain the place of property in a Socialist society, proposing that the 'Communism of the future will not do away with private property, but will restrain it to healthful proportions, [. . .] held for the people by co-operative associations, economic, social, and religious, and by the State', and later that year the same author asserted that Socialism 'does not dream of unwinding the mainspring of society, individualism, and of abolishing private property'.[663] From this, we know that he envisioned forces empowered to enforce this restraint on ownership. He offered no hierarchy for the two forces, co-operatives and the State, which he suggested would divide ownership between themselves, and which would hold this property in trust for the people. I think, though, that we may presume that the State, and likely a democratically elected State, would be the high arbiter. Economic, social, and religious organisations find a place in this vision of the future because their status as 'co-operatives' guarantees their fundamental inclusivity. A church might maintain its building and grounds, a village might organise a fete, both with funds they own and property they manage on behalf of the parishioners and residents. In this Socialist future,

---

659 Carpenter, 'England's Ideal', (May 1884), p. 322.
660 Clarke, 'An Examination of some Criticism of Democracy', (Dec 1888), p. 161.
661 Mark Bevir, 'Ernest Belfort Bax: Marxist, Idealist, and Positivist', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54.1, (January 1993), 119-135, p. 130.
662 R Heber Newton, 'Communism', *To-day,* (Apr 1885), 161-168, p. 167.
663 Newton, 'Communism', Apr 1885), p. 167; R Heber Newton, 'The Religious Aspect to Socialism', *To-day,* (Dec 1885), 474-483, p. 479.

> [L]and would be common property to be cultivated or built on as organised Society should determine; the machinery, the gradual invention of hundreds of generations, carried out by millions of toilers, would be used by all without their being taxed for its use for the benefit of individuals. [664]

This unnamed author made clear that it was already the case that invention was the product of cooperation; that no inventor's genius occurs in isolation, but rather amongst the influence and wisdom of their forebears. This line of argument dismissed protests that Socialism would snuff invention. Instead, it was the society which has always fostered invention, and to return the benefits of invention to the collective was the surest way to see to their fair distribution.

It was extremely important to the SDF that 'profit' not come into the Socialist future. Thus, '[c]ommerce would lose its gambling nature, and would mean a distribution of products which would not involve the making of profits.'[665] It was profit which was so anathema to the SDF, for they believed that it could not exist without unfairness. Profit indicated the overcharging of consumers, or the underpaying of workers, or both. In the future which they envisioned, the workers should labour to create enough to sustain themselves and their fellows, and no more. They would also be rewarded appropriately for their labour, not in excess of their needs, but in exact necessity. Their need, rather than their contribution, would determine their reward. In this they differed from the Fabians, who believed that man's competitive instinct, which they would not seek to alter, would always demand the opportunity for a hierarchy of achievement. In the SDF's perspective, however, the future which maintained capital would be 'a kind of bourgeois Socialism—an attempt to rid the world of poverty and its consequences without getting rid of the causes which render poverty inevitable.'[666] The maintenance of private property by individuals, rather than by cooperatives or the State, was the route to a regression to a Capitalist society based on the self-focused accumulation of the individual.

The SDF also sought to establish the police force on their own terms, especially after Bloody Sunday's scenes of violence against Socialists. 'We must have complete control over the police', *Justice* argued in December of 1887. 'At present they are a standing menace to every honest citizen. And are organised by the Capitalist class to keep the workers in subjection.' They must not be 'myrmidons of a military dictator.'[667] Through the transformation of the police force into a co-operative organisation, with the power that they wielded treated as property to be held in common, they might have become a force for the wider social good, rather than for the

---

[664] 'The Meaning of Socialism', (Jan 1885), p. 6.
[665] 'The Meaning of Socialism', (Jan 1885), p. 6.
[666] F. G. Jones, 'The Abolition of Capital', *Justice,* (06 June 1891), 4, p. 4.
[667] James Blackwell, 'Home Rule for London', *Justice,* (03 December 1887), 4, p. 4.

narrow protection of a hierarchy. The author's use of 'myrmidon' is significant here—the myrmidons were Achilles's soldiers, so-called because their black armour resembled ants, as did their willingness to sacrifice themselves to better the life of their ruler. The author called on men not to be as ants, serving *en masse* their supreme leader. While some other Socialist visions of Utopia were inherently isolationist, Hyndman's Socialist future included maintaining a navy so that England would not be 'starved or conquered by other powers nor [. . .] deprived of our colonies or [. . .] shirk our share in international difficulties.'[668] This hints at the wider imperial implications of the Socialism of the SDF; Hyndman differed from both the League and the Anarchists in supposing that a Socialist future would not be characterised by an isolation from trade with other countries, and certainly differed from them in imagining the maintenance of a military force.

The final element of the SDF's vision of the future was what can best be described as 'social feeling'. This refers to the shift in attitude which will precipitate the revolution, and which will also characterise the post-revolution society. The SDF differentiated itself from the Anarchists in the articulation of this view; the Anarchists believed that Capitalism and government hierarchy was the sole impediment to the expression of an innate desire to be of service to the community. The SDF believed that such a social feeling could *develop* within man through the alteration of living conditions, but they did not believe that this feeling would find immediate expression without careful cultivation and their role in the midwifery of human nature. The 'brotherhood instinct', aforementioned, exemplifies part of this social feeling. So too does an instinct for honesty, accountability, and equality.

It was not the case that the SDF encouraged benevolence to the extent that it might become meekness. Carpenter advised readers to be 'arrogant rather than humble, rash rather than stupidly contented; but, best of all, be firm, helpful towards each other, forgetful of differences, scrupulously honest in yourselves, and charitable even to your enemies.'[669] It was not the agreeableness required of the subjected which Carpenter advocated here. He described the kindness which could be offered by one secure in his position, in possession of the independence identified as vital to the individual Socialist. The men whom he advised to be arrogant are not those already puffed up with the power of their Capitalist success. He exhorted men who are accustomed to being amongst the downtrodden to raise up their heads and assert their humanity.

---

668 H. M. Hyndman, 'Manifesto on Foreign and Colonial Policy', *Justice,* (7 March 1896), 1, p. 1.
669 Carpenter, 'England's Ideal', (May 1884), p. 339.

This was certainly the theme of the SDF's vision of the future: the empowerment of the individual, the restoration of dignity to the labourer and the labourer's work, and the autonomy of the labourer in shaping their own future. The scrupulous honesty to which Carpenter referred was a theme to which he returned several times in the article. If 'to-day the gospel of mere personal honesty spread through society', he suggested, 'so that it became disgraceful for a man to receive the gift of the labour of others without giving an equivalent amount of his own labour in return [. . .] Society would begin to undergo a magical transformation.'[670] Thus by 'honesty', he meant the honesty of actions. It was as much a matter of *honour* as of honesty. This emphasis on honesty was not directed at the workers whom he advised above to become dynamic men. It was, rather, against the Capitalists who styled themselves as gentleman, and who were yet contented to be the indolent beneficiaries of what Carpenter considered a dishonest system, that this was levelled.

Though 'all hands' admit that the 'Social condition [in England] is about as bad as it can possibly be', Carpenter suggested that adequate emphasis had not been placed on the 'importance of mere *personal* actions and ideals as in a sense preceding all schemes'. For it was a 'nation is composed of individuals', and this meant that the 'forces which move the individual, the motives, the ideals which he has in his mind' are the most powerful elements of social reform.[671] Once again, power was conferred upon the worker as an individual able to create change through his or her own free will. No one person, worker or Capitalist, was exempt from the call to act for the betterment of society; the action of the individual forms the basis on which this betterment was achieved through the effort of the group.

As with all other aspects of the arguments formed by these Socialist groups, there is an underpinning of evolutionary rhetoric to the SDF's views of the future. One author argued in *To-Day* that a 'sane Socialism expects to realize its dream only through the slow evolution of society.'[672] In a later instalment of the journal, the same author displayed almost Fabian caution. '[T]he social movement may wreck itself [. . .] if it loses the time-perspective and rushes ahead to reach the millennium in a spurt. Its sense of high inspiration must not cause it to spurn the cold counsels of science.'[673] Here, with total clarity, was the method of revolutionary reform being tied as closely as possible to the author's understanding of evolutionary progress—slow, steady, and therefore unstoppable. These engagements exemplify how the rhetoric of evolution and

[670] Carpenter, 'England's Ideal', (May 1884), p. 322.
[671] Carpenter, 'England's Ideal', (May 1884), p. 321.
[672] Newton, 'The Religious Aspect to Socialism', (Dec 1885), p. 478.
[673] R Heber Newton, 'The Religious Aspect of Socialism', *To-day,* (Feb 1886), 42-52, p. 50.

science was deployed even without the author or reader requiring a deep level of understanding. Inspiration was here contrasted with scientific precision, a delineation also alluded to in *To-Day* several years later. There, the author identified Socialism as the 'outcome of a condition of society in which production has become collective and scientific instead of individual and artistic.'[674] This mode of production would certainly increase the pace at which the necessaries of life could be produced, but it would also have undercut the creativity concomitant with autonomy for the worker, and which might run contrary to the emphasis placed upon exposure to culture as such a vital element of the Socialist future. Why teach the worker to know art and discourage him from creating it?

Revolutions which lacked adequate preparation 'came to naught or but reached partial reforms, and so they failed: but, renewing themselves again and again, they have surely taught us to see in them true efforts of human nature'.[675] These efforts were both a tireless desire for social improvement, and a desire which could, in its impatience for fruition, ensure its own failure. Society must be prepared for the revolution. Thus, *Justice* claimed that '[h]istory shows us that sudden substitutions of utopias for the established order never occur and cannot occur'. The author believed that 'society is an organism, progressing slowly but surely in the direction of perfection', and that 'society is already well on the way to Socialism, for the new society is growing out of, and must grow out of, the old.'[676] Society was a living thing, and thus could not be shaped from nothing. If the SDF had razed the State, there would have been nothing left of society. Better then for them to encourage the development of society and the State in a direction to which they were amenable. Hyndman joined these men in using the language of evolution and science: 'what is mere foolishness and utopian balderdash to [non-Socialists] is the certainty of a scientific evolution and a material religion to us.'[677] The initiated understood Socialism as more than a pleasant dream—it was a theory and a plan rooted in history and science, and its believers could worship at the altar of the proofs of its viability. Hyndman's religious invocation referred to a wider trend in the Socialist movement to describe the theory in terms of a faith.

Many Socialists across these movements came from religious backgrounds—Morris himself even considered becoming a minister. It was not therefore surprising that religious language was widespread in exhortations to believe fervently in Socialism. One author conflated Heaven and Socialism when he argued with a metaphor for a gradualist approach to revolution:

---

674 Clarke, 'An Examination of some Criticism of Democracy', (Dec 1888), p. 166.
675 Newton, 'The Religious Aspect to Socialism', (Feb 1886), p. 47.
676 Hart, 'The Folly of Anarchism', (Jan 1898), p. 2.
677 Hyndman, 'The Progress of Socialism', (Oct1884), p. 4.

'[t]he kingdom of heaven is not to be precipitated upon a worldly society'.[678] Society must be prepared for the coming of the Socialist future. The author lamented too the supposed alienation of working men from religion, and, for the 'socialistically inclined workingmen, a positive antipathy toward every traditional form of religion.'[679] Religion had too long been used to reassert class difference, to reassure the Capitalist class from the pulpit that their wealth was rightfully theirs, and that their charitable efforts were sufficient repentance for their worldly success. Should religion be carried out as it was designed, he posited, religion and Socialism were intensely compatible. And though Aveling disputed in searing terms the claim that Christ was a Socialist—for the idea had 'not entered into the mind of even the high-thinking men in the days of Jesus', others in the movement claim him as a forebear.[680] *Justice*, for instance, asserts that 'Christ was no Anarchist.' He claimed him instead as the father of a 'rude communism'.[681] Not only was Christianity compatible with Socialism in general, but the specific brand of Socialism for which the SDF advocated found some of its roots in Christ's teachings. Besant, writing for *To-Day,* agreed, positing that 'there is much in the teachings of the New Testament, as in other ancient scriptures, which can be utilised in the pleading for Socialism.'[682] Besant positioned Socialism as having historical context, as old as that of other forms of government which assert their rectitude in part based upon their survival through centuries. This was important from an evolutionary perspective, because of the credence it lent to the movement. If Socialism had simmered for so long, been considered and reconsidered for so long, it must finally be acknowledged as a legitimate movement. It was not rash or ephemeral, but rather had existed under different names throughout the centuries alongside Republicanism and Monarchy.

Though the Social Democratic Federation deemed Utopia as a concept irrelevant to the future which they envisioned, they continued to argue against it, and thus to foster its continued relevance in their discourse. They used 'utopian' as a synonym for 'impractical', particularly in relation to the plans of the other Socialist groups. Both 'extremes' of methods—choosing only to pursue parliamentary politics or parliamentary overthrow were schemes dismissed as Utopian dreaming. So too was Morris's desire for a return to the production style of the medieval past considered an impracticality and a regression. Instead, the SDF considered itself the steward of a revolution which was inevitable. It was their role to prepare the worker; they must understand

---

678 Newton, 'The Religious Aspect to Socialism', (Feb 1886), p. 47.
679 Newton, 'The Religious Aspect to Socialism', (Dec 1885), p. 47.
680 Edward B. Aveling, 'Christianity and Capitalism', *To-day,* (March 1884), 177-187, p. 180.
681 J. M. O'Fallon, 'Idealism, Anarchism, Christianity and Socialism', *Justice,* (02 January 1897), 2, p. 2.
682 Besant, 'Divide and —?', (May 1888), p. 136.

the goals of the Socialist movement and desire its success. This would require a reform of the education system, which the SDF believed was a tool used by the Capitalist class to prepare the worker to continue to serve their needs. The education of the future would be one which fostered dignity and intellect. No servility could continue in the character of the worker—they must desire their own autonomy for Socialism to succeed and to continue. Though this autonomy could include the possession of some property, it would be allowed neither to include an excess of it, nor anything which would create a profit for the owner. Profit was considered by the SDF to exist only from an unjust exchange—it had no place in the future they envisioned. The police force would be allowed to exist, but it would be under the strict control of the Socialists.

The most important shift in the Socialist future would be in the increase of social feeling. This was imagined by the SDF as a sort of universal *noblesse oblige*; everyone would enjoy a level of privilege which would allow them to extend aid to any of their fellows. The evolution to this future would be a slow one—it could not be rushed, and it would fail if the SDF attempted to do so. Society was described as an organism growing towards Socialism, and Socialism itself as both a religious belief and also as a political belief intensely compatible with Christian religion. The SDF's view of the future, though never expressed in terms of a Utopia, nevertheless envisioned a higher mode of living. The SDF's ideal future bore striking similarity to the future envisioned by the Fabians, as I demonstrate below. That these movements shared so similar an end renders extraordinary their failure ever to unite in their method of achieving it.

III.ii *The Fabian Society*

The Fabians, much like the SDF, did not view Utopia as a concept relevant to their visions of the future. They offered sharp rebuke to those men who were more inclined to 'discover and proclaim what the future *must* be' than to 'make the future what it should be'.[683] The Fabians sought to be an example against this proclivity. Rather than dedicating time to projecting what the future would be like many generations from their time, or offering a single solution to the mass of suffering to which they were witness, most Fabian writing articulated a vision of the next step, and perhaps the step after that, on the path to a more Socialist future. This lack of engagement with forecasting the future was consistent with their understanding of human nature. The Fabians did not expect man to alter fundamentally through the advent of Socialism; instead, society would alter to channel the competitive nature of man into the greater good.

[683] Wallas, 'Property Under Socialism', (1889), p. 131.

Thus, there was not much to imagine about a Socialism of the distant future, because it would be man as he had always been, living in improved circumstances, ever evolving in response to man's needs.

The Fabians did not profess a teleological Socialism, and their engagement with Utopia as a form reflects this; the Fabians cited markers indicative of successful progress rather than a final form of Socialism. When they did offer insights into the goal towards which they were progressing, it was generally done in modest terms. Besant desired a future with neither excess nor lack—where everyone would be perfectly sated, but never over-full or starving. Socialism was not, for the Fabians, the cure for every problem which society faced, nor could it be promised as the ticket to a better life for every person—rather, the Socialist vision offered by the Fabians sought to improve the lot of *most*. This vision was offered in terms of education, of the dignity of labour and the labourer, of the potential for the mechanisation of drudgery, and with an eye towards the possibility for the necessitation of checks upon the population as one tool of many by which to improve the conditions of the majority of labourers.

Utopian Socialism was, as a form, antithetical to the theoretical commitments of Fabianism. It meant, for them, a Socialist theory formed with no eye to practicality and no basis in science. Webb asserted that neither 'Insurrection' nor 'Utopianism' are compatible with the Fabian brand of Socialism.[684] In contrast to both insurrection and Utopianism, the Fabians considered their methods to be the only realistic option—much as the SDF portrayed their own plans. Theirs would be a slow and ever-evolving Socialism which would move society in a better and more equitable direction. Though the Fabians might have identified specific changes which they hoped to see in a future Socialist State, such as the 8-hour workday, they did not presume to outline every aspect of the Socialist future.

The 'sketching of Utopia', which required 'no knowledge of facts' was, according to Besant, 'easier and less useful' than the 'less attractive' but 'more useful' effort to trace the social 'tendencies to their natural outworking in institutions; and so to forecast, not the far-off future, but the next social stage.' Besant contrasted the diligence and historical basis of Fabianism with a Utopia which existed without relation to reality, and which was merely an ideal made without a path which connected it to the state of man. There was no romance to Besant's suggestion—and it was a charge levied almost explicitly at Morris. The Utopist figure whom she criticised 'creates, he does not construct'—for his people are not 'wayward [. . .] irregular organisms of daily life';

[684] Webb, 'Socialism: true and false', (1894), p. 4.

rather they were 'automata' who obey the 'strings he pulls.'[685] She implied that it was easy to imagine a peaceful communalism, formed without government and existing without strife if one did not have to account for the tumultuousness of reality, and the unpredictability of human nature.

In the Fabian perspective, such a future would only have been possible after many generations of steady change towards such a future. It did not serve man then to run a thought experiment on the future his grandchildren's children might know. Nor did it serve the Socialist cause to provoke violent revolution in a society which was not prepared for the changes it would bring, and which would therefore return to its previous state when the temporary fervour faded. It was against these two strains—Utopianism and insurrection, which Besant directed her own attention to the '[r]evolutions which transform society, not the transient riots which merely upset thrones and behead kings.'[686] She would work with patience to lay the groundwork for a better world which she hoped would materialise step by step as the Fabians create steady, lasting change.

'We are not Utopian Socialists', Besant protested. '[W]e have no sudden cure-all for every ill which afflicts society'. It was more in the realm of the League, rife with Anarchist tendencies and led by Morris to advocate for a 'sudden' Utopia. The solution for the Fabians was one of gradual betterment and slow change, the end of which could not be foreseen. She went on to argue that the 'exact details of the working [of a future society] could only be given by one endowed with the spirit of prophecy, and many such matters will have to be solved by the common-sense and business experience of the administrators.'[687] It was the job of Fabians neither to identify one solution which would ameliorate all social problems, nor to present a definitive view of the future towards which they were working. Rather, the Fabians were most explicit in their *methods* for change, and the principles on which these methods are built.

Despite these protests, Besant presented a less hostile view of Utopia as a concept in an 1890 piece for the SDF's *Justice.* In that article, she suggested that through Utopias, '[v]ague aspirations are [. . .] rendered definite, and a sign post is set up marking the direction in which we should press.' 'It is true', she acknowledged, 'that dreaming is not acting, but it is also true that a dream may give an impulse to action'.[688] Though Utopianism would never be the primary outlet through which Fabians advocated change, the process of outlining the future could, she

---

685 Annie Besant, 'Industry Under Socialism', *Fabian Essays in Socialism, (*The Fabian Society: London, 1889), 150-169, p. 150.
686 Besant, 'Industry Under Socialism', (1889), p. 150.
687 Annie Besant, 'Socialism: its Truths and its Hopes: A Reply', *Our Corner,* (April 1887), 193-200, p. 199.
688 Annie Besant, 'Utopias', *Justice,* (22 February 1890), 2, p. 2.

admitted, be a useful one. In this spirit, Besant put forth the following ideas: society should have '[e]nough for each of work, of leisure, of joy; too little for none; too much for none'. This, she claimed, was 'the Social Ideal.' Besant advocated for limits at the upper and lower ends of living. The principle she implicitly accepted was that there was an equilibrium possible in quality of life. There was enough to go around that everyone could have enough to satisfy their needs, including time for pleasure and rest, and not enough to encourage indolence. She imputed a moral value onto the pursuit of this future when she asserted that it was '[b]etter to strive after [this end] worthily, and fail, than to die without striving for it at all.'[689] As we have seen in the previous chapter, part of this striving, included in Besant's moral imperative, was a restriction on birth rate. Socialism could not support an overabundance of dependents on a proportionally smaller group of able adults—we will investigate this point in more detail below.

While Fabians were united in the view that the route to Socialism would be evolution rather than revolution, and united in broad terms upon economic principles, they differed in how they imagined some social issues might be resolved. As regards education, Graham Wallas argued that '[i]f this generation were wise it would spend on education not only more than any other generation has ever spent before, but more than any generation would ever need to spend again', and that 'every child should be brought up as a nobleman'.[690] Wallas characterised education as a means of bettering not just the mind of the individual, but also of bettering their progeny. To educate thoroughly one generation, to impart to them social ideals and increase their standard of living, would be to improve permanently the prospects and expectations of future generations.

Besant viewed education as a matter of value to the personal improvement of the worker, and to the efficiency of that worker's labour. '[T]he educated brain', she contended, 'economises labor and minimises drudgery'.[691] Shaw, in contrast, warned that if everyone was educated, then 'educated labour will be as dirt-cheap as uneducated labor is now'—thus diminishing the benefit of so-called 'free schools'.[692] He objected to these anyway as they were funded out of an increase of the taxes of the working man. For Besant and Wallas, education was a means of empowerment for the individual. Rather than being a commodity only useful in its sale value, as Shaw would have had it, it had independent, intrinsic value. It was the means by which the dignity of the worker could be assured, and by which the return he demanded from life might be

[689] Besant, 'The Evolution of Society', (Sept 1885), p. 137.
[690] Wallas, 'Property Under Socialism', (1889), p. 147.
[691] Besant, 'The Evolution of Society', (Oct 1885), p. 203.
[692] Shaw, 'The True Radical Programme', (1887), p. 5. See Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 293 for more of Shaw's skepticism to education as a means of reforming human nature.

expanded. An education was, for Besant and Wallas, the best way to teach the worker about the life he might win by the toppling of the current system—a view with which the SDF certainly agreed.

In an 1884 *Fabian Tract,* the author argued that the 'competitive system' of 'Capital in the hands of individuals', which was itself responsible for mass poverty, had 'escaped condemnation' only because the people within it were 'so ready to accept established custom' and because 'general ignorance' existed as to the 'evils' resulting from the current system and the 'power' of the people to change it. Education might be the salve to be applied to this ignorance, both of what better prospects existed, and also of the means in the hands of each individual to enact change. Philips' argument was one of empowerment. The workers must rely on themselves, and of their own volition choose freedom. Unless they actively chose it, 'Capital' would not be 'made social'.[693] The industrial revolution allowed for a huge accumulation of wealth, but the 'distribution' of this wealth was 'partial'.[694]

Besant was in favour of mechanisation of much of the dangerous and dull labour, like Kropotkin and unlike Morris—the kind of labour which would not stimulate the newly-educated worker. Nevertheless, she acknowledged that there would be a division of labour—someone would be in charge of lighting the fires—'but the one who lights the fire will be a free and independent human being, not a drudge.'[695] Machinery would intervene where it could to improve the lot of workers, but those workers who continued to perform manual labour would be imbued with dignity.[696]

Machines would be used for that labour which is productive and industrial, in Besant's vision. The 'line of progress is to substitute machines for men in every department of production: let the brain place, guide, control', she suggested, 'but let iron and steel, steam and electricity, that do not tire and cannot be brutalised, do the whole of the heat toil that exhausts human frames to-day.'[697] Men would be producers of knowledge and of strategy; they would organise labour, but not be subject to the dangerous toil of effecting it. Besant did not present a fundamentally different industrial structure to that of the late Victorian period—she sought

---

693 W. L. Philips, 'Why are the many poor?', *Fabian Tract* 1, (1884), 1-4, p. 2, p. 4.
694 Besant, 'The Evolution of Society', (Aug 1885), pp. 71-72.
695 Besant, 'The Evolution of Society', (Oct 1885), p. 203.
696 The interaction between machinery and the role of the labourer, in particular of the automisation of certain tasks, had been at the heart of discussions regarding industry throughout the nineteenth century. Concerns were rife throughout the century that workers became little better than pieces of machines, trained only to do one manual task, and starved for a more expansive and a bettering education. For an exploration of the intellectual background from which Besant's ideas emerged, see, for example, Maxine Berg, *The Machinery Question and the Making of Political Economy 1815-1848,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) in total and in Chapter 7 'The Scientific Movement' particularly.
697 Besant, 'Industry Under Socialism', (1889), p. 161.

simply to replace the suffering workers with machines that could not suffer. The labourer would become the foreman, and the machine the labourer. This change in industrial structure would not, Besant imagined, lead to mass unemployment. She hoped that instead of 'supporting the unemployed by rates levied on the employed', labourers would be allowed to 'work to supply their own necessities'.[698]

Besant argued elsewhere that checks on population are right and proper for the abolition of poverty. She did not make explicit here the connection between the mechanisation of menial labour and the diminution of population, but it was implicit in her plans. Shaw likewise anticipated this difficulty and warned that the combination of the 'introduction of machinery' and the 'increase of population' would drive wages lower.[699] It was not that new sectors of work would be created to occupy the destitute factory worker for Besant, but rather that such a worker would not be born. It was true that this long-term plan would alleviate suffering, but through the elimination of the sufferer rather than the cause of the suffering.

It was true too that 'Socialism' was not the 'only condition necessary to produce complete human happiness.' A reform of the mode of living did not do away with all the difficulties which a people might face. 'Diseases' and 'vices' would not evaporate with the advent of even the 'justest [*sic*] possible social system'—and the 'extinction of weaker peoples' might still occur. The Fabians acknowledged that they could not, even with the cure of all social ills, ensure the end of all physical ones. They could not protect all people against hardship. 'But', asserted Olivier, for 'five men out of six in England who live by weekly wage, Socialism would indeed be a new birth of happiness.'[700]

The Socialism envisioned by Olivier was not a panacea, not a Utopia, not the absolution of all evil and suffering. It would not prop up the lives of those people who could not survive without the State's help. Whereas in Morris's Utopia it seemed that *all* people had become more attractive under better working and social conditions; in Olivier's assessment, it was through the death of the 'residuum' that the rest of society could flourish. Socialism would do away with the 'dreary squalor of *their* homes [my emphasis]'. '[E]ducation, refinement, leisure', the 'thought of which now maddens *them* [emphasis mine]' would be '*their* daily life [emphasis mine].' Olivier made no attempt to disguise his writing as being for the common man—they were written about, but they were not his audience. They, who lived in squalor and could not comprehend luxury and beauty, would be lifted up by Olivier and his coterie of saviours along the path towards a

698 Besant, 'Industry Under Socialism', (1889), p. 156.
699 Shaw, 'The True Radical Programme', (1887), p. 5.
700 Wallas, 'Property Under Socialism', (1889), p. 148

Socialist future, and those of 'them' who were too weak to survive disease and vice would naturally die out.[701]

The most significant reason for which the Fabians rejected Utopianism was that they believed it to be incompatible with human nature—they believed their role, much like the SDF, was that of a steward carefully nudging a population in the right direction, but never presuming to impose upon that society their own will all at once. Unlike the SDF, the Fabians also had no expectation of a vast alteration of human nature. 'History', Webb posited, offered no precedent for the 'sudden substitutions of Utopian and revolutionary romance.' The chief Utopian Socialist, William Morris, was also the progenitor of the genre of Socialist romance.[702] This assertion by Webb was thus a not-so-subtle gibe at his rival Socialist leader. He attacked Morris again with reference to the 'mere Utopians' who 'wove the baseless fabric of their visions of reconstructed society on their own private looms'—this 'private loom' being no doubt the purview of Morris's artisanal labours, and the society he forecasted in his Utopian vision was indeed a reimagining not only of social structures, but also of the people within them. Webb derided the 'benevolent despots who would have poured the old world, had it only been fluid, into their new moulds.'[703] These Utopians, rather than working to guide the evolution of human nature towards a greater sociability, would merely attempt to force people as they are into new behaviours. Besant likewise joined Webb in a barely veiled critique of Morris's Utopian vision, and in so doing she captured the essence of the Fabian view of human nature. She sought only to 'work out changes practicable among men and women as we know them', rather than planning a future for men unlike those living in their day—a critique which H. G. Wells also levelled at Morris.[704]

When the Fabians considered people as they are, they recognised a willingness in the population to accept help from the government, but not to change their habits as the Utopian future presented by Morris would necessitate. Wallas argued that 'most people in England' would then 'gladly inhabit comfortable houses built and owned by the State', but that, 'at present', they would 'insist on having their own crockery and chairs' and 'books and pictures'.[705] The

---

701 Wallas, 'Property Under Socialism', (1889), p. 148.
702 Carole G. Silver, 'Socialism Internalized: The Last Romances of William Morris', *Socialism and the Literary Artistry of William Morris,* eds. Carole G. Silver and Florence S. Boos, (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 117-126, p. 126.
703 Webb, 'Historic', (1889), p. 31 and p. 34.
704 Wells was a Fabian between 1903 and 1908 and, like Besant, explored a flirtation with negative eugenics. Besant, 'Industry Under Socialism', (1889), p. 8; Wells, *A Modern Utopia,* p. 11; Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics,* p. 189; Partington, John S., '*The Time Machine* and *A Modern Utopia*: The Static and Kinetic Utopias of the Early H.G. Wells', *Utopian Studies* 13.1 (2002) 57-68, p. 65.
705 Wallas, 'Property Under Socialism', (1889), p. 134.

population was not prepared to sacrifice private property entirely—whatever they might come to accept at some point in the future. The move towards a communal future was, however, underway—Webb offered a moderate version of this in a 'Municipal Socialism' funded by 'local debt' to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of a town or area. Free libraries, art galleries, science lectures, and subsidised water are all examples he cites as ongoing in England.[706]

The Fabians also concerned themselves with the morality and moral motivations of the prospective society. Olivier argued that the morality of 'actions and propensities of the individual' should be decided based on their 'supposed effects upon society'. Thus, the highest moral code was to act always for the benefit of society.[707] Wallas, writing in the same volume as Olivier, paused to examine the difficulty of creating a society which lived by that code from people as he knew them, 'saturated with immoral principles by our commercial system'. Though it might have been possible to 'supply a tolerable shelter with a bed', and 'a sufficient daily portion of porridge, or bread and cheese, or even of gin and water', to do so with the public as they were would be to invite mass indolence.[708] Human nature as understood by the Fabians was not suited to continuing to toil when survival in relative comfort could be assured without it. It remained an unpleasant task to be shirked where possible. The delicate task of the Fabians was to structure a society in which man would be motivated to labour, while still protecting society from the ravages of poverty, hunger, and senseless inequality. Workers must be incentivised to value work as a worthwhile act, a benefit to their own character and also to their community. A society in which the worker could be left to his own devices and trusted to live up to these principles was, in the Fabian view, a thing of the distant future.

The Fabians believed Utopia to be alien to the method by which they sought to evolve society. While they acted in pursuit of a general direction of social movement, they did not presume to lay out, even for themselves, a fully formed end towards which they were working. This would have been, in their view, little more than an exercise in vanity. They derided Morris's Utopian vision, which existed without any reasonable tether to human nature, and which failed to lay out the path by which man might achieve Morris' desired end without an alteration to his intrinsic character. For all their desire not to engage in speculation about the distance future, we have been able to understand some elements which they imagined would be inherent to the Socialist future. Education of the worker would ensure his autonomy and expedite his labour. Machinery

[706] Webb, 'Historic', (1889), p. 52.
[707] Olivier, 'Moral', (1889), p. 110.
[708] Wallas, 'Property Under Socialism', (1889), p. 145.

would be used for most productive work, and menial tasks still done by men would not be regarded as being without dignity. Some men would still die of illness, some would succumb to their vices, but for most of the population, life would be immeasurably improved by the changed conditions of labour. We have so far examined the future-forecasting of two groups who profess a reluctance to offer us their vision. We will move on, in the next section, to a group whose willingness to forecast the future marks it out with most distinction from its fellows.

III.iii *The Socialist League*

Unlike in the two sections above, 'Utopia' was, for members of the League, not just a useful thought experiment, but instead the best-articulated programme for which they advocated. The foundations of Utopia were supposed by the authors of the *Commonweal* to be rooted deeply in human history. These contributors also supposed that the past could be looked to as a guide by which they could navigate a return to a primitive (and, by their estimation, Utopian) way of living. Morris and Bax contended that the development of the 'modern civilised State' was fuelled by the 'antagonism between individual and social interests, which has transformed primitive Society into Civilisation.'[709] Society, then, was formed by individuals in agreement with one another, whereas Civilisation was the process of enforcing the will of some—perhaps even of the majority—on the whole. Five years later, Morris reinforced this delineation, and suggested that his 'ideal of the new Society would not be satisfied unless that Society destroyed civilisation'.[710] Morris and Bax believed that it was through war that leadership was created within a group; it was the need for organisation in the face of an enemy by which a single leader emerged and by which obedience became a virtue in the majority.[711] There was a tinge of imperial critique in this discourse; any conception of 'civilising' colonial peoples must, under Morris's definition, have been unjust tyranny and worthy of overthrow.

They argued that the 'conditions of mere savage life' were composed only by the satisfaction of individual needs. It was after this point that 'primitive Communism' developed.[712] Bax contended that the 'suppression of individual liberty' which followed the earliest individualist stage of society resulted in the suppression or erasure of 'special individuality' and is thus also not the answer—even though 'societies lived together in harmony, in security and

[709] Morris and Bax, 'Socialism from the Root Up: Ancient Society', (May 1886) p. 53.
[710] Morris, 'The Society of the Future', (March 1889), p. 98.
[711] Morris and Bax, 'Socialism from the Root Up: Ancient Society', (May 1886) p.. 53.
[712] Morris and Bax, 'Socialism from the Root Up: Ancient Society', (May 1886) p. 53.

peace.'[713] Sumpter considered that Morris had an 'admiration' for the 'supposedly democratic aspects of barbarian gentile society'.[714] Morris expressed this in a lecture to the Manchester Royal Institution of Art in 1883, when he wondered why 'civilized society' has 'degenerated' in respect of the 'beauty of man's handiwork' since the 'barbarous, superstitious, unpeaceful Middle Ages'.[715] It must be that the suppression of individual needs in favour of the greater good, defined by the holders of power and presumably in service to their interests, proved less fertile ground for creativity even than the chaos of barbarism. Evolutionary theory lent new language to an old concern. The impulse to care for the collective—to sacrifice oneself for the livelihood of a multitude— was an impulse that could not exist in isolation. Communalism must be carried out by the majority, if not by the entirety, of a population, or those acting in self-interest would be able to manipulate entirely for their own benefit the goodness of others.

In Morris's *News from Nowhere,* serialised in the *Commonweal,* the Middle Ages seemed once again to have come alive in England. As Sumpter observes correctly, 'prehistory was adapted to predict the coming socialist dawn.'[716] Morris took his cues in the formation of a Socialist future from the traditions of England's past. He asserted confidently a return to these Medieval traditions. Others were reluctant to offer so clear a vision of what might lie ahead. Of the Socialist future, one *Commonweal* contributor wrote, '[t]he thing we really want is mightier than all our conscious efforts to attain it, and it will grow in its own way.'[717] The responsibility of forecasting the future was obviated—and a trust was placed in the inevitability of the Socialist future. Another article argued that '[s]ociety is as much a matter of evolution as any other organism', and that thus Socialists could not be expected to lay out in exactitude the structure of the society towards which they were working.[718]

Morris grew up in wealth—and lived his life as a wealthy man. He was aware keenly of his privilege and the tension in which it stood to his revolutionary credentials. Morris believed that his birth into wealth suited him uniquely to the role of designing the future—because of the privilege in which he was raised, he asked 'much more of the future than many of you do'.[719] His awareness of luxury shapes his conception of Utopia. Morris viewed 'realism itself as

---

[713] Bax, 'Early Communal Life', p. 148.
[714] Sumpter, 'Anthropology, Socialist Prediction and William Morris's *Commonweal*', p. 355.
[715] Philip Henderson, *William Morris: His Life, Work, and Friends,* (Norwich: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1963), pp. 247-248.
[716] Sumpter, 'Anthropology, Socialist Prediction and William Morris's *Commonweal*', p. 350.
[717] George Sturt, 'The Ruskin Reading Guild', *The Commonweal,* (21 December 1889), 402, p. 402.
[718] Thomas Shore, 'Solvitur Ambulando', *The Commonweal,* (21 January 1888), 20-21, p. 20.
[719] Morris, 'The Society of the Future', (March 1889), p. 98.

antiproletarian' because it concerned itself with what Morris termed the 'troubles of a middle class couple in their struggle toward social uselessness'.[720] Margaret Cole goes so far as to suggest that it was the realisation that 'under capitalism the worker was not merely unable to possess beautiful things, he was not even allowed to make them' which first ignited in Morris an inclination towards Socialism.[721] Such an assertion must by nature remain speculative, but it certainly aligns with the centrality of access to beauty in his Utopian writing.

Kropotkin imagined that machinery will unencumber the labourer from repetitive and unstimulating labour, but Morris rejected the necessity of machinery to a Socialist future.[722] Morris referred to the 'perfecting of machinery' as having been 'forced on civilisation by the competition of the world-market'.[723] Globalisation and mass production threatened Morris's desire for a future of artisanal labour and production—the production of beautiful things which perhaps drew him to Socialism.[724] Morris desired a return to a Medieval model where the 'demand for craft products would revive and quality would be preferred to quantity in consumers' judgements of value or utility.'[725] This was the most expedient method by which 'to re-establish the worker's freedom' by 'emancipat[ing] him from his subjection to capitalist profit-making'.[726] Beauty and craftsmanship would be prized above quantity and cost—particularly in a society devoid of money, as Nowhere was.

The pervasion of beauty extended beyond production to architecture. As in the later Utopias written by H. G. Wells and Francis Galton, Morris noted explicitly architectural similarities between Utopia and an Oxford college.[727] To these men, the Oxbridge collegiate system signified a closed community which placed great emphasis upon learning and self-betterment. It also signified a degree of communal living which was replicated only, perhaps, in London's Clubs, and the Inns of Court.[728] The *Commonweal* described cities of the future as being populated by 'architectural splendours' and argues that '[o]nly those who have themselves felt the influence of a magnificent building can imagine the effect upon men of a beautifully constructed

---

720 Silver, 'Socialism Internalized', p. 119; Morris, 'The Society of the Future', (March 1889), p. 200.
721 Margaret Cole, 'The Fellowship of William Morris', *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 24.2, (Virginia: University of Virginia, 1948), 260-277, p. 269.
722 Peter Kropotkin, 'Communist-Anarchism', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (April 1888), 73-74, p. 74
723 Morris, 'Notes', *The Commonweal* (13 August 1887), 257, p. 257.
724 Morris's view is characteristic of a Socialist desire to inhibit over-consumption. Thompson, 'Socialist Political Economies', p. 234.
725 Cole, 'The Fellowship of William Morris', p.10.
726 Cole, 'The Fellowship of William Morris', p.10.
727 Morris, *News from Nowhere,* p. 54; Wells, *A Modern Utopia,* p. 146; Galton, *Kantsaywhere,* p. 32.
728 Both Galton, 'The Donoghues of Dunno Weir', *Utopian Studies* 12.2, (2001), 210-233, p. 211 and Wells, *A Modern Utopia,* p. 146 favourably reference London's Clubs in their Utopias.

city.'[729] The article's assertion betrayed the same elitism as Morris's belief that he demanded 'much more of the future' than those born into less privilege. Those who had not 'felt the influence' of grandeur must take the author at his word that to do so would shape their minds for the better. The destruction of inferior buildings, to be replaced by more beautiful ones, is a common feature across the Utopian visions of Wells and Morris.[730] In an 1891 article infused with Anarchist sympathy, the author exhorted that the 'slums, being abandoned by the people, must not be left standing, at least, we must make it impossible for the poor to inhabit these horrible dens again. [. . .] Let the slums perish in the purifying flame'.[731] There was certainly a Lamarckian influence in this writing, and that of Morris'. Beauty's influence on a population was to their benefit because of its power to intervene in the evolutionary process.

Morris believed, as did many of his fellows, that genetic stock was influenced deeply by the aesthetic, comfort, and healthfulness of surrounds. Thus, when Bevir refers to Morris's desire for 'everyone to enjoy art in their domestic lives' as one of his 'ethical concerns', he joins the overwhelming scholarship which has discounted Morris' scientific commitments. It is a *biological* concern for the Lamarckian Socialist.[732] Bevir believes that Morris' 'utopian vision revolved around his continuing romantic concern to promote good art based on naturalness and harmony', without investigating more deeply why art was such an important part of his personal philosophy. There may be some truth to his contention that 'Morris defined his socialism, therefore, primarily in terms taken from his earlier romanticism, Protestantism, and Ruskinian sociology', but it does not come close to capturing the full picture of Morris's brand of Socialism, because it ignores his vital engagement with the language of evolutionary theory.[733]

The desire for an Oxbridgian beauty was not concomitant with a collegiate hierarchy, however. The very method by which cohesion exists between groups was contested within the *Commonweal.* One author contended that it would be 'inconceivable' and 'impossible' to imagine a future where the State, defined as the 'standing or permanent part of society', did not also exist, even in a Socialist future. 'Society', posited that author, demanded 'some common means of expressing itself.'[734] If the State was the means of expression for society, it could be presumed that the author imagined a direct democracy through which the voice of the people would find immediate expression.

---

[729] James Blackwell, 'Dreams and Nightmares', (June 1889), p. 186.
[730] Waithe, 'Building Utopia', p. 587.
[731] Nicoll, 'After the Revolution', (July 1891), p. 74.
[732] Bevir, 'William Morris: The Modern Self, Art, and Politics', p. 17.
[733] Bevir, 'William Morris: The Modern Self, Art, and Politics', p. 21.
[734] Beckett, 'Empirical Socialism', (Dec 1887), p. 421.

Though Morris and Bax acknowledged that 'naturally' some 'organisation of discipline' would emerge within the Socialist movement in pursuit of revolution, 'there shall be no distinctions of rank or dignity' which might 'give opportunities for the selfish ambition of leadership'. Though they acknowledged that there was potential for human nature to express itself in greed and self-interest given adequate opportunity, they intended to protect against such an eventuality. Morris advocated in his Utopian vision for the decentralisation of government in place of a single authority.[735]

Morris and Bax argued that because they are working '*for* equality and brotherhood for all the world', they must achieve it '*through* equality and brotherhood' for their work to be most 'effective'.[736] This aligned with their conception of society as distinguishable from civilisation; the former being the result of the collective willing in harmony, and indeed with their pursuit of-, and belief in- Utopia. It was Morris and Bax's contention that,

> Communism can never be realised till the present system of Society has been destroyed by the workers taking hold of the political power. When that happens it will mean that Communism is on the point of absorbing and transmuting Civilisation.[737]

Violent language to describe non-violent means of revolution presents itself in this 1886 piece in the *Commonweal*. Society must be 'destroyed', but workers would 'tak[e] hold' of 'political power'.[738] The rhetoric implied that they would repurpose an existing form for their needs—they were not 're-inventing' political power, but rather were preserving it for use to different ends. This rhetoric may have been guided by Bax, to whom parliamentary channels were more appealing than they were for Morris at that time.

Such a view of a society changed via political channels was not held in harmony across the League, particularly as the group evolved. In 1890, Burnie insisted that it was 'a hundred times better' to have 'unknown chaos than such a loathsome system of organised robbery and murder as that under which we live now.'[739] Anarchy was preferable to the Capitalist State. A year later, another Anarchist voice proclaimed, 'State Socialism, we are sure, will tend to the creation of a

---

735 Anna Vaninskaya, 'Janus-Faced Fictions: Socialism as Utopia and Dystopia in William Morris and George Orwell', *Utopian Studies* 14.2, (2003), 83-98, p. 87; McCulloch, The Problem of Fellowship', p. 443.
736 William Morris and Ernest Belfort Bax, *The Manifesto of the Socialist League,* (Socialist League Office: London, 1885), p. 8.
737 William Morris and Ernest Belfort Bax, 'Socialism from the Root Up: The Utopists: Owen, Saint Simon, and Fourier', *The Commonweal,* (30 October 1886), 242-243, p. 243.
738 Kinna, 'William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism', p. 603.
739 R. W. Burnie, 'Be Bold and Resolute', *The Commonweal,* (23 August 1890), 268, p. 268.

new master-class composed of the rulers [. . .] it would be our duty to fight against it'.[740] Again, the fragility of human nature, susceptible to the temptation of power and self-aggrandisement, emerges. So too does the Anarchist rejection of allowing such tyranny to run unchecked. The founding of a Socialism such as the Fabians might envision would be no more than another enemy to a Socialist group founded on this attitude of rejection. An open letter published later that year in the *Commonweal* attested that the author had 'come to believe that we shall reach a perfect state of Society by destroying all Government, [rather] than by helping or forcing Governments to make laws which shall better the social condition of the people.' Another author, writing in response, agreed. She asserted that 'it is absolutely impossible to obtain justice for all in any other way than by destroying institutions founded on force and privilege.' These institutions, built upon rotting foundations, could only be cured by their full removal. The tooth cannot be capped with gold to assuage the pain it causes; it must rather be uprooted entirely.[741]

In addition to Morris's hierarchical deviation from a collegiate system in his Utopia, he denigrated repeatedly academic study.[742] Cultivating one's mind was seen as a direct sign of neglect of one's body by Morris, and his Utopia prized brawn above brain. It was a concept upon which Morris placed a huge amount of emphasis. For a learned man, and someone whose literary pursuits exemplified the benefits of his excellent education, Morris disregarded the importance of a traditional education. His Utopian protagonist, Guest, questioned the people of Nowhere about the absence of a centralised system of education, and they dismissed his concerns.[743] Children (and adults) could choose to learn about a subject if they were inclined to do so, but they were never forced to attend school or study certain subjects.[744] Morris's Utopians were supremely unconcerned by this. Most children, Guest was assured, learn to read naturally before the age of four.[745] Literacy in the Victorian period in Britain was on the rise; in 1800, about fifty percent of the population was literate. Literacy rates in adults neared one hundred percent by 1900, thanks in great part to an increase in the availability of education to working class children.[746] In Utopia, then, education was given less emphasis, but learning was more easily done and more widespread than it was for much of Morris' lifetime.

---

740 D. J. Nicoll, 'After the Revolution', *The Commonweal,* (18 July 1891), 78-79, p. 79.
741 Louise Michel, 'Why We Are Anarchists', *The Commonweal,* (26 September 1891), 119, p. 119.
742 Morris, *News from Nowhere,* p. 58, p. 66, p. 97.
743 Morris, *News from Nowhere,* p. 66, p. 97.
744 Morris, *News from Nowhere,* p. 67.
745 Morris, *News from Nowhere,* p. 66.
746 Amy J. Lloyd, 'Education, Literacy, and the Reading Public', *British Library Newspapers,* (Detroit: Gale, 2007), p. 2.

This line of thinking throughout the text was both paradoxical and bizarrely dystopian, and perhaps speaks to Morris's own experiences with education; he 'despised' his time at Marlborough, one of England's public schools.[747] The people of Nowhere, who demonstrated repeatedly their entire ignorance of the Victorian period, or of the history which led them to the world of perfect harmony which most of them so enjoy, had very limited knowledge of how they came to live in such perfection.[748] A critic might suggest that without knowledge of the sacrifices made to build Utopia, and without a knowledge of the depravity to which humanity had descended in the Victorian period according to Guest's characterisations, their Utopian bliss might be short-lived, and Capitalism might once again develop out of a period of communal living.

Morris's suggestion of a more widely learned population, rather than learning being the remit of the leisure class and wealthy professional classes, was repeated by Bax, who rejected as false the dichotomy of the 'man of learning' and the 'man of labour' as stable and inalterable roles. This was to the Socialist, he argued, 'merely one of the abstractions created by a society based on classes, and therefore is essentially false and unreal, and as such destined to pass away with the other abstractions', which he went on to list. These included 'ruler and ruled', 'master and servant', as well as 'rich and poor' and 'religious and secular'.[749] To follow the linguistic pattern of these pairings, it was the 'religious' which Bax hoped and expected to 'pass away' in the future Utopia—or to be absorbed into the realm of the secular. In the 1885 manifesto of the Socialist League, and in an 1888 article on ethics, Bax referred positively to the religion of Socialism as a pinnacle towards which members should work.

The 1885 manifesto of the Socialist League, authored by Morris and Bax, stated explicitly a 'devotion to the religion of Socialism', which was the 'only religion which the Socialist League professes'.[750] Elsewhere, they suggested that 'moral relations' would no longer be defined by 'some preconceived standard outside social responsibilities' or by 'superstitions', but instead by the 'duty' which is owed to the 'community'.[751] It was not therefore simply a turn of phrase when Morris and Bax put forward Socialism as a religion. They imagined that, like a religion, it would inform and guide the action of a community which served the greater good before the self, and which affirmed the good of the self through an individual's contribution towards the welfare of his or her fellows. One author pushed back against the assertion that all Socialists must be

747 Wilmer, 'Introduction', *News from Nowhere,* p. xi.
748 Morris, *News from Nowhere,* pp. 67-68.
749 Bax, 'The Two Enthusiasms', (Feb 1886), p. 10.
750 Morris and Bax, *The Manifesto of the Socialist League,* p. 8.
751 Morris and Bax, *The Manifesto of the Socialist League,* p. 6.

atheists and argued that belief in God had spanned too many centuries to be eradicated, and that a Socialism that demanded that God be 'annihilated as a philosophical preliminary' would face disappointment.[752] He was desirous of a philosophy of Socialism which was not dependent on the religious views of its adherents. This complicated the reordering of a conception of morality, which must remain for Christians who were also Socialists rooted in their religious convictions, and thus not wholly antithetical to their mode of life prior to social revolution. What Morris and Bax proposed was implicitly incompatible with a religion of 'superstitions', and therefore anticipated and pre-emptively parried the author's desire for a Socialism compatible with Christian religion. This was the 'aggressively secular Socialism [of] the 1880s' about which Sheridan Gilley writes.[753] It was not religious feeling which Bax rejected, but rather Christianity. A faith grounded in Socialist principles, the object of the worship the collective or the scientific, would doubtless have appealed to Bax. He joined Gronlund, who invoked religious language in relation to evolution, and thus presented evolution as the new basis for a quasi-religious faith in science.

Judith Shklar characterised Utopian literature as a 'rejection of that notion of "original sin"' in human nature.[754] The vision of Utopia, when it was at its best, was to imagine that Adam and Eve ate of the second tree—the tree of eternal life—before their expulsion from the garden. The people of Utopia could live forever in their knowledge of life without the threat of death and final judgement. Utopia posed the greatest challenge to personal agency in requiring Adam and Eve to forgo the autonomy granted by the knowledge of the first fruit—that knowledge which conferred to them the ability to knowingly err against the will of their creator. Morris's Utopian citizens lack the innate capacity, in large part, to choose to sin against the system of perfection for which he has readied them.

Kuskey observes rightly that the achievement of the 'complete development of Victorian moral ideals' in *News from Nowhere,* sourced as they were from a 'violent and wholesale revolution' existed as a 'logical impossibility'.[755] In *News from Nowhere,* Morris presented the true nature of humans as inherently communal rather than competitive.[756] Shklar names this phenomenon, too; she posited that,

---

[752] Beckett, 'Empirical Socialism', (Dec 1887), p. 421.
[753] Sheridan Gilley, 'William Morris and the mid-Victorian Crisis of Faith', p. 324.
[754] Judith Shklar, 'The Political Theory of Utopia: From Melancholy to Nostalgia', *Daedalus* 94.2, (1965), 367-381, p. .
[755] Kuskey, 'Bodily beauty', p. 168.
[756] Morris, *News from Nowhere,* pp. 118-119.

> [T]he engineered community, whose perfect order springs not from a rational perception of truth, but from a pursuit of social unity as a material necessity, provides neither ancient nor modern liberty.[757]

It was not necessary, in Shklar's view, for each member of a Utopian community to understand the vision towards which they were striving, and it was instead their willingness to adhere to the direction of the group which created their value as a good citizen. McCulloch, in search of a middle ground, suggests that a 'communitarian commitment' requires that a community be 'cohesive enough' to create a 'strong sense of membership', but 'loose' enough to allow commonality to be found on as narrow a basis as 'common humanity.'[758] Morris' people were docile—hardly the brave revolutionaries whose vim for justice prevailed against the vast organisation of the State. Indeed, if his people had become more beautiful and healthier across just a few generations, as he predicted, they had also lost the requisite vigour to organise and defend themselves through violent means to protect the Utopia in which they live.

To gain access to a philosophy of ethics, Bax argued, the notions that 'society is at bottom an aggregate of individuals' and that 'there is a permanent antagonism between individual and community' must first be excised. He suggested from the conception of society, 'ethical sentiment must exist implicitly if not explicitly.'[759] Bax considered that under Socialism,

> Ethics become political, and politics become ethical, while religion is but the higher—that is, the more far-reaching—aspect of that sense of obligation, duty, and fraternity which is the ultimate bond of every-day society.[760]

In the same article, he contended that the 'highest expression of Socialist morality' or 'Socialist religion' was a 'readiness to sacrifice all'—even to die—for 'the cause.'[761] 'Religion' was used by Bax not as it related to an intangible faith in divinity and doctrine which sprang from a multi-century tradition of worship, but rather to mean a cohesive belief system which governed moral action. This re-purposing of the concept of 'religion' highlights an important delineation in an 1886 article in which he quoted approvingly from his 'comrade' Gabriel Deville, who argued that 'to permit by religious practices the cerebral deformation of children is in reality a monstrous

---

[757] Shklar, 'The Political Theory of Utopia', p. 375.
[758] McCulloch, 'The Problem of Fellowship in Communitarian Theory', p. 448.
[759] Bax, 'The New Ethic: I', (Feb 1888), p. 36.
[760] Bax, 'The New Ethic: III', (Feb 1888), p. 59.
[761] Bax, 'The New Ethic: III', (Feb 1888), p. 58.

violation of liberty of conscience'.[762] While Bax would scorn the upbringing of children under a Christian religion, he would greatly admire children raised to worship at the altar of 'socialist religion'.

The working habits of the Utopian man are of particular interest to these authors. Morris and Bax, as Kropotkin does too, promised a shortened working day—two or three hours—for every 'man'.[763] They acknowledge, however, that under the necessary motto '*from* each one according to his capacity, *to* each one according to his needs', it was likely that some men must labour for longer hours than others.[764] They argued that this would not constitute inequality, however, because neither the labourer with greater capacity nor the labourer with less would benefit materially from their in-born ability.

One wonders if labour limits of three hours per day would extend to women as well as men. Utopian women in Morris's conception continued to do the majority of domestic labour, though through inclination rather than relegation, making them nominally freer than Victorian women.[765] In Morris's Utopia, Guest was assured that maternity was 'highly honoured.'[766] Morris was an ardent follower of John Ruskin, and Ruskin's influence on Morris's conception of the natural place of women may be felt in this assessment.[767] It was at least the case that Morris and Bax imagined that 'modern bourgeois property-marriage' would give way with the new economic freedom to 'kindly and human relations between the sexes.'[768] Men and women, they supposed, would no longer value each other as commodities with a monetary value, but rather as equal partners.

Aveling asserted that each person shall be rewarded under the Socialist system for having worked 'according to his strength and ability' rather than 'according to what he has done', and that this will be true even 'if the one be a Charles Darwin and the other a crossing-sweeper.' Aveling used Darwin as the symbol of value and contribution in opposition to the crossing sweeper, even as he advocated for both men to enjoy the same reward for society. Under Aveling's imagined future, then, value of contribution would still be recognisable—some metric of assessment of valuable and less valuable labour would exist, seemingly inevitably—though it

---

762 Bax, 'Some Bourgeois Idols; or Ideals, Reals and Shams', (April 1886), p. 25.
763 Morris and Bax, *The Manifesto of the Socialist League*, p. 6.
764 Morris and Bax, *The Manifesto of the Socialist League,* p. 10.
765 Morris, *News from Nowhere,* p. 99; Wells, *A Modern Utopia,* pp. 128-129.
766 Morris, *News from Nowhere,* p. 95.
767 Morris, *News from Nowhere,* pp. 94-95 for the 'woman question'; Hale, *Political Descent,* p. 256 on Morris' admiration for Ruskin; John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies,* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1865), p. 146 for Ruskin on the natural roles of men and women.
768 Morris and Bax, *The Manifesto of the Socialist League,* p. 6.

would not be rewarded accordingly.[769] It is worth noting that the most admired figures of *News from Nowhere* were those who—willingly—clothe themselves the most simply. It was the dustman whose appearance was unseemly and vulgar in its richness of fabric.[770] There is an irony here—even Morris's Utopia has failed to resolve a determined social revulsion toward the apparel of those men whose labour is most menial.

Mowbray's succinct definition of Socialism was that it was the 'right of the toiler to the free and equal use of the tools of production, and the right of the producers to the product.'[771] Morris and Bax suggested that 'the first step in the state of transition into Communism might probably be the enactment of a law of a minimum of wages and a maximum of price applied to all industrial production'. By this they would hope to 'destroy the possibility of profit-making' in favour of '[. . .] the decentralised voluntary organisation of production'.[772] This would be immediately to raze the ability of the owners of means of production to profit from the under payment of their workers. It would be the destruction of capital. 'Wealth' could, according to one *Commonweal* contributor, be 'define[d] as power.'[773] What Morris and Bax proposed to do was to eviscerate the possibility of the accumulation of wealth, as well as its usefulness. Glasier offered a concurring line of thought. He suggested that 'no man can claim that the products of his own labour are exclusively his own' because he owed a debt to the farmers and innovators who preceded him for their toil in preparing the land or method which he used.[774]

The protagonist of Morris's Utopia expressed his confusion on the pervasion of good will in Nowhere. He expressed doubts that human nature could long endure such ceaseless benevolence, but Morris's Utopians contested the idea of a singular 'human nature'.[775] Instead, they saw human nature as shaped by the environment in which it exists. Under Capitalism, in which some must profit and others toil, human nature adjusted to the competition necessary for survival. In Nowhere, where communalism and bounty abound, human nature had adjusted to mutualism. This argument is exemplary of the League's Lamarckian interpretation of evolution; human nature would adapt to the circumstances in which it existed. Competitive instinct, rather than being an inherent obstacle to communal living, was merely symptomatic of the great social sickness that was the Capitalist State. Utopia as presented by the most famous Utopian Socialist

769 Edward B. Aveling, 'Objections to Socialism', *The Commonweal,* (May 1886), 69-70, p. 70.
770 Morris, *News from Nowhere,* p. 60.
771 Mowbray, 'Socialism as Defined by Parsons', (March 1890), p. 67.
772 Morris and Bax, *The Manifesto of the Socialist League,* p 14.
773 R. W. Burnie, 'Wealth', *The Commonweal,* (22 January 1887), 26-27, p. 27.
774 J. Bruce, Glasier, 'Henry George and the Single Tax', *The Commonweal,* (1 June 1889), 169-170, p. 170.
775 Morris, *News from Nowhere*, p. 118.

of the English Victorians, and by his colleagues at the *Commonweal,* was a world free from remuneration based on the quality or quantity of labour contributed by an individual. Rather, each man would work for a maximum of three hours per day, and in reward for this could expect to enjoy a life with adequate sustenance and in beautiful surroundings.

The cessation of machinery to produce goods would increase the dignity and value of literal manufacture. Goods would become beautiful again. Clothes would become simple but well-made. Education would exist as it was sought by the interested party and would be forced upon no one. Religious feeling would occupy a place in the League's vision of the Utopian future. It would not (according to the majority of contributors) be a Christian religion, but rather a Socialist one. In this sense, it would have been a system of morality shared across all members of the society which prioritised the good of the majority over the gain of the individual. It would be the ultimate goal and benevolence, and it would be adopted and practiced with the fervour of those seeking their ultimate salvation. The League was unique among Socialist groups in having a Utopian programme articulated so explicitly their leader. Morris's *News from Nowhere* offers an invaluable insight into the goals towards which the policies of the League tended. Unlike the Fabians and the SDF, the League did not suggest a scepticism towards Utopia as a means by which to explore the fruition of their plans, but rather embraced such a purpose whole-heartedly.

III.iv *The Anarchists*

The first sentence of the first edition of *Freedom* read as follows: '[t]hrough the long ages of grinding slavery behind us, Freedom, that unknown goal of human pilgrimage, has hovered, a veiled splendour, upon the horizon of men's hopes.'[776] Freedom was the end, the eternal goal, the promised land. Exploring that 'veiled splendour' was regarded by the Anarchists as a natural preoccupation, but the Anarchists did not use 'utopia' to describe this; rather, they rejected the term as being a synonym for an impossible ideal not rooted in planning. In 1887, Kropotkin contrasted Anarchism with Utopianism, arguing that while Utopists tended to endow man with traits which he did not have or which are only idealised versions of reality, Anarchists dealt in practical and historical truths of human nature. It was the 'tendencies' of society, 'past and present' which were the business of the Anarchist, who must point out 'in which direction evolution goes.'[777] The nature of the planning and forecasting in which the Anarchists

[776] 'Freedom', (Oct 1886), p. 1.
[777] Kropotkin, 'The Scientific Basis of Anarchy', (Feb 1887), pp. 238-239.

participated was concomitant with a correct interpretation of evolutionary theory. They were not *creating* anything—just noticing a natural progression.

The word 'utopia' was associated by them with impracticality; 'the Socialists, and especially the Anarchists, were treated [. . .] as "unpractical dreamers," as Utopians; but facts show how right they were in making their own evolution for themselves and in developing their ideas free of any compromise', according to an 1895 article in *Freedom.*[778] Once again, 'utopia' was associated with frivolousness and 'evolution' was presented as a core tenet of the Socialist movement. To make their own evolution meant to interpret Darwin for themselves rather than putting their trust in scientists like Huxley with whom they so disagreed. As an author identified as 'Diabol' argued, 'Communism [. . .] is most conducive to human happiness, but it must be natural, free, unrestrained.'[779] The Anarchists believed firmly in the possibility for such a communism—by which they meant a communalism rather than a Marx-adjacent philosophy—to exist without need of either organisation or coercion. Though the Anarchists believed their ideas to be practical and evidence-based, critical reception did not always credit them with this.

Reviews of *The Conquest of Bread* (1892) offered wide praise for Kropotkin's 'irresistible' idealism, and his ability to 'see visions and follow them', but also with scepticism as to the practicability of his suggestions.[780] One reviewer praised Kropotkin's optimism but fell short of an endorsement of the potential of Kropotkin's plan to be more than a thought experiment. Rather, the reviewer saw Utopianism where Kropotkin saw tangible possibility and real political economy. He misunderstood a crucial element of Kropotkin's theory however, which the reviewer asserted 'admits of no compromise with the weakness or folly of human nature'.[781] Weakness and folly were occasioned not by human nature for Kropotkin, but rather by the artificially imposed hierarchy of a Capitalist system and the competition inherent to such an organisation.

'Never', Kropotkin asserted, 'has mankind known a period of relative well-being for all as in the cities of the Middle Ages.'[782] Kropotkin placed this period of well-being in the cities, where feudal obligations did not tie a peasant class to specific land, and therefore allowed them freedom of movement. Obligations instead emerged in the form of apprenticeships which led to

---

778 'Co-Operation & Anarchism', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (September 1895), 37, p. 37.
779 "Diabol", 'Anarchy, Communism, and Competition', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (July 1891), 53-54, p. 54.
780 Sidney Ball, 'REVIEW: *The Conquest of Bread*', *Economic Journal* 17:66, (1907), 252-255, p. 252; 'REVIEW: *The Conquest of Bread* by P. Kropotkin', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 31.3, (1908), 181-182, p. 181.
781 Ball, 'REVIEW: *The Conquest of Bread*', p. 253.
782 Kropotkin, 'The State', (May 1897), pp. 38-39.

membership in guilds, much venerated by Kropotkin. These voluntary cooperatives encouraged a sense of neighbourliness and interpersonal obligation which Kropotkin considered absent from Victorian life. Kropotkin proposed that the reason for the diminution of mutual aid among his contemporaries was the increased intervention by the State in the well-being of its citizens.[783] He argued that citizens were 'relieved from their obligations towards each other' by the centralisation of aid in the State. Kropotkin's advocacy for Anarchism was an intervention against the supposed erosion of society in the face of increasingly centralised aid. He looked backwards to the medieval period as an example of the community that could be fostered without a looming State. With the introduction of some improvements, he looked to the medieval way of life as an ideal towards which Anarchists could work. The Middle Ages were also not home to the 'disproportionate respect for brain work as compared with muscular work' of which *Freedom* is critical.[784] Much like Morris's Utopian vision, the Anarchists looked forward by looking backward, prospecting with retrospective wisdom.

'Anarchism is not a Utopia', Charlotte Wilson protested, but rather a 'faith based upon the scientific observation of social phenomena.'[785] For Wilson, too, then, Anarchism takes shape around the evolutionary truths to which Anarchists subscribe. Kropotkin attested that 'abstractions which lead to no practical conclusion are hateful. They are good to show us the way, but they are worth nothing if they cannot be brought to a practical issue.'[786] Any writing about the world of the future must light the way to reaching it—otherwise it was without use. Adams is correct when he suggests that Kropotkin was an 'anti-utopian utopian'.[787] Kropotkin believed that Anarchists must not lose sight of action by distracting themselves with theoretical developments. Rather, they must set about 'driving home to the minds of the people the hard, the real, the matter-of-fact truths of every-day life.'[788] In the previous chapter, we examined the method by which the Anarchists suggested the revolution might be achieved. In this one, we will examine what the world after the revolution was imagined to be by these same thinkers. Four main strands of thought emerge in Anarchist forecasts of the future: the abolition of central government, the redistribution of property, the form which labour would take under these new conditions, and the innate attitude of man towards community and labour.

---

783 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 197.
784 'Some Effects of Reason Worship', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (March 1888), 71-72, p. 72.
785 Wilson, 'What Socialism is', (1886), p. 12.
786 Kropotkin, 'Communist-Anarchism', (April 1888), p. 73.
787 Adams, *Kropotkin,* p. 141.
788 'Anarchist Propaganda', (Aug 1900), p. 34.

Centralised government was a force for violent oppression in Anarchist thought. Dismantling such a tyranny, then, could merit the violent action which was otherwise not encouraged in Kropotkin's 'peaceful, communal' brand of Anarchism.[789] The first article in *Freedom* decried 'as a wrong to human nature [. . .] all use of force for the purpose of coercing others'. This 'force' was both the actual violence which the State might exert against protestors, and the silent threat of such a force. The author did not, however, totally dismiss the validity of force as a social corrective. He or she considered it the 'social duty of each to defend, by force if need be, his dignity as a free human being, and the like dignity in others, from every form of insult and oppression.'[790] This was the logic by which the use of force was justified during the revolution. 'The only way in which a state of Anarchy can be obtained', one author in *Freedom* contended, 'is for each man who is oppressed to act as if he were at liberty, in defiance of all authority to the contrary, and evading or overcoming by force all force by which he is opposed or pursued.' In his or her view, '[t]he liberty of each is created by his taking it.'[791] Rather than one body using violence to oppress individuals, individuals might act in their own defence against the aggregate body of oppressors.

The police force was viewed as a particularly offensive element of State control by the Anarchists. It had no place in the future which they envisioned. Instead, pressure to conform to the social ideals of the group would be force enough to ensure harmony. Wilson relied on 'public opinion' rather than laws enforced by police, to whom she referred as 'organised violence', as the best means by which to procure order and peace.[792] Kropotkin, too, believed in the power of 'public opinion'.[793] Another author concurred with the suggestion that 'kindly remonstrance and an attempt to enable [the criminal] to cure the morbid tendency would most effectually and generally lead to a cessation of evil conduct'.[794] The instinct for association was so strong, and the desire to be thought well of by one's fellows so powerful, that such a threat as the bad opinion of others would check criminal behaviour. In Kropotkin's view, it was the 'habit' of trustworthiness and the 'desire of not losing confidence' which compelled people to keep their word without any need for legal enforcement of this goodwill.[795]

The number of transgressors and transgressions in a society where poverty, hunger, want, and oppression have been abolished was also imagined to decrease dramatically. The

---

789 Bevir, 'The Rise of Ethical Anarchism', p. 1.
790 'Freedom', (Oct 1886), p. 1.
791 'The Permanence of Society After the Revolution', (Oct 1890), 41-42, pp. 41-42.
792 Wilson, 'What Socialism is', (1886), p. 12.
793 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 62.
794 A. Hazel, 'Crime and the Criminal', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (December 1892), 86-87, p. 87.
795 Kropotkin, 'The Coming Anarchy', p. 154.

crimes which stemmed from those factors would be a thing of memory. That author allowed that '[i]n the very strongest cases of incorrigibility on the part of an aggressor [. . .] the community could hardly be justified in any treatment more severe than that of refusing to associate or work with him'. This would, he or she hoped, result in the criminal voluntarily removing himself or herself from the community in which he or she could no longer 'live reasonably and peaceably'. [796] There was an economic implication to the community's refusal to include any true 'aggressor' in their social unity, because the Anarchist vision of the future imagined all property to be owned in common, as we examine below. Exclusion would mean a loss of access to this property. So too would anyone who refused to labour for the benefit of the community be excluded; Kropotkin argued that any 'parasite' who 'shirks work' ought not to benefit from the product of the labour of others, and he believed those 'parasites' to include 'middle men' such as shopkeepers, grocers, and the intellectual professions.[797] Though they might exist, he believed that those 'sluggards' who refused to work would be a small minority, and, like criminals, they could be excluded from the group to make a life for themselves elsewhere.[798]

António Ferraz de Oliveira describes Kropotkin's ideal future as one of 'networked autonomous communes'.[799] His assessment is correct insofar as this network is understood to develop as naturally as a root system in a grove of aspen trees—there must be no central hub, no total dependency, but instead a common way of living which supports the survival of all. Kropotkin advocated for producers to 'unconditionally direct their labour themselves' united by 'free agreements.'[800] In much the same way he abhorred mindless labour and was desirous of 'alternating manual with intellectual work', to satisfy the labourer, Kropotkin demanded intellectual engagement in the creation of a harmonious, government-less life from all citizens—this was the future to which he looked forward.[801]

The Anarchists desired property to be distributed as equally as power in the post-revolution society. Kropotkin made a compelling case for communal ownership as the most natural distribution of property in the society of the future; it was the toil of all which facilitated the breakthrough of genius, and therefore the rewards of the innovation should be shared amongst

[796] Hazel, 'Crime and the Criminal', (Dec 1892), p. 87.
[797] Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 22; Miller, *Kropotkin,* p. 107; Adams, *Kropotkin,* p. 159.
[798] Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 139.
[799] António Ferraz de Oliveira, 'Kropotkin's commune and the politics of history', *Global Intellectual History* 3.2, (2018), 156-177, p. 161.
[800] Miller, *Kropotkin,* p. 104.
[801] Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 97.

all those who labour rather than just the person best placed to benefit from their labour. Kropotkin contended that in the many centuries since humans lived as hunter-gatherers, they have 'amassed untold treasures.'[802] Each generation had benefited from the discovery and innovation of its antecedents. It was the 'co-operation' of 'intelligent beings' that stimulated and fostered technical innovation.[803] There existed 'not even a thought' nor 'an invention' outside of 'common property', so constituted because its occurrence depended on the labour of others.[804] For him, 'every new invention is a synthesis, the resultant of innumerable inventions which have preceded it in the vast field of mechanics and industry'.[805] Thus, every invention belonged to all people. He contended that '[i]n each machine, however simple, we may read a whole history—a long history of partial improvements which brought it to its present state.'[806] He applied this principle not only to the future of production and ownership, but also retrospectively to all inventions, innovations, and objects.

Kropotkin made himself perfectly clear that the 'immense capital' of 'cities, houses, pastures, arable lands, factories, highways, education' ought to become 'common property'.[807] Kropotkin, by including highways and education in his estimation of what 'capital' was, implied its definition as all of those things which facilitated a better and easier life. Though it would not be done with the decree of a majority power, the first step of revolution should be to take 'immediate possession of all the food of the insurgent communes'.[808] The revolution, which Kropotkin believed to be only 'a few years' away, was to claim sustenance (and later everything else they wanted) for themselves.[809] As part of this seizure of the necessaries for survival, Kropotkin advocated for the repossession and redistribution of all homes.

In his proposal, he imagined that people would choose dwellings for themselves, and that they could be trusted to choose reasonably; '[i]t is not the people's way to clamour for the moon.'[810] This was representative of his view of human nature as communalistic; they would express no undue selfishness if left to choose for themselves. He promised '[p]alaces fairer and finer than any the capitalists built for themselves' to be given to 'those who have most need of them.'[811] The ideal, then, was still grandeur, but grandeur for all.[812] This was exemplary of Noel

---

802 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 11.
803 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 12.
804 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 15.
805 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 16.
806 Kropotkin, 'The Scientific Basis of Anarchy', (Feb 1887), p 249.
807 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 25.
808 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 57.
809 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 25.
810 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 79.
811 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 80.
812 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 82.

Thompson's observation that 'a measure of private restraint was often seen as a necessary complement to this pursuit of social [rather than individual] opulence.'[813] He did not propose to repossess clothing; rather, all clothing stores would allow all people to claim what they need. He argued that while some might choose expensive or fashionable clothes, many would favour practical garments.[814] As in Morris's Utopia, the society of the future would be more beautiful and fairer than any vision which came before it.

Nevertheless, even after the success of the revolution, 'some inequalities, some inevitable injustices, will undoubtedly remain.'[815] Kropotkin did not imagine a Utopian future with perfectly fair distribution, but he urged the reader to trust in the 'good instincts of the masses' to ensure an infinitely more equitable future. He explained that this system would have 'no stint or limit to what the community possesses in abundance, but equal sharing and dividing of those commodities which are scarce or apt to run short.'[816] Once again, he trusted dually in the power of social pressure and the instinct for protection of the group to curtail the over-consumption of scarce commodities.

Anarchists believed that the result of the revolution would be 'a population of men and women anxious only to work for and satisfy their common needs.'[817] There would be no idlers in this society, and thus each could be depended upon to contribute enough to the group for the needs of all to be met. Kropotkin argued that,

> No hard and fast line can be drawn between the works of one and the works of another. To measure them by results leads to absurdity. To divide them into fractions and measure them by hours of labour leads to absurdity also. One course remains: Not to measure them at all, but to recognise the right of all who take part in productive labour to the comforts of life.[818]

Greater trust in the community, and in the industry and goodness of individual members of that community, would allow for the cessation of competition. Competition was motivated by the certitude either that one's neighbour did not have enough to share if times became desperate, or that one's neighbour would look to failure as an opportunity for personal advancement. It was the aim of Anarchists 'to make social relations stronger, more brotherly, more human', and they believed that 'this can only be done by equally sharing the means and results of production to the

---

[813] Thompson, 'Socialist Political Economies', p. 245.
[814] Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* pp. 84-85.
[815] Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 80.
[816] Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 62.
[817] 'Anarchism and Organisation', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (March 1889), 15, p. 15.
[818] Kropotkin, 'The Wage System', (Dec 1889), p. 55.

everlasting confusion of profits, interest and all manner of money-grubbing.'[819] Money could no longer beget money in a propertyless society, and no one who looked upon another as a brother would seek to benefit from his struggle.

Kropotkin posited that the 'ethical importance' of communal ownership outstripped the 'economical value' of such a method. It was the preservation of communal care and mutual aid which mattered more for the livelihood in the community than the potential material gain for Kropotkin.[820] He also argued that '"mine' and 'thine' is much less sharply observed among the poor than among the rich".[821] Scarcity of goods encouraged mutual aid as a necessity for survival, whereas surplus of goods encouraged hoarding and, inevitably, greed. Kropotkin believed 'surplus production', a term applied to the goods exported for sale elsewhere, was a fiction.[822] Instead, those items represented necessary goods that the worker could not afford to purchase.

Kropotkin believed that the condensed geography of the city and factory conditions might prove necessary to unite the workers to overthrow the tyrannical power of their rulers. Once overthrown, however, those workers could retreat from the press of city life and enjoy the freedom of the countryside (newly reclaimed from the ownership of the landed gentry). In order to heal the imbalance of power between the inhabitants of the country and those of the city, Kropotkin suggested that the city people should say '[b]ring us your produce, and take from our stores and shops all the manufactured articles you please.'[823] This would ensure the fair distribution of goods across geographical contexts.

Communities could farm in common and without the oversight of government, as they had done in the medieval period. For this reason he advocated that the 'first task of the Revolution would be to arrange things so as to share the accommodation of available houses according to the needs of the inhabitants of the city, to clear out the slums and fully occupy the villas and mansions.'[824] No longer could large country homes be enjoyed by a small family while the men and women who worked their land lived in homes unfit for purpose. Dust covers were to be a thing of the Capitalist past—every room should be utilised, and the full benefit of its comforts made available to any who had the need of it.

The community's territory, which was comprised of its arable fields, must not exceed its needs for consumption. Kropotkin expected the revolution to halt import and export, and that

819 'The Year '92', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (February 1893), 1-2, p. 2.
820 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 208.
821 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 241.
822 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 162.
823 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 62.
824 Kropotkin, 'Communist-Anarchism', (April 1888), p. 74.

the people of the revolution should create self-sufficiency within their community.[825] The function of a community, the pastoral care and shepherding, must be offered by all members in concert with each other. He advocated for 'territorial' as well as 'functional' decentralisation—communities must reduce in size in order to be guided by themselves in 'the spirit of local and personal initiative.'[826] The fields should be tilled in common, and life lived on a basis of trust and cooperation best-fostered in a community of limited size.[827]

Kropotkin asserted '[f]ree workers, on free land, with free machinery' as the ideal towards which the Anarchists were working. We have seen the workers freed from the tyranny of central government and the land and machinery distributed to all. Now, we turn our attention to what labour these 'free workers' would do. Writing in the third person about his own contributions to Anarchism in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Kropotkin asserted that he advocated for communism over collectivism.[828] Thus, he was desirous of consumption unfettered by any measure of labour, including wages.[829] He also made this argument in *The Conquest of Bread,* where he disputed the efficiency of the 'collectivist' approach of 'payment proportionate to the hours of labour'. Instead, he suggested 'a new form of remuneration', which would take the form of 'enjoyment in common of the fruits of common labour.'[830]

In the future which Kropotkin desired and in which he believed, all people would contribute their labour to the project of sustaining their community, and they are all thus guaranteed a sustenance. Kropotkin posited that the most equitable establishment of communism will happen on the principle of 'agrarian communes' in Europe.[831] Kropotkin asserted that an 'equitable organisation of society' could only emerge if wages were abolished and instead 'everybody, contributing for the common well-being to the full extent of his capacities, shall enjoy also from the common stock of society to the fullest possible extent of his needs.'[832] In this way Kropotkin would reorganise the ideals of society to promote the survival of the most people rather than to reward the individual contributions of its members. Putting, as he suggested the 'wants of the individual *above* the valuation of the services he has rendered, or

---

825 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 176.
826 Kropotkin, 'Anarchism', p. 235.
827 This is contradicted by what he wrote in *The Conquest of Bread*, in which he argued that 'agro-industrial communes' could (and should) become 'vast agglomerations' comparable to Paris, rather than 'small communities'. Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* pp. 8-9.
828 Kropotkin, 'Anarchism', p. 245.
829 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 32.
830 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 32.
831 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 61.
832 Kropotkin, 'The Coming Anarchy', (Aug 1887), p. 151.

might render, to society'.[833] In Kropotkin's view, a member of society was not valuable to the community for their labour potential, but rather society was valuable to its members because of the assurance it provided of members' survival. It was the community rather than the individual which was created in order to serve to the other.

Kropotkin wanted each person to be able to work, and thus to diminish the workload borne by any one person. It was not 'the right to work' that he sought to protect here, but rather the 'right to well-being'. He defined the latter as 'the possibility of living like human beings' and leaving a 'better' society for the next generation, while the former protection was merely 'the right to be always a wage-slave'.[834] He argued that if every loom was made available, no scarcity would exist and all could be clothed.[835] This abolishment of scarcity must come not from an overbearing State providing for its citizens, but rather from the gainful employment of all people for the benefit of each other.

Though access should be granted to these looms, it should not be done at the expense of an individual's well-being. There would be no *over*-work in the Anarchist future. This meant that man should not be forced to do only one form of intellectually unstimulating labour. '[W]hen a man is harnessed to a machine, his health is soon undermined and his intelligence is blunted'. Man must not be the carthorse of machinery, but rather its driver. The worker must 'alternat[e] manual with intellectual work', to satisfy himself.[836] Kropotkin rejected specialisation, which he thought would support existing hierarchies of intellect.[837] He 'looked to unfettered technological innovation empowering those who were dehumanised by capitalist production'; in this, he differed from his contemporary and friend William Morris, who advocated a rejection of technology as a means to a communalist end. Indeed, Kropotkin criticised Morris for his unwillingness to endorse the machine as the way forward.[838] He and Morris agreed, however, that a communal future would see labour as a joy and privilege rather than an unceasing toil.

Kropotkin believed that by 'freely using all the powers given to man by science, [man] could with the greatest easiness grow the necessary food for the whole of the population of the country'. In a pointedly anti-Malthusian turn, he suggested that this would be so 'even if [the

---

833 Kropotkin, 'The Coming Anarchy', (Aug 1887), p. 152.
834 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 30.
835 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 22.
836 Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread,* p. 97.
837 Miller, *Kropotkin,* p. 102.
838 Adams, *Kropotkin,* p. 2. See Peter Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist,* (London, 1899), p. 95; Peter Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories, and Workshops: Or, Industry Combined with Agriculture and Brain Work with Manual Labour (1902),* (Connecticut: Martino Fine Books, 2014), p. 350; William Morris 'How We Live and Might Live', *Political Writings of William Morris*, ed. A. L. Morton, (Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 1984), 134-158, p. 151.

population] should soon be doubled'.[839] It was Malthus's contention that the growth of a population would always outpace growth of supply to meet the basic needs of that population. Such a view was used by Capitalists to justify the persistence of poverty, and by Fabians such as Besant to advocate for artificial checks on the growth of a population. In Kropotkin's assessment, however, Malthusianism was only true on the grounds of the current social premise, which allowed for the ownership of private property. Should workers be able to fend for themselves, their cares would be better tended than they were by State administration and the economic apotheosising of Capitalist titans of industry.

Kropotkin asserted that the dream of individual success was necessitated by labour conditions in which to be employed by someone else was to suffer their whims. It was not, he implied, the instinct of humans to seek power over their fellows, but rather a disgust for unfair servitude which compelled them to seek this power. It was thus that success had come to mean one individual triumphing over their fellows, and thus that this was held widely in high regard. Kropotkin also contended that 'not only many aspirations of our modern radicals were already realized in the middle ages, but much of what is described now as Utopian was accepted then as a matter of fact.'[840] Though Kropotkin certainly praised medieval communities, and saw them as exemplars of Anarchist principles, he did not imagine a regression to all aspects of life in the middle ages—contra-Morris. Instead, Kropotkin foresaw the use of technology to improve rural living and facilitate easier farming. Already, he wrote that the Middle Ages were host to shorter working hours than the Victorian period.[841] With the introduction of Victorian technology, those hours could be diminished even further. He referred to 'progress in a direction of equality and freedom' as the 'real, although unspoken goal of humanity.'[842] Kropotkin contended that 'four hours of useful work' by each labourer would be 'more than sufficient for supplying everybody with the comfort of a moderately well-to-do middle-class house.'[843] This proposal was truly radical in a world rife with unemployment and lazy leisure classes, and where workers were forced to rely on their oft-lying factory managers for the measure of time spent labouring.[844]

The humanity of the worker was of central importance in the Anarchist vision of the future. They believed that 'each one has within him some capacity to help mould the future.'[845] Though

839 Kropotkin, 'Communist-Anarchism', (April 1888), p. 74.
840 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* pp. 172-173.
841 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid,* p. 173.
842 Kropotkin, 'The Scientific Basis of Anarchy', (Feb 1887), p 252.
843 Kropotkin, 'The Coming Anarchy', (Aug 1887), p. 159.
844 E.P. Thompson, 'Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past & Present* 38 (1967), 56-97, p. 86.
845 'Anarchist Propaganda', (Aug 1900), p. 34.

this capacity had long been trampled by the suffocating power of the State, it would flourish in the freedom promised from that 'horizon of men's hopes'. *Freedom* argued that in the absence of philanthropy or charity, the 'manhood of Man', which the article suggested had 'lain dormant *so* long' would be able to 'assert itself'. Man could then 'enjoy the knowledge that the help which he was receiving was the outcome of the collective effort for the good of the individual and for the society of individuals.'[846] He could give and receive help without any sense of being owed or owing a debt. Independence would invigorate the individual in their pursuit of the good of themselves and of their community. In a society where the imbalance of wealth distribution had fostered *noblesse oblige* among the propertied classes, and where the worker was too poor to extend a hand to his fellow, both offering and accepting aid had class implications. In the Anarchist future, no one could consider that their right to subsistence rested on the precarity of a favour or whim. In Malatesta's words,

> [M]an is a social animal and evolution has socialised him more and more, made him more and more dependent on what association with his fellows has to give him. The Social Revolution is, at bottom, just the general recognition of this fact, and a determination to live more in accordance with it.[847]

To live communally, to share what one had, to depend on one's fellows without shame—these were the things which the Anarchists believed Capitalist society had stolen from the worker, and which should be restored after the revolution. Malatesta pointed to evolution as the catalyst for man's inclination to live socially. It was, once again, evidence of the importance of evolutionary theory for justifying the claims, aims, and methods of the Anarchists. Kinna posits rightly that Kropotkin did not believe in the *inevitability* of mutual aid winning out over Capitalist individualism, but rather in the possibility of the morally better mutual aid being 'willed back into existence' from the better times to which he pointed in both tribal and medieval communes.[848]

Freedom proposed that the 'remedy' to social ills was 'to generate more goodwill and trust in one's fellows.' In this consideration, '[t]he State is only the expression of a great underlying defect of character.'[849] The article depicted the State as a natural—if malignant—growth from a society corrupted by competition and distrust. This was in opposition to Kropotkin's view that the State imposed itself upon society and set out to foster competition and distrust in order to

---

[846] G. E. Conrad Naewiger, 'Enemies of Progress: The Philanthropist', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (November 1892), 78-79, p. 78.
[847] Pearson, 'Individual or Common Property', (May 1890), p. 21.
[848] Kinna, 'Kropotkin and Huxley', p. 45.
[849] Thomas Reece, 'Is the State the Enemy?', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy,* (December 1899), 87, p. 87.

increase its own power, but these ideas were both fundamentally compatible with the Anarchist programme to excise the State—whether as tumour or parasite.

In the same voice in which he called for the abolition of the centralised State, Kropotkin called for the 'emancipation from religious morality'.[850] In its place, he hoped for a morality freely developing from society and maintained without intervention from the State or organised religion. As early as 1857, Kropotkin offered criticism of the ritual nature of organised religion.[851] In Kropotkin's Anarchist future, members of the community must make choices which define their future—free from the 'obedience towards individuals or metaphysical entities' which he believed led to a 'depression of initiation and servility of mind'.[852] Any hierarchy threatened individuality and self-determination. Kropotkin described the Anarchist future as existing without 'temples' or 'public worship'.[853] He did not describe the abolition of faith—just the bureaucracy around it, and that which might intercede (and therefore interrupt) a personal relationship to faith. For Kropotkin, a moral action was done for the common good without calculation of the benefits of the act to the individual actor, or the good feelings which such a moral act might give to the actor, but rather emerged from the impulse to do good.[854] He claimed that all organised religions had a 'rude attempt at explaining nature' and a 'statement of the public morality born and developed within the mass of the people.'[855] The evolutionary science of the nineteenth century undid the need for organised religion to explain natural phenomena. Religious doctrine, therefore 'may go', but 'morality remains' and cannot be eschewed along with religion.[856] Kropotkin did not believe that people needed the oversight of organised religion any more than they did the interference of an overreaching State to motivate them to better behaviour. Such a desire was natural and biologically necessitated.

The Anarchists offered a clear vision of society after the revolution, though they rejected the term 'Utopia' in their descriptions of this future. The Anarchists alone of the other Socialist groups believed man as he was capable of the communal living and the aid to his community which a Socialist future demanded. Kropotkin believed that it was the temporary diversion of a Capitalist regime which had disrupted the natural course of human nature from this communalism. The impulse to act in service of others simmered beneath the artificial

850 Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism,* p. 14.
851 Miller, *Kropotkin,* p. 27.
852 Kropotkin, 'Anarchism', p. 234.
853 Kropotkin, 'Anarchism', p. 237.
854 Kropotkin, 'The Coming Anarchy', (Aug 1887), p. 163.
855 Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism,* p. 12.
856 Kropotkin, *The Place of Anarchism,* p. 12.

compression of the Capitalist State, and that it would surge forth immediately upon the unfettering of a population from this oppressive control. Because of this, the Anarchists did not expend energy on the modes by which human nature could be reshaped, but rather focused their attention on what needed to be cut away in order to allow human nature to express itself. The first and most obvious hurdle was to abolish centralised government. In its place, small communities would emerge which would guide the direction of their groups. In pursuit of the abolition of the violent oppression of the State, Anarchists allowed the possibility of violence from individuals against the State. After the revolution, there would exist no police force. In its place, the pressure of desiring the good will of one's fellows would lead each to act in accordance with the *mores* of the group. Because the necessary elements of survival would be assured by all to each, all crimes related to want and poverty would disappear. Individuals who persisted in violating the *mores* of the group, whether through violence or indolence, would be punished by exclusion from it. This was considered a sufficiently harsh deterrent. Property would be owned in common by the community. Houses which existed at the time of the revolution would be made available for any to choose for themselves. Kropotkin passed over the potential for chaos invited by this, suggesting that most people would not take greedily for themselves. Likewise, each could be trusted to clothe and feed their families with the group's best interests in mind. The Anarchist society of the future would be a communal one, created not to manipulate human nature, but rather to foster its innate expression.

III.v *Conclusion*

This chapter has demonstrated the engagement of the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, the Socialist League, and the Anarchists with the concept of society after the success of their endeavours for revolution or reform. The SDF imagined itself the steward of an inevitable revolution in society, realistic in acknowledging that such a revolution might extend beyond parliamentary channels. In this role of steward, they would guide the working man to desire Socialism for himself, through encouraging his sense of autonomy. The revolution in conditions would alter human nature such that a social feeling would blossom and ensure the protection of all men by each man. This would happen slowly, and it would grow out of the natural direction of society like an organism. The Fabians viewed Utopia as being as distasteful to them as insurrection—both were antithetical to the gradualism with which they hoped to bring society ever closer to a greater equality. The Fabians attacked Morris's naiveté in choosing to draft a Utopia untethered to society as it then was. Again, there was a great deal of focus on improving

the dignity of the labourer, who would be raised from squalor through education. The Socialist tendencies with which they hoped society would evolve would ensure the betterment of the conditions of many but could not promise the improvement of the lot of all.

The League believed human nature was shaped by the environment in which it existed, as did the SDF. This led them to a Lamarckian belief, expressed in Morris's *News from Nowhere,* that beautiful surroundings and the assurance of sustenance and shelter would vastly improve the physical beauty of the population. The League embraced the concept of Utopia, and they articulated their vision of it in great detail. The Anarchists, though they rejected the word 'Utopia' as a synonym for impracticality, embraced the usefulness of articulating a future the path to which was made plain. Kropotkin's belief in the readiness of man's nature for the freedom of Anarchy separates the future-vision of the Anarchists from their Socialist fellows. Kropotkin used an evolutionary argument rooted in his own interpretation of Darwinism to advocate for the mutual aid instinct in man. He believed that it was society which forced competition upon human nature, rather than any flaw in human nature which had fostered the Capitalist competition under which they lived. His vision of the future, rather than being articulated in terms of manipulating human nature towards communalism, advocates for the unfettering of man from competition. The futures envisioned by these groups were tied deeply to their understanding of human nature, informed by their interpretations of evolution.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated that the fissiparity of the Socialist movement, based in London between 1880 and 1901, emerged out of conflicting evocations of Darwinian evolution. The Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, the Socialist League, and the Anarchists who coalesced around Peter Kropotkin formed their political philosophies in a society steeped in evolutionary theory and evolutionarily tinged rhetoric. The wide acceptance of Darwin's thinking required the Socialists to engage with scientific theories, and either to adapt their ideas to suit the scientific truths offered by Darwin, or else to adapt Darwin's truths to suit their programmes for reform with varying degrees of scientific foundation. The ideas of these groups were propounded in the journals published by each; *Justice, To-Day, Our Corner,* the *Fabian Tracts* and *Essays,* the *Commonweal,* and *Freedom*, as well as in some contemporary writing by key members of each group. This thesis has allowed the Socialists to speak, in their own words, to the aims and desires of their movement, and to the evolutionary platform on which those aims and desires were formed, with the goal of understanding the collective portrait of evolutionary rhetoric in each group. The breadth of primary material accessed in the research of this thesis has been possible because of digitisation efforts for the output of all these journals. In the mid-1880s when these groups came together, they believed optimistically in the dawn of the revolution before the end of the century. The revolution which they expected never came—though perhaps the Fabian group, still active, views it as ongoing.

This thesis has sought to investigate the emergence of four Socialist groups through a close examination of the journals published by each in the final decades of the nineteenth century. While the scope of investigation was confined in this thesis to writing in and about Britain, the framework it offers for understanding the differing views of human nature through an evolutionary vernacular could usefully be applied to a study about imperial writing by British Socialists. The ways in which their understandings of human nature and evolution informed discourse about eugenics, property rights, the role of the State, and the place of dignity for the worker for colonised peoples would prove fascinating further study. This thesis has supplied a missing foundation block in scholarship about British Socialism from this period, and the

material discovered through the close reading of primary sources may well prove helpful to subsequent scholarship.

The large body of scholarship which precedes this thesis in examining these Socialist groups has all too often asserted that they *were* deeply divided without asking *why* they were so. Where these divisions have been questioned, the answers offered have made light of, or made nothing at all of, the *scientific* engagements of these groups. In part, the dearth of acknowledgement in scholarship of the importance of the evolutionary vernacular may be due to the practical difficulties of accessing and collecting material from these journals prior to digitisation efforts. What might once have required innumerable hours of turning pages of delicate newspapers in archives can now be done through much more expedient digital means. Evolutionary discourses are woven through articles the titles of which are not overtly scientific—being able to search for keywords greatly expedited this study and allowed this thesis to draw out the consistent thread of evolutionary vernacular across each journal. Personal differences and feelings about the veracity of Marx's writing are not sufficient to explain the failure of the groups to unite in the face of their monumentally vituperative feelings towards the Capitalist State. Hale is exemplary in the preceding scholarship for giving adequate weight to the role of Darwinian evolution in Socialist thought. The argument of this thesis runs for the most part in complement with his work, though it dives more deeply than his work does into the way this translated into political engagement for these groups.

I have examined more closely the language of evolution, which is not always used by these groups in terms as formal as the Lamarckism and Malthusianism with which Hale engages. Especially in seeking to explain the relevance of evolution to Socialism for their non-scientist readership, discourses tended towards low science, even among authors who demonstrated their deep engagement with Lamarck or Malthus in books and tracts published outside of their involvement with these journals. In this way, even scientifically well-informed authors like Besant and Aveling could hope to confer legitimacy on their movement by tying it to the most prominent biological idea of the period while still engaging a public unschooled in biological sciences. That these groups all acknowledged explicitly that the Socialist movement would be benefited by their unification, and that such a unity never occurred, is fascinating. These were relatively small organisations—never more than a few thousand members a piece—who still prioritised the purity of their beliefs over the power-by-numbers of the movement. Such a failure merits the close reading which this thesis has performed in pursuit of the cause of their disunity. They attributed their divisions to the clashes of their evolutionary interpretations, and this thesis confirms and explores the truth of their assertion.

In the first chapter, 'Socialism in a Darwinian Vernacular', we examined the many meanings of 'evolution' and 'science' for the Socialists. The 'scientific Socialist' was both the Marxist and the Darwinian—the student of economic and evolutionary theory. Sometimes the term was deployed to mean both, and sometimes one or the other. 'Evolution' was a term used to refer to biological truths, but also to the changes wrought within a society by political means. The Socialists used their engagement with the foremost scientific theory of the day to justify and to confer legitimacy upon their programmes for reform and revolution. If Socialism could gain currency as the political realisation of Darwinism, then it could ride the coattails of the acceptance by scientists and society of this radical theory into a shared dawn of legitimacy. The Socialists also expressed a more nuanced view of the 'survival of the fittest' than that which was advocated by the leading scientific voices. They admitted of the human desire for survival, but they believed there to be no objective measure of 'fitness'—and certainly not one which represented those people who saw success in their own society. They believed the concept of 'fitness' was malleable and based upon the circumstances which allowed survival. In a Capitalist society like their own, it was naturally the competitive and ruthless who flourished.

In a Socialist society, however, where the competitive instinct would not make any person more fit than another, competition would fade away as a worthwhile trait, in a change sometimes explicitly referred to as a process of natural selection. Instead, the instinct for self-sacrifice and service to the community would be rewarded. They were deeply afraid of the peril into which mankind would plunge itself if a social structure which incentivised traits which they considered bad was allowed to continue—the race itself might degenerate beyond salvation. As Hale correctly identifies, these groups discoursed on the merits and demerits of Lamarckianism and Malthusianism. Each group, however, with the exception of the Anarchists, published writings in favour of, and against, both theories. Besant herself published arguments compatible with both, though she is remembered as a Malthusian. The Anarchists supported Lamarck with full voice—the limitations of supply to support a population were, in their view, solely those imposed by tyrannical forces of Capitalist oppression. Though a flirtation with eugenic ideas runs through these groups, there exists no explicit endorsement of eugenics within these pages. Figures including Shaw, who became known for his enthusiasm for eugenics, constrained himself when writing for the Fabians' middle-class audience for whom the association of eugenics with free love, female promiscuity, and birth control were distasteful.[857] The closest that the leaders of any of these groups came to publishing an endorsement of eugenic ideas was in

[857] Pfeiffer, 'Evolutionary Theory', p. 274; Richards, *Darwin,* p. 494.

Besant's most Malthusian mood, when she advocated for the rectitude of population checks for the Socialist future.

In the second chapter, 'Conflict in Socialist Methodologies of Reform and Revolution', we examined first the revolutionary or reformist methods which emerged out of each group, rooted in an evolutionary justification. Then, we explored the criticism each group published of each of their fellows, again rooted in an evolutionary comment of the missteps of their rival organisations. We found that those groups which viewed human nature as competitive believed that parliamentary reform was the only or the best means of moving society towards Socialism. This accounts broadly for the SDF, entirely for the Fabians, and for some of the League's early leadership. Those groups who believed that man's nature was inherently communal believed in the overthrow of all government—Socialist or otherwise. This accounts for the later iteration of the League and for the Anarchists. Those groups for whom parliamentary reform seemed the most expedient method valued hierarchy for twofold reasons. The first was that, even after the revolution, some check must exist for the competitive nature of man. The government must act as the perpetual steward to incentivise Socialism for the individual. The second reason was the scepticism of these groups for man's power to organise without an authority against a machine so powerful and entrenched as the Capitalist State. Without leadership, they did not believe that man was capable of creating an effective campaign.

In the comment offered by each group of their fellows, the case is made in a language imbued with evolutionary critique. The Anarchists, for example, were wrong in the Fabian estimation because of their fundamental misunderstanding of the lessons evolution teaches us about how lasting change can be created. This change, in order to be lasting, must be as slow as the changes made to a species over centuries or millennia—if they were attempted in a day, or in a decade, they would do no more than alter the surface of the human condition, which would inevitably revert to its old ways. The Fabians, in the Anarchist critique, misunderstood human nature and therefore distrusted man to act for the good of his fellows without the threat of the State to force or manipulate him to do so. At stake in these arguments was the preservation of mankind. They could not afford to allow the revolution to fail because of the misinterpretation of one of their fellow Socialist groups of evolutionary theory—and it was this reluctance to risk the fate of the evolution or devolution of the race that motivated the fractious nature of these groups.

In the third chapter, 'Utopia? Socialism after the Revolutionary Dawn', we examined the futures which each group envisioned following the successful realisation of the Socialism for which they advocated. First, we explored their engagement with the term 'Utopia', to mean either an impracticality unworthy of their attention, or the laudable realisation of their political activism. The SDF, the Fabians, and the Anarchists all rejected the term 'Utopia', and they used it to refer to those ideas which are so far from the realm of reality that they are rendered nothing but a gratuitous thought experiment. The Fabians in particular rejected any kind of future-forecasting as being an unworthy use of their time. Instead, they dedicated themselves to dealing with the immediate future—the next step or steps which could be taken towards a more Socialist society. They never embraced the idea of *the* Socialist society—there was no one correct or inevitable or static future towards which they worked. Nevertheless, we examined those hints that they did make available about the form that the future with which they would begin to be happy would take—its primary requisite being the satisfaction of the needs of as many as possible, without scope for paucity or excess of sustenance. The Anarchists, in contrast, embraced the forecasting of the ideal future, though they would not call it a Utopia.

Unlike the SDF and the Fabians, the Anarchists did not believe that the innate nature of man needed to undergo a transformation in preparation for the Socialism of the future. Instead, they believed that the only obstacle to the realisation of man's ideal was the oppressive forces of the State, which cause man to live divided from his fellow instead of allowing the mutual aid instinct to prevail. Therefore, the path to their ideal future was not obscured behind any gradual improvement of human nature, but rather could be realised as soon as the government fell. The Socialist League viewed Utopianism as being a force for good, a means by which to articulate the end point which would make all of the efforts of reform and revolution worthwhile. The League's vision of the future was informed by a Lamarckian belief in the improving power of beautiful surroundings. Morris's Utopians are more beautiful than their Victorian predecessors, as well as being more communally inclined.

The extent of the visions of the future articulated by these groups, in terms of Utopia or not, included their visions of the continuance in some degree of private property, the redistribution of wealth, communal ownership of the essential elements of production, the form that government would take, the role or abolition of police, the inclination of the labourer towards work, the means by which work was to be improved, and the salvific effect of education on the worker. An emphasis which proliferated across these differently articulated visions of the future is on the autonomy and dignity of the worker, which was to be immeasurably increased by the alteration of his circumstances. It was through the alteration of these circumstances that this

dignity would be fostered, whether it was an alteration of man's nature or merely the uncovering of what was already there. These groups, divided by many principles, were nevertheless united in their desire for the improvement of the individual feeling of the worker.

As this thesis has shown, the SDF, the Fabians, the League, and the Anarchists interpreted human nature differently. The differences in these interpretations, expressed in a Darwinian vernacular which they often manipulated to political ends, informed the differences in their methodologies. Even from authors including Besant, Aveling, and Kropotkin, whose own knowledge of the science of evolution existed at a much higher level of sophistication than, for instance, Morris', the journals published their evolutionary arguments for their assumed public of non-specialists, engaging for the most part with a low science approach. The SDF believed that evolution occurred at both a steady, gradual pace and with some explosive changes. Evolution was conceived of as the growth of a baby mammal into adulthood and the bursting forth of a young bird from its egg. It was imperceptible progression as much as it was eruption and sudden change to a surface under which such change had long been brewing. It was in these terms that the SDF understood human nature to exist, too. Change could be wrought through both gradualism and violent uprising. It was in these terms that their policy of parliamentary reform until the necessity of a violent, revolutionary push came to be. They believed man's nature to be selfish, and for it to be their role to act as stewards in preparing man through a gradual process for the eventual bursting forth of the Socialist future.

The Fabians, likewise, thought man to be ultimately self-serving. This belief motivated their engagement with parliamentary politics. In their view, it was through the control of a central power that man's competitive nature could be channelled into the benefit of the whole group. They rejected the idea of a revolution which would instate a new government through overthrow because they did not believe that lasting change could be made through celeritous action. It would be the equivalent of the shearing of their sheep's coat—however dramatic it might appear in one moment, it would with time return exactly to what it had always been. It would be better, and ultimately more expedient, to breed generations of sheep selecting for shorter coats to eventually create a species which resembled permanently what the shears had created in a flash.

The Socialist League prized beauty, both artistic and physical, as the true expression of a successful Socialism. This was expressed in a Lamarckian argument for the beautification of surroundings to ensure the perfection of the race. Though they viewed human nature as fundamentally selfish, they also believed it to be easily manipulated, as its physical expression

was, by the external circumstances in which evolution occurred. If they could but ensure that man was perpetually surrounded by beautiful things, people, land, and buildings, they could ensure that he would evolve towards a more communal nature.

The Anarchists believed human nature to be fundamentally communal. It was the intervention of the State, and forces of government and ownership, which forced competition and hierarchy onto human nature which was not disposed towards it. The Anarchists did not view human nature as malleable; despite centuries of living in a competitive environment, Kropotkin trusted that man would return to the life of a Medieval commune with total ease upon the dissolution of the State. Society could be trusted to regulate itself, and the innate desire to be accepted by one's fellows would incentivise cooperation even when it was inconvenient or uncomfortable for an individual.

This thesis has asked why four organisations, united in disgust for Capitalist disparity, desirous of the bettering of conditions for the working man, never coalesced into one group. I have rejected the explanation that interpersonal disagreements or views on Marxism account for this monumental failure of unity. Instead, I have looked to the explanations woven through hundreds of pages of Socialist publications between 1880 and 1901 for the answer. What I have discovered in this close reading is a framework which may be applied usefully to studies which widen the scope of this one to examine later Socialist engagements with imperial thought. These Socialists rooted their arguments in the language Darwin provided for evolutionary biology. It was not that the stakes of their movement were not high enough to overcome pride or dislike or snobbery, but rather that the stakes were *too* high. Each group propounded a methodology for creating the Socialist future which was drawn from their evolutionary interpretation. The division of these groups was rooted in the belief of each that only by their method could society achieve the Socialist future. Only by the correct understanding of human nature could humanity be saved from degeneration and decay, and be brought instead into dignity, brotherhood, and perpetual improvement.

Bibliography

i. *Primary*

'Anarchism as Criticism and Religion', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (January 1887), 15.

'Anarchism and Organisation', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (March 1889), 15.

'Anarchism vs. Revolutionary Socialism', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (August 1890), 31-32.

'Anarchist Propaganda', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (August 1900), 34.

'Another Turn of the Screw', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (June 1889), 25-26.

Aveling, Edward B., 'The Atheists and Socialism', *Justice* (09 February 1884) 6.
----'Christianity and Capitalism', *To-day* (March 1884) 177-187.
---- *The Darwinian theory: its meaning, difficulties, evidence, history* (London: Progressive Publishing Company, 1884).
----'Lessons in Socialism', *The Commonweal* (July 1885) 57-58.
----'Objections to Socialism', *The Commonweal* (May 1886) 69-70.
----'Scientific Socialism', *The Commonweal* (April 1885) 21-22.
----'Sign of the Times', *The Commonweal* (April 1885) 23.
---- *Student's Darwin* (London: Freethought publishing company, 1881).

Ball, Sidney, 'The moral aspects of socialism', *Fabian Tract* 72 (November 1896) 3-23.
----'REVIEW: *The Conquest of Bread*', *Economic Journal* 17:66 (1907), 252-255.

Banham, William, 'Correspondence', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (June 1895), 20.

Baxter, Dan, 'Labour v. Rent of Ability', *Justice* (27 March 1897), 2.

Bax, Ernest Belfort, Early Communal Life and What It Teaches', *The Commonweal* (7 May 1887) 148-149.
----'A Free Fantasia on Things Divine and Human', *To-day,* (Oct 1888), 101-113.
---- *Justice* (14 September 1895), 4.
----'Looting, Scientific and Unscientific', *The Commonweal* (March 1886) 20-21.
----'The New Ethic: II', *The Commonweal* (11 February 1888) 42-43.
----'The New Ethic: III', *The Commonweal* (25 February 1888) 58-59.
----'Some Bourgeois Idols; or Ideals, Reals and Shams', *The Commonweal* (April 1886) 25-26.
----'The Two Enthusiasms', *The Commonweal* (February 1886) 9-11.
----'Unscientific Socialism', *To-day* (March 1884) 192-204.

Beckett, Reginald A.,'Empirical Socialism', *The Commonweal* (24 December 1887) 421.
----'Evolution', *The Commonweal* (7 January 1888) 5.
----'REVIEW: The Service of Man', *The Commonweal* (11 June 1887) 189.

Bernstein, E., 'Amongst the Philistines: A Rejoinder to Belfort Bax', *Justice* (14 November 1896), 6.

Besant, Annie, 'Divide and —?', *To-day* (May 1888) 134-137.
----'The Evolution of Society', *Our Corner* (July 1885) 8-11.
----'The Evolution of Society', *Our Corner* (August 1885) 71-75.

----'The Evolution of Society', *Our Corner* (September 1885) 134-137.
----'The Evolution of Society', *Our Corner* (October 1885) 200-204.
----'The Fabian Society and Socialist Notes', *Our Corner* (March 1886) 187-192.
----'The Fabian Society and Socialist Notes' (September 1886) 187-192.
----'The Genesis of conscience', *Our Corner* (January 1887) 25-37.
----'The Genesis of conscience', *Our Corner* (February 1887) 101-113.
----'Industry Under Socialism', *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (The Fabian Society: London, 1889) 150-169.
----'The Law of Population and its relation to Socialism', *Our Corner* (June 1886) 324-332.
----'Modern Socialism', *Our Corner* (February 1886) 76-84.
----'Peeps through a Microscope', *Our Corner* (January 1883) 32-36.
----'Radicalism and Socialism', *Our Corner* (November 1886) 266-272.
----'The Redistribution of Political Power', *Our Corner* (May 1885) 260-265.
----'Science Corner', *Our Corner* (January 1883) 41-43.
----'Socialism: its Truths and its Hopes: A Reply', *Our Corner* (April 1887) 193-200.
----'The Story of Trafalgar Square, 1887-1888', *Our Corner* (April 1888) 224-233.
----'Utopias', *Justice* (22 February 1890), 2.
----*Why I am a socialist* (London: 1886).

Binning, Thomas, 'Organised Labour', *The Commonweal* (28 August 1886) 173.

Blackwell, James, Correspondence', *The Commonweal* (13 April 1889), 117.
----'Dreams and Nightmares', *The Commonweal* (15 June 1889) 186.
----"Home Rule for London", *Justice* (03 December 1887), 4.

Bland, Hubert, 'The Outlook', *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (The Fabian Society: London, 1889) 202-220.

Boulting, William, 'Misapplied Darwinism', *To-day* (February 1884) 91-97.

Bradlaugh, Charles, 'A Brief History of *Freedom*', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (December 1900), 49-50.

Bradley, F. H., 'Essay V – My Station and Its Duties', *Ethical Studies (1876),* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 145-192.

Burnie, R. W., 'Anarchist Morality', *The Commonweal* (1 November 1890) 346.
----'Anarchist Morality', *The Commonweal* (8 November 1890) 356.
----'Be Bold and Resolute', *The Commonweal* (23 August 1890) 268.
----'Wealth', *The Commonweal* (22 January 1887) 26-27.

C., 'Law and War', *The Commonweal* (7 January 1888) 2-3.

Carlile, W. A., 'Correspondence', *The Commonweal* (24 March 1888) 93.

Carpenter, Edward, 'England's Ideal', *To-day* (May 1884), 321-339.

Chatterton, Joe, 'R-Evolution', *Justice* (06 April 1895), 2.

Clarke, William, 'An Examination of some Criticism of Democracy', *To-day* (Dec 1888), 161-170.

Clifton, G., 'The Brutal Middle Class', Justice (1 October 1887), 2-3.

'The Coming Revolution', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (October 1886), 1-2.

Cook, The Lady Cook, 'Moral Environment', *Justice* (13 August 1898), 3.

'Co-Operation & Anarchism', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (September 1895), 37.

Coulon, A., 'Correspondence', *The Commonweal* (February 1891), 10.

Crane, Walter, 'The Advancement of Art, and Its Application to Industry', *The Commonweal* (5 January 1889) 1-2.

Creaghe, J., 'Correspondence', *The Commonweal* (28 November 1891), 155.
----'Where Are We Now?', *The Commonweal* (29 November 1890) 38.

'Critical Chronicle: Darwin', Justice (13 June 1885), 1.

Dadson, Arthur J., 'Huxley and Spencer', *The Commonweal* (22 February 1890) 60-61.

Dallas, D.C., 'Correspondence: Evolution versus Revolution', *The Commonweal* (25 December 1886) 311.

Darwin, Charles, *The Descent of Man,* (London: Murray, 1901).

Davis, H., 'Free versus State Communism', *The Commonweal* (23 February 1889), 57-58.

"Diabol", 'Anarchy, Communism, and Competition', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (July 1891), 53-54.

"Diogenes", 'Jottings', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (September 1896), 4.

'The Draft of an Eight-Hour Bill', *Justice* (23 November 1889), 1.

Drysdale, C. R., 'The State Remedy for Poverty', *To-day* (September 1884) 284-294.

'Editorial Notes', *To-day,* (Oct 1887), 93-95.

'Editorial Notes', *To-day,* (Jul 1887), 1-5.

"Egeria", 'The Ethics of Socialism', Justice (08 February 1896) 2.

'The Fabian Society', *Justice* (05 March 1887), 3.

'Fabianism "Furioso"', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (May 1900), 20-21.

Foulger, J C, 'Revolution by Reform', *To-day*, (Oct 1884), 412-428.

'Freedom', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (October 1886), 1.

Galton, Francis, ed. Lyman Tower Sargent, 'The Donoghues of Dunno Weir', *Utopian Studies* 12.2 (2001) 210-233.
----*The Eugenic College of Kantsaywhere* (c. 1910) UCL digital archive.
----ed. Lyman Tower Sargent, 'The Eugenic College of Kantsaywhere', *Utopian Studies* 12.2 (2001) 191-209.

Geldart, E. M., 'Socialism as a Religion', Justice (01 November 1884) 3.

Glasier, J. Bruce., 'Henry George and the Single Tax', *The Commonweal* (1 June 1889) 169-170.
----'Men who are not Socialists', *The Commonweal* (13 August 1887) 257-258.

Gronlund, Laurence, 'The Work Before Us', *Supplement to The Commonweal* (July 1885) 61-62.

H., W., 'Regimental Socialism', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (October 1896), 106-107.

Halliday Sparling, H., 'Pseudo-Socialism', *The Commonweal* (February 1886), 9.

Hart, Walter C., 'The Folly of Anarchism', *Justice* (15 January 1898), 2.

Hazell, A. P., 'Crime and the Criminal', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (December 1892), 86-87.
----'The Law of Population According to Malthus and Marx', *Justice*, (01 January 1898) 2.
----'Malthus Superseded', *Justice* (14 September 1895) 2-3.

Hunter Watts, J., 'Conversion', *Justice* (01 August 1885), 1.
----'Pennyworths of Socialism', *Justice* (24 March 1894), 4.
----'Signs of the Times', *Justice* (13 April 1889), 2.

Huxley, T. H., 'The Struggle for Existence', *The Nineteenth Century* (1888) 161-180.

Hyndman, H. M., 'Democratic Form and Socialist Substance', *Justice* (03 November 1900), 3.
---- *Further Reminiscences* (Macmillan & Co., 1912)
----'Hyndman on the SDF and Socialism in England', *Justice* (17 August 1901), 3.
----'Introduction to the Communist Manifesto', *Justice* (07 January 1888), 2.
----'London and the Provinces', *Justice* (26 September 1891), 2.
----'Manifesto on Foreign and Colonial Policy', *Justice* (7 March 1896).
----'No Rent', *Justice* (02 September 1899), 4.
----'Our New Year's Work', *Justice* (02 January 1892), 2.
----'The Progress of Socialism', Justice (04 October 1884), 4.
----'Revolution or Reform', *To-day* (August 1884) 180-198.
----'Socialism as a Whole', *Justice* (10 January 1891), 4.
----'The Survival of the Fittest', Justice (19 December 1885) 2.
----'The Work of the Future', Justice (06 August 1887), 1.
----'The Work of the Past. The Opportunities of the Future', *Justice* (06 June 1891), 2.

Jones, F. G., 'The Abolition of Capital', *Justice* (06 June 1891), 4.
----'How I Became a Socialist', *Justice* (14 September 1895), 2.

Jones, J. Ernest, *The Case for Progressive Imperialism* (2nd Ed. 1902).

Kautsky, Karl, 'The Social Revolution', translated by J. B. Askew, *Justice* (18 October 1902) 6.

Keep, Arthur, 'An American Socialist on the Fabians', *Justice* (13 March 1897), 6.

Kent, J., 'Shall the State Maintain its Children?', *Justice* (25 November 1899), 4.

Kitz, Francis, 'Bastille, Bourgeoise, and Bumble', *The Commonweal* (November 1885) 95.
----'A Safe Investment', *The Commonweal* (13 October 1888) 324.

Kropotkin, Peter, 'Anarchist Morality', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (March 1892), 19-20.
----'The Coming Anarchy', *The Nineteenth Century* 76 (August 1887) 149-164.
----'Communist-Anarchism', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (April 1888), 73-74.
----*The Conquest of Bread and Other Writings,* ed. Marshall Shatz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
----'Co-Operation: A Reply to Herbert Spencer', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (January 1897), 1-2.
----*Fields, Factories, and Workshops: Or, Industry Combined with Agriculture and Brain Work with Manual Labour (1902),* (Connecticut: Martino Fine Books, 2014).
---- *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (London, 1899).
----'In Memory of William Morris', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (November 1896), 109-110.
---- 'The Morality of Nature', *The Nineteenth Century and After* (1905) 407-426.
---- 'The Morality of Nature: I, II, III' *The Living Age* (22 April 1905) 193-211.
----*Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution,* ed. Paul Avrich (London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1972).
----'Mutual Aid Among Savages' *The Nineteenth Century* (April 1891) 538-559.
----'Objections to Anarchism', *The Commonweal* (17 October 1891) 129-130.
---- *The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution: An Address Delivered in Paris,* tr. Henry Glasse, (London: William Reeves Bookseller Limited, 1884).
---- *L'Anarchie dans L'Evolution Socialiste: Conférence Faite À La Salle Lévis (1887),* (Brochure Mensuelle, 1934).
---- 'The Scientific Bases of Anarchy', *The Nineteenth Century* (February 1887) 238-252.
----'The State: Its Historic Role', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (May 1897), 38-39.
----'The Theory of Evolution and Mutual Aid', *The Nineteenth Century and After* (1910) 86-107.
----'The Wage System', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (December 1889), 55.

Lay, H. J., 'H. M. Hyndman at Reading', *Justice* (06 October 1894), 2.

'A Lesson to Socialists', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (August 1895), 30.

'Letters to the Editor: Science and Socialism', Justice (18 July 1896) 6.

'Letters to the Editor: Malthusianism', Justice (18 July 1896) 6.

Lewis, J., 'Science and Socialism', *Justice* (26 October 1895), 3.

'Literary Notices', The Commonweal (4 October 1890) 315.

'The London Commune', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (April 1892), 25.

MacDonald, J Ramsay, 'How to lose and how to win an election', *Fabian Tract* 64 (1895) 1- 2.

Malatesta, Enrico, 'Anarchy', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (December 1891), 92.
----'Anarchy', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (March 1892), 22-23.

Marx Aveling, Eleanor, 'How Women Fared on Sunday', *Pall Mall Gazette* (16 November 1887) 2.

'The Meaning of Socialism', *To-day ,* (Jan 1885), 1-10.

Michel, Louise, 'Why We Are Anarchists', *The Commonweal* (26 September 1891) 119.

Morris, May, 'REVIEW: Il Socialismo', *The Commonweal* (7 May 1887) 147.

Morris, William, 'Art under Plutocracy', *To-day* (Feb 1884), 79-90.
----'Anti-Sweating Demonstration', *The Commonweal* (21 July 1888), 225-226.
----'Attractive Labour', *Supplement to The Commonweal* (June 1885) 49-50.
----'Bourgeois versus Socialist', *The Commonweal* (6 August 1887) 252.
----'Fabian Essays in Socialism', *The Commonweal* (1890), 28-29.
----'Free Speech and the Police', *The Commonweal* (November 1885), 99-100.
----'How We Live and How We Might Live: III', *The Commonweal* (18 June 1887) 194-195.
---- 'Is Trade Recovering?', *The Commonweal* (18 December 1886) 300.
----'Monthly Report', *The Commonweal* (May 1885), 36.
----*News from Nowhere and Other Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 2004).
----'Notes', *The Commonweal* (13 August 1887) 257.
----'Notes on News', *The Commonweal* (2 June 1888) 169.
----'Notes on News', *The Commonweal* (7 July 1888) 209-210.
----'Notes on Passing Events', *The Commonweal* (4 September 1886), 177.
----'Our Policy', *The Commonweal* (March 1886) 17-18.
---- *Political Writings of William Morris*, ed. A. L. Morton, (Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 1984).
----'REVIEW: Modern Socialism by Annie Besant', *The Commonweal* (10 July 1886), 117.
----'The Society of the Future', *The Commonweal* (30 March 1889) 98-99.
----'The Society of the Future', *Political Writings of William Morris,* ed. A. L. Morton (New York: International, 1973).

Morris, William, and E. Belfort Bax, *The Manifesto of the Socialist League* re
----'Socialism from the Root Up: Ancient Society', *The Commonweal* (15 May 1886) 53.
----'Socialism from the Root Up: The Utopists: Owen, Saint Simon, and Fourier', *The Commonweal* (30 October 1886) 242-243.)

Morton, C., 'The Failure of the Democratic Experiments at the Fabian Society', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (November 1890), 49.

Mowbray, C. W., 'Correspondence', *The Commonweal* (29 November 1890) 381-382. -
---'Socialism as Defined by Parsons', *The Commonweal* (1 March 1890) 67.

'Mutual Aid Amongst Animals', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (November 1890), 50.

N., 'Notes on News' *The Commonweal* (12 July 1890), 221.

N, 'Physical Force', *The Commonweal* (March 1891), 21-22.

Naewiger, G. E. Conrad, 'Enemies of Progress: The Philanthropist', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (November 1892), 78-79.

'News of the Week', *The Spectator* (19 November 1887) 1.

Newton, R Heber, 'Communism', *To-day,* (Apr 1885), 161-168.
----'The Religious Aspect to Socialism', *To-day,* (Dec 1885), 474-483.
----'The Religious Aspect of Socialism.' *To-day,* (Feb 1886), 42-52.

Nicoll, D. J., 'After the Revolution', *The Commonweal* (11 July 1891), 73-74.
----'After the Revolution', *The Commonweal* (18 July 1891), 78-79.

'Note', *The Commonweal* (22 February 1890) 59.

'Notes', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (January 1888), 62.

'Notes', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (June 1891), 42.

'Note', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (August 1893), 52.

'Notes on News', *The Commonweal* (23 August 1890), 267.

'Notes on the Socialist Movement', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (September 1887), 47.

O'Fallon, J. M., 'Anarchy and Anarchism', *Justice* (19 September 1896), 2.
---- 'Idealism, Anarchism, Christianity and Socialism', *Justice* (02 January 1897), 2.
----'Social-Democratic Federation Socialism v. Anarchism and Its Sympathies', *Justice* (05 September 1896), 4.

Olivier, Sydney, 'A Critic of Anarchism', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (October 1887), 50-51.
----'Moral', *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (The Fabian Society: London, 1889), 102-128.

P., 'Socialism and Sex', *To-day* (Feb 1887),42-55.

Pearson, Karl, 'Socialism and Natural Selection', *The Fortnightly Review* 331 (1 July 1894), 1-21.

Pearson, T., 'Anarchist Communism or Social Democracy', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (November 1890), 49-50.
----'Individual or Common Property', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (May 1890), 21.

Philips, W. L., 'Why are the many poor?', *Fabian Tract* 1 (1884) 1-4.

'Points Gained for the People', *Pall Mall Gazette* (17 November 1887) 1.

'The Politics of Socialism', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (January 1890), 2.

Quelch, H., 'Fabian Scribes', *Justice* (25 January 1890), 3.

Reclus, Elisee, 'An Anarchist on Anarchy', *The Commonweal* (10 October 1891) 126-127.
----'Anarchy', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (September 1895), 41.
----'Evolution and Revolution', *The Commonweal* (18 September 1886) 197.
----'Evolution and Revolution', *The Commonweal* (27 June 1891) 65-66.
----'Evolution and Revolution', *The Commonweal* (4 July 1891) 70-71.

Reece, Thomas, 'Is the State the Enemy?', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (December 1899), 87.

Rennie, W. S., 'Equality', *Justice* (24 March 1894), 2.

'The Revolt of the English Workers in the Nineteenth Century', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (April 1889), 20.

Romanes, George, *Darwin and After Darwin (1893)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Rothstein, T., 'Social-Democracy and Revolutionary Action', *Justice* (03 October 1896), 2.

Ruskin, John, *Sesame and Lilies* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1865).

The Sage of the Northern Heights, '"The Lazy Working Man', *Justice* (07 November 1894), 7.

Samuels, H., 'Socialism and Physical Force"', *Justice* (13 February 1897), 2.
----'What Next?', *The Commonweal* (10 May 1890) 146-147.

Scheu, Andreas, 'Prof. Huxley and His Natural Rights', *The Commonweal* (15 March 1890) 84-85.
----'What's to be Done?', *Supplement to The Commonweal* (June 1885) 50.

Shaw, G. Bernard, 'The Basis of Socialism: Economic', *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (The Fabian Society: London, 1889) 3-29.
----'The Fabian election manifesto', *Fabian Tract* 40 (1892) 1-16.
----'The Fabian election manifesto: PROOF', *Fabian Tract* 40 (1892) 1-16.
----'The Fabian Society: what it has done: and how it has done it', *Fabian Tract* 41 (1892) 3-30.
----'The Impossibilities of Anarchism', *Fabian Tract* 45 (1893) 3-27.
----'A Manifesto', *Fabian Tract* 2 (1884) 1-2.
----'Report on Fabian policy and resolutions presented by the Fabian Society to the International Socialist workers and Trade Union Congress, London, 1896', *Fabian Tract* 70 (July 1896) 3-15.
----'Transition', *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (The Fabian Society: London, 1889) 173-201.
----'The True Radical Programme', *Fabian Tract* 6 (1887) 1-9.
----'What socialism is', *Fabian Tract* 13 (1890) 1-3.
----'A Word for War', *To-day,* (Sept 1887), 82-86.

Shore, Thomas, 'Solvitur Ambulando', *The Commonweal* (21 January 1888) 20-21.

Sketchley, J., 'Evolution versus Revolution', *The Commonweal* (11 December 1886) 292-293.

Smith, Goldwin, 'The Greatness of England,' *Contemporary Review* 45 (1878) 1-19.

'Social-Democracy and Politics', *Justice* (09 January 1897), 4.

'Socialism of the Sty', *Justice* (26 July 1890), 2.

A Socialist Politician, 'The Present Crisis in the Socialist Movement', *To-day* (Jun 1887).

'Socialist Propaganda', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (October 1887), 52.

'Some Effects of Reason Worship', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (March 1888), 71-72.

Sparling, Halliday, 'Pseudo-Socialism', *The Commonweal* (February 1886) 9.

Spencer, Herbert, *Social Statistics, Abridged and Revised; Together with the Man versus the State* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896).

'Stage Socialism, Review: Widowers' Houses by George Bernard Shaw', *Justice* (20 May 1893), 6.

'The State at Work', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (June 1896), 81.

Sturt, George, 'The New "Saviour"', *The Commonweal* (12 May 1888) 148.
----'A Query', *The Commonweal* (20 April 1889) 125.
----'The Ruskin Reading Guild', *The Commonweal* (21 December 1889) 402.
----'Voluntary Co-Operation', *The Commonweal* (14 May 1887) 156.

Tamlyn, John, 'An Appeal for Definiteness', *Justice* (06 February 1897), 2.

Tcherkesoff, W., 'Pages of Socialist History', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (April 1898), 21-22.

'Tell Tale Straws', *Justice* (26 July 1890), 2.

Tennyson, Alfred, *In Memoriam,* (London: Edward Moxon, 1850).

Thorne, Will, 'The Nationalisation of the Instruments of Labour', *Justice* (01 May 1898), 10-11.

'Topics of the Day', *The Spectator* (19 November 1887) 5.

'Union is Strength!', *Justice* (12 December 1885), 1.

Unwin, Raymond, 'Positivism and Socialism', *The Commonweal* (30 July 1887) 243.
----'Socialist Tactics', *To-day* (Dec 1887), 180-186.

Utley, W. H., 'The Scientific Aspect of Socialism', *Our Corner* (February 1887) 82-87.

'Utopianism', *Justice* (15 April 1899), 4.

Wallas, Graham, 'Property Under Socialism', *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (The Fabian Society: London, 1889) 131-149.

Watts, J. Hunter, 'Pennyworths of Socialism', *Justice* (24 March 1894), 4.

Webb, Sidney, 'The case for an eight hours bill', *Fabian Tract* 23 (May 1891) 3-15.
----'The difficulties of individualism', *Fabian Tract* 69 (June 1896) 3-19.
----'English progress towards social democracy', *Fabian Tract* 15 (December 1890) 3-15.
----'Figures for Londoners', *Fabian Tract* 10 (1889) 1-3.
----'Historic', *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (The Fabian Society: London, 1889) 30-61.
----'Socialism: true and false', *Fabian Tract* 51 (1894) 3-19.
----'Twentieth Century Politics : A Policy of National Efficiency', *Fabian Tract* 108 (1901) 1-15.
----'What the farm laborer wants', *Fabian Tract* 19 (1890) 1-4.
----'What the farm laborer wants', *Fabian Tract* 19 (1893) 1-4.
----'What the farm laborer wants', *Fabian Tract* 19 (1894) 1-4.
----'The Workers' Political Programme', *Fabian Tract* 11 (1891), 3-19.

Wells, H. G., ed. Gregory Claeys and Patrick Parrinder, *A Modern Utopia* (London: Penguin Books, 2005).

'What is Anarchism', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (September 1889) 39-40.

'What Revolution Means', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (November 1886), 1-2.

Willis-Harris, W., 'Survival of the Fittest', *Justice* (28 April 1888), 2.

Wilson, Charlotte, 'What Socialism is', *Fabian Tract* 4 (1886) 1-12.

'The Year '92', *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchy* (February 1893), 1-2.

ii. Secondary

Adams, Matthew S., 'Formulating an Anarchist Sociology: Peter Kropotkin's Reading of Herbert Spencer', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77.1 (2016) 49-73.
----*Kropotkin, Read, and the Intellectual History of British Anarchism: Between Reason and Romanticism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

Oxford English Dictionary, 'Anarchy, *n.*', Accessed 20 June 2021, <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/7118?redirectedFrom=anarchy#eid>.

Bashford, Alison, and Philippa Levine, 'Introduction: Eugenics and the Modern World', *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 3-24.

Baylen, Joseph O., 'George Bernard Shaw and the Socialist League: Some Unpublished Letters', *International Review of Social History* 7.3 (1962) 426-440.

Beer, Gillian, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Bell, Duncan, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).
----'Pragmatism and Prophecy: H. G. Wells and the Metaphysics of Socialism', *American Political Science Review* 112.2 (2018) 409-422.
----'Pragmatic Utopianism and Race: H. G. Wells as a Social Scientist', *Modern Intellectual History* 16.3 (2017) 863-895.

Berg, Maxine, *The Machinery Question and the Making of Political Economy 1815-1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Bevir, Mark, 'Annie Besant's Quest for Truth: Christianity, Secularism and New Age Thought', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 50.1 (1999) 62-93.
----'Annie Besant's Quest for Truth: Christianity, Secularism, and New Age Thought', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 50 (1999) (republished by UC Berkeley: Previously Published Works), 1-50.
----'Ernest Belfort Bax: Marxist, Idealist, and Positivist', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54.1 (January 1993), 119-135.
----'Fabianism and the Theory of Rent', *History of Political Thought* 10.2 (Summer 1989), 313-327.
----'Fabianism, Permeation and Independent Labour', *The Historical Journal* 39.1 (1996), 179-196.
----'H. M. Hyndman: A Rereading and a Reassessment', *History of Political Thought* 12.1 (Spring 1991), 125-145.
----'Historicism and the Human Sciences in Victorian Britain', *Historicism and the Human Sciences in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1-20.
----'The Long Nineteenth Century in Intellectual History', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 9 (2001) OpenAccess 1-39.
----*The Making of British Socialism* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011).
----'The Marxism of George Bernard Shaw 1883-1889', *History of Political Thought* 13.2 (Summer 1992), 299-318.
----'Republicanism, Socialism, and Democracy in Britain: The Origins of the Radical Left', *Journal of Social History* 34.2 (Winter 2000), 351-368.
----'The Rise of Ethical Anarchism in Britain, 1885-1900', *Historical Research* 69 (1996) (republished by UC Berkeley: Previously Published Works), 1-42.
----'Sidney Webb', *The Journal of Modern History* 74.2 (June 2002), 217-252.
----'William Morris: The Modern Self, Art, and Politics', *History of European Ideas* 24 (1998) (republished by UC Berkeley: Previously Published Works), 1-33.

Boos, Florence and William Boos, 'The Utopian Communism of William Morris', *History of Political Thought* 7.3 (Winter 1986) 489-510.

Boulter, Michael, *Bloomsbury Scientists: Science and Art in the Wake of Darwin* (London: University College London, 2017).

Bowler, Peter J., 'Christian Responses to Darwinism in the Late Nineteenth Century' in *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity,* eds. J. B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2012) 37-47.
----'Evolution, History of', *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* 2.8 (2015) 382-387.
----*Monkey Trials and Gorilla Sermons: Evolution and Christianity from Darwin to Intelligent Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

---- *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Re-Interpreting a Historical Myth,* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
----'Scientific Attitudes to Darwinism in Britain and America' in *The Darwinian Heritage,* ed. David Kohn (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985) 641-682.

Britain, I. M., 'Bernard Shaw, Ibsen, and the Ethics of English Socialism', *Victorian Studies* 21.3 (Spring 1978) 381-401.

Browne, Janet, *Charles Darwin: The Power of Place* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Burrow, J. W., *Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

Carlson, Elof Axel, 'Eugenics and Basic Genetics in H. J. Muller's Approach to Human Genetics', *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 9.1 (1987) 57-78.
----'H. J. Muller: The Role of the Scientist in Creating and Applying Knowledge', *Social Research* 51.3 (1984) 763-782.

Claeys, Gregory, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
----'REVIEW: *The Making of British Socialism* by Mark Bevir', *The English Historical Review* 128.530 (2013) 188-190.
----'The "Survival of the Fittest" and the Origins of Social Darwinism', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61.2 (April 2000) 223-240.

Clayton, Joseph, 'The Passing of Socialism in England', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 14.55 (September 1925) 425-436.

Cole, Margaret, 'The Fellowship of William Morris', *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 24.2 (Virginia: University of Virginia, 1948) 260-277.

Cowden, Morton, 'Early Marxist Views on British Labour, 1837-1917', *The Western Political Quarterly* 16.1 (March 1963) 34-52.

Crook, Paul, *Darwin's Coat-Tails: Essays on Social Darwinism* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007).

Desmond, Adrian, *The Politics of Evolution: Morphology, Medicine, and Reform in Radical London* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992).

Feaver, George, 'REVIEW: *From Radicalism to Socialism: Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines, 1881-1889* by Willard Wolfe', *Victorian Studies* 20.3 (1977) 335-337.

Freeden, Michael, 'Eugenics and Ideology', *The Historical Journal* 26.4 (1983) 959-962.

Gilley, Sheridan, 'William Morris and the mid-Victorian Crisis of Faith', *The Chesterton Review* 25.3 (1999) 317-327.

Goodlad, Lauren, 'Moral Character', *Historicism and the Human Sciences in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 128-153.

Goodway, David, '*Freedom,* 1886-2014: an Appreciation', *History Workshop Journal* 79.1 (2015) 233-242.

Hale, Piers J., 'Finding a place for the anti-Malthusian tradition in the Victorian evolution debates', *New Perspectives on Malthus,* ed. Robert J. Mayhew (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 182-207.
----'Of Mice and Men: Evolution and the Socialist Utopia. William Morris, H. G. Wells, and George Bernard Shaw', *Journal of the History of Biology* 43 (2010), 17- 66.
----*Political Descent: Malthus, Mutualism, and the Politics of Evolution in Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).
----'Rejecting the Myth of the Non-Darwinian Revolution', *Victorian Review* 41.2 (2015), 13-18.

Hall, John and Svetlana Kirdina-Chandler, 'Towards an intellectual history of evolutionary economics: competition and struggle versus cooperation and mutual aid', *Brazilian Journal of Political Economy* 37.3 (2017) 551-564.

Henderson, Philip, *William Morris: His Life, Work, and Friends* (Norwich: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1963).

Hinely, Susan, 'Charlotte Wilson, the "Woman Question", and the Meanings of Anarchist Socialism in Late Victorian Radicalism, *IRSH* 57 (2012) 3-36.

Johnson, Graham, 'Making Reform the Instrument of Revolution: British Social Democracy 1881-1911', *The Historical Journal* 43.4 (Dec 2000), 977-1002.

Kinna, Ruth, 'Kropotkin and Huxley', *Politics* 12.2 (1992) 41-47.
----'Kropotkin's Theory of Mutual Aid in Historical Context', *International Review of Social History* 40 (1995), 259-283.
-----'William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism', *History of Political Thought* 15.4 (1994) 593-613.

Kucich, John, 'Scientific Ascendancy', *A Companion to the Victorian Novel,* eds Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002) 119-136.

Kuskey, Jessica, 'Bodily beauty, socialist evolution, and William Morris's *News from Nowhere*', *Nineteenth-Century Prose* 38.1 (2011) 147-182.

Lightman, Bernard, 'Darwin and the Popularization of Evolution', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* 64 (2010) 5-24.
----'Life', *Historicism and the Human Sciences in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 21-47.

Lloyd, Amy J., 'Education, Literacy, and the Reading Public', *British Library Newspapers* (Detroit: Gale, 2007).

Lloyd, Trevor, 'Morris V. Hyndman "Commonweal" and "Justice"', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter* 9.4 (Dec 1976) 119-128.
----'The Politics of William Morris's *News from Nowhere*', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 9.3 (Autumn 1977) 273-287.

MacKenzie, Donald, 'Eugenics in Britain', *Social Studies of Science* 6 (1976) 499-532.

McCulloch, Caroline, 'The Problem of Fellowship in Communitarian Theory: William Morris and Peter Kropotkin', *Political Studies* 32 (1984) 437-450.

Micklewright, F. H. Amphlett, 'The Rise and Decline of English Neo-Malthusianism', *Population Studies* 15.1 (July 1961) 32-51.

Miller, Martin A., *Kropotkin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

Mins, Leonard E., 'Unpublished Letters of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to Americans', *Science & Society* 2.3 (Summer 1938), 348-375.

Morton, Peter, *The Vital Science: Biology and the Literary Imagination, 1860-1900* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984).

Nettlau, Max, 'Peter Kropotkin at Work' in *Freedom* (February 1921) 11-13.

Nicolosi, Riccardo, 'The Darwinian Rhetoric of Science in Petr Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution (1902)*', Ber. Wissenschaftsgesh 43 (2020) 141-159.

de Oliveira, António Ferraz, 'Kropotkin's commune and the politics of history', *Global Intellectual History* 3.2 (2018) 156-177.

Parfitt, Steven, *Knights Across the Atlantic* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016).

Parrinder, Patrick, 'Eugenics and Utopia: Sexual Selection from Galton to Morris', *Utopian Studies* 6.2 (1997) 1-12.

Partington, John S., '*The Time Machine* and *A Modern Utopia*: The Static and Kinetic Utopias of the Early H.G. Wells', *Utopian Studies* 13.1 (2002) 57-68.

Pfeiffer, J. R., 'Evolutionary Theory' in *George Bernard Shaw in Context,* ed. B. Kent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) 273-280.

'REVIEW: *The Conquest of Bread* by P. Kropotkin', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Scienc*e 31.3 (1908) 181-182.

Richards, Evelleen, *Darwin and the Making of Sexual Selection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Runciman, David, *Pluralism and the Personality of the State* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2009).

Shklar, Judith 'The Political Theory of Utopia: From Melancholy to Nostalgia', *Daedalus* 94.2 Utopia (1965) 367-381.

Shpayer-Makov, Haia, 'Anarchism in British Public Opinion 1880-1914', *Victorian Studies* 31.4 (Summer 1988), 487-516.
----'The Reception of Peter Kropotkin in Britain, 1886-1917', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 19.3 (Autumn 1987), 373-390.

Silver, Carole G., 'Socialism Internalized: The Last Romances of William Morris', *Socialism and the Literary Artistry of William Morris,* eds. Carole G. Silver and Florence S. Boos (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1990) 117-126.

Simkhovitch, Vladimir G., 'REVIEW: *Mutual Aid a Factor of Evolution* by P. Kropotkin', *Political Science Quarterly* 18.4 (1903) 702-705.

Stead, William Thomas, 'REVIEW: Mutual Aid', *London: Office of the Review of Reviews* 26:155 (1902) 533.

Stears, Marc, *Progressives, Pluralists, and the Problems of the State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Sumpter, Caroline, 'Anthropology, Socialist Prediction and William Morris's *Commonweal*', *Cultural and Social History* 9.3 (2012) 349-367.

Thomas, Matthew, 'Anarcho-Feminism in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, 1880-1914', *International Review of Social History* 47.1 (April 2002), 1-31.

Thompson, E. P., 'Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past & Present,* 38 (1967) 56-97.

Thompson, Noel, 'Socialist Political Economies and the Growth of Mass Consumption in Britain and the United States, 1880 to 1914', *Review of Radical Political Economies* 39.2 (Spring 2007) 230-256.

Todes, Daniel P., 'Kropotkin's Theory of Mutual Aid' in *Darwin without Malthus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) 123-142.

Vaninskaya, Anna, 'It was a silly system: Writers and Schools, 1870-1939', *The Modern Language Review* 105.4 (October 2010), 952-975.
----'Janus-Faced Fictions: Socialism as Utopia and Dystopia in William Morris and George Orwell', *Utopian Studies* 14.2 (2003), 83-98.

Waithe, Marcus, eds Joanne Parker and Corinna Wagner 'Building Utopia: The Structural Medievalism of William Morris' *News from Nowhere*', *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Medievalism* (Croydon: Oxford University Press, 2020) 583-596.

Weiler, Peter, 'William Clarke: The Making and Unmaking of a Fabian Socialist', *Journal of British Studies* 14.1 (November 1974), 77-108.

Wilkins, M. S., 'The Non-Socialist Origins of England's First Important Socialist Organization', *International Review of Social History* 4.2 (1959) 199-207.

Winter, J. M., 'The Webbs and the Non-White World: A Case of Socialist Racialism', *Journal of Contemporary History* 9.1 (January 1974) 181-192.\

Wolfe, Willard, *From Radicalism to Socialism: Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines, 1881-1889* (London: Yale University Press, 1975).