"THE SOUL OF MAN UNDER SOCIALISM":
AN ESSAY IN CONTEXT

by J. D. Thomas

..."By the way, Dorian," he said, after a pause, "'what does it profit a man
if he gain the whole world and lose'—how does the quotation run?—'his own
soul'?'"

(The Picture of Dorian Gray.)

It is tragic how few people ever "possess their souls" before they die.

(De Profundis.)

"The Soul of Man under Socialism" has perplexed commentators on
Oscar Wilde. Those who have not passed it over with a glib phrase, such
as "clever social treatise, written with a scintillation that dazzled the
Fabians," have tended to relate it to the manifest rift in Wilde's lute. Ac-
cepting and embroidering upon his own old-fashioned use of the word soul,
for example, the Countess of Brémont quaintly analyzed his psychological
being as the union of a masculine brain with a feminine soul, and declared
that even though he "sacrificed his soul to his personality" in the search for
"new and bizarre intellectual stimulant," nevertheless "that supreme femi-
nine soul had left a sentinel on the field from which she retreated, and that
sentinel was the conscience... The subtle disquietude that reigned in his
brain found expression in 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' and his essay on
'The Soul of Man.'"

The difficulty about "The Soul of Man under Socialism," as every
reader perceives, is that it is a treatise on Individualism. Hesketh Pearson
suggested that it might better have been titled "The Soul of Man above
Socialism." In Wilde's day, even more explicitly than in ours, individual-
ism (commonly capitalized) was the specific antonym of socialism and
communism, and was regularly so employed by collectivists and exponents
of free enterprise alike. In the minds of doctrinaire socialists it was associ-
ated with the hated counter-doctrine of laissez-faire, in which what might
be termed the orthodox view of progress in Victorian England had been

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anchored. As between the two established political parties, the spirit of laissez-faire obviously was more normally connected with the Whig-Liberal than with the Tory-Conservative tradition; however, factional lines were easily crossed and repeatedly redrawn, and the Conservatives were not exactly Tories or the Liberals precisely Whigs. The Victorian Compromise was in part a closing of ranks by the whole Establishment against revolutionary forces generated in France, and so from the point of view of a reformer desiring radical change the political body to be permeated and impelled might be called something like a Whig-Tory-Liberal-Conservative axis.

Radicalism—never a very happy term of politics—was an anomalous force in Victorian England. The Radicals, though not a cohesive or regularly organized party, nevertheless were effective in pushing the established parties to compete in measures of reform. So far as Radicalism promoted such measures as free trade and extension of suffrage, it operated in the tradition of laissez-faire liberalism, the tradition that progress is achieved by throwing off the mercantilism and statism that had succeeded the feudalistic stage of society. But the hearts of benevolent men as different otherwise as Carlyle, Dickens, and Ruskin were not warmed by the cold comforts of naked Political Economy. Nor could Radicalism, as the secular arm, so to speak, of Utilitarianism, identify itself wholly with the Rugged Individualism of Manchester; for the principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number demanded, on its face, that every political-social-economic proposal be tested by its effect on the collective good of society, a basis of judgment on which a Factory Act restricting the liberty of a manufacturer to sweat labor might be as utile as the abrogation of a tariff to give him free access to the other raw materials of his enterprise. Whether John Stuart Mill moved during the last twenty-five years of his life "from a mere political democrat to a convinced Socialist," as Sidney Webb declared, may depend on the end of the telescope through which he is viewed: that is to say, on whether he is being claimed by exponents or opponents of socialism. There is, moreover, a contrary and more subtle working of this kind of ambiguity, which may be denominated the Principle of the Gored Ox. Thus Herbert Spencer, having decided that "All socialism involves slavery," complained that "Most of those who now pass as Liberals, are Tories of a new type," that is, partisans of the state against personal freedom; whereas the Fabian Hubert Bland contended: "The Whigs have triumphed all along the line. The Tories have not only been beaten, they have been absorbed. . . . Tories have accepted the whole of the Whig principles. . . ."

Messrs. H. Spencer and H. Bland were both clear-eyed men looking upon the same events of the 1880's. Spencer, for whom (as Wilde was to
put it in “The Soul of Man under Socialism”) “Evolution is the law of life, and there is no evolution except towards Individualism” (p. 327) saw the increasing infringements of individual liberty of action, to which both parties were inspired by the Zeitgeist, as a reactionary movement counter to the true direction of nineteenth-century progress. The outcome could only be socialism. Here, at least, a Fabian like Bland would be happy to agree; however, from his end of the telescope (or ox) the Radical measures that so alarmed Spencer seemed little more than a combined delaying action of both parties against the march of progress. From our vantage post in the future, we see that the march toward twentieth-century Britain was indeed in the direction that cheered Fabians and chilled Spencerians. At the turn of the 1890’s, nevertheless, Spencer’s attitude was eminently respectable—as indeed it still is, in the United States even more than in the United Kingdom. No doubt even his “New Tories” felt about what Hubert Bland attributed to “the whole of our public men” (loc. cit.): “They see, some of them perhaps more clearly than others, that there is much the State must do; but they all wish that much to be as little as possible.”

The paradox of socialism, recognized by Spencer and, for that matter, just as clearly by Bland, was that in the name of social and economic welfare it promised—or threatened—a return to statism. Here, again, the Principle of the Gored Ox is operative: the Fabian apologists were ready to demonstrate that there are states and states, a moderne as well as ancien régime; or, as Sidney Webb would say, a new (scil., good) as well as old (scil., bad) “synthesis.” Webb, the perfect Fabianite, far from attempting to deny or explain away what has come to be termed creeping socialism, described it with approval, urging Socialism to clasp Radicalism sisterly by the hand and lead gently into the collectivist future. Bland’s program was the same, except that he had more imagination of the braking effect to be anticipated from Individualism dragging its feet.

The imputation of what, in “The Soul of Man under Socialism,” Oscar Wilde called “an industrial barracks system, or a system of economic tyranny” (p. 281) may not have troubled Fabians like Webb and Bland, or a Marxist like H. M. Hyndman of the Social Democratic Federation, but just the same it was and remains the scandal of state socialism. When Wilde said, “... I confess that many of the socialistic views that I have come across seem to me to be tainted with ideas of authority, if not of actual compulsion” (p. 282), the deceptively mild tone overlies a very profound distress of men of good will otherwise drawn by social sympathy toward collectivism. The difficulty has been obviated in various ways. In Marxian theory, for example, the dictatorship of the proletariat is a necessary stage toward an ultimate withering away of government. Chris-
tian Socialists have hoped to mitigate man's institutional inhumanity to man with an infusion of the higher charity. In Edward Bellamy's American novel of 1888, *Looking Backward*, the rigor of the "Great Trust" and the "industrial army" is relieved by arrangements—subject to "necessary regulation" (including three years of compulsory common labor)—permitting voluntary choice of personal occupations. William Morris, however, gagged at that depressing brave new world without tears, which he sarcastically described as "a cockney paradise," saying also that "if they brigaded him into a regiment of workers he would just lie on his back and kick." His *News from Nowhere*, which was printed serially in *The Commonweal* between January 11 and October 4, 1890, and so was almost certain to have been ready to the hand and thought of Oscar Wilde while he was preparing "The Soul of Man under Socialism," an attempt to describe the braver new world of communism as Morris conceived it.

In acknowledging the gift of a book (possibly a presentation copy of *News from Nowhere*), Wilde wrote to Morris: "I have loved your work since boyhood: I shall always love it." "The Soul of Man under Socialism" is not a mere redraft of *News from Nowhere* in essay form, but there is little of fundamental disagreement between the two writings, and very much of common attitude. Besides the basic socialistic tenet that "The proper aim is to try and re-construct society on such a basis that poverty will be impossible" (p. 274), much that strikes a reader's attention in the essay could have been mined straight out of the romance (although it is of course true that Wilde also could have found the same views expressed elsewhere): e.g., "substituting co-operation for competition" (p. 276); or, "With the abolition of private property, marriage in its present form must disappear" (p. 292); or, "The individual is to make what is beautiful" and "All work of that kind [i.e., in which "man ... does not find pleasure"] should be done by a machine" (p. 297); or, "All modes of government are failures" (pp. 293-294); or, "a community is infinitely more brutalised by the habitual employment of punishment, than it is by the occasional occurrence of crime" and "When there is no punishment at all, crime will either cease to exist, or if it occurs, will be treated by physicians as a very distressing form of dementia, to be cured by care and kindness" (p. 295).

The major difference is that Wilde thought of Individualism in terms of the liberation of the self-conscious individual artist, who, except for trying to elevate popular taste so far as may be, "takes no notice whatever of the public" (p. 319); whereas Morris, though assuredly he would have agreed with Oscar Wilde that "Art is the most intense mode of individualism that the world has known" (p. 300), thought in terms of a genuinely popular art that would carve cherry pipes as gladly as cherry stones.

A good deal—probably too much—has been made of the philosophical
influence on Wilde of a book he happened to review (in February of 1890) exactly a year before "The Soul of Man under Socialism" was published: *Chuang Tzu: Mystic, Moralist, and Social Reformer* (1889).\(^{16}\) Edouard Roditi, for example, inferred from the review, from the second part of *The Critic as Artist*, and from "The Soul of Man under Socialism" that "there is enough evidence to conclude that the discovery of Taoism made it possible for Wilde to transcend at last the political dilemmas of the dandy in a new creed of his own."\(^{17}\) Even if Dorian Gray was "poisoned with a book," Oscar Wilde—for all his genius of discipleship—was slow of travel on the road to Damascus. (His pilgrimage from Oxford to Rome ended only with his death agony.) The tone of his review of sayings of "the wonderful sage" ("recently translated into the vulgar tongue by Mr. Herbert Giles, Her Majesty's Consul at Tamsui") is ironic and teasing. Far from having been struck blind or dumbly quiet, he has read "a most fascinating and delightful volume" out of which, by way of flattening the bourgeoisie, he makes sport of the "great middle classes of this country, to whom, as we all know, our prosperity, if not our civilisation, is entirely due." Whether or not the statement, "It may be true that the ideal of self-culture and self-development, which is the aim of his scheme of life, and the basis of his scheme of philosophy, is an ideal somewhat needed by an age like ours . . ." correctly renders Taoistic quietism, certainly Oscar Wilde, after knowing and reading Pater and the French Decadents, did not have to wait until 1889 or 1890 to discover such a view in Chinese philosophy. He might well have echoed the paraphrase of Chuang-tze from the review, "All modes of government are wrong," in his essay on socialism a year later; still, as a contributor to *The Nineteenth Century* he would have been aware that the Russian expatriate Peter Kropotkin had been saying the same thing (in English) within its pages.\(^{18}\) Several years later, in *De Profundis*, Wilde would refer to Kropotkin as having lived one of "the most perfect lives I have come across in my own experience."\(^{19}\)

Among critics of Oscar Wilde, George Woodcock, as might be expected from his co-authorship of Kropotkin's biography and from his recent book on *Anarchism*,\(^{20}\) has most insisted upon the relation between anarchist thought and "The Soul of Man under Socialism." He holds that, central to a schizoid personality, "the essential link in Wilde's thought and action, the goal to which all his intentions turn, is to be found in his doctrine and practice of individualism."\(^{21}\) Quoting from *The Critic as Artist*, he comments: "Here is individualist philosophic anarchism of the purest kind, and this theory is expanded and applied to direct social issues in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*" (*Paradox of Wilde*, pp. 154-155). Woodcock seconds Roditi concerning the important influence of Taoist ideas, trans-
mitted through Chuang-tze, on Wilde's developing thought (Paradox of Wilde, pp. 85-87, 150-152). He refers to the encomium in De Profundis upon Kropotkin (Anarchism, p. 448; Anarchist Prince, p. 224). He also says:

Bearing in mind the close sympathy between Wilde and the anarchists, demonstrated not merely in his general attitude towards society, but also in his actual relations with the anarchists he encountered, it is not surprising that his scanty political writings should have given so libertarian a picture of socialism. In these writings there are traces, not merely of his reading of anarchist books, but also of his connection with William Morris and other libertarian Socialists on the verge of anarchism. Wilde knew Morris well in his later years, and it is recorded by Shaw that when the old poet lay dying there was no visitor whom he welcomed so much as Wilde, with his kindly wit and good-humoured conversation.22

He observes (without reference in this context to Oscar Wilde) that "the only complete Utopian vision that has ever appealed generally to anarchists is News from Nowhere, in which William Morris, who came remarkably near to Kropotkin in his ideas, presented a vision—charmingly devoid of any suspicion of compulsion—of the kind of world that might appear if all the anarchist dreams of building harmony on the ruins of authority had a chance to come true" (Anarchism, p. 24).

For Woodcock, however, the final analysis of Wilde's essay is as follows:

The most ambitious contribution to literary anarchism during the 1890's was undoubtedly Oscar Wilde's The Soul of Man Under Socialism. . . . [I]n The Soul of Man Under Socialism . . . it is Godwin rather than Kropotkin whose influence seems dominant.

(Anarchism, p. 448.)

No doubt Wilde could have sought out the 1842 reprint of the final version of William Godwin's Political Justice, or conceivably copies of the original editions of 1793, 1796, and 1798; but if he read the work at all it most probably was as Henry S. Salt's Godwin's "Political Justice"; a Reprint of the Essay on Property (London, 1890), consisting of Book VIII only, in the text of the first edition, together with an appreciative but far from adulatory Introductory Note by the editor (an earnest humanitarian who had helped to guide Shaw to Shelley and vegetarianism). Among other points that Wilde could have found in this Note, was Salt's observation that Godwin was both an "ardent communist" and an "equally ardent individualist."23

A summary statement of some of Godwin's ideas would certainly sound like some of Wilde's, but the fact remains that Oscar Wilde does not feel or write in the least like William Godwin. With all respect to the very able critical edition by F. E. L. Priestley of the Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Morals and Happiness,24 one must demur at
the _obiter dictum_ in Priestley's Introduction that "The Soul of Man under Socialism" is "a thorough rehearsal of Godwin's whole system" (III, 113). One could as validly call "The Soul of Man under Socialism" a thorough rehearsal of Herbert Spencer's _Social Statics_. The essay is Wilde's own, not a thorough rehearsal of something else, but it is as far from William Godwin in tone as it is close to William Morris. Agreements of Wilde and Goodwin (e.g., Godwin: "... marriage is an affair of property... The abolition of marriage will be attended with no evils" [Salt ed., p. 103]; Wilde: "With the abolition of private property, marriage in its present form must disappear" [p. 292]) are canceled by many deviations (e.g., Godwin: "... everything that is usually understood by the term co-operation, is in some degree an evil" [p. 96]; Wilde: "Socialism, Communism, or whatever one chooses to call it, by converting private property into public wealth, and substituting co-operation for competition, will restore society to its proper condition of a thoroughly healthy organism..." [p. 276]). Oscar Wilde speaks in terms of the abolition of private property; William Godwin, of its equalization. Wilde says (as do Marxists) that the function of the socialist State will be to act as organizer and manager of labor, manufacture, and the distribution of necessities. Godwin argues "that a system of equal property requires no restrictions or superintendence whatever" (p. 94). Godwin relies greatly upon public opinion; Wilde speaks of it only to deride its impingement upon the autonomy of art. Wilde is eager for "the realisation of Utopias" (p. 299); Godwin devotes considerable energy and space to cautions against premature effort to achieve the millennium. Some of these discrepancies are, it must be granted, as much verbal as substantive. Nevertheless, the difference between Oscar Wilde's romantic individualism and the characteristically eighteenth-century rationalism of William Godwin was absolutely basic.

Apart from William Morris and _News from Nowhere_, Wilde's most evident informants on socialism would be the group he called (through Gilbert in the second dialogue of _The Critic as Artist_) "my friends the Fabianists." If he glanced through the _Fabian Essays in Socialism_, which had an unexpectedly heavy sale at the end of 1889 and thereafter, he would have seen that Individualism, as a convenient term for unsocialism, took a heavy drubbing from most of the essayists. One essay, midway of the volume, to which he might have been drawn by its subject and by the reputation of its author (even, possibly, by the fact that he too was a graduate of Oxford), was a discussion of the Moral Basis of Socialism, by Sydney (afterward Lord) Olivier. Bernard Shaw once commented that "barring Olivier, the Fabians were inveterate Philistines," and gave food for present thought by adding: "My efforts to induce them to publish... Oscar Wilde's _The Soul of Man under Socialism_, or even to do justice to
Morris's News from Nowhere, fell so flat that I doubt whether my colleagues were even conscious of them." Rather astoundingly, Olivier wrote:

Socialism appears as the offspring of Individualism, as the outcome of individualist struggle, and as the necessary condition for the approach to the Individualist ideal. The opposition commonly assumed in contrasting the two is an accident of the now habitual confusion between personality and personalty, between a man's life and the abundance of things that he has. Socialism is merely Individualism rationalised, organised, clothed, and in its right mind.

The style is just a little heavier than Wilde might have desired or devised, but that is a passage which he would have savored.

Robert Ross told Bernard Shaw, who told Frank Harris, who did his best to tell the world, a story about a connection of "The Soul of Man under Socialism" with the most articulate of Wilde's friends the Fabianists. The account, long taken at face value but of recent years somewhat discredited, was as follows:

At a meeting somewhere in Westminster at which I [Shaw] delivered an address on Socialism, . . . Oscar turned up and spoke. Robert Ross surprised me greatly by telling me, long after Oscar's death, that it was this address of mine that moved Oscar to try his hand at a similar feat by writing "The Soul of Man Under Socialism."

The modern reaction against the story is typified by this rather puzzled on dit:

It was written, someone has asserted, after Wilde had heard Bernard Shaw lecturing on Socialism. Shaw's rendering of the gospel according to Sidney Webb created such disgust in Wilde, the legend runs, that he went home and wrote The Soul of Man Under Socialism almost in a sitting.

—or by the following judgments:

The views expressed in Wilde's essay on Chuang Tzu clearly explode the legend that he wrote The Soul of Man Under Socialism from the inspiration of Bernard Shaw. . . . This essay represented Wilde's real social beliefs. Some of his biographers have tried to show that it was merely the result of a passing enthusiasm inspired by hearing Shaw's lecture on Socialism. But in fact, as Hesketh Pearson has pointed out, "his whole trend of thought was antagonistic to the Webb-Shavian deification of the state" . . .

Without quibbling over the word "deification," one must concede that Sidney Webb's views were utterly incompatible with Oscar Wilde's. Bernard Shaw, however, was neither single-minded nor rigid-minded. He has related how much he had to learn, and did learn, in the early years of the Fabian Society, and also how for a time it was by no means certain that the Fabians were not to put an anarchist disposition on. Unless Shaw's account of the lecture attended by Wilde was pure cozenage of Frank Harris, knitted out of the same yarn as the other story (in the same
memoir) about the visits of Convict C.3.3. to a dying William Morris, it is difficult to believe that the devoted Robert Ross was not rendering a true account of what Wilde had told him. It is just as hard to see why Wilde might have wanted to deceive Ross.

In the absence of corroborative evidence, any attempt to identify the lecture of Bernard Shaw that converted Oscar Wilde to socialist authorship—assuming that there was such a lecture—may be quixotic. Hundreds of Fabian lectures were being delivered, and Bernard Shaw was active in that department as in every other. Luckily, Edward Pease, who was paid Secretary (“chief officer of the Society,” he called himself) from March 28, 1890, through 1913, took occasion when he wrote The History of the Fabian Society to note a “somewhat brilliant series” of lectures given during the first seven months of 1890. The final lecture of the season, delivered on July 18 by Bernard Shaw, was remembered by the Secretary as “perhaps . . . the high-water mark in Fabian lectures.”

The minutes, which rarely stray beyond bare facts, record that “the paper was a long one,” nearer two hours than one, if my memory is accurate, and add: “The meeting was a very large one and the lecture was well received.” In fact the lecture was the bulk of the volume “The Quintessence of Ibsenism,” which some regard as the finest of Bernard Shaw’s works, and it is perhaps unnecessary to say that the effect on the packed audience was overwhelming. It was “briefly discussed” by a number of speakers, but they seemed as out of place as a debate after an oratorio.

Shaw’s own account of the lecture, incidentally making clear that the secretarial phrase “briefly discussed” should not be read literally, was given in the original Preface (dated June, 1891) of The Quintessence of Ibsenism:

In the spring of 1890, the Fabian Society, finding itself at a loss for a course of lectures to occupy its summer meetings, was compelled to make shift with a series of papers put forward under the general heading of Socialism in Contemporary Literature. . . . I consented to “take Ibsen” . . . After this I cannot claim that my paper on Ibsen, which was duly read at the St James’s Restaurant on the 18th July 1890, under the presidency of Mrs Annie Besant, and which was the first form of this little book, is an original work in the sense of being the result of a spontaneous internal impulse on my part. Having purposely couched it in the most provocative terms (of which traces may be found by the curious in its present state), I did not attach much importance to the somewhat lively debate that arose upon it . . .

This deliberately “provocative” lecture on Socialism in Contemporary Literature, with special reference to Ibsen, evidently created the intended stir. If Wilde was present, or if he had his ear close enough to the ground to heed the “overwhelming” rumble of a distant drum by talking with those who were, he must have been gratified to learn that Ibsen’s individualism, his “acceptance of the impulse towards greater freedom” as it is phrased
in the opening section of the *Quintessence*, is "the last step in the evolution of the conception of duty," and that "The evangelist of this last step must therefore preach the repudiation of duty." He would have had no need to turn to Godwin for an attack on the marriage system after Shaw's "realist" had proclaimed: "This thing is a failure for many of us. It is insufferable that two human beings, having entered into relations which only warm affection can render tolerable, should be forced to maintain them after such affections have ceased to exist, or in spite of the fact that they have never arisen." Although after the Wilde Western tour of 1882, and amid the current abuse of *Dorian Gray*, he hardly needed special inspiration for his disaffection with "Public Opinion dictating to the artist" ("The Soul of Man under Socialism," p. 315) or for his quip that "democracy means simply the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people" (p. 294), he could have drawn solace from Shaw's sampler of the public abuse that *Pioneers* are heir to, not to mention his approval of Dr. Stockmann's imprecations upon "the damned compact Liberal majority." All this, and socialism too!

When Ibsen heard that someone in England had been lecturing about him as a socialist, his first response was indignant denial of the imputation. Then, having taken thought, he decided to add a cubit to his stature by more or less accepting the place that had been assigned to him in the vanguard of socialism. Attempting to explain his explanation, he wrote:

> What I really said was that I was surprised that I, who had made it my chief life-task to depict human characters and human destinies, should without conscious or direct intention, have arrived in several matters at the same conclusions the social-democratic moral philosophers had arrived at by scientific processes.\(^3\)

How strange—and yet how typical of the uncanny influences worked by the "little band" of Fabians—if Bernard Shaw's provocative lecture on Ibsen, together with the lively debate upon it (both *in camera* and in the columns of the London *Daily Chronicle*), should have provoked the conversion to socialism, in at least a Pickwickian sense, of two leading apostles of individualism, Henrik Ibsen and Oscar Wilde.

**NOTES**

1. Frances Winwar, pseud., *Oscar Wilde and the Yellow 'Nineties* (New York, 1942 [\(^1\)940]), p. 177.

2. Anna, Comtesse de Brémont, *Oscar Wilde and His Mother; a Memoir* (London, 1911), pp. 14 ff., 100, 105, and passim. She quotes Wilde as telling her privately in a picturesque setting at Paris in August, 1900:

> I have found my soul. I was happy in prison. . . . I was happy there because I found my soul. What I wrote before I wrote without a soul, and what I have written under the guidance of my soul, the world shall one day read, it
shall be the message of my soul to the souls of men! (Page 187.)

Regrettably, the Countess does not state whether Oscar Wilde explicitly mentioned the then unheard-of letter to Lord Alfred Douglas, later known (after its first partial publication in 1905) as De Profundis, in connection with this confession that so patly documented her thesis.


7. All page citations of "The Soul of Man under Socialism" are to Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, ed. Robert Ross, Authorized Edition (New York, n.d.), Vol. IV. Since the force of italics out of context would be confusing, Wilde's italicized dicta (including the statement here annotated) are quoted in ordinary roman type.

8. Cf. Fabian Essays, ed. cit., p. 60: "... the steady increase of the government regulations of private enterprise, the growth of municipal administration, and the rapid shifting of the burden of taxation directly to rent and interest, mark in treble lines the statesman's unconscious abandonment of the old Individualism, and our irresistible glide into collectivist Socialism."

9. J. Bruce Glasier, William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement (London, 1921), p. 150; May Morris, Introduction to News from Nowhere, in The Collected Works of William Morris, XVI (London, 1912), xxviii. It must be observed that News from Nowhere and Looking Backward really do accord in some respects (Edward Bellamy was a man of good will, too); but that is another story.

10. The date usually given in references to News from Nowhere, 1891, being that of the first English book edition (it had previously been printed as a volume in America at the end of 1890) has to some extent worked against recognition of Morris's "Chapters from a Utopian Romance" as a direct inspiration of "The Soul of Man under Socialism" (first printed in The Fortnightly Review for February, 1891 [XLIX, N.S., 292-319]), which has sometimes been dated 1890. It is tempting to make more than the traffic probably would bear out of the famous passage in which Wilde asks: "Is this Utopian? A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at..." (p. 299).


12. Cf. News from Nowhere; or, An Epoch of Rest: Being Some Chapters from a Utopian Romance, Ch. XV: "All work which would be irksome to do by hand is done by immensely improved machinery; and in all work which it is a pleasure to do by hand machinery is done without."

13. Cf. News from Nowhere, Ch. XI: "The government itself was but the necessary result of the careless, aimless tyranny of the times; it was but the machinery of terror. Now tyranny has come to an end, and we no longer need such machinery; we could not possibly use it since we are free. Therefore in your sense of the word we have no government."
14. Ch. XII of *News from Nowhere* ("Concerning the Arrangement of Life") furnishes exact parallels; e.g., "Surely if we, in dread of an occasional rare homicide, an occasional rough blow, were solemnly and legally to commit homicide and violence, we could only be a society of ferocious cowards." Crime is unusual, and is regarded as pretty much "a mere spasmodic disease."

15. In 1895 his essay was reprinted as a volume in quarto under the title *The Soul of Man*, and apparently Wilde habitually referred to it by that significantly shortened name, as for example in *De Profundis*. Proposing the translation into French to be made by Jules Cantel, he called it "*Fessai paru dans le Fortnightly Review de février dernier sur L'Ame de l'Homme,* qui contient une partie de mon esthétique." See *Letters of Wilde*, pp. 475, 476, and 294-295.

16. Wilde's review, titled "A Chinese Sage," appeared in *The Speaker* (one of the predecessors of the present *New Statesman*), I (February 8, 1890), 144-146.


19. Prince Kropotkin (1842-1921), probably the original of the respectable *Anarchist* in Act III of Shaw's *Man and Superman*, was a Communist Anarchist, in distinction from the rival branch of Individualist Anarchism. (Syndicalism, a third branch, was a late development mainly of the 1890's and early twentieth century.) Whether or not anarchism in general is to be regarded as a department of socialism is what is known as a semantic (and therefore insoluble) problem. Certain it is that anarchists dogged the footsteps of Marxists through the congresses of the nineteenth-century Internationals, from which they were repeatedly ejected as intruders but to which they continually returned demanding a place in the name of the right of free speech. On the other hand, they proclaimed their separate identity, which was grounded on the basic philosophical premise that when freed from external restraint and compulsion humanity will achieve the humane life. Despite the popular caricature of a bewhiskered Red carrying a lighted bomb, anarchist theory—in common with socialist—neither prescribes nor precludes terrorism. Kropotkin exploded only paper grenades; his red beard, like that of Shaw, was an appendage of nature.


The difficulty of type-casting anarchism may be illustrated from the fact that the American *John Birch Society* in our time is an offshoot of anarchist philosophy, whereas Russian Nihilism of the nineteenth century was not.
20. The Anarchist Prince; a Biographical Study of Peter Kropotkin, with Ivan Avakumović (London, 1950); Anarchism, ed. cit.
22. Paradox of Wilde, pp. 153-154. The not so "kindly wit" may have been that of Shaw, sardonically spinning a yarn into a fool's cap for Frank Harris. (Morris died while Oscar Wilde was in carcer et vinculis at Reading Gaol.) Cf. Letters of Wilde, p. 290 fn. 3.
27. Bernard Shaw, "My Memories of Oscar Wilde," appended (with separate pagination) to Frank Harris, Oscar Wilde; His Life and Confessions (New York, 1918), II, 10-11.
29. Woodcock, Paradox of Wilde, pp. 152, 160; cf. Pearson, Oscar Wilde, p. 141. (Pearson always writes the compound even more pointedly as Webbshavian.)
31. Ed. cit., pp. 94-95; cf. also pp. 93, 232. One of the lecture titles, "The Antithesis between Individualism and Socialism Philosophically Considered," is intriguing. The speaker, however, was not Shaw but quite another Bernard, the distinguished Hegelian philosopher Bernard Bosanquet. Taking his immediate inspiration, evidently, from Albert Schäffle's The Impossibility of Social Democracy which he was editing in English translation (as he had already edited Schäffle's The Quintessence of Socialism, thereby furnishing Shaw with a title), Bosanquet seems to have discriminated "moral" socialism, as leading to a wholeness of society and personality, from mere "economic" socialism that was actually a disguised form of individualism in the unfavorable sense of a fragmentation of society. See Bernard Bosanquet and His Friends; Letters . . . , ed. J. H. Muirhead (London, 1935), pp. 74-75 fn. To their credit, the Fabians were hospitable to outside, even hostile, speakers.
32. The Quintessence of Ibsenism, Preface to the First Edition, in The Collected Works of Bernard Shaw, ed. cit., XIX (1931), 13-14. Shaw goes on to explain that he was led to revise the lecture for the press by "a frantic newspaper controversy"—arising from certain stage productions of Ibsen in England—"in which I could see no sign of any of the disputants having ever been forced by circumstances, as I had, to make up his mind definitely as to what Ibsen's plays meant, and to defend his view face to face with some of the keenest debaters in London."
33. At about this time Oscar Wilde was interested in the Ibsen movement, for in the spring of 1891 he twice attended performances of the Elizabeth Robins-Marion Lea production of Hedda Gabler. He thought extremely well of the printed Quintessence of Ibsenism. See Letters of Wilde, pp. 290-291, 293, 332; and Pearson, Oscar Wilde, p. 140, also idem, G.B.S.; a Postscript (New York, c.1950), p. 92.