Love and Fine Thinking: Ethics and The World State in The Writings of H.G. Wells.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is intended to be an examination of, and a reflection upon, the vision and values inherent in H.G. Wells' hope for a "World Federal State"; and the "Open Conspiracy" by which such a State might be achieved: with special attention directed to ethical issues.

Cette thèse est une inspection de, et une réflexion sur, la vision, et des valeurs compris dans l'espoir de H.G. Wells pour un "Etat Global et Fédéral"; et de la "conspiration ouverte" par laquelle cet état peut être accompli; avec une attention speciale aux questions d'éthiques.

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Thoughts on a Bookcase and a History Teacher

Among my earliest recollections are those of the three-shelved, mahogany-stained bookcase in the living room of my parents' home. It was not stocked so much plentifully as well. Of course, I didn't realize this until much later.

The volumes on those shelves were typical of the culturally English family of the middle years of this century: a smattering of novels, both classical and popular; an enormous English dictionary (Webster's); encyclopedia; a one volume collection of Shakespeare; and some Kipling.

But the books I remember best are lying beside me on my desk as I write. The red, gold, and blue dust jackets are rather tattered now, but there is no mistaking the boldness of their combined title: H.G. Wells', The Outline of History, "The Whole Story of Man".

I cannot remember a time when these books did not captivate my imagination. To my child's mind, The Outline of History seemed to represent the ultimate in both knowledge and wisdom. I imagined that when that great day came, and I was allowed to read them, I would find, nestled between their covers, the answers to the great mysteries of who we humans were, and where we came from. For more than half my life, The Outline of History was the third person of my literary trinity, after the Bible and my grandfather's ancient Complete Works of William Shakespeare.

I suspect that my parents unconsciously reinforced these views, formed at an age before I could read Wells, let alone understand his thought. Certainly, they must have sensed the importance of these books for me. When I left home to go to university, both H.G. and the "Immortal Bard" left with me. They have been among my most constant companions.

Of course, as I began to grope towards scholarship myself, I soon came to realize that H.G. did not have all the answers, and that his remarkable books did indeed provide only an outline. Nevertheless, my fondness for him, my respect for his work and his personal, intellectual and spiritual struggles, far from diminishing, continues to grow. I owe as much, perhaps, to H.G. Wells as to my parents and teachers for my passion for history and my love of learning.

Looking back, I realize that I am indebted to H.G. for countless hours spent in the sheer joy of reading. When I was in my early teens I discovered his science fiction and was thrilled, as were two generations before me, by the adventures of The Time Machine, The First Men in the Moon, and The War of the Worlds.

But mostly I am indebted to H.G. Wells for the gift of a lifetime conviction and commitment. Seeds, which H.G. sowed years before I was born, took root and bore fruit in the person of Mr. Arthur Beel, whom I was privileged to have as my teacher of world history in my last year of secondary school. It was he who introduced me, explicitly, to H.G.'s vision of a World Federal State.

It was sometime towards the end of that final year when he passed out copies of an extract from the postscript of The Outline of History, in which the idea of the World State was described.

I was overwhelmed by the vastness of the idea; by the power of the hope and confidence it exuded.

I remember talking with Mr. Beel after class that day. The exact words are lost; but the excitement remains, unabated, nearly two decades later. Another of H.G.'s seeds was sown. Mr. Beel had enlisted me in H.G.'s "Open Conspiracy", although it would be years before I recognized it as such, and found contextuality in the World Federalists of Canada.

What, then, could be more natural and pleasant than to translate an abiding passion into a Master's Thesis?

And so here it is: my effort as a fledgling scholar and as an "open conspirator". I offer this thesis as a gift to my sons, Andrew and Stuart; and with thanks to my parents who encouraged, indeed compelled me to learn; to Arthur Beel, who "opened up the text" for me; to my mentor, Professor J.A. Boorman, who has supported me in exploring this and many questions; and to my wife, Janice, without whose "being there", pen might never have touched paper.

And, of course, to Herbert George Wells, who, through the gift of his books and the brightness of his ideas, has graced me with the pleasure of his company for more years than I can remember.

"The Shape of Things to Come"..in this Paper.

It is rare to find anyone today who thinks of H.G. Wells as other than an author of science fiction. Certainly, his work in the genre, even more than that of Jules Verne, is considered seminal; and it is not without justification, as I shall later demonstrate, that he is remembered as the father of modern science fiction.

It is rarer still to find a Christian scholar prepared to consider Wells seriously. He is generally dismissed as a champion of agnostic, even atheistic, humanism; and his writing ignored or belittled, as in C.S. Lewis' scathing satire of Wells and Olaf Stapledon in the first two volumes of his "space trilogy". Furthermore, Wells' bitter condemnation of the church, coupled with his hyperactive sexuality, have gone far in discrediting him in the eyes of many Christian thinkers.

But Wells was not only a writer of brilliant science fiction, with many of his books remaining literarily satisfying to the present. His "scientific romances", as he called them, comprise only a small part of the body of his work, and were mainly produced early in his career. In all, he wrote over two hundred books and stories, and countless essays and articles; he remained to the end of his long and productive life in constant demand as a lecturer. He published novels contemporary to his own period; books on social thought and philosophy; histories, of which the best known is the afore-mentioned Outline of History; and books designed to be nothing less than blueprints for a new world order, notably, The Open Conspiracy.

Nor can Wells be dismissed simply as an amoral antitheist. Two of his books in particular stand out in contradiction to such facile characterization: God the Invisible King, and The Soul of a Bishop.

The problem for the scholar working from a religious, and particularly Christian, perspective, is to banish preconceptions, in so far as possible; and to approach Wells with a mind open to fresh insights from this remarkably multifaceted human being.

In doing so, one discovers that through all H.G.'s work there is a moral obsession with the quest for a better world: a world less "muddle-headed" and suicidal than that which Wells experienced during a lifetime which spanned the tumultuous years from the publication of Darwin's Origin of the Species, to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, which may have heralded the demise of that same species.

This obsession crystallized into the vision of a world federal state, committed to the peace and progress of humanity, and utilizing for good the possibilities of the modern scientific era. This became the great driving force in H.G.'s life, uppermost in his writing, his speaking, and his hopes. The apparent impossibility of realizing such a vision became his great despair, for he realized clearly, indeed presciently, that if humankind did not learn to control science, science would destroy humankind. He was far from being a naive progressivist, trusting in a benevolent technological evolution. His dystopian nightmares are as convincing as his utopian dreams, if not more so.

For H.G., the great task of scientific humanity was to create a world state, capable of overcoming humankind's nationalistic insanity: an insanity armed with a technological arsenal too awesome to be grasped and too terrible to be countenanced. The problem is clearly paramount today, reflected in such books as Schell's The Fate of the Earth, the Misches' Toward a Human World Order, Dyson's Weapons and Hope, and most recently, in Gwynne Dyer's remarkable National Film Board of Canada series, "War". The late Rabbi Harry Joshua Stern, Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Emmanuel in Montreal, stated the problem forcefully and succinctly in the title essay of his collection, One World or No World.

But if the risks facing a disparate and dangerous humanity seem overwhelming, so does the possibility of realizing H.G.'s vision of a world federal state. We remember the failure of "Wilson's" League of Nations, and fear the same fate for our contemporary United Nations. But Gwynne Dyer offers an interesting perspective in an open letter on behalf of the World Federalists of Canada, dated September, 1984:

> "The world we live in has become a very dangerous place, largely because nations have put so few limits on what is permissible in the pursuit of power, privilege and self-interest. In the most serious matters, the only law prevailing among nations is the law of the jungle...The world has been run this way for so long, we hardly question whether there might not be a better way. And yet we know that in the nuclear age, going on with the old game is likely sooner or later to kill us, and our children, and our civilization, and betray all the efforts of everyone down through time who thought they were contributing to a human enterprise that was worth sacrificing for.

> Nuclear weapons have given us an ultimatum: either we abolish war, or war will abolish us. But if we are going to rid the world of war, then that means changing the way the world works...(and) changing the way we think about the world and about what's permissible. If we are to rule out the use of force in international relations, then nations must agree to establish the basic institutions of world law. We will not finally be safe... until there is a higher legal authority which nations can trust to protect them from each other...it seems like a tall job, world government. But as Sherlock Holmes would say, when you have eliminated all the impossible solutions to a problem, what you're left with, however implausible, is the solution. However implausible, our chances of achieving a minimally functional world government sufficient to prevent war are certainly much better than our surviving with the war system as it is."

H.G. would say "Amen" - or, more likely, "Bravo!"

The conscientious ethicist might then ask: "Survival indeed, but at what cost?" With respect to Wells' vision in particular, and from a Christian perspective, is there in his writing a consistent ethical structure undergirding his idea of the establishment of a world federal state? Is this structure compatible with the implicit and explicit ethical values of the Hebrew prophets, and their great successor, the Jesus of the synoptic gospels, of the parables of the Kingdom?

Well asked. And, as a thesis must be an answer to a question, this thesis is offered as a response to the question: "Is Wells' vision of a World State, and its achieving, compatible with a Christian world view?" I propose to approach my work by dividing the thesis into two sections. It is my intent in the former to introduce Mr. Wells to those, particularly in the rarified world of theological reflection, who may never have met him;

and to re-introduce him to those who have forgotten his impact on the world, or who may have encountered him only while reading his youthful adventure stories and early science fiction.

After all, a self-proclaimed world-builder, like H.G., may seem, other than to his friends and admirers - personal or literary - at best pretentious, at worst megalomanic. This may be especially true when he and his work are viewed two generations and more distant from the social, emotional and intellectual climate of his day. But I believe that the size of H.G.'s intellect easily matched the size of his vision. And furthermore, that the impact of that vision was profound and lasting: making of its owner a figure truly deserving of the description "neo-Renaissance".

In this first section also, I intend to place H.G. in the context of his time and culture: turn of the century Victorian and post-Victorian England. There is nothing like an approaching millenium to inspire millenial visions!

In the latter section I propose:

1. to articulate H.G.'s vision of a world state, and the 'open conspiracy' by which it is to be achieved;
2. to answer the central question of this thesis as expressed on the preceding page; and
3. to exhibit that the open conspiracy is neither a philosophical and literary relic, nor a naive dream, but rather a vital and relevant factor in the struggle for world government.

To this end I shall attempt to show how H.G.'s conflicting utopian and dystopian visions in his early work led him to begin his struggle for the world state. The two subsequent chapters will be the heart of the descriptive portion of this section: "The World State", and "The Open Conspiracy".

In the analytical discussion to follow, I shall examine the compatibility of H.G.'s vision with Christian thought through the formula of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral: that is, by approaching the ideas through the four perspectives of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Last, in an epilogue entitled 'Science and Spirituality', I intend to offer evidence of the existence of the open conspiracy, and for the possibility of its eventual triumph.

In researching this thesis, the greatest problem I have faced has been the vast amount of material available. I have already mentioned the enormous body of H.G.'s own work, and a recent renewal of interest in Wells has resulted in several excellent biographies over the last few years. In choosing primary source material, I have been somewhat arbitrary, selecting from the works which seemed to me to best illustrate my points - and which are, to be frank, personal favourites.

Let me say, however, that the idea of the world state and that of the open conspiracy form so central a theme for H.G., that virtually any of his books could be cited. As Lovat Dickson, H.G.'s Canadian biographer, and formerly of Macmillan, one of Wells' primary publishers wrote in

H.G. Wells: His Turbulent Life and Times:

> "... from 1901 on ... the passion that came to consume his life, and, of course, his art (was) - the Utopian ideal of the World State." 1.

There should be a word, or rather several, concerning the title of this thesis: "Love and Fine Thinking: Ethics and the World State in the Writings of H.G. Wells."

The phrase beyond the colon in the title must by now be self-explanatory. But, the reader may ask, whence does the phrase: "Love and Fine Thinking" derive? The answer is: from H.G. himself.

In 1911 H.G. published The New Machiavelli: not without a certain amount of difficulty and an even greater amount of scandal. This novel, very much ahead of its day, not only in its intellectual vision but in its characterization is, as so many of H.G.'s works, auto-biographical. His own life was the palette from which he took the colour which made his books so regularly provocative.

The New Machiavelli is the story of Remington, an aspiring young British Parliamentarian. It chronicles his life and career from childhood to early middle age, when scandal, mainly over his sex life, forces him into a self-imposed exile in Italy. Here Remington reflects on his downfall and on his vision for the future - a dethroned philosopher - king.

The story cuts deep into Wells' self-image just before the war of 1914-1918. Like Remington, Wells found himself the centre of a sexual scandal, involving Amber Reeves, the very young daughter of reform-minded colleagues.

Furthermore, H.G. was still smarting over his defeat in his great falling out with the Fabian Society and its leading lights, The Webbs.

In short, Remington's reflections are but the transliterations of H.G.'s reflections. In a dramatic monologue, well into the second half of the book, we learn from Remington the essence of his hope for the future - and H.G.'s:

> "My ideas about statecraft have passed through three main phases to the final convictions that remain. There was the first immediacy of my dream of ports and harbours and cities, railways, roads and administered territories ... Slowly that had passed into a more elaborate legislative constructiveness... I arrived at last at the clear realization that ... political life didn't in some way comprehend more than itself... I had been trying to deal all along with human progress as something immediate in life ... In the development of intellectual modesty lies the growth of statesmanship. It has been the chronic mistake of statecraft and all organizing spirits to attempt immediately to scheme and arrange and achieve. Priests, schools of thought, political schemers, leaders of men, have always slipped into the error of assuming that they can think out the whole - or at any rate completely think out definite parts - of the purpose and future of man, clearly and finally... In the passion of their good intentions they have not hesitated to conceal fact, suppress thought, crush disturbing initiations and apparently detrimental desires... Directly... this idea of an emancipation from immediacy is grasped...and the collective mind in the race is understood... The statesman... no longer wants to 'fix up' .., human affairs, but to devote his forces to the development of that needed intellectual life, without which all his shallow attempts at fixing up are futile. He ceases to build on the sands, and sets himself to gather foundations ... I began in my teens by wanting to plan and build cities and harbours for mankind; I ended in the middle

> thirties by desiring only to serve and increase a general process fearless, critical, real-spirited, that would in its own time give cities, harbours, air, happiness, everything at a scale and quality and on a light altogether beyond the match-striking imaginations of a contemporary mind. I wanted freedom of speech and suggestion, vigour of thought, and the cultivation of that impulse of veracity that lurks more or less discouraged in every man. With that I felt there must go an emotion. I hit upon a phrase that became at last something of a refrain in my speech and writings, to convey the spirit that I felt was at the heart of real human progress - love and fine thinking ... The more of love and fine thinking the better for men, I said; the less, the worse."[2]

Although I have not found a reference to this phrase in his other books, I submit that "love and fine thinking" is as good a summary of H.G.'s vision and, indeed, his credo as one might find. Whether such a vision, in detail, is compatible with Christian thought is the question for this thesis to consider.

Section I: Mr. Wells and the World.

Chapter One: The Pervasiveness of a "Very Ordinary Brain."

In 1932, H.G. Wells set out to write an autobiography. It was not meant as a memoir. It was not designed to be the capstone of a rich, fruitful, and fulfilled life. It was begun for predictably personal reasons:

> "I need freedom of mind. I want peace for my work. I am distressed by my immediate circumstances. My thoughts and work are encumbered by claims and vexations and I cannot see any hope of release from them... before I am overtaken entirely by infirmity or death... I find it difficult to assemble my forces to confront this problem which paralyzes the proper use of myself. I am putting even the pretense of other work aside in an attempt to deal with this situation. I am writing a report about it - to myself." 1.

He called this report to himself an Experiment in Autobiography, and subtitled it "Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain."[2]

Concerning this very ordinary brain he writes:

> "The brain upon which my experiences have been written is not a particularly good one. If there were brain shows as there are cat and dog shows, I doubt if it would get even a third class prize... It was a precocious brain... But compared with the run of brains I meet nowadays, it seems a poorish instrument. I won't even compare it with such cerebra as the full and subtly simple brain of Einstein; the wary, quick and flexible one of Lloyd George; the abundant and rich grey matter of G.B. Shaw: Julian Huxley's store of knowledge; or my own eldest son's fine and precise instrument." [3]

Considering that these words were written when H.G. was still at the peak of his career, enjoying:

> "the secure status of a great visionary, a man who could talk to dictators, prime ministers and presidents as an equal, and whose vision of the future included the bombing of London and the ultimate perversion of science..." 4.

one might wonder whether a certain level of false modesty was not being demonstrated. In fact, I believe Wells to have been quite candid in his remarks. In many ways he took his fame quite lightly. For him, the great issue of the day was the future of humankind. The role he sought, and maintained until the end of his life was that of:

> "...a self-appointed prophet, a scrappy, self-assertive, pudgy little Londoner who claimed no less a mission than that of interpreting the human race to itself." 5.

Outside that role, it would seem that Wells would really have been happy living a reasonably normal life, keeping company with the imaginative powers of his "ordinary brain."

C.P. (Lord) Snow, in his Variety of Men, provides thumbnail sketches of nine individuals who "have affected the shape and spirit of the twentieth century." [6] Wells is one of them. Of him, and his "ordinary brain," Snow writes:

> "He was not born wise, but he had learned much wisdom, He was touchy and self-centred: self-centred rather than vain and self-assertive. If the universe behaved according to his pattern, he was ready and willing to be forgotten. More than any writer, he was careless about the personal memorial he might leave... In many ways he was curiously impersonal. He could make fun of himself as the Little Man... He could be tetchy... He could discuss predicaments which were pressing upon him... Yet it takes an impersonal nature to be so indifferent to its audience." 7.

Despite Wells' disclaimers, and their apparent confirmation by Snow, I am inclined to the view that Wells' brain was something more than ordinary. But perhaps there was something other than, or perhaps more than, sheer intellectual ability which allowed him:

> "For nearly five decades... to interpret the idea of science to a larger public, to range beyond the work of the scientists to the shape and outline of the future itself." 8.

Antonina Vallentin, in H.G. Wells, Prophet of Our Day, describes him as:

> "...so infinitely sensitive to the changes taking place around us, so far ahead of our time and yet so closely, so intensely present in it, that he sums up its whole content. He is the history of our day. To study his personality from every side and to delve again into his writings is to bring more than half a century back to life without seeking further." 9.

But, she continues, the quality of his life and work exceeds that of a sensitive respondant, for:

> "...he was something more than a particularly clear cross-section of humanity, more than a mere summary of trends of thoughts. He was the leaven of our day. The lesson that emerges from his achievements and his failures can be applied to every instance of creative impatience and to all the aspirations of men of good will." 10.

Undergirding this sensitivity, and perhaps the key reagent in the leaven that was his person, was a liberal portion of courage.

Commenting on Wells' Experiment in Autobiography, Lord Snow writes:

> "As a rule, novelists should not write autobiography, but his is a most unusual one. Reading it, one feels astonished at the toughness of the human spirit. This wasn't a life many of us would come through intact." 11.

But come through it he did. And that "ordinary brain" not only touched upon, but substantially contributed to, more areas of human endeavour than most of us are even familiar with. The eminent American science fiction author and teacher, Jack Williamson, wrote in his foreward to the H.G. Wells Scrapbook:

> "In his own daring way he was our first world citizen... Certainly he was one of the giant minds of modern times, his true greatness seldom recognized... He is sometimes slighted just because he is like the famous elephant described in six different ways by the six blind men. He lived through so many periods, showed so many dazzling facets, left such a vast and varied volume of work, that few people have ever tried to see the whole of him... The literary giant, the first futurologist, the world historian and educator, the international statesman, the social philosopher." 12.

In the balance of this chapter, I shall make use, more or less of Mr. Williamson's categories in examing the contribution of H.G. and his "ordinary brain" to twentieth century western civilization.

1. H.G. as Literary Giant: Science Fiction

More than four years have passed since I decided to write a thesis on H.G.'s vision of a World Federal State. It has been the rare exception when, on mentioning my subject to colleagues and acquaintances, the response to my revelation has been other than, "Oh. Really? Didn't he write science fiction?"

He certainly did; and in such an effective and lasting style that it seems almost superfluous to remark upon it in a general introduction to his remarkable career. Nevertheless, I think it important to note the profound impact Wells made on the genre; not only for the sake of the impact itself, overwhelming as it was, but in the realization that much of Wells' most effective writing concerning his future vision is to be found, reasonably enough, in his "future" stories.

Jack Williamson writes:

> "H.G. Wells strides the science fiction genre like a colossus in much the same way that his towering Martians bestrode the English countryside in his famous novel The War of the Worlds... although, as the idea of science fiction did not exist at the time he produced his greatest works in the genre, he was not to be seen as one of the founding fathers of a new genre until a quarter of a century later." 13.

In The Science Fiction of H.G. Wells, Frank McConnell confirms Wells' place in the development of this relatively new literary form even more forcefully:

> "H.G. Wells has been called the father, the one authentic genius, even the Shakespeare of science fiction... even today, when science fiction is attracting more first rate writers than ever and is taken more seriously by "official" literary critics than ever, the burden of proof is still on the person who wants to question such judgements, not the one who confirms them." 14.

This sense of Wells' greatness in the science fiction field is not simply a generalized aura, but rather is based on a wide variety of specific ideas he contributed to "S.F.". Donald A. Wollheim has been for decades one of the most successful editors, anthologists, and critics of science fiction. He notes that:

> "Going over the short stories of H.G. Wells strictly for remarkable inventions we encounter first after first in the realm of S.F. basics: Rivalry of insect "civilization" with humanity, war tanks, man-eating plants, diamond making collision with another star, super-acceleration of life, the shop of marvels, the man of psi talents, worship of science, germ warfare, travel beyond this dimension, and on and on... If one adds the novels we find (as well as invasion from space and the biological restructuring of beasts into humanoids) aerial warfare, the bedlam of the over-crowded future city, size-changing foods, and atomic power." 15.

It bears remembering that all these firsts were produced during a very brief period of Wells' career, and that: "...by 1910 Wells had... finished with his science fiction writing." 16.

But his greatest strength lay not so much in the wealth of specific inventions for stories which he bequeathed to his successors, but in something less tangible, yet far more potent: an attitude of mind.

Responding to comparisons of himself with that other towering figure of early science fiction, Jules Verne, Wells wrote:

> "There's a quality in the worst of my so-called pseudo-scientific (imbecile adjective) stuff which differentiates me from Jules Verne... just as Swift is differentiated from fantasia... There is something other than either story writing or artistic merit which has emerged through the series of my books. Something which one might regard as a new system of ideas - 'Thought'." 17.

David Kyle in A Pictorial History of Science Fiction, supports Wells completely:

> "If one goes through Wells' work to ferret out the original ideas and concepts it becomes obvious that Wells possessed thought." 18.

It was this attribute of 'thought' in H.G.'s writing that kept him in a class apart from other early science fiction writers. It was his obsession with 'thought' that led him from the relatively parochial sphere of science fiction, into the great task of "world-visioning" which was to occupy him right up to his death at the age of eighty.

It was 'thought' which allowed Wells to soar, in the words of Wollheim:

> "... in the categories of future prediction and social satire... Therein lay the talent that put H.G. Wells into his permanent position in the world of great literature." 19.

2. H.G. as Literary Giant: English Literature

It may seem fair to some to argue that the permanent place in world literature that Wollheim claims for Wells, is a position owed only to his science fiction. Such an argument might be supported by the observation, easily made, that the great majority of his reprinted books are from the canon of his science fiction.

But then, I think it would also be fair to argue further that such a major contribution should hardly be taken lightly. After all, science fiction, despite the claims of its critics, has certainly developed into literary art.

Frank McConnell points out:

> "... the only great divide there is between science fiction and 'serious' literature is in the heads of the people who think it is there. A genre that can boast of writers like Jules Verne, Olaf Stapledon, John Wyndham, Robert Heinlein, Arthur C. Clarke, Isaac Asimov, Walter Miller, and Ursula K. Leguin need not fear comparison with any but the most austere and, therefore, irrelevant standards of greatness. (No science fiction writer has produced a work to rival Joyce's Ulysses: no one else has, either.)" 20.

Nevertheless, I submit that a defense of science fiction as a credible branch of the greater literary tree need not be a priori in claiming for Wells an impact in the larger arena of "mainline" literature.

For Wells' ability with his pen in the field of fiction was not restricted to his "scientific romances" as he called them.

In novels like Kipps, The Adventures of Mr. Polly, The New Machiavelli, Mr. Britling Sees It Through, Meanwhile, and "on and on", Wells "ordinary brain" provides a distinctive insight into his world:

> "For Wells there was no real distinction between the life of the mind and the life of the body, between theory and behaviour. This is one way of understanding his description of himself as "a very ordinary brain". For all his energy and brilliance, he was an ordinary brain because he never stopped believing in the importance, the tragedy, and the salvageability of ordinary life... His fondest hope for the new age of science he forecast was that it would dignify and enrich the ordinary life of the middle classes. And in his fiction... he gives us as convincing and valuable a representation of that middle class as we have." 21.

But there was a long period of years in which these insights and contributions seemed destined to be lost. McConnell notes that:

> "It used to be fashionable to speak of him, if at all, as an historical curio of English letters..." 22.

McConnell suggests that this wasteland period for Wells' work and his memory can be understood, at least in part, in the contrast between Wells and Henry James.

Wells and James had developed a strong friendship, initiated largely by James, during the early stages of Wells' career. But the two authors were entirely disparate types:

> "for James, 'art' was a sacred term; the highest and most exacting reach of human possibility. For Wells, it was always, even from the beginning, a means to an end - to making a living, supporting a family, changing mens' minds, or saving the human race: a noble means, to be sure, perhaps an indispensable one, but still a means." 23.

McConnell continues with a suggestion that the period of relegating H.G. to the back shelves of English literature as a 'curio' may be nearing an end:

"It used to be thought in conventional literary wisdom that Wells lost the quarrel with James - at least before the bar of history. Lately, however, the final return seems less clear... he did write fine things, even in the longest and dreariest of his latest books... if his books suffered as 'art', they also kept alive an important tradition: the tradition of fiction as a public forum, as a clearing house of ideas." 24.

I submit that this is no mean feat!

3. H.G. as Historiographer

In late 1982, John Barker, a professor of history at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario, published a series of biographical essays under the rather presumptious title, The Superhistorians: Makers of Our Past.[25] Barker chose thirteen individuals to be accorded the honorific "super-historian": Herodotus, Thucydides, Augustine, Petrarch, Machiavelli, Voltaire, Scott, Ranke, Marx, Nietsche, Du Bois, Toynbee, and Herbert George Wells.

In the preface to his brief lives of these men, Barker describes the essence of their importance:

> "Historical study, in its most creative form, has always been a vigorous enquiry of a Socratic kind in which the historian draws upon contemporary experience to ask imaginative questions about the past... to eliminate old comfortable questions and answers, and (to pursue) fresh, positive conclusions; and, to be effective, his inquiry demands critics as well as an audience. But some historians stand apart from the rest. They are men who, when old versions of the past ceased to fit new realities, put fundamental questions to the human record and developed new interpretations... Beginning with the question, 'Who am I?', each eventually shifted his enquiry into an investigation of the past, answering a leading historical problem other historians had been unable or unwilling to solve. Each in turn enlarged society's sense of itself, giving it a different perspective. To the extent that each changed beliefs about the past, he became a 'maker' of that past... These figures understood that history's primary subject is human beings, as they grow and as they change. Realizing what we are now, and what we hope to become, each decisively if sometimes controversially interpreted the past, as he speculated on human nature and destiny." 26.

In including H.G. among his distinguished choices, Barker acknowledges that Wells' great contribution to the historical endeavour lies as much, if not more, in 'how' he wrote as in 'what' he wrote. H.G. "saw history as 'more and more a race between education and catastrophe.'" 27. In his Outline of History, H.G.'s best known and most overt struggle to deal with the kinds of questions Barker attributes to his ambitious canon, Wells sought to give the edge in the race to education. He chose for his arena, not the pain of the past, but the promise of the future:

> "For historians to write directly of the future seems at first a plain contradiction in terms... But, whenever the future seems to have been reliably sighted, it changes the arrangement of the historical picture and redistributes light, shade, scale. It becomes the new means of elucidating the past and may make that past more genuine to us in the present; for by ancient tradition which affects history writing, too, the storyteller's leap into the fantastic must start from a ground of the most solid reality." 28.

As H.G. cast about in the future with his first great successes, The Time Machine, The Island of Dr. Moreau, The War of the Worlds and The First Men in the Moon, he found his speculative net drawing in visions which were frightening to say the least.

In The Time Machine, we are given a vision of social and biological evolution taken to the extreme: a world in which class division has ultimately led to the degenrate idle rich literally providing food for the predatory "Morlocks." In The First Men in the Moon, he describes a society with an utterly cerebral ruler, and a degenerate population bred to perform certain specialized tasks - a society where thought was controlled, the

past forgotten, and all was subordinated to technology and communal needs."[29] The War of the Worlds and The Island of Dr. Moreau are no more comforting.

By 1900 H.G. was growing more and more alarmed by the potential for disaster inherent in a modern technological society. He translated his alarm, that same year, into Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress Upon Human Life and Thought. The work is usually referred to simply as "Anticipations."

Barker notes that in Anticipations Wells:

> "had reviewed the pretensions of democracy and stated the widely unspoken thought of the late Victorians: 'this will not work.'" [30]

And then Barker adds the insight which reveals H.G.'s transformation into a 'superhistorian':

> "'And so', (H.G.) went on, 'through circumstances and simplicity rather than through any exceptional intelligence, I arrived ahead of everyone at the naked essential question, which everyone about me was putting off for tomorrow, what, then, will work?'" [31]

The 'what' became Wells' 'Open Conspiracy', his life work and the focus of this thesis. The keynote to the open conspiracy was to be education, especially "salvation by history." [32]

Barker describes its impact on the reading public:

> "... with a copy in almost every English-speaking home (often the

> only historical work) and translations far and wide, it gave him immediate respectability. Here was the vast and scattered past of all mankind, marvelously caught in a single glance; here was history as science, clear, useful and easily accessible; here was hope rising from the ashes (of World War I) with a blueprint for the future, and here, emphatically was a story gripping and memorable, without footnotes, written on a standard typewriter." [34.]

Naturally, there was criticism. The academic community must needs have found the Outline shallow, superficial and stylistically oversimplistic. I am reminded in our own day of the work of Dr. Carl Sagan of Cornell in his attempts to demystify science in general, and astronomy in particular, and of the criticism he has received from the academic community.

But, as Barker points out, the Outline's great advantages, described above,

> "... and Wells' special talents ensured the Outline's astonishing reception, which swamped all criticism of detail or interpretation, and charges of plagiarism; and it is doubtful if any history book, before or since has had such a triumphal impact." [35.]

Nor was the entire historical establishment critical, Arnold Toynbee called it a "magnificent intellectual achievement." [36.]

Criticism was inevitable, however, for H.G.'s method was unorthodox, to say the least:

> "I set to work... with the encyclopoedia Britannica at my elbow, to get the general shape of history." [37.]

But then, H.G.'s intentions were unorthodox; indeed, revolutionary. In the introduction to the Outline of History, Wells described the dilemma of intelligent, well-educated people in virtually every nation and culture on the planet:

> "Men and women tried to recall the narrow history teaching of their brief schooldays and found an uninspiring and partially forgotten list of national kings or presidents. They found... an endless wilderness of books. They had been taught history in nationalistic blinders, ignoring every country but their own..." 38.

He despaired of the academic community ever responding to this glaring need:

> "Historians are for the most part very scholarly men these days... giving us... great and noble compilations, of extreme value to students. But these magnificent performances are, for the every-day purposes of the ordinary citizen travelling about in life, as impressive and as useful for handy guidance as a many-volumed encyclopoedia." 39.

His task and goal was to fill this need for a useable and comprehensive history:

> "... to teach our children the history of man as man, with all his early struggles and triumphs... to teach the peoples of the world what is the truth... that they are all engaged in a common work, that they have sprung from the same common origins, and are all contributing some special service to the general end." 40.

Mere popularity should not justify placing Wells among the truly significant historians of the west. Barker's final analysis of Well's work gives us the measure of H.G. as historiographer; the real impact of his method of studying history laterally rather than compartmentally, as was, and still is, the norm:

"Political growth, cultural development, and social conflict remain as some substantial themes for reducing the whole of history to comprehension; but the closing illustration in most surveys of history today is seldom the usual political map of the world on Mercator's projection. We now find instead Wells' picture of the little speck of cosmic dust on which all mankind is travelling, the earth as photographed from space "a morning star of hope"... Wells' chosen viewpoint on the human epic has already in large measure become ours, and it seems almost certain to be our childrens'; for that reason alone, he is a very important historian for the late twentieth century." 41.

But there is more:

"Wells' Outline has been another case of history making history... his survey enthusiastically taught the world once more that history was progress, and thereby it stimulated further movement onward. Its designation of man as part of nature prepared us for the new historical interests of an age conscious of man's place in the environment. And, finally, without Wells' imaginative vision of the human story extending into time and space, marked by unprecedented ventures, late twentieth century man might not have been quite as audacious, and his spirit would have been far poorer." 42.

4. H.G. as Educator

At first glance it may seem redundant to devote several hundred words to H.G. as educator, having but completed a lengthy comment on his work as a historiographer and recognizing the significant educational role of works such as The Outline. Once again, I ask the reader to bear with me. After all, one may be overtly an historian, and only covertly an educator. Such was not the case with H.G. As already noted, he had come to believe his true vocation to be that of tutor to the public mind.

More: for H.G., education was truly salvific. Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie capture this ethos in H.G. Wells: A Biography, in their chapter entitled, "Salvation by History":

> "The idea of 'salvation by history' had already been put forward explicitly in the last novel H.G. had written during the war - the modern dress version of the Book of Job which he called The Undying Fire and published in 1919. It was a forceful 'dialogue' book in which Job's modern counterpart, Jacob Huss, triumphs over his tribulations to discover that 'the substance of all real education is to teach men and women the Battle of God... to show them how man has risen through the ages from amidst the beasts'... the sole hope for the survival of the species lies in knowledge, and the means to that knowledge is education." [44.]

When we speak of H.G. as an educator, and when particularly we see this emphasis of the salvific quality of education, we must realize that this is a case in which the thinker and the thought are virtually indistinguishable. The specific is extended to the general. H.G. saw education as salvific for the world, because it had proved salvific for him.

H.G.'s similarity to Dickens lay not only in a certain commonality of style as witnessed in long and somewhat tedious novels, thickly overlayed with a social moral. His youth and young adulthood were dominated by a similar struggle to that of Dickens. Dickens' years in the 'boot-blacking' factory were paralleled by H.G.'s painful and continuously rebellious sojourns in the dry goods and chemist's (pharmacist's) trades. He was a hopeless failure in the world of merchandizing, and was literally frantic to escape from what was, to him, worse than penal servitude, out to a bright, brave new world of ideas. His efforts have been well-chronicled, both by H.G. himself, and by his biographers, and I shall not elaborate further on the specifics. But the seriousness of his plight, and how he came to see education as universally salvific, is cogently analyzed by Anthony West, H.G.'s son by Rebecca West, in his biography of his father, H.G. Wells: Aspects of a Life:

> "My father's behaviour at this point seems overwrought to anyone who has been brought up in the modern world, but I feel that it is unjust to talk of him, as some biographers have done, as childishly trying to get his own way by resorting to temper tantrums. It wasn't just a matter of wanting to have his own way, it was the much graver one of not wanting to be thrown aside and wasted. The episode lies on the far side of almost a century of social change, most of it for the better. However liberal that vanished order might have been in rewarding the successful, it had no pity on those who fell behind in the struggle to get on. My father was in real danger of being trapped in the worst of all its social niches, that of the white collar worker who had to keep up the appearances of gentility while earning a day-labourer's wage. A shop assistant had no security of employment and no prospect of a pension or any form of retirement benefit. He lived in dread of being given his notice at the end of the week. He knew that he would be as good as finished before he'd begun if he gave way and accepted the role that had been assigned to him. My

> father's physique has to be taken into account... a skinny youth well below the average height... although he had very great energy, he had no strengths, no reserves... he was a misfit so far as the drapery trade was concerned, and... his physical traits were going to count against him more rather than less as time went on. He was the sort that employers were never going to like the look of... He would have seen floor walkers eyeing him with distaste, and he would have seen older versions of himself, weedy and shambling, cringing when they were exposed to the same unappreciative glares. These partly worn-out men, penny-pinching to build up some reserve against the evil day when they failed to please in their last crib, were what his brothers were becoming, were what he would surely become..." [45].

Education at its most basic level saved H.G. from such a fate. The opportunity to tutor provided him with the income necessary to remain a student. But salvation in education lay not in the simple accumulation of information, but in a world view which would gather that information into a transformational force with which to be reckoned. He found such a world view in the library at Uppark, where his mother had been given the post of head housekeeper. Anthony West writes:

> "...at Uppark... he discovered what there was in old Sir Harry's library. He fell under the spell of France's eighteenth century leap forward, the intellectual adventure of the enlightenment and its most characteristic product, Diderot's splendid idea for the great Encyclopoedia, which was to have been a grand assize of human knowledge... there was a wonderful practicality about the determination of the French savants to establish how much they knew about their world before they set out to remake it. Their belief had been that once men were given a clear picture of the extent of their capabilities, and of the possibilities open to them, they would become united in amity by a common desire to make the most of their opportunities for improving the qualities of their lives. In the vast educational enterprise of the Encyclopoedists my father recognized the concept of a true revolution." [46].

West goes on to note that:

"My father's love affair with this same educational revolution, that began so thrillingly for him as he was recovering from illness and disillusionment at Uppark in the winter of 1887-88, was to last for the rest of his life." 47.

It was in these days of his own enlightenment that the idea of the Open Conspiracy was really born. It was to be an extension of the work of the Encyclopoedists on a larger and grander scale, of which the Outline of History was but an outrider.

For H.G., education and revolution had become indistinguishable. He sought nothing less than a new world, and he intended to become the great educator who would lay the foundations for that new world in a doctrine of salvation by history - salvation, in fact, by education.

In the Outline of History alone, we can see that he achieved some measure of success.

5. H.G. as Utopian

Ian Todd and Michael Wheeler introduce their lavishly illustrated scrapbook of utopian visions and models with a dictionary definition of their subject:

> "Utopia: an ideal commonwealth whose inhabitants exist under perfect conditions; book published by Sir T. More in 1516 describing imaginary island with perfect social and political system; ideally perfect place or state of things. Utopian: ardent but impractical reformer." [48.]

In the succeeding pages of Utopia, they trace the history of the ideals and ideas that, more or less, conform to this definition, from the Greek city states and the philosophy of Plato, through Augustine, More and Tolstoy (to name but a few), and so to the present. Among those whom they honour is Herbert George Wells.

They credit him with a unique contribution to utopian thought and literature:

> "Where More was content with one ideal state that resolved its problems with its neighbours by violence and conquest... H.G. Wells would turn utopia itself into a world state." [49.]

They go on to describe the key elements, as they read them, of H.G. as a utopian:

> "A Modern Utopia, which was published by Wells in 1905 at the height of the imperial era, is not so much a prescription for utopia as an extensive discourse on the utopias of the past and the possibilities of the present... noted for its legal and administrative complexity and its pursuit of efficiency through centralization. Regulations cover all aspects of life,

> though not to the point of coercion... the rule of the world state is in the hands of a volunteer elite called the Samurai, who must be highly educated and lead a Spartan life according to a prescribed rule." [50].

It is important to remember that here we have an early attempt at a future vision by H.G., apparently heavily influenced by his reading of Plato. Wells' vision becomes far less complex, and far less inhibiting as he matures both in his writing and in his vision of society:

> "Wells associates science, centralization and industry with human progress and he retains these in his other utopia, Men Like Gods, in which he takes a less jaundiced view of human nature, and drops... the... world state in favour of universal education. [51].

Tod and Wheeler are, in the longer view, wrong in their assessment of Wells. He never "drops" the idea of the world state. Rather, he allows it to develop and grow into a vision which, as I shall soon describe, is far more attractive and far more plausible than this limited reading of him suggests.

Indeed, I would submit that Wells' contribution as a utopian lies only partly in ~~the~~ vision of a world state itself. The richer part of his thought lies in his being what I choose to call a "realistic utopian." This may initially strike one as a contradiction in terms. By it, I mean to say that Wells is a utopian in-so-far as he uses a utopian vision as a gauge, a yardstick, by which to judge human progress towards a better, more just, global society.

Although Tod and Wheeler do well to include him in their anthology,

H.G. is far from a 'simple' utopian, the ardent but impractical reformer of the dictionary definition.

Jack Williamson captures some of the complexity of H.G. as a utopian:

> "Teaching my own science fiction course, I used to divide the authors we read into optimists and pessimists, into those who believe we can use science and reason to build a better future and those who fear we are inventing our own destruction... Wells holds a central place among the pessimists... heir to Jonathan Swift, and he influenced many followers... George Orwell and Aldous Huxley; Fred Pohl... But he also wrote A Modern Utopia... he was a spokesman for what C.P. (Lord) Snow calls the culture of science - the people who understand science and try to use it constructively... Not... because he had discovered... optimistic faith that technology equals automatic progress, but rather because he had foreseen early in his life that our technology could and probably would destroy us unless we learned to use it well. He did his best to teach us how to use it well." 52.

Lord Snow himself writes of H.G.:

> "People have tried to disparage his social thinking by saying that he was optimistic: and since this is the harshest charge which can be brought against any modern writer, they think they need say no more. In fact, in the sense the criticism is intended, it is nonsense. Wells was about as much inclined to think men were naturally good, or naturally wise, as St. Augustine. His temperament forbade it: and if it had not done so, his education would have... whatever evolutionary theory taught, it was not a belief in the survival value of the sweet and innocent. He did believe that, in man's crawl out from the caves up to the ramshackle society of 1900, the human species had acquired a bit more control over its own fate: and that it was no longer necessary for most of the human race to live hungry and to die early. In his impatient fashion, he believed that this revolution could take place far more quickly than it has done. If that is blind optimism, give us more of it." 53.

H.G. himself did not see his brand of utopianism, if such it may truly be called, as a destination, but rather as a voyage:

> "Before men can come to utopia, they must learn the way there. Utopia, I see, is only a home for those who have learnt the way." [54]

But if utopian thought is worth anything, it is as a sign of hope. Frederick Pohl, in his autobiography The Way the Future Was, credits Wells with the creation of such a sign in his discussion of the motion picture version of H.G.'s The Shape of Things to Come, a Korda film:

> "'Things to Come'... is the finest science fiction film ever made, greater than 'Metropolis', more meaningful than '2001'... It wasn't exactly a story. It was almost a documentary... I think a great deal of 'Things to Come' rubbed off in the deep down core of my brain... in spite of all the evidence, I am optimistic about the future of the world. I have a conviction that bad times and good all pass and all are endurable, and that is what 'Things to Come' had to say. You can blow up the world as often as you like, but there is a future, there is always a future, and while some of it will be bad, some of it will be better than anyone has ever known." [55]

6. H.G. as Social Thinker

H.G.'s influence as a social thinker was in the form of the truest of two-edged swords: on the one hand his analytical genius led him to forecast an ominous future for the human race unless we develop socially and morally in time with technological advances. On the other hand, that same analytical brilliance allowed him to diagnose and prescribe remedies for existing and expected social problems which are as revolutionary and compelling today as they were scandalous eighty years ago.

In A Story of the Days to Come, published in 1927, Wells draws a sobering picture of a not-too-distant future urban existence, all too plausible if we simply allow ourselves, as a race, to drift thoughtlessly into the future:

> "That... (technological) contrivances, together with the device of limited liability joint stock companies and the supercession of agricultural labourers by skilled men with ingenious machinery, would necessarily concentrate mankind in cities of unparalleled magnitude and work an entire revolution in human life, became, after the event, a thing so obvious that it is a matter of astonishment it was not more clearly anticipated. Yet that any steps should be taken to anticipate the miseries such a revolution might entail does not appear even to have been suggested; and the idea that the moral prohibitions and sanctions, the privileges and concessions, the conception of property and responsibility, of comfort and beauty that had rendered the mainly agricultural states of the past prosperous and happy, would fail in the rising torrent of novel opportunities and novel stimulations, never seems to have entered the 19th. century mind. That a citizen, kindly and fair in his ordinary life, would, as a shareholder, become almost murderously greedy; that commercial methods... reasonable and honourable in the old-fashioned countryside, should on a large scale be deadly and overwhelming; that ancient charity was modern pauperization, and ancient employment modern sweating;

> that... a revision and enlargement of the duties and the rights of man had become urgently necessary were things it could not entertain... The new society was divided into three main classes... the property owner, enormously rich by accident rather than by design... Below was the enormous multitude of workers employed by the gigantic companies that monopolized control; and between these two the dwindling middle class... a middle class whose members led a life of insecure luxury and precarious speculation amidst the movements of the great managers." 56.

One is reluctant to editorialize gratuitously, but one might say that such times as those described above are already here.

It was to warn us against such a future that Wells wrote much of his work. His great frustration was that he saw dark days ahead, days that could be avoided, but few would take serious note of his predictions.

His ultimate recommendation for rescuing the world from such a needlessly barren and despair ridden future was the open conspiracy leading to the establishment of a world state. But his thought was by no means restricted to the sweepingly global and the evidently long term. He also focused sharply on the arena of day to day life.

One issue which stands out dramatically is the emancipation of women:

> "He (H.G.) saw that while it was in general true that poverty made for misery, some of the very poor were not at all unhappy, and many of those who were miserably unhappy were not at all poor, particularly if they were women. He had also been surprised to find how often natural gifts - particularly where women were concerned - went unrecognized and undeveloped among the children of the upper classes... It could be that the first order of business in any radical transformation of society for the common good ought not to be a matter of either wealth or class. It could be that an end to the subjugation of women would be the thing that

would most certainly and most rapidly enlarge everybody's chance of happiness. It could be done by recognizing them as the equals of men, and setting them free to become their rivals or partners as they might choose, in whatever field they elected to enter." 57.

In 1907, Wells published two papers jointly under the title Socialism and the Family. His observations of the first decade of this century may still be seen in far too many North American situations:

"Every intelligent woman understands that, as a matter of hard fact, beneath all of the civilities of today, she is actual or potential property, and has to treat herself or keep herself as that. She may by force or subtlety turn her chains into weapons, she may succeed in exacting a reciprocal property in a man, the fact remains that she is either isolated or owned." 58.

To H.G., this was intolerable. He saw the situation of women, as Anthony West remembers, as an:

"...appalling waste of brain and ability... in restricting half the population to the menial tasks reserved for the uneducated." 59.

West goes on to describe one of his father's more remarkable suggestions for radical reform of society, an idea with many supporters in the 1980's:

"By 1903-04 he had convinced himself that the most effective solution to the problem... lay in taking money from the general tax fund to subsidize motherhood: he felt sure that once it was generally accepted that a woman was entitled to state support through pregnancy and the early years of her child's life, the back of it would have been broken." 60.

For H.G., this was neither an entirely abstract nor objective idea. It was quite literally an integral factor in his own rather avant-garde lifestyle.

C.P. Snow offers an insight that summarizes H.G. as a social thinker:

"He chose for his major loves (or they chose him) some of the most remarkable women of his time: one can trace the effect, not only of their attractiveness, but of their intelligence in semi-autobiographical projects, such as Ann Veronica, the New Machiavelli, and The World of William Clissold... those complications... helped to shape his vision of a new society and a new enlightenment... in which people would break free from sexual traditions and enjoy themselves far more gloriously... even though he was rationalizing his own life, some of it has come true in the western world: and certainly this part of his message... made him an influence on the intelligent young for thirty years." [61.]

7. H.G. as World Figure

Anthony West's H.G. Wells: Aspects of a Life, is by far the most enjoyable, and the most helpful book on H.G. that I have had the pleasure to read. Here is not simply a talented and introspective illigitimate son (H.G. would have scorned such a pointlessly anachronistic term) struggling to make sense of his relationship with an even more talented and often enigmatic father. Rather we find in West an astute observer of humanity, and a sharp analyst of world affairs. Clearly West admires H.G., and finds him an entirely more sympathetic character than his flamboyant mother, Rebecca West. But Anthony West does not whitewash his father's memory: he sees him as a complete person, warts and all. Thus I find it a convincing statement, not overshadowed by filial pride, when West declares boldly:

> "Between 1918 and 1923 he became a world figure whose name was known wherever books were printed and newspapers were sold." 62.

Nor is West simply voicing personal opinion. There is much to support his assertion.

> "... The Outline of History put him very close to the top of the journalistic tree, and when Lord Northcliffe wanted him to cover the Washington Conference on Naval Disarmament for the features syndicate... he offered him what was then a staggering ten thousand pounds to do it. His arrival in that field was coincident with an enormous enlargement of his reputation as a writer outside the literary world... his Outline of History sold more than two million copies in England and the United States, and as many more in translation elsewhere. This created a market for cheap re-prints of the novels he had written in the nineties and in the first years

> of the nineteen hundreds... they racked up sales of nearly three million copies in England alone... This activity tempted a number of foreign publishers to give his books a run in translation in countries in which he had never before been published." 63.

Possibly the most convincing evidence of H.G.'s stature as a world figure is found in the seriousness with which he was treated by others who arguably occupied significant roles on the world stage. His visits with world leaders, with whom he discussed everything from Soviet hydro-electric power to his open conspiracy, were, for the most part, published in the journals of the day. But some of the more interesting accounts are to be found in H.G.'s own Experiment in Autobiography.

On Theodore Roosevelt:

> "He had made a tremendous effort in his time of masterful direction. He was the big noise of America... I lunched with the President and walked about the grounds of the White House with him while he talked... He betrayed none of the uneasiness of the normal politician that any phrase of his might be unfairly quoted against him... I asked him what he was up to... he was thinking vaguely of a loose combine, an understanding rather than an alliance, of the liberal northern powers to control the next phase of human affairs..." 64.

On Lenin:

> "Now here was a fresh kind of brain for me to encounter and it was in such a key position as no one had dreamt of as possible for anyone before the war... He had the strength of simplicity of purpose combined with subtlety of thought... he changed Marxism into Leninism. He changed the teachings of a fatalistic doctrinaire into a flexible creative leadership... When I talked to Lenin... I was chiefly impressed by the fact that physically he was a little man, and by his intense animation and simplicity of purpose. But now, as I... size him up against the other personalities I have known in key positions, I begin to realize what an outstanding and important figure he is in history... I must admit that Lenin at least was a very great man." 65.

On Franklin Delano Roosevelt:

> "I had had some slight correspondence with the president already, I went to him on my own credentials... Besides Mr. and Mrs. Roosevelt, his daughter Mrs. Dall, Miss Lehand, his personal secretary... dined with us, and afterwards I sat and talked to him and Mrs. Roosevelt and Miss Lehand until nearly midnight, easily and pleasantly - as though the world crisis focused anywhere rather than on the White House." 66.

So much for greatness by association, which may clearly be but by reflection and often suspect - though not, I submit, in H.G.'s case.

One achievement alone would warrant seeing H.G. as a world figure: his role in the drafting of the document that has gone down in history as the "Sankey Declaration of the Rights of Man."

At the outbreak of the second World War, Wells felt compelled to jump into the journalistic melee over appropriate aims in the prosecuting of the war. He was able to convince the publishers of the "Daily Herald", with help from that journal's science editor, Ritchie Calder, to devote a page a month to the project of publishing:

> "... a modernized version of the Bill of Rights embodied in the constitution of the United States. The War, he suggested, would be worth fighting if it were to end with a declaration by the victors that these were the inalienable rights of all men." 67.

As per usual with H.G., it seemed that success could never maintain a straight course. Anthony West writes:

"My father was originally to have been both the chairman of the drafting committee and the editor of the Herald's "Rights of Man" page. But... a few days before the committee's first meeting, a vitriolic article appeared... over his signature... threats of resignation induced him to step down... though not as editor." 68.

In the end, though, according to West, H.G.:

"... got his document: an unambiguous statement of a particular thing that the ordinary reasonable Englishman thought his country ought to be fighting to establish as part of the common law of nations." 69.

All this might have seemed but an effete intellectual exercise for the middle-class intelligentsia, were it not for the particular structure of the commonwealth and empire, and the pressures building therein:

"The idea of a codification of human rights seemed more rather than less important to the intellectuals in the colonial territories who knew that they would soon have to decide what kinds of society they were going to create for themselves when the war ended... much later... an overwhelming third world sentiment in favour of such a thing compelled the victorious Allies to incorporate a Declaration of Human Rights in the Charter of the United Nations. But by then my father was dead." 70.

Dead, but not yet forgotten.

8. H.G. as Religionist: "Agent Provocateur."

One can imagine the horror with which one would be greeted if one were to suggest that twentieth century religious thought, particularly in the field of Christian social ethics, owes a debt to the gadfly spirit of H.G. Wells. Yet so I maintain. To be sure, his role is that of a relentless critic of Christianity, and his criticism is delivered as an outsider to the church. But to criticize Christianity is not to attack the religious impulse in humanity, which Wells regularly confirms. Many find much in the church, and in Christian dogma, to criticize, and, in this latter quarter of the twentieth century, the most strident voices often emanate from within theological circles.

Wells' critique of Christianity can be seen as both subjective and objective. Its subjective nature may be located in two places: his mother's piety; and his forced confirmation.

Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie are blunt in their appraisal of Sarah Wells' cramped religious life:

> "... religion was the dominating force in Sarah's life. Her Low Church piety... cramped her emotionally and directed her anxiety into feelings of guilt which she tried to relieve by a passion for church-going that verged on the obsessional. She seldom seems to have felt happy; and whenever she was prevented from attending divine service, the deprivation intensified the underlying depression which emerges monotonously from her daily diaries." 71.

H.G. himself was rather more charitable in his Experiment in

Autobiography: but still we feel the narrow limits of her literalist tendencies, and can imagine how the expansive mind and keen intelligence of the young "Bertie" would be obliged to rebel:

> "My mother was low church, and I was disposed to find, even in my tender years, Low Church theology a little too stiff for me, but she tempered it to her own essential goodness, gentleness, and faith in God's fatherhood, in ways that were quite her own. I remember demanding of her in my crude schoolboy revolt if she really believed in a hell of eternal torment. 'We must, my dear,' she said. 'But our Saviour died for us - and perhaps after all nobody will be sent there. Except of course the Old Devil.' And even he, being so to speak the official in charge, I think she would have exempted from actual torture. Maybe Our Father would have shown him the tongs now and again, just to remind him....
> She believed that God our Father and Saviour, personally and through occasional angels, would mind her; she believed that He would not be indifferent to her prayers; she believed she had to be good, carefully and continually, and not give Satan a chance with her. Then everything would be all right. That was what her 'simple' faith as she called it really amounted to, and in that faith she went out very trustfully into the world." 72.

The second source of H.G.'s subjective dislike of the Church seems to have had far more bitter roots. Just as H.G. was about to give up hope, and resign himself to life as a draper's apprentice, Mr. Horace Byatt offered him a position at Midhurst Grammar School. But...

> "My father had one last exasperation to endure. The statutes of the ancient foundation that Byatt had taken over and reanimated had been resurrected with it, and one of them provided that all its teachers had to be communicants of the Church of England. My father demurred, hinting at his unbelief by saying that he found certain of the Church's Thirty-Nine Articles hard to ~~accept...~~ but... there was no way around... My father would have to be confirmed and pay homage to my grandmother's God - just as if he believed in him... the humiliation of being required to profess a faith to which he could not in any sense subscribe stayed with him for the rest of his life. He felt

that he had been forced to take part in a dishonourable charade." 73.

From a more objective point of view, Wells could clearly see that the hidebound conservatism and blind dogma which dominated so much of Christianity were serious impediments to building a saner, indeed, a more socially moral world than that which humanity had hitherto experienced. His study under Professor Thomas Huxley, Darwin's chief disciple and defender, and one of the great model's of H.G.'s life, confirmed his distaste for any unthinking credo.

On occasion he criticized the Church by poking fun at its vanities and hypocrisies. One delightful piece is 'Answer to Prayer', wherein an aging Prince of the Church, replete with ecclesiological worldliness, has reached that uncertain stage of adulthood when one is not at all certain of the meaning or direction of one's life. He determines to take desperate measures - he decides to pray:

"He had of course said his prayers with the utmost regularity... He had felt that it was a purifying and beneficial process, no more to be missed than cleaning his teeth, but the sense of a definite hearer... was a faint one... Which... left the Church conveniently free to take an unembarrased course of action... 'Oh God,' he began, and paused... a sense of awful immanence... gripped him... And then he heard a voice... It was not a harsh voice, but it was a clear, strong voice... nothing about it still or small... neither friendly, nor hostile... brisk... 'Yes;' said the voice, 'What is it?'
They found his grace in the morning... Plainly his death had been instantaneous. But instead of the serenity, the almost fatuous serenity, that was his habitual expression, his countenance, by some strange freak of nature, displayed an extremity of terror and dismay." 74.

H.G. rarely took an 'unembarrased course of action.' Herein lies his scorn for a wholly accomodating church, bent on everything but the transformation of the world into the just Kingdom of Jesus of Nazareth.

On other occasions his critique was direct and scathing. Perhaps the most famous of these was published in Pearson's magazine in February 1903. It aroused an angry response from a variety of sources, including "several Bishops and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle." [75] The text of H.G.'s "Great Indictment of the Church" is included among the illustrations at the end of this chapter.

I find in Wells' criticisms, no matter how cutting, a genuine challenge to Christianity in these critical times. The challenge becomes even more pointed when one realizes in what esteem H.G. held Jesus of Nazareth:

> "... This doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was the main teaching of Jesus, ... is certainly one of the most revolutionary doctrines that ever stirred and changed human thought... For the doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, as Jesus seemed to have preached it, was no less than a bold and uncompromising demand for a complete change and cleansing of the life of our struggling race... not only did Jesus strike at patriotism and the bonds of family loyalty... it is clear that his teachings condemned all the gradations of the economic system... It was not merely a moral and social revolution that Jesus proclaimed... his teaching had a political bent of the plainest sort... wherever and in what measure his kingdom was set up in the hearts of men, the outer world would be in that measure revolutionized and made new... he seemed to propose plainly to change and fuse and enlarge all human life... He was like some terrible moral huntsman digging mankind out of the snug burrows in which they had lived hitherto... Is it any wonder that men were dazzled and blinded and cried out against him? ... Is it any wonder that to this day this Galilean is too much for our small hearts?" [76]

I, too, suspect that the church has often forgotten, indeed often ignored, much of the impact of its source, Jesus of Nazareth. To this I shall return in my later analysis of the open conspiracy - an idea essentially religious in its values and its aim.

9. H.G. as Futurologist.

In his introduction to the H.G. Wells Scrapbook, Jack Williamson repeatedly refers to H.G. as a "futurologist", indeed as "the first futurologist". [77.] Unfortunately, Mr. Williamson neglects to provide us with a working definition of futurology. Unfortunate, because neither does Webster's dictionary. But he does give a clue: futurology, as H.G. invented it, is the science, or perhaps the art, of "discovering our future before it happened." [78.]

Futurology, thus understood, was neither intellectual palmistry nor mere speculation into the fantastic. It was more in the line of Hebrew prophecy - the careful reading of present trends, combined with an astute analysis of likely results if those trends were to continue unchecked. The result, as Mr. Williamson reminds us, is that H.G. saw "the future too clearly, and found much to fear." [79.] Inevitably, H.G. was drawn to the issue of all the issues facing humanity in this century:

> "His greatest concern was world peace. As early as 1913, he had been writing about uranium bombs. Foreseeing world wars and atomic holocausts, he hoped to help establish a world state that might avoid them. Critical of democracy, he tried to alert and warn and train an 'open conspiracy', an elite group of pioneer world citizens who would organize to keep us from global suicide." [80.]

It is that world state, and that open conspiracy to which the heart of this paper is dedicated.

Futurology became an obsession with Wells, especially where it concerned the quest for peace and the world state. As the years passed, he would use any style of literature, and every opportunity to expound his hope of an open conspiracy that would lead to a new world order.

On occasion his futurology was based on "hard science" - one might say technological futurology. A classic example is his short story, 'The Land Ironclads', an illustration from which, and a cartoon concerning which, are to be found among the illustrations at the end of this chapter. In this story, published in 1903, Wells predicts the development of the modern military tank: a concept not realized until late in the First World War - a concept so effective that it was credited with ending the terrible stalemate of the trenches. The tank's real worth as a war machine was proved by the German Panzer Divisions of the Second World War, and their Allied counterparts. One might stretch a point only slightly to suggest that the state of Israel owes its existence in large part to its armoured divisions.

The 'land ironclad' that Wells 'invents' is remarkably like the tanks dubbed 'Kitchener's Steamrollers' just over a decade later:

> "Subsequent authorities have found fault with the first land ironclads in many particulars, but assuredly they served their purpose on the day of their appearance. They were essentially long, narrow, and very strong steel frameworks carrying the engines, and borne upon eight pairs of big pedrail wheels, each about ten feet in diameter, each a driving wheel and set upon long axles free to swivel around a common axis. This arrangement gave them the maximum of adaptability to the contours of the ground... The engineers directed the

> engines under the command of the captain, who had look-out points at small ports all round the upper edge of the adjustable skirt of twelve inch iron plating which protected the whole affair... The riflemen each occupied a small cabin of peculiar construction, and these cabins were slung along the sides of and before and behind the great main framework..." 81.

There was a bitter epilogue to this story, as described by Peter Haining:

> "'The Land Ironclads'... predicted the tank and although Wells offered his services when the first such mechanical contrivances were being devised under the instructions of Winston Churchill, he was turned away: a rebuff that embittered him towards the Army for the rest of his life." 82.

His futurology also took the form of 'hard philosophy', thinly veiled in fiction. Thus we have The Shape of Things to Come. This remarkable book purports to be a history of the world from 1929 to 2105. It is conceived as a 'dream book', in which a respectable League of Nations diplomat in Geneva literally dreams the future in the form of an history book which, in his dream, he reads. The book includes much that reflects but the wide ranging fancy of H.G.'s fertile imagination: but some of the prophetic visions of Things to Come became chilling reality. Things to Come was first published in 1933. In chapter nine, H.G. fixes the start of the war as 1940; he sees it as a protracted conflict, triggered by a confrontation between Poland and Germany; he pictured the war as being determined in the air; and he places the aerial bombardment of London in 1943.

But these projections are incidental to the book's major task: the

the delineation of a world-state which would serve as a model for the new world that Wells desperately hoped would dawn.

As he develops, largely by inference, his portrait of the world state, or 'modern state' as he prefers to call it in this book, H.G. provides cutting analyses of the failings of both Marxism and capitalism as possible world systems. Indeed, much of the book is as dry as a politico-economic treatise.

Nevertheless, it had a powerful impact on the imagination of the English speaking peoples by its translation into a major motion picture through the genius of Alexander Korda. Illustrations from the film follow this chapter, including one which illustrates the architectural prescience of H.G. and the set designers:

> "... If the duty of science fiction is to predict as well as entertain, and the science-fiction movie is to visualize both prophecy and philosophy, then Things to Come must remain to tower over them all. 'It is a leviathan among films. A stupendous spectacle staggering to the eye, mind and spirit, the like of which will never be seen again. It makes film history.' So wrote Sydney W. Carroll, film critic of the 'Sunday Times', back in 1935: words that hold true after more than forty years."[83]

Still other futurological projections took the form of whimsy, notably the little known short story, 'The Queer Story of Brownlow's Newspaper', published in 1931. This short story was the seed of Things to Come, as we can see from H.G.'s own description of it in the early pages of the later work, as he explains the nature of Mr. Raven's future history 'dream book':

> "... I made up a short story. 'Brownlow's Newspaper', about a man into whose hands there fell an evening journal of fifty years ahead - and of all the tantalizingly incomplete intimations of change such a scrap of the future would be sure to convey. Brownlow, whom I imagined as a cheerful and self-indulgent friend, came home late and rather alcoholic, and found this paper stuck through his letter slot in place of his usual 'Evening Standard.' He found the print, paper and spelling rather queer; he was surprised by the realism of the colour illustrations, he missed several familiar features, and he thought the news fantastic stuff, but he was too tired and muzzy to see the thing in its proper proportions, and in the morning when he awoke and thought about it, and realized the marvellous glimpse he had into the world to come, the paper had vanished forever down the dust-chute." 84.

I shall return to this 'queer story' in a subsequent chapter, for it is an almost ideal illustration, albeit by suggestion, of a world state brought about by an open conspiracy.

As science fiction has expanded and matured since the days when H.G. pioneered the field, so has futurology developed since H.G. 'invented' it.

Witness a review in 'Discover' magazine of Nigel Calder's futurological book, 1984 and Beyond:

> "The forecasters had no inkling of the energy crisis, and thus could not foresee some of its consequences, like the zooming prices of plastics and other by-products of petroleum. They completely missed the coming disenchantment with nuclear power... They confidently - and mistakenly - painted pictures of vast new transportation systems... Still, some forecasts were unerring. Calder's scientists spoke of tremendous strides in the ability to transplant major human organs. Others predicted today's biotechnical revolution... Several scientists spoke of an imminent revolution in telecommunications..." 85.

Futurology is serious business.

Futurology has become far more than a means for idlers to pass the time. As science fiction author Larry Niven writes concerning his success

in the field of science fiction, or, as we might call it, fictional futurology:

> "I have profited enormously, but so has the rest of the world, because we do now think in terms of projecting problems, finding solutions, looking for the ideas that can create the technology that can solve the problems. There are still the mundanes of course. Most of the populace still doesn't bother with that kind of stuff. They expect, and would feel more comfortable in, a future which is just like the present. But I am not talking to those people. I am talking to the people who are ready to know that the future will be different from the present." 86.

H.G. knew not only that the future would be different, but that it must be different. He saw that only in a new order of things would our species, and indeed, our whole fragile and beautiful blue-green planet be able to survive.

H. G. WELLS' GREAT INDICTMENT OF THE CHURCH.

"The Archbishop of York, I think, was quite right when he said that the Church of England has lost its power in the daily lives of the people, and I do not think that he need have confined his remark to his own Church.

"It is almost equally true of the Nonconformist Churches, and much more true of the Roman Catholic Church.

"Roman Catholics nowadays are born, not made; the adolescents leak away, and the small power for good of the Roman Church even over those who are still its nominal adherents has had the most startling demonstration during the last year of the brigandage and murder in Ireland.

MR. H. G. WELLS.

This increasing moral impotence is a phenomenon common to all the organised Christian Churches, not only in Britain but throughout the world.

"But it does not follow that there has been a decline in religious feeling and aspiration.

The world is now a very tragic and anxious world and the desire for a peace of mind and a courage such as only deep and pure convictions can supply has never been so strong and so widespread.

"More people are asking to-day and asking with a new intensity. What must I do to be saved?" The trouble with the Christian Churches is that they give a confused unconvincing, and unsatisfying answer.

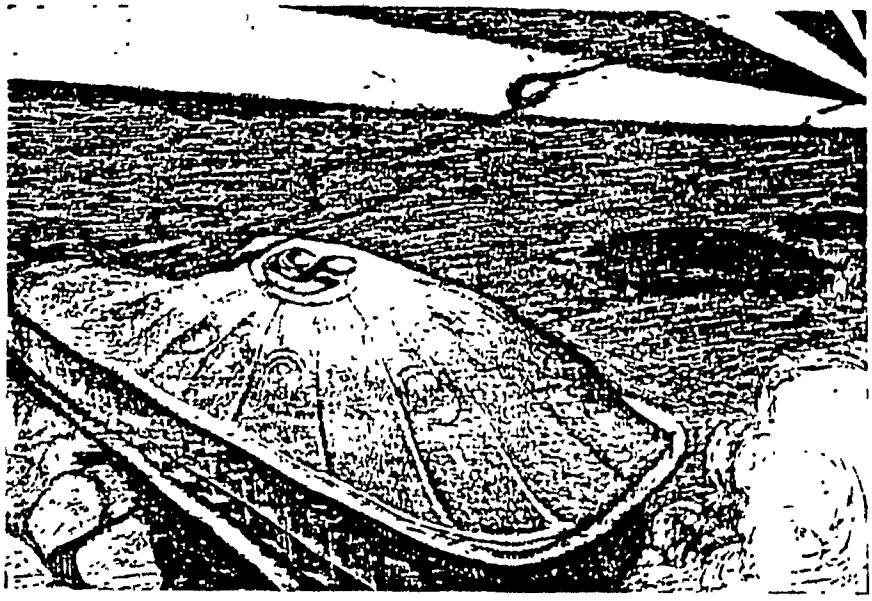
"This is an age of great distresses but it is also an age of cold, abundant light. People know more than was ever known before of the history of life in space and time of the origins of the creeds and symbols of Christianity, of the possibilities of human existence.

"They are, as the Archbishop says, 'repelled' when in answer to that passionate inquiry for salvation the Christian exponent, dressed up like an Egyptian priest of three thousand years ago, performs mysterious chants and motions and offers incomprehensible sacraments.

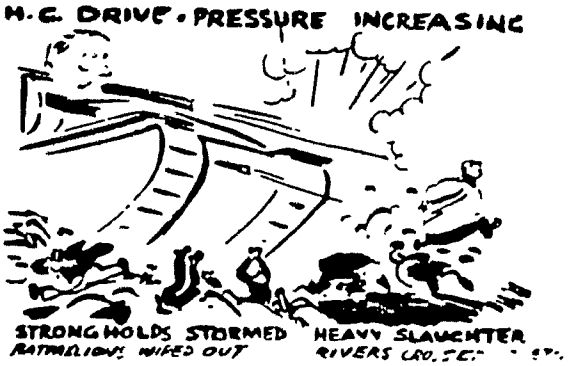
"They are equally 'repelled' when he embarks upon tedious explanations of the multiplicity and unity of the Deity.

"Within a few score years of the Crucifixion, Christianity had become hopelessly involved with ceremonies and superstitions of immemorial antiquity and with a theology embodying the imperfectly embalmed philosophy of Alexandria. In a less critical age it was possible for many to live holy and noble lives within the terms of these old formulæ but to-day when intellectual integrity is being recognised as a primary moral obligation this can be done no longer.

"Until Christianity sheds these priestly and theological encumbrances it will encounter greater and greater difficulty in serving Him it claims as its Founder, the Son of Man.



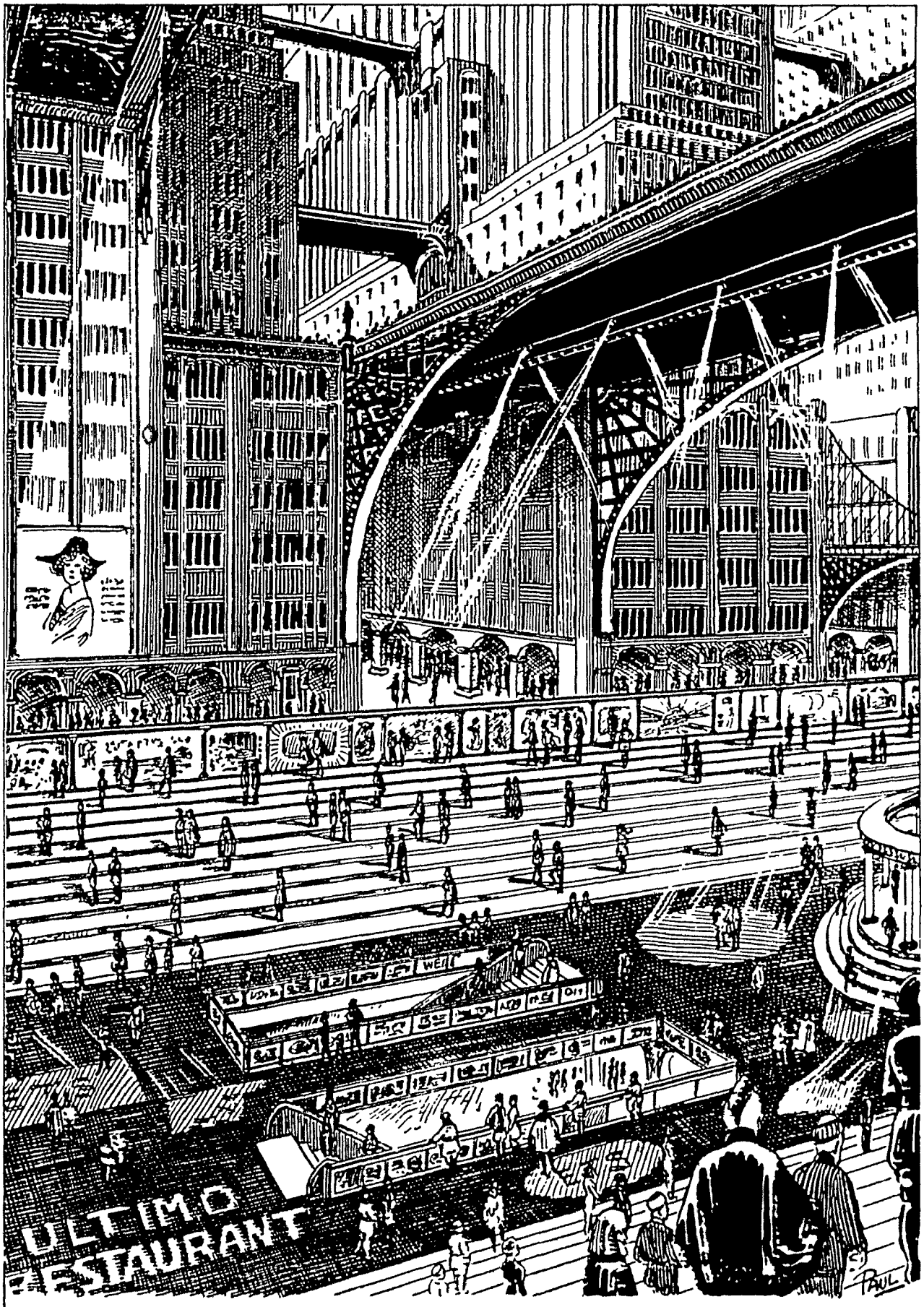
" A LAND IRON-CLAD"



A cartoon by David Low, poking fun at H.G.'s frustration with the military.

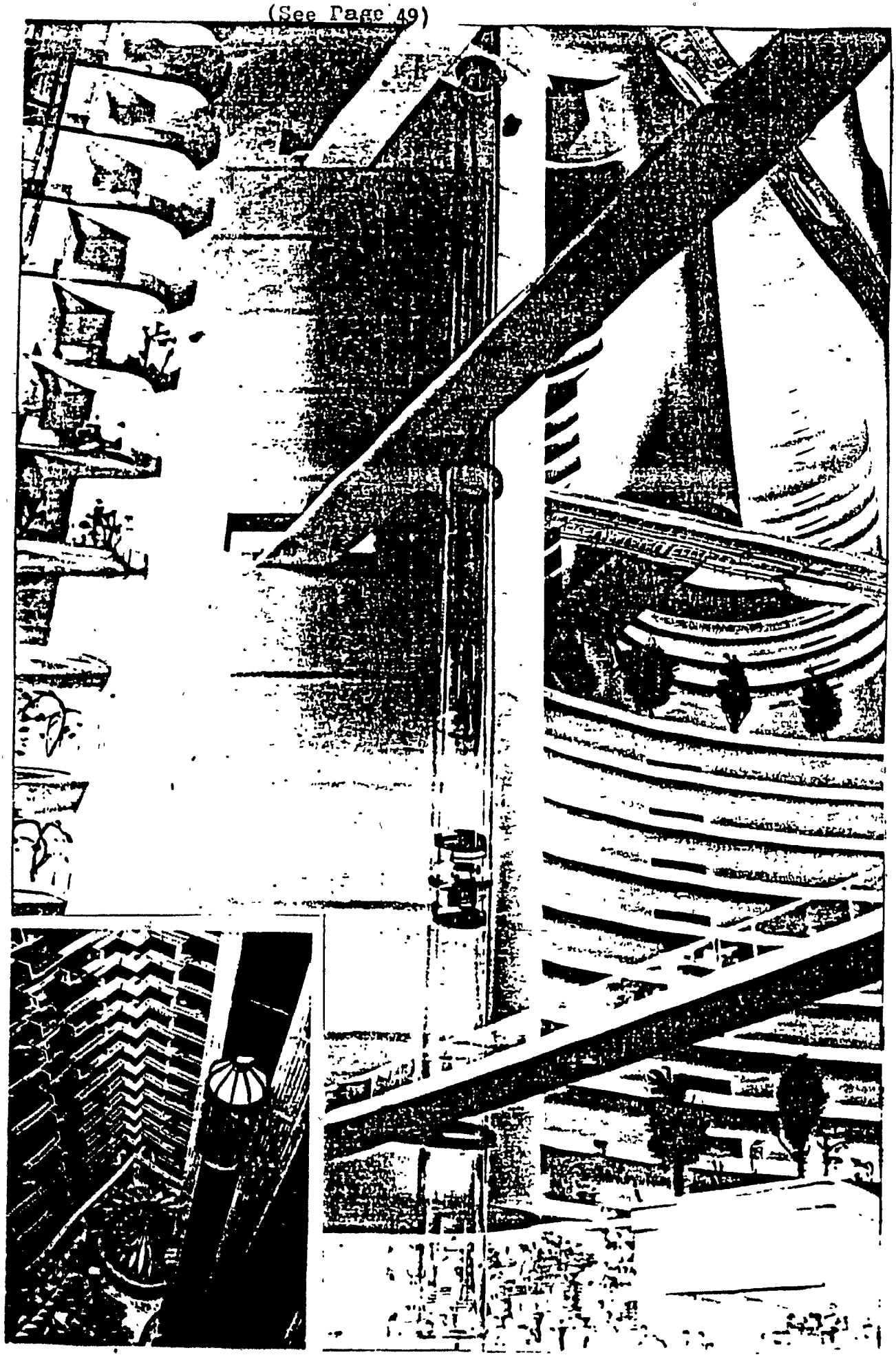
An advertisement for the film version of the book.

(See Page 49)



The middle space was immovable and gave access by staircases descending into subterranean ways. Right and left were an ascending series of continuous platforms, each of which traveled about five miles an hour faster than the one internal to it. The establishment of the Suzanne Hat Syndicate projected a vast facade upon the outer way, sending overhead an overlapping series of huge white glass screens, on which gigantic animated pictures of the faces of well-known beautiful living women wearing novelties in hats were thrown.

(See Page 49)



Page 47: A 'still' from the film version of The Shape of Things To Come. Inset: the interior of the Regency Hyatt House in Atlanta Today.

Page 48: An illustration from A Story of the Days to Come.

Chapter Two: H.G. and his World

Having borne with me thus far, I trust the reader will be prepared to acknowledge H.G.'s vast and diverse talents: talents which serve to class him as a truly neo-Renaissance figure, and a philosopher with the credentials to support his presumptions as a world builder. But plainly neither H.G. nor his talents developed in a vacuum. Rather, both came to maturity in a particular context: the context of 'fin de siecle' Britain. In this chapter it is my intent, in some measure, to describe that context, and the man who developed in it: in short, to provide a kind of biographical, though only loosely chronological, sketch.

1. "Fin de Siecle"

The end of any century must be a nervous time, a jittery time. There seems to be something in humanity's emotional make-up that charges us with both hope and anxiety as the date draws near. We find ourselves confused and unnerved as we try to see in two directions: whence we have come and whither we are going. The end of the nineteenth century was no exception. In the English-speaking world, people looked back at a time of reasonable stability and peace. And, based on the technological and social advances of the Victorian era, they looked forward with perhaps justified optimism to a better century ahead.

The advent of the twentieth century found H.G. in adulthood, complete

with his first fame from his science fiction stories and future predictions. And it found him clearly located in England. An England which, to Wells, newly risen from the lower middle class, had much to look forward to: for certainly the middle class had little from the nineteenth century to recall with fondness.

Some of the most vivid descriptions of nineteenth century England that I have read are from William Manchester's, The Last Lion, a biography of Winston Churchill's early years. Take, for example, this thumb nail sketch of London:

> "The city itself... was engulfed by changes with which it had not learned to cope, and which were scarcely understood. Some were inherent in the trebling of the population, some consequences of the Industrial Revolution. Particles of grime from factory smokestacks, blending with the cold fogs that crept down from the North Sea channel produced impenetrable pea-soupers which could reduce visibility to a few feet - 'London particulars,' Dickens called them in Bleak House. They could be dangerous; it was in one of them that Soames Forsyte's wife's lover was run down by horses and killed. Much of London stank. The city's sewage system was at best inadequate and in the poorer neighbourhoods nonexistent. Buildings... had often been constructed over cesspools which, however, had grown so vast that they formed ponds, surrounding homes with moats of effluvia. Thoroughfares were littered with animal excrement. Gaslight... was smokier, smellier, and yellower... And the narrow, twisted streets were neither sealed nor asphalted. Victorians are often mocked for locking their windows, even in summer, but they had a lot to keep out: odours; dust; gusts of wind that could turn the open flames of candles or kerosene lamps into disastrous conflagrations." 1.

The lives of the great majority of people, including the life the young H.G. narrowly escaped through education was easily as grim as the environment:

> "Englishmen were more preoccupied with death than we are, partly because there was much more of it. In 1842, a Royal Commission had

found that the average professional man lived thirty years; the average labourer, seventeen. By... (1874)... about fifteen had been added to these, but it was still not unusual for a middle-class man to die at thirty-nine... Another reason for bereavement had nothing to do with delicacy of feeling. The loss of a father was disastrous. There was seldom any financial net beneath the survivors of a wage earner. Jobs were at a premium; artisans provided or rented their own tools, and one mill outdid Scrooge, issuing the notice: 'A stove is provided for the clerical staff. It is recommended that each member of the clerical staff bring four pounds of coal each day during cold weather.' Except for the thriftiest of savers... no class was immune to the catastrophe which followed the passing of a head of household. If a man had been a successful physician... his family might have belonged to the upper middle class as long as he was alive, living in the Wordsworthian tranquility of a leafy Georgian square, with a coach in the mews and a boy at Winchester. All that vanished with his last breath. The family was evicted from the house; the son took a job as a clerk; his mother made what she could as a seamstress, or, in that bitterest refuge of shabby gentility, as a governess in a bourgeois home." 2.

Human sexuality, a key theme in H.G.'s vision of social transformation, pre-eminent in books such as Ann Veronica and the New Machiavelli, was overtly stifled:

"Occasional male lubricity was grudgingly accepted for the future of the race... A Victorian mother prepared her daughter for the marriage bed with the advice, 'Lie still and think of England.'... Thomas Bowdler... had published The Family Shakespeare... 'In which nothing is added to the text; but those Words and Expressions are omitted which cannot with propriety be read aloud in a family.'... the distributors of a pamphlet which advised couples not ready for children to practise douching were indicted for scheming 'to vitiate and corrupt the morals of youth...'" 3.

The results were disastrous for many, yet as Manchester points out:

"... in matters of sex the Victorians should be judged not by what they said, but by what they did; during the century before Churchill's birth (in 1874) the population of the island tripled... and London grew from two million souls to five million." 4.

One gets the impression that the twentieth century, at least in England, was born out of a great, seething, roiling mess, tightly capped by societal conventions, the whole of which was waiting to erupt at the first opportunity.

H.G. personalized the intellectual winding down of the last century, and the dawning of our own:

> "Queen Victoria was like a great paper-weight that for half a century sat upon men's minds, and when she was removed their ideas began to blow about all over the place haphazardly." 5.

Certainly, people were ready for a new world. Note Hilary and Dik Evans in Beyond the Gaslight, Science in Popular Fiction, 1895 - 1905:

> "In the year 1900 everything suddenly seemed possible. In this new century just dawning, surely men would fly. They could well fly to the moon. They might even travel back and forwards in time... When they had a continent to cross, they would travel by 200 m.p.h. monorail. When they had an ocean to cross, they would sail in giant passenger submarines, or they would travel beneath it in huge sub-oceanic pneumatic tubes linking one continent with another. It was not only mechanical forces which twentieth century man would exploit. He would also tap the neglected powers within his own being - mesmerism, telepathy, animal magnetism - the latent faculties would be harnessed to accomplish feats dreamed of but never achieved by the visionaries of the past. Wild speculation? Anything but. The citizen of 1900, looking forward with such high hopes to the century before him, based those hopes firmly on what had already been accomplished in the century behind him." 6.

But amidst the optimism was a jarring note - a note provided by H.G. himself:

> "...even at the time the scientist's faith was not shared by all: for the journalist, this time, had doubts. H.G. Wells published his The Sleeper Awakes early in the new century: it was a brilliantly prophetic

vision of an age when scientific inventions had been perverted to serve the debasement of religion and the enslavement of most of the population. It was a theme which was to be taken up by many writers during the half century to come: but then they, unlike Wells, had had more than a moment to reflect in. He alone seems to have seen that science presented mankind, not with the certainty of a better world, but with a choice between paths which led to the better or the worse. Sixty years later we are still as undecided as ever which to choose..." 7.

H.G.'s experience of life and people, combined with his biological training, led him to temper his hope with stark realism. As we approach the end of the most tumultuous century of human history, we can appreciate his caution. Let us proceed in some measure to examine its origins.

2. Atlas House and Uppark.

There is a sense in which H.G.'s early life revolved around two diametrically opposite poles: the respective worlds of Atlas House and Uppark. Atlas House was the failing china shop in Bromley, Kent, owned and effectively mismanaged by his cricket-loving father, Joseph Wells. Uppark was the Featherstonehaugh country estate to which 'little Bertie's' mother Sarah Wells, escaped when she could stand Joe and imminent bankruptcy no longer. Formerly the maid of the lady of the manor, she now returned as head housekeeper. It was to Uppark that H.G. repaired on school holidays, during illness, and each time he managed to contrive an escape from yet another grinding apprenticeship in the draper's trade.

H.G. revolted at the squalor and meanness of life at Atlas House. At the same time he rebelled at the social constraints that sought to keep him in his place in the orderly hierarchy of Uppark. In Tono-Bungay, a semi-autobiographical novel, (almost all his novels were semi-autobiographical) published in 1908, Wells describes in vivid and biting satire life at "Bladesover", a fictional Uppark. He remarks upon his growing sense that there was something inherently wrong with things as they were:

> "Now the unavoidable suggestion of that wide park and that fair large house, dominating church, village and countryside, was that they represented the thing that mattered supremely in the world... They represented the Gentry... by and through and for whom the rest of the world... breathed and lived and were permitted... it was only when I was a boy of thirteen or fourteen and some queer inherited strain of skepticism had set me doubting whether Mr. Bartlett, the vicar, did really know with certainty all about God, that as a further and deeper step in doubting I began to question the final rightness of the gentlefolk, their primary necessity in the scheme of things. But once that skepticism had awakened it took me far and fast. By fourteen I had achieved terrible blasphemies and sacrilege..." 8.

That he was never really a part of either world may go far to explain his obsession with creating new worlds of his own. Nevertheless, it is clear that he was influenced decidedly by both the worlds of Atlas House and Uppark. He derived from the unique perspectives of each his understanding that the future must be different if humanity was truly to begin the process of maturation.

Atlas House must have been a nightmare, a bad dream remembered only with pain. H.G. was convinced that his father was "conned" into acquiring it:

> "An obliging cousin... with a little unsuccessful china and crockery shop... offered it to my father on reasonable terms. It was called Atlas House because of a figure of Atlas... in the shop window. My father... spent all his available savings and reserves... And so they were caught... they had no means of getting out of it..."[9]

The neighbourhood in which Atlas House was located was even less imposing than the shop:

> "Next to Atlas House... the tailor kept a couple of men sewing in a workroom that looked into Joe Wells' yard- a cause of continual worry to Sarah Wells who suspected that they squinted out of the window to note the family's comings and goings to the privy... in 45, Woodall's fishmongery, and just along the street... an imposing butchery which usually had twenty carcasses and a few score fowls hanging up outside to catch the eye and attract the flies..."[10]

His memories of his days there are of a lifestyle cramped almost beyond enduring. In Experiment in Autobiography he describes a typical day

in the life of Atlas House:

> "My father would get up and rake out and lay and light the fire... she would get breakfast while he took down the clumsy shop shutters and swept out the shop. Then came... hunting the boys out of bed, seeing that they did something in the way of washing, giving them breakfast and sending them off in time for school. Then airing and making the beds, emptying the slops, washing up the breakfast things... perhaps a dusty battle to clean out a room... or a turn at scrubbing... the splintery rotten wood of a jerry built house... My father usually bought the meat for dinner himself, and that had to be cooked and the table laid in the downstairs kitchen... the room was dark... and intermittently darker because of the skirts and boots going by the grating... My mother... was just the unpaid servant of everybody... We drank beer that was drawn from a little cask in the scullery, and if it went a little flat before the cask was finished it had to be drunk just the same..." 11.

Uppark, on the other hand, was a tease. It hinted at possibility - and with possibility came hope. Despite his scathing satire of Uppark in Tono-Bungay and elsewhere, H.G. still had an admiration of that which it implied. If Atlas House imbued the young Wells with a desire for escape, then Uppark imbued him with a desire to attain; and indeed provided him with a powerful model of what life could be:

> "... it is one of my firmest convictions that modern civilization was begotten and nursed in the households of the prosperous, relatively independent people... Within... these households... men could talk, think and write at their leisure. They were free from inspection and immediate imperatives. They... could go on after thirteen thinking and doing as they pleased... their libraries... retained into the nineteenth century an atmosphere of unhurried liberal enquiry, of serene and determined insubordination and personal dignity, of established aesthetic and intellectual standards. Out of such houses came the Royal Society... the first museums and laboratories and picture galleries, gentle manners, good writing, and nearly all that is worthwhile in our civilization today... it has been far more through the curiosity and enterprise and free deliberate thinking of these independent gentlemen than through any other influences, that modern machinery and economic oganization have developed so as to abolish at last the harsh necessity for any toiling class whatever. It is the country house

that has opened the way to human equality, not in the form of a democracy of insurgent proletarians, but as a world of universal gentlefolk no longer in need of a servile substratum. It was the experimental cellule of the coming Modern State." 12.

3. Plato and other Friends.

H.G.'s model for the world state did not spring from experience alone, but from the world of books. He gained an insatiable appetite for reading while convalescing at Atlas House from a broken leg, and later, while on his visits to Uppark. Of his first adventures in reading, H.G. writes:

> "I cannot recall now many of the titles of the books I read, I devoured them so fast, and the title and the author's name in those days seemed a mere inscription on the door to delay me in getting down to business. There was a work, in two volumes, upon the countries of the world... illustrated with woodcuts... it took me to Tibet, China, the Rocky Mountains, the forests of Brazil, Siam and score of other lands... I read too in another book about the distances of the stars, and that seemed to push the All Seeing Eye very agreeably away from me. Turning over the pages of the Natural History, I perceived a curious relationship between cats and tigers and lions and so forth... and curious premonitions of evolution crept into my thoughts... I read the life of the Duke of Wellington and about the American Civil War... the works of Washington Irving... Later on... Fenimore Cooper and the Wild West generally..." 13.

The meatier reading was to come later, at Uppark. In Tono-Bungay Wells emphasizes the potent nature of the ideas he uncovered by having his fictional alter-ego, George Ponderevo, obtain his reading material illicitly from the Bladesover library:

> "The book-borrowing raid was one of extraordinary dash and danger... down the main service stairs... was legal... illegality began in a little landing when, very cautiously, one went through a red baize door... a dash across the open space at the foot of the great staircase... and so to the saloon door... That door was the perilous place; it was double, with the thickness of the wall between, so that one could not

> listen beforehand for the whisk of the feather brush on the other side. Oddly rat-like, is it not, this darting into enormous places in pursuit of the abandoned crumbs of thought?... I found Langhorne's Plutarch... on those shelves. It seems queer to me now to think that I acquired pride and self-respect, the idea of the state and the germ of public spirit, in such a furtive fashion; queer, too, that it should rest with an old Greek, dead these eighteen hundred years to teach me that." 14.

The reality at Uppark was rather more prosaic in style, but equally revolutionary in substance:

> "Sir Harry Featherstonehaugh, like many of his class and time, had been a free-thinker, and the rooms downstairs abounded in bold and enlightening books. I was allowed to borrow volumes and carry them off to my room... I improved my halting French with Voltaire's lucid prose... I nibbled at Tom Paine, I devoured an unexpurgated Gulliver's Travels and I found Plato's Republic..." 15.

Here was explosive stuff: In Plato, H.G. discovered the mentor who would guide the course of his life and work:

> "Here was the amazing and heartening suggestion that the whole fabric of law, custom and worship, which seemed so invincibly established, might be cast into the melting pot and made anew." 16.

The heart of H.G.'s whole vision is captured in that sentence.

From these newly-made literary friends, H.G. was able to begin the construction of an articulate literary base upon which to build a vision of a world profoundly different from that which he had hitherto experienced. More to the point, he came to realize that the art of letters was capable of things far more substantial than mere entertainment or stylistic appeal. He began to understand the power of the pen to teach and to move minds.

Years later, H.G.'s publisher, W.E. Henley, urged him to struggle with his writing, that it might develop into something close to aesthetic perfection. But, as Anthony West points out, his father had other fish to fry:

> "... the height of his aspiration was to become one of the world's great teachers. His two most keenly felt literary admirations testify to this, they were for Swift and Voltaire, writers who had written less for writing's sake than to make other men ask themselves what they were doing with their lives, with the object of improving the quality of life for all mankind. Henley may have made a novelist of my father, but he had not given him literary ambitions." 17.

4. Variations on a Theme: Optimism and Darwinism

It was certainly true that the eminent biologist and teacher, T.H. Huxley, a leading disciple of Charles Darwin, was a role model for H.G.; and Huxley and Darwin together provided him with an intellectual framework large enough and strong enough to last a lifetime. In Experiment in Autobiography he writes:

> "That year I spent in Huxley's class, was beyond all question, the most educational year of my life. It left me under that urgency for coherence and consistency, that repugnance from haphazard assumptions and arbitrary statements, which is the essential distinction of the educated from the uneducated mind." 18.

He continues to write of Darwin and of Huxley together:

> "These two were very great men. They thought boldly, carefully, and simply, they spoke and wrote fearlessly and plainly, they lived modestly and decently; they were mighty intellectual liberators. It is a pity that so many of the younger scientific workers of today, ignorant of the conditions of mental life in the early nineteenth century and standing for the most part on the ground won, cleared and prepared for them by these giants, find a perverse pleasure in belittling them. In a thousand respects their work was incomplete and tentative... That does not alter the fundamental magnificence of Darwin's and Huxley's achievement. They put the fact of organic evolution upon an impregnable base of proof and demonstration so that even the Roman Catholic controversialists at last ceased to vociferate... and discovered instead that the Church had always known about Evolution... just as it had always known about the place of the solar system in space... Darwin and Huxley... belong to the same aristocracy as Plato and Aristotle and Galileo..." 19.

It is only reasonable that their influence should be so profound. Aside from their established greatness, they were also the first real intellects, that is to say contemporary intellects, to which Wells, as a young student, was exposed.

But the theme of Wells' life, the future of humanity in a world state, or modern state was to be far larger than that which Huxley could provide. Wells determined that:

> "... the essential and permanent conflict in life is a conflict between the past and the future, between the accomplished past and the forward effort... the continual automatic struggle of the thing achieved, to hold the new, the new-born individual, the new-born idea, the widening needs of the species, in thrall." 20.

For H.G., the hope was always that the future would win out - but, he well knew, the future was always at risk. The world state was the future, and the prejudices and habits, personal, national and international of the past threatened to strangle it at birth: or, more likely, to abort it.

There are, then, two contrasting and conflicting variations on this theme of future versus past. They are optimism on the one hand (or perhaps I should more correctly say hope, for I have earlier noted that H.G. was <u>not</u> an optimist in any facile sense); and Darwinism on the other. I say Darwinism rather than pessimism, or even despair, for although Wells recognized the ultimate authority of the law of entropy and the second law of thermodynamics; and although, late in his life he told Sir Ernest Barker that his epitaph should be:

"God <u>d</u>amn you all; I told you so;" 21.

and although the world of 1946, the post Hiroshima world, seemed doomed to commit mass suicide; yet still I do not sense that H.G. ever gave up hope.

In an essay entitled "I Believe", written in 1939 on the obvious brink of a world war that should have been avoided, H.G. wrote:

> "I find myself almost alone with my outcries. People about me drift, with a quiet and rather amused complacency toward disaster. 'Why worry,' they say... 'So what can be done? One man tells us this and another that.' To which the only possible retort is: 'Why not think for yourselves? Why not come into the thinking and planning before it is too late?'... The hour is late, but still amidst the deepening shadows we may yet be in time." 22.

One of Wells' recent biographers, Frank McConnell, holds, I suspect, the key to H.G.'s hope. He sees H.G. as molded, not only by the fateful realism of Darwin, but also by the Victorian understanding of 'Will':

> "Wells was a complicated and troubled man who held (as most complicated and troubled people do) that simplicity and resolute cheerfulness are supreme virtues... In this he was a true son of his age. The Victorian Era... was a period of murderous psychological and political tensions kept just below the surface of consciousness by... the Will... Wells throughout his life was a great believer in Will... The word and the concept appear in his fiction and his nonfiction from nearly the beginning to nearly the end of his career." 23.

But, continues McConnell:

> "If Darwin was right... then humankind was demoted... it was simply and temporarily a successful adaptation of the primal world-stuff in its ceaseless blind struggle to survive... it was, on the cosmic scale... a temporary and perishable commodity. Wells... was the heir to not only the Victorian apotheosis of the Will, but its Darwinian negation... if Wells was a true Victorian in his faith in the power of the Will, he was also a true Edwardian in his open doubt about the final usefulness of that faith when weighed against the inexorable processes of uncaring nature." 24.

McConnell sees this tension between Will and evolution as embodied in the time traveller of The Time Machine:

> "The narrator of The Time Machine says of the Time Traveller that he 'thought but cheerlessly of the Advancement of Mankind, and saw in the growing pile of civilization only a foolish heaping that must inevitably fall back upon and destroy its makers in the end.' There speaks the evolutionary theorist... But, the narrator himself continues, 'If that is so, it remains for us to live as though it were not so.' And there speaks the romantic, the exponent of Will, the man who never stopped hoping that there might after all be some final appeal against entropy, against fate... Those two voices continue their debate in Wells' work to the end of his life, and their uncertain contest is one of the great dramas of his writing... he was infinite in hope, yet sober in expectation." 25.

5. The Scientific Romanticist.

In content, Mr. McConnell seems to be quite correct: the two voices are raised in tension, and that tension is never quite resolved. But stylistically, H.G. began, and remained a romantic, dealing, in the words of Mr. Webster's dictionary, in the "fanciful, imaginative... ideal." [26] It was the theme of the 'little man', armed, perhaps, with some scientific knowledge, courage in a hostile universe, and hope, who captured the imagination of Wells' early audiences in The Time Machine, The War in the Air, First Men in the Moon, In the Days of the Comet, and so on.

It was the romance of his characters' struggle against fate and their place in society in Kipps, The New Machiavelli, and Tono-Bungay that titillated his readers during the early middle years of his career. And it was his ability to portray our human history as the greatest of our romances that gained him such a vast readership and fame with The Outline of History.

This romantic tone seems to have been a part of his nature; the artistic outlet for the two voices of which McConnell speaks. It was intentional from the beginning:

> "For the writer of fantastic stories to help the reader to play the game properly, he must help him in every possible way to domesticate the impossible hypothesis. He must trick him into an unwary concession to some plausible assumption and get on with his story while the illusion holds. And that is where there was a certain novelty in my stories when they first appeared. Hitherto... the fantastic element was brought in by magic. Frankenstein, even, used some jiggery-pokery magic to animate his artificial monster. There was trouble about the thing's soul. But by the end of the century it had become difficult to squeeze even a momentary belief out of magic any longer. It occurred to me that instead of the usual interview

> with the devil or a magician, an ingenious use of scientific patter might with advantage be substituted. That was no great discovery. I simply brought the fetish stuff up to date, and made it as near actual theory as possible." 27.

Clearly a romantic manifesto.

The Shape of Things to Come, however brilliantly it translated into film, must still be seen, except by the enthusiast, as rather dry reading. Yet, even in this book, written in 1933, at the height of H.G.'s didactic period, romance is carried like a simple yet subtle chord, underlying, even undergirding a complex symphony; and sometimes the chord comes crashing through to dominate the whole. Witness the tragic denouement of the love triangle among Arden Essenden, a founder of the Modern State; Elizabeth Horthy, an aviatrix of the new order; and Jean Essenden, the jealous wife. Arden betrays Jean with Elizabeth; Jean betrays Arden with false testimony before the World Council: the result - Essenden is ordered to comply with the time honoured 'Socrates solution':

> "There is no description of the last moments of Arden Essenden, the man who had drafted the proclamation that founded the World-State. Possibly he did sit for a while in some sunlit garden and then quietly swallowed his tabloid. He may have thought about his life of struggle, of his early days in the years of devastation and of the long battle for the World-State... or perhaps according to all the rules of romance he thought only of Elizabeth. Much more probably he was too tired and baffled to think coherently... Elizabeth Horthy killed herself that day... She took the nearest way out of the world by flying her machine to an immense height and throwing herself out. She went up steeply. It was as though she was trying to fly right away from a planet that had done with romance." 28.

But throughout all, the ultimate hero of H.G.'s romances - scientific, social, sexual, and political - is the ideal of the World State: H.G.'s personal, illusive Holy Grail, after which all his characters quest.

6. The Social Novelist and the Novel Socialist.

For H.G., teacher and world builder, all thoughts and words - romantic, scientific, or otherwise - must have an issue in the tangible affairs of humanity. For Wells, this issue was socialism. Despite Anthony West's important insight that his father was more truly an encyclopoedist of the Diderot mold, H.G. makes himself particularly clear: he saw himself as a socialist. But typically, he insists on defining socialism in his own terms. In Socialism and the Family, written in 1907, H.G. writes:

> "Socialism... is to me a very great thing indeed, the form and substance of my ideal life, and all the religion I possess. Let me make my confession plain and clear. I am, by a sort of predestination, a Socialist... Socialism is no piece of political strategy... it is a plan for the reconstruction of human life, for the replacement of a disorder by order, for the making of a state in which mankind shall live bravely and beautifully beyond our present imagining." 29.

He places his declaration of socialism, and describes its roots, as germinating between 1884 and 1887, as a science student in London, under Huxley:

> "...I found in the advancing socialist movement, just the congenial field for the mental energy that was repelled by those courses in physics and geology... The socialist movement in England was under the influence of Ruskin... run by poets and decorators like William Morris... brilliant intellectual adventurers like Bernard Shaw... teachers... like Graham Wallas, advanced high churchmen like Stuart Headlam... a small group of civil servants like Sydney Webb... William Burton... and I declared ourselves to be socialists... with red ties..." 30.

H.G.'s political commitments did not only lead him to become a social novelist; he was also a novel socialist. Anthony West writes:

"My father had put himself out on a limb by declaring himself an

> anti-Marxist socialist committed to the view that the rigidity of Marxist dogma made it useless as a tool for apprehending the realities of a world of evolution and growth. He was particularly firm in holding to his thesis that there could be no future for a working-class party that thought of itself as having interests diametrically opposed to those of the rest of the community. To stick with that concept meant sticking to the politics of class war, and that had to be as destructive and as wasteful of human potential as any other kind of warfare. It could only lead to a dead end, for socialism, and for human progress." 31.

H.G. had little patience with the narrow and limited vision of the socialist leaders in the England of his day. In Experiment in Autobiography he comments on his active involvement with Labour Party politics:

> "... in the general elections of 1922 and 1923 I contested London University as an official Labour candidate... But... the leaders and makers of socialism misconceived the great problem before them... The local Socialist parish or town councillor who is the typical unit politician of the Labour Party, is the last person likely to understand and welcome enlargements that will abolish all those parochial intimicies to which he owes his position." 32.

His criticism of class-struggle socialism à la Marx was regular and scathing. One of the most angry assaults against Marxism is found in The World of William Clissold, published in 1926. It bears quoting in some length:

> "And now I can come to the maggot, so to speak, at the core of my decayed Socialism - Karl Marx. To him we can trace, as much as we can trace it to any single person, this almost universal persuasion... that economically we are living in a definable Capitalist System... and that the current disorder of human affairs is not a phase but an organized disease that may be exorcised and driven off. Then after a phase of convalescence the millenium... he presents the source and the beginning of one of the vastest and most dangerous misconceptions, one of the most shallow and disastrous simplifications, that the world has ever suffered from. His teaching was saturated with a peculiarly infectious class animosity. He it was who poisoned and embittered

> Socialism, so that today it is dispersed and lost and must be reassembled and rephrased and reconstructed again slowly and laboriously while the years and the world run by. He it was who was most responsible for the ugly ungraciousness of all current Socialist discussion... though his work professed to be a research, it was more of an invention... from the first questions of policy obscured the flow of his science... He imposed this delusion of a system with a beginning, a middle, and an end upon our perplexing economic tumult..." [33.]

For H.G., Socialism was something else:

> "Socialism is still essentially education, is study, is a renewal, a profound change in the circle of human thought and motive. The institutions which will express this changed circle of thought are important indeed, but with a secondary importance. Socialism is still the incomplete, the still sketchy and sketchily indicative plan of a new life for the world, a new and better way of living, a change of spirit and substance from the narrow selfishness and immediacy and cowardly formalism, the chaotic life of individual accident that is human life today, a life that dooms itself and all of us to thwartings and misery. Socialism, therefore, is to be served by thought and expression, in art, in literature, in scientific statement and life..." [34.]

Words spoken in the style of an evangelist: which, really, he was.

His gospel was the World State; his way, the Open Conspiracy.

7. The Great Educator.

If socialism to H.G. was essentially education, then H.G. for the balance of his life, from 1907 onward, became the quintessential socialist. But this is purely in a formal sense, for H.G. had been an educator from his earliest days as a student teacher under Horace Byatt; and he would remain an educator, teaching, prodding and probing until his death.

I have, in the previous chapter, outlined to some extent Wells' role as an educator. I have no wish to be redundant. But there is a biographical insight I wish to offer the reader. It does not concern Wells' effect on education so much as it concerns education's effect on him. From 1890 to 1893, H.G. was intimately involved in the University Correspondence College in London. While preparing correspondence courses in biology, and writing for the 'Educational Times', Wells articulated the question out of his experience in education which would lead him to his understanding of the whole purpose of education as the way to rebuild the world:

> "... I reviewed practically every work upon education that was being published at that time. Educational theory was forced upon me. This naturally set me asking over again... 'What on earth am I really up to here? Why am I giving these particular lessons in this particular way? If human society is anything more than a fit of collective insanity in the animal kingdom, what is teaching for?' At intervals, but persistently, I have been working out the answer to that all my life..." 35.

8. World-Builder.

Clearly, teaching was for world-building: at least to H.G. According to his Experiment in Autobiography, it was during his early adolescence, at Uppark, that H.G. came to the conclusion that:

> "... if one does not accept the general ideas upon which the existing world of men is based, one is bound to set about replanning and reconstructing the world on the ideas one finds acceptable. Ultimately I was to come to a vision of a possible state of human affairs in which scarcely one familiar landmark would remain. But revolution on that scale was beyond the courage of my youthful imagination. I was definitely in opposition to the structural concepts of this world into which I had come, and that is as far as I went. I was almost cowed into conformity by the realization of the magnitude of the structures involved. I was in rebellion, but it was still quite impotent rebellion." 36.

World-building, or at the very least, having an influence for the better on potential world-builders, may have been beyond his grasp when a youth at Uppark, but it was not to remain so. In 1939 Wells wrote an essay, which I have already cited, for an anthology of personal creeds of the then contemporary great, entitled, I Believe. In this essay he describes the symptoms of a world grown ill:

> "The world has plainly become much darker and more dangerous... Open free speech has ceased over vast areas. There has been much almost promiscuous killing, much waste of natural resources and much economic disorganization. Violence has made headway against the world's peace and the level of civilized life is visibly sinking. The element of hope for a new way of living in Soviet Russia has dwindled. The call for positive activities to arrest this world-wide dissolution is much more urgent than it was." 37.

He continues to delineate some of the causes of this illness:

"Throughout the ages the processes of social life have been carried on by long-established and well-defined classes, professions, and types of functionary, priest, soldier, lawyer, artisan, merchant, peasant... A sort of rough social balance among these elements had stood the tests of several thousand years... Life adapted itself gradually to such gradual changes as were in progress... Then suddenly came the onset of power machinery and a new scale of human operations... New methods... have twisted the old functional classifications of mankind in peace or war almost out of recognition... traditions... now plainly mischievous or reduced to utter futility, tangle us into the most alarming and sanguinary strains and stresses. Old classes change or vanish; new ones appear... And everywhere there appears a new hitherto unheard-of stratum of able-bodied, unemployed, untrained, and aimless young men... All the civilized communities suffer from a sort of cancer of irrelevant, useless, energetic young people. Their lack of function is a purely disintegrating force... Human life has stalled..." 38.

And he offers a remedy:

"... it seems plain that this problem of the reclassification of society and the reorientation of humanity to a new, vaster, richer, and more satisfying set of objectives has to be tackled strenuously and immediately... Only an enormous intellectual effort throughout the whole world can now arrest the headlong deliquescence of human society that is now in progress... '...Adapt yourselves to these greater demands or perish.'... Build up an acceptable vision of a new world, make, not a flimsy gesture of good intentions, but set to work, to work hard, to produce a reasoned, and tried and tested common plan that will hold human minds together in a new order in the world. The effort may seem well-nigh hopeless in the face of contemporary fatalism, but it is the only thing to do. That is why I say and repeat, first in this form, then in that, that an educational revolution, a new Encyclopedism, must be the basis of any better human life, and that failing that, we shall, as humanity, perish. At present all our efforts to produce a new human society are insufficiently implemented with knowledge. More science is needed, more interchange, and more mental synthesis." 39.

H.G. began by building fantasy worlds, both of hope and of despair, in his science fiction. He rapidly realized the urgent need for rebuilding the world of reality. By the end of the first decade of this century, he had devoted himself to this latter task. He remained devoted to it until the last weeks of his final illness, in the summer of 1946.

9. Ashes to Ashes.

We all die. Even the stars perish. And some day, in the almost unimaginably distant future, if the astro-physicists are correct, all that has ever been in this universe of ours will collapse, and come rushing back to one infinitesimal spot, and literally disappear, leaving only nothingness - until, perhaps, the next big 'bang'.

By the advent of the second world war, H.G.'s time to die was fast approaching. By 1942, a serious illness was driving his star into eclipse. And, in the midst of war, it seemed that his particular brave new world would not even be healthily conceived, let alone survive gestation to birth, before he himself must surrender to death.

The world was mad, and H.G. was beginning to wonder whether salvation was possible, or even desirable: or whether all should be destroyed in order to begin again. In a letter to George Bernard Shaw in 1941, he wrote:

> "At present the whole species is mad... We are as a people, a collection of unteachable dullards at war with an infectious lunatic and his victims... I don't care if all the treasures of art in the world are ground to powder. (This is between ourselves.) I want to see humanity de-cultivated and making a fresh start. Culture is merely the ownership of stale piddle. Mantagna, Brahms, my Tang horse, St.Paul's Cathedral, I rank a little higher than the lavender smelling correspondence of my nicer great aunts. I would like to keep them but not if they lead to idolatry." [40.]

His last half decade was a difficult time, the alternating periods of

malignancy and remission of his cancer of the liver seeming to set the rhythm for the alternating bouts of frustration and faint hope in his last writings. But no matter how grim the world scene was becoming, the Stoic in Wells continued to wax strong. In 1945, after Hiroshima, he wrote concerning a copyright of a film venture with Alexander Korda:

> "The human situation is grave and tragic, a thing he has been saying for the past half-century; it is and has been obvious to the clear sighted for all that time, but that is all the more reason why man should face his culminating destiny with dignity and mutual aid and charity, without hysteria, meanness and idiotic misrepresentation." 41.

Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie describe his last days:

> "During the last months, though H.G. was weak and ailing, he could still husband his energies... Two months before he died, Compton Mackenzie called on him. H.G. was 'sitting with his coat and waistcoat off, thus displaying a remarkable pair of braces decorated with nymphs and lilied pools...' While they were having tea, the maid brought in the evening paper. H.G. looked at it and tossed it aside. 'I have just read an article I wrote fifty years ago and if it was reprinted today I should not have to change a word of it.'... From the beginning of August H.G. kept to his room, but he seemed better and his family expected him to rally. On the afternoon of Thursday 13 August 1946 he told his nurse that he would take his customary nap, and sent her away. A few minutes later, at 4:15, he died." 42.

J.B. Priestly spoke at his funeral:

> "... the man who could write Kipps and Mr. Polly and Tono-Bungay... who was not only a tremendous character but also a most lovable man... When he was angry, it was because he knew, far better than we did, that life need not be a sordid greedy scramble; and when he was impatient it was because he knew there were glorious gifts of body, mind and spirit only just beyond our present reach." 43.

The Mackenzies concur with Priestly's assessment:

"Priestly... had been the spokesman for the generation who felt that Wells had been their spokesman, giving himself to a great vision and martyring himself in its service. It was by that dream that he had lived, and was remembered... No other man, spanning the years between the Origin of the Species and the Hiroshima bomb, had so faithfully mirrored the dualism of his own kind or demonstrated better the conflict of the divided self that could not accept the human condition." 44.

Gip Wells and Anthony West scattered their father's ashes over the sea:

"The idea of burying my father at sea had come... during the memorial service at the crematorium. A passage from the last chapter of his novel Tono-Bungay, 'Night and the Open Sea' had been read with telling effect, and while listening to its description of the book's narrator taking his newly-launched torpedo boat destroyer down the Thames and out into the North Sea to run its speed trials, my half-brother (Gip) had thought... that will be the right thing to do... 'We make and pass,' the passage concludes... 'We are all things that make and pass, striving upon a hidden mission, out to the open sea." 45.

SECTION II: The World and Mr. Wells.

Chapter One: Visions Dark and Visions Glorious.

"Build up an acceptable vision of a new world.... I say and repeat, first in this form and then in that..."[1]. The first form which H.G. used was science fiction - and the first themes were grim. This is reasonable enough, considering that H.G.'s experience of life up to 1894 had been rather weighted on the grim side; and he was almost fresh from his newly gained understanding of the inexorable fatalism of evolution as taught by Huxley. There was, furthermore, a strong literary influence underlying the bleakness of H.G.'s first published works. In an introduction to one of the earliest anthologies of his science fiction novels, H.G. writes that his earliest "books are consciously grim, under the influence of Swift's tradition."[2].

In retrospect it seems almost impossible to miss the Swiftian satire, the deadly seriousness, which pervades The Time Machine and The Island of Dr. Moreau. Yet one of Wells' French critics, Vernier, wrote that The Time Machine:

> "... however dire its implied prophecies and however dark its central vision... is still primarily an entertainment, a fantasy intended, and taken by its audience, less as a cautionary parable than as a diversion."[3].

There is no doubt much truth in what Vernier says with respect to audience response: The Time Machine is entertaining. But to leave it at that would be comparable to missing the awful message embodied in

Swift's "Modest Proposal" for a solution to the problems of Ireland in his day.

Even in his earliest work, H.G. was not out solely to entertain. He was already beginning the lifelong task of building an acceptable vision of a new world. His first technique was to demonstrate clearly that which was not an acceptable vision. That these early tales were stories of the fantastic does not render them any less significant. Wells writes that:

> "In all this type of story the living interest lies in their non-fantastic elements and not in the invention itself. They are appeals for human sympathy quite as much as any 'sympathetic' novel, and the fantastic element, the strange property or the strange world, is used only to throw up and intensify our natural reactions of wonder, fear or perplexity." [4.]

Right from the beginning, the living interest for H.G. does not reside solely in the individual characters, but in the life of society as a whole. He writes:

> "The Time Machine is indeed quite as philosophical and polemical and critical of life... as Men Like Gods written twenty-eight years later. I have never been able to get away from life in the mass and life in general as distinguished from life in the individual experience, in any book I have ever written. I differ from contemporary criticism in finding them inseparable." [5.]

But H.G.'s early visions were not only dark. True to McConnell's analysis, Wells' Darwinian fatalism was balanced against his Victorian faith in Will:

> "... I am neither a pessimist nor an optimist at bottom. This is an entirely indifferent world in which wilful wisdom seems to have a perfectly fair chance. It is after all rather cheap to get force of presentation by loading the scales on the sinister side." 6.

A study of H.G.'s early attempts at world building should therefore include both the dark and the bright visions. In the following pages I shall look first at the dark visions of the future: if for no better reason than chronological precedence. I have chosen three, each with a slightly different perspective on future dangers: The Time Machine; The Island of Dr. Moreau; and When the Sleeper Wakes.

From these decidedly dystopian visions, I shall move to discuss two decidedly utopian books: The Food of the Gods and In the Days of the Comet. I shall conclude the chapter with a brief note on Wells' conscious move away from science fiction, to more overt work concerning the World State and the future of humanity.

1. Future Fears.

The Time Machine literally exploded onto the stage of English letters in 1895; and the force of its explosion catapulted its twenty-nine year old author into national prominence. It was published first in serial form in the 'New Review', and its critical reception, in a review by W.T. Stead in March of 1895, was astonishing:

> "H.G. Wells... is a man of genius... The story is not yet finished, but he has written enough to show that he has an imagination as gruesome as that of Edgar Allan Poe." 7.

No less astonishing were the circumstances under which it was written. Basil Copper describes the context of its creation:

> "H.G. Wells' first literary work of any importance and one that was to launch the former draper's assistant on a dazzling career was written incredibly quickly in 1894... in Sevenoaks... where he... a married man was living illicitly with the young and attractive Catherine Amy Robbins... In January 1894, the young lovers set up house and in August of that year... accompanied by Mrs. Robbins... caught the train at Charing Cross for Sevenoaks... In the fortnight they spent on holiday... Wells, aged only twenty-eight, wrote The Time Machine from some commissioned articles. This must be something of a literary record." 8.

The storyline of The Time Machine must, by now, be universally familiar:

It begins prosaically enough, as per H.G.'s usual formula of beginning in the common place. A group of old friends, of an intellectual and curious nature, have gathered for dinner at the home of the Time Traveller. In the course of the evening, he introduces to them the tangible results of a certain research: a model of a time machine. The guests are incredulous, even

after the miniature disappears "somewhen" into time before their eyes.

But the real shock comes one week later when the friends return to find that the Time Traveller has himself ventured into the far future on the completed, full size invention.

Upon his return into their midst, he describes his horrifying adventures in the year 802701. In that far distant future humanity as we know it has evolved into the frail, innocent, pleasure seeking, and totally useless Eloi, who live in Eden-like simplicity; and the grotesque, distorted, bestial Morlocks, who live below ground, in a world filled with darkness and the sinister throbbing of great engines.

The Time Traveller falls in love with Weena, one of the Eloi, but their love is doomed by the evolutionary realities which have reduced the Eloi literally to cattle to feed the Morlocks. The Time Machine is stolen by the Morlocks, and the Time Traveller must venture into their dark underworld to save it and himself. His escape carries him into an even more distant future, where he witnesses the last days of a dying earth under the feeble light of a sun grown cold. And so back to his friends to tell the story. But he doesn't remain long; he returns to the future, perhaps to find Weena, and to try and change destiny in the face of hopeless odds.

There is almost an overabundance of riches with respect to themes to be examined in The Time Machine. Literary analysis alone could occupy the scholar thoroughly. From a Darwinian perspective we find in the Eloi a

grim warning that a species may be doomed as much by overadaptation as by a failure to adapt. In the Time Traveller's ultimate return to the future we find the philosophical struggle between the power of fate and the belief in free will. From a political point of view, we see the first rumblings of H.G.'s ultimate criticism of Marxism, as the causus belli in an inevitably destructive class war.

But from the point of view of H.G. as world builder, we see a warning against a possible future arrived at largely through muddleheadedness and a lack of planning.

It is an unacceptable vision of a new world: a vision in which society has gone wrong through an unwillingness to resolve the conflict between Capital and Labour, the Haves and the Havenots.

It is also a refutation of the utopian visions of other world-builders. The degenerate Eloi are a biting parody of the garden-world utopia of William Morris' News from Nowhere; and the bestial Morlocks are a satire of the machine managed future of Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward.

The Time Traveller provides the analysis of what went, or, I suppose, what would go wrong:

> "... proceeding from the problems of our own age, it seemed clear as daylight to me that the gradual widening of the present merely temporary and social difference between the Capitalist and the Labourer, was the key to the whole position. No doubt it will seem grotesque enough to you... and

> yet even now there are existing circumstances to point that way. There is a tendency to utilize underground space for the less ornamental purposes of civilization; there is the Metropolitan Railway in London, for instance, there are new electric railways, there are subways, there are underground workrooms and restaurants, and they increase and multiply... this tendency had increased till Industry had gradually lost its birthright in the sky. I mean that it had gone deeper and deeper into larger and ever larger underground factories, spending a still increasing amount of its time therein, till, in the end - ! Even now, does not an East-end worker live in such artificial conditions as practically to be cut off from the natural surface of the earth? Again, the exclusive tendency of richer people - due, no doubt, to the increasing refinement of their education, and the widening gulf between them and the rude violence of the poor - is already leading to the closing, in their interest, of considerable portions of the surface of the land. About London... perhaps half the prettier country is shut in against intrusion. And this same widening gulf - which is due to the length and expense of the higher educational process and the increased facilities for and temptations towards refined habits on the part of the rich - will make that exchange between class and class, that promotion by intermarriage which at present retards the splitting of our species along lines of social stratification, less and less frequent. So, in the end, above ground you must have the Haves... and below ground the Havenots..." 9.

If The Time Machine is a vision of society gone wrong, then The Island of Dr. Moreau is a vision of science, more especially biological science, gone wrong.

The vision described in The Island of Dr. Moreau far exceeds that of The Time Machine for intrinsic horror. So much so that the critical outrage heaped upon the later book easily matched the critical praise awarded the

first. A review in the "Times" declared:

> "... we feel bound to... give a word of warning to the unsuspecting who would shrink from the loathsome and repulsive. This novel is the strongest example we have met in the perverse quest after anything in any shape that is freshly sensational... The ghastly fancies are likely to haunt and cling, and so the book should be kept out of the way of young people and avoided by all who have good taste, good feeling or feeble nerves..." 10.

An eminent zoologist of the day, Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, wrote that "the author sought out revolting details with the zeal of a sanitary inspector probing a crowded graveyard." 11.

It is understandable that H.G.'s contemporaries were horrified. It is a horrifying book. But then it deals with a potentially horrifying issue: the thin line that divides what we think of as our humanity, from what we understand to be bestial.

For a society still reeling from the implications of The Origin of the Species, H.G.'s vivid warning must have been too much. Almost a century later, however, with the memory of Joseph Mengele's Auschwitz experiments still strong in our minds, and the terrible moral implications of genetic engineering looming like the shade of Dr. Moreau before us, we tend to be less sanguine concerning our "human nature."

The story concerns the misadventures of a certain Mr. Pendrick, a scientific dilettante, who finds himself, following the destruction of the ship on which he is travelling, cast adrift with two companions on a small

boat in the Pacific. They are without food and water, and are reduced to drawing lots to begin the process of cannibalism which might keep at least one alive, when Pendrick's two companions are lost overboard.

He is picked up by a passing steamer with some unusual passengers, and eventually is deposited on the island of Dr. Moreau, to await an eventual return to civilization. He very quickly learns that all is not normal on the island; particularly concerning certain of the horribly misshapen inhabitants.

Pendrick pursues one line of reasoning after another to try and make sense of his host's strange domain and its stranger populace; but he is forced to discard each until the awful truth dawns that the island dwellers are animals which Moreau has transformed into parodies of human beings through a ghastly process of vivisection and plastic surgery. Control over the beast-men is tenuous at best, and Pendrick's presence helps set in motion the sequence of events leading to the death of Moreau and his assistant, and the inevitable reversion of the tortured creatures to their animal existence. Pendrick eventually is able to build a raft and manouver out into the shipping lanes where he is rescued and returned to England. But the memories of the island, and its effect on him, have left him a haunted and tortured man, all too aware of the beast within:

> "... there are times when... I look about me at my fellow-men. And I go in fear. I see faces keen and bright, others dull and dangerous, others unsteady, insincere; none that have calm authority of a reasonable soul. I feel as though the animal

> was surging up through them; that presently the degradation of the Islanders will be played over again on a larger scale... I would go out into the streets to fight my delusion, and prowling women would mew after me, furtive men glance jealously at me, weary pale workers go coughing by me, with tired eyes and eager faces like wounded deer dripping blood, old people, bent and dull, pass murmuring to themselves, and all unheeding a ragged trail of gibing children." 12.

Frank McConnell sees a lesson in all this, and not only the warning against the abuse of science:

> "... it has taught Pendrick to be less certain of his self-confident 'humanity', less arrogant about the naturalness of his own civilization. It has shown him, and the reader, the potential abyss that lies on the other side of everything we believe in as civilized." 13.

Here we find the premonition, in a nutshell, of that which would be articulated by Wells as the great choice: sanity and the World State, or the abyss.

Where the critics recoiled in horror from The Island of Dr. Moreau, they might be said to have reclined in boredom at When the Sleeper Wakes. An anonymous reviewer of 'The Atheneum' wrote in 1899:

> "The world having survived the Martians, Mr. Wells carries on its history a stage further, and shows us what it will be two hundred years hence. The blasphemer will say... that it is a great pity that the Martians did not clear the whole place out, for a duller and more disreputable world than it becomes... would be difficult to conceive... Mr. Wells cannot be congratulated on his latest effort; it is not very ingenious, and it is distinctly dull." 14.

Compared to the startling content of The Time Machine and The Island of Dr. Moreau, When the Sleeper Wakes is rather slow going. But for the purposes of this thesis it is a valuable book indeed. It is a story of a future world; a not entirely implausible future world, in which the world's system, or lack of system, of finance and capital has developed cancerous proportions and distortions: it is a portrait of the ultimate interlocking directorship. It is also the dystopian shadow of the positive vision of a World State which Wells proposes over a quarter of a century later in The World of William Clissold.

At the beginning of the story we are introduced to Mr. Graham, who is not a well man. Indeed, he is so ill that he presently falls into a cataleptic state, a kind of suspended animation, and sleeps for two hundred years. One can see the influence of the young H.G.'s fondness for Washington Irving. But here is Rip Van Winkle with a typically sardonic, Wellsian twist. During his sleep, Mr. Graham has become the beneficiary of a number of very clever financiers and speculators, who, not wishing to see their great corporate and financial holdings reduced upon their own passing, settled their estates on the "Sleeper", sure that he would never inconvenience anyone by waking. But, he does; and he finds himself the sole owner of at least half the world:

> "... Money attracts money... They played it very cleverly. They worked politics with money, and kept on adding to the money by working currency and tariffs... for years the twelve trustees hid the growing of the Sleeper's estate under double names and company titles and all that. The Council spread by title deed, mortgage - share, every political party, every newspaper they bought... you

> will see the Council growing and growing. Billions and Billions... the Sleeper's estate." 15.

Mr. Graham is not at all sure he likes this state of affairs. He is even less sure as he meets the people who have become victims of this greatest of all trans-national corporations. To further complicate matters he falls in love. His attempt to wrest control of his unsought legacy in order to bring about a just society form the dramatic tension of the balance of the book.

But perhaps the most poignant thought with respect to the future of our planet is uttered early in the story, as Graham begins to realize to what kind of world he has awakened:

> "It seemed to him the most amazing thing of all that in his thirty years of life he had never tried to shape a picture of these coming times. 'We are making the future,' he said, 'and hardly any of us trouble to think what future we were making. And here it is!'" 16.

H.G. troubled to: and his books, particularly these dystopian visions, were written that we should trouble to think also.

2. Future Hopes.

If H.G. was capable of producing some of the grimmest and most dismal pictures of the future, he was equally capable of producing some of the most luminous. The Food of the Gods and In the Days of the Comet are particularly good examples of the latter. Wells notes in introducing them for an anthology, that they "are distinctly on the optimistic side." [17] They are also symptomatic of a turning point in H.G.'s work, concerning which more will be said shortly.

The Food of the Gods is a peculiar blend of the comic and the earnest. As Frank McConnell says:

> "There is something irresistibly funny about the idea of a giant chicken invading a village. And there is something irresistibly noble... about the idea of a gigantic man standing in the moonlight, raising his fist to the stars themselves." [18]

Yet both these scenes are part of this unusual novel: a novel that led to Wells' critics heaping abuse on him for exhibiting a "vulgar preoccupation with bigness." [19]

The story is told in two parts. In the first, two scientists discover a remarkable chemical which, when introduced as a food to any young living organism, increases its growth rate tenfold. Their experiments with this new food, through a series of comic errors, run amok; with the result that the balance of the first part of the novel is spent mainly in straightening up the mess and chaos wrought by a whole series of gigantic pests, from wasps to rats.

But the world of humans is touched even more significantly by their discovery, as the scientists supply certain children, including their own, with quantities of herakleophorbia, as the new substance is called. The second part of the book moves from the realm of the comic, into the very serious domain of the ramifications of the introduction into the world of a whole new variety of human being: gigantic not only in form, but in intellect.

The result is a mixture of tragedy and hope, as the conflict between the giant children, now grown to adulthood, and the rest of normal, little humanity, becomes a telling parable of Wells' theme of the brave new idea being mortally attacked by the pettiness and the intransigence of the established order.

G.K. Chesterton was unimpressed:

> "The old... story of Jack the Giant Killer is simply the whole story of man... But the modern world, like Mr. Wells,... is on the side of the giants: the safest place, and therefore the meanest and most prosaic. The modern world... talks of being strong and brave: but it does not see the eternal paradox involved in the conjunction of these ideas. The strong cannot be brave. Only the weak can be brave." 20.

But Frank McConnell argues, and I agree, that Chesterton has missed the point:

> "Wells acknowledges that The Food of the Gods is... an inversion of the tale of Jack the Giant Killer. But he does not (as Chesterton wrote)... tell it 'from the point of view of the giant'. He tells it, first, from the point of view of the little men who stumble on the Food; then from the point of

> view of men visionary enough to understand the true implications of that revolutionary giantism; and then, and only then, and very delicately, from the point of view of the supermen, the new men, the children of the Food who have been nurtured not only on 'Herakleophorbia', but also on the enlightened educational and social wisdom of their small but heroic fathers... who make possible the coming reign of the giants. These men... stage-manage the ascendancy of the new men. They are... utopian planners. And in telling their tale, Wells is... preparing his own distinctive voice as social prophet and social planner."

In the Days of the Comet is one of H.G.'s more straightforward stories. In his own words, it "is Utopian. The world is gassed and cleaned up morally by the benevolent tail of a comet." 22.

A benevolent effect indeed:

> "... man himself had not changed at all. We knew before the Change... by glowing moments in ourselves and others, by histories and music and beautiful things, by heroic instances and splendid stories, how fine mankind could be, how fine almost any human being could upon occasion be; but the poison in the air, its poverty in all the nobler elements which made such moments rare and remarkable - all that was changed. The air was changed, and the Spirit of man that had drowsed and slumbered and dreamt dull and evil things, awakened, and stood with wonder-cleaned eyes, refreshed, looking again on life." 23.

Passing through the tail of the comet transforms the life of the planet, and particularly the life of the typically Wellsian little man, Leadford, the working class hero of the story brutalized by things as they are, liberated by things as they become after the "Change."

The story was roundly condemned at its time of publishing because of one of its incidental themes concerning Leadford. Before the advent of the comet, Leadford was bent on violent revenge on his lover and the blackguard who 'stole' her. After the Change, though, he becomes so open and rational that he and three others set up a "menage à Quatres" with the young lady in question.

But the sexual element is of minor interest. Of far more significance is the realization that the model that Wells chooses for his cleaning up operations is none other than "those early Christian visions of apocalypse upon which the young H.G. Wells was reared." [24]. It is this almost unconscious incorporation of at least part of the Christian model of reality which I hope later to show as a significant element in the open conspiracy. But with respect to the open conspiracy, it is not the vision of apocalypse, but the parables of the kingdom which are the models borrowed from Sarah Wells' influence on her little Bertie.

In the Days of the Comet is even more important as a prime example of H.G.'s rather unique slant on the utopian vision. Frank McConnell explains that:

> "... this utopian fiction is not so much the fiction of an ideal society as it is a fiction of an ideal self for the narrator, and, implicitly, for every other inhabitant of the planet who reads the book. What might we be like if we were really human, really good, really adequate to the nagging sense of our possibilities?" [25].

This is Wells' call for a new way of thinking: towards a World State which would provide the environment for us to strive concretely towards a realization of our human potential.

Both In the Days of the Comet and The Food of the Gods are important as counterpoints to H.G.'s dystopian visions. But, for the purposes of this thesis, it is the latter which bears the greater significance. It marks the transition for H.G., in the first few years of the century, from a popular and controversial author of speculative fiction, to a committed social planner with very specific goals. As Frank McConnell notes:

> "... the book's modulation from comedy to earnestness is part of the modulation of Wells' own stance at this moment of his career. As long as humans remain immersed in their frantic preoccupation with the everyday, they will remain trivial, tiny creatures, unintentionally comic and perpetually endangered by the cosmic mechanism of evolution. But, once they begin to take stock of themselves and their true position in the universe, once they begin to think both realistically and energetically about the business of living, they can, Wells tells us, indeed become the fathers of gods, the founders of a humanity that might resist even the universal principles of entropy and extinction." 26.

For H.G., the time had come to take stock, and get on with the building of such a foundation.

3. "What, then, will work?"

Earlier in this thesis I noted that this question of H.G.'s is what makes of him, according to John Barker, a superhistorian. In context, the question seeks "an acceptable vision of a new world;" which H.G. believed was that of the World-State.

But the question applies just as much to H.G.'s own work: in his methods of presenting his ideas. By the turn of the century he had realized how critical the task of building a new world had become, and he was also aware that he was not making his points clear enough to inspire his readers to action.

Concerning The Food of the Gods, H.G. wrote in his Experiment in Autobiography:

> "The Food of the Gods... began with a wild burlesque of the change of scale produced by scientific men and ended in the heroic struggle of the rare new big-scale way of living against the teeming small-scale life of the earth. Nobody saw the significance of it, but it left some of its readers faintly puzzled."[27.]

By 1923, his frustration had reached a peak:

> "Men Like Gods... was almost the last of my scientific fantasies. It did not horrify or frighten, was not much of a success, and by that time I had tired of talking in playful parables to a world engaged in destroying itself. I was becoming too convinced of the strong probability of very strenuous and painful human experiences in the near future to play about with them much more."[28.]

H.G. continued in the same article to outline his plan for the balance of his life's work:

> "It becomes a bore doing imaginative books that do not touch imaginations, and at length one stops even planning them. I think I am better employed now nearer reality, trying to make a working analysis of our deepening social perplexities..." 29.

The balance of this paper will be devoted to the outcome of his analysis: the World State, and the Open Conspiracy to achieve it.

Chapter Two: The World State.

In the chapter of Experiment in Autobiography entitled "The Idea of a Planned World," H.G. remarks that by:

> "... 1900 I had already grasped the inevitability of a World State and the complete insuffiency of the current parliamentary methods of democratic government..." 1.

It was his realization not only of the inevitability, but, to his mind, the necessity of a World State, that, as I earlier noted in a quote by Lovatt Dickson, came to consume him. He knew that this passionate dream of his would not be easily realized; and he had a fairly realistic view of the particular role he might play in its realization:

> "At that early date I was somehow already alive to the incompatibility of the great world order fore-shadowed by scientific and industrial progress, with existing political and social structures. I was already searching about in my mind, and in the facts about me, for ideas about the political and social will and mentality that were demanded by these inevitable material developments. The fact that I regarded myself as a complete outsider in public affairs, and that I felt debarred from any such conformity as would have given me a career within the established political and educational machinery, probably helped importantly in the liberation of my mind to these realizations, and supplied the disinterested vigour with which I worked them out. I could attack electoral and parliamentary methods, the prestige of the universities and the ruling class, the monarchy and patriotism, because I had not the slightest hope or intention of ever using any of these established systems for my own advancement or protection. For a scientific treatment of the theory of government my political handicap was a release. I had the liberty of that irresponsible child in the fable of the Emperor's Clothes. I could say exactly what I thought because it was inconceivable that I could ever be a successful courtier." 2.

He said exactly what he thought concerning the World State in three distinctive types of writing:

1. Science Fiction:
2. "Mainline" Fiction:
3. Non-fiction.

In the ensuing chapter, I shall attempt to articulate his vision of the World State by offering examples from each of the above, in order.

1. The World State in H.G.'s Science Fiction.

At the end of the previous chapter, the reader may have been left with the impression that by 1923, H.G. had done with the writing of science fiction: but not so by a long way. With respect to the idea of the World State, his two most significant science fiction stories were yet to be written. The first was "The Queer Story of Brownlow's Newspaper," a short story written in 1931, published in "Ladies' Home Journal", of all places, and virtually ignored until 1971. The reader may recall the synopsis, in H.G.'s own words which I included in Section I, Chapter One, under the heading "H.G. as Futurologist." The newspaper from the future which Brownlow found in his letter box was "The London Standard" which revived interest in the story, and garnered itself an interesting feature for the day in question.

The second story is the weighty, and already oft mentioned The Shape of Things to Come. I would ask the reader to recall the link between this novel, published in 1933, and "Brownlow's Newspaper," which I also described while discussing H.G. as a futurologist. The detailed picture of the future World State which is so much a part of the later novel, is tantalizingly hinted at during the course of Brownlow's adventure.

> "The streamer headline across the page about that seven-mile Wilton boring, is, to my mind, one of the significant items in the story. About that we are fairly clear. It referred... to a series of attempts to tap the supply of heat beneath the surface of the earth... 'It was explained...,' said Brownlow... 'Old system... was to go down from a few hundred feet to a mile or so and bring up the coal and burn it. Go down a bit deeper, and there's no need to bring up and burn anything. Just get heat straightway. Comes up of its own accord - under its own steam. See? Simple.'" 3.

This was not the only science item included; and there seemed to be the expectation that the reader of the future would be rather more scientifically literate than his immediate ancestors:

> "The excitement about tapping the central reservoirs of heat... was not the only symptom of an increase in practical economic interest and intelligence. There was much more space given to scientific work and to inventions than is given in any comtemporary paper... A more intelligent world for our grandchildren evidently, and also, as the pictures testified, a healthier and happier world." 4.

True to his form, his reputation, and, in fairness, his beliefs, H.G. included a racy fashion section:

> "... people depicted in the social illustrations and in the advertisements seemed to have reduced body clothing... Breast and chest went bare... And then... long cloaks of the lovliest colours and evidently also of the most beautiful soft material, which either trailed up from a sort of gorget or were gathered up and wrapped about the naked body, or were belted up or thrown over the shoulders..." 5.

And then the first hints of the existence of a World State, through the political news:

> "I found the politician stirring in me. Was there really nothing about India?... Brownlow could not recall a mention of the British Empire as such, nor of the U.S.A. There was no mention of any interchanges, communications, ambassadors, conferences, competitions, comparisons, stresses in which these governments figured... I thought perhaps all that had been going on so entirely like it goes on today... that he had run his eyes over the passages in question and that they had left no distinctive impression on his mind. But... he is unshaken

> in his assertion that there were no elections in progress, no notice of parliament or politicians, no mention of Geneva or anything about armaments of war... It isn't that Brownlow didn't notice them very much; he is positive they were not there." 6.

The narrator, H.G. (under the name of Hubert George), draws some astonishing conclusions:

> "Now to me this is a very wonderful thing indeed. It means, I take, that in only forty years from now the great game of sovereign states will be over. It looks also as if the parliamentary game will be over, and as if some quite new method of handling human affairs will have been adopted." 7.

The nature of that "new method" is gradually revealed by inference:

> "There had been a picture of a landslide near Ventimiglia and one of some new chemical works at Salzburg, and there had been a picture of some fighting going on near Irkutsk... 'Now that was called... "Round-up of Brigands by Federal Police".' 'What Federal Police?' I asked. 'There you have me,' said Brownlow, 'The Fellows on both sides looked mostly Chinese, but there were one or two taller fellows, who might have been Americans or British or Scandinavian.'" 8.

But the Federal Police is only one level of the main surprise. Behind the Federal Police stood the Federal Board.

> "My mind... hangs on to that Federal Board. Does that phrase mean, as just possibly it may mean, a world federation, a scientific control of human life only forty years from now? I find that idea - staggering. I have always believed that the world was destined to unify - 'Parliament of Man and Confederation of the World,' as Tennyson put it - but I have always supposed that the process would take centuries. But then my time sense is poor. My disposition has always been to underestimate the rate of change." 9.

From the perspective of 1985, we might observe that H.G. could safely trust his disposition. Still, the world of Brownlow's newspaper is not entirely unrecognizable. And the method of its realization is hopeful, in fact comforting:

> "Is there some tremendous revolutionary smash-up ahead... against this idea... we have the fact that here forty years ahead is a familiar London evening paper still tumbling into a private individual's letter box in the most uninterrupted manner. Not much suggestion of a social smash-up there. Much stronger is the effect of immense changes which have come about bit by bit, day by day, and hour by hour, without any sort of revolutionary jolt, as morning or springtime comes to the world." 10.

In short, "The Queer Story of Brownlow's Newspaper" provides us with a complete picture of H.G.'s great hope: a World State brought into being by the conscious gradualism of an Open Conspiracy.

The Shape of Things to Come is more chilling. Although its end is bright enough, actually optimistic; it is by no Open Conspiracy that the World State is accomplished, but through the agencies of war, holocaust, disease, and ruthless oppression. But by 1933, Adolf Hitler was in power in Germany, and for H.G. the historian, there could be but one outcome of the increasingly tense international scene: war.

The future history, the dream book of Professor Raven, as edited by H.G., chronicles world-history from the end of World War I, through the traumatic years of the League of Nations, the next and last and worst

world war, and on into reconstruction by surviving aviators, who, operating out of their aerodromes in Asia Minor, establish the Technocracy which ultimately evolves into the Modern, the World, State.

The Shape of Things to Come is by turns fascinating and tedious; insightful and pretentious: but prophetic throughout. Prophetic in that ten years and more before the detonation of the first atomic weapons, by the United States against Japan, H.G. could read from the world around him the signs of impending global holocaust. His "shape" still fits uncomfortably close.

But this paper is not so much concerned with the doom as with the outcome of that doom: the "shape" H.G. gives to the World State once, rising through dark waters, it is established.

I suspect that personal and prophetic frustration, as well as his analysis of the dark world scene in the 'thirties' are reflected in the grim first chapters of The Shape of Things to Come. The world to H.G. was proceeding on such a muddleheaded and disaster bent course that the only thing for it was to knock everything down and start again from scratch. Only the strictest single-minded vision and utter ruthlessness could turn things around. The book is filled with single-mindedness and ruthlessness.

The vision of the World State which completes the book is almost desperately utopian by comparison to the way in which it is achieved in the

story itself, and to both the earlier vision in "Brownlow's Newspaper", and a later, nonfiction vision, a discussion of which will close this chapter.

The World state in The Shape of Things to Come is, to my mind, one of H.G.'s least attractive constructs. It is not a federation; regional integrity is denied. It is an extreme vision; far more so than in the later film version. I would suggest that it is a vision resulting more from H.G.'s fears than from his hopes. I believe it was Arthur C. Clarke, the eminent English scientist and author who once said that he wrote science fiction not so much in order to predict the future, but, in a modest way, to prevent certain variants of it from materializing.

Things to Come seems to me to be written in somewhat the same light. For H.G. the optimal vision remained the gradualism of the Open Conspiracy leading to the World State. That was the path of sanity. But if we choose an alternate path, the vision might easily be that of Things to Come: or worse.

But perhaps I digress; trying too hard to justify H.G., as he tried rather too hard to justify the ruthlessness and anti-semitism by which this ultimate utopia was to come to pass.

Certainly, he projects a remarkable future for our species.

"Book the Fifth" of The Shape of Things to Come is dedicated to a description of life in the World State: a World State hard won, as H.G. describes in synopsis form in the opening paragraphs of this section:

> "With the Declaration of Megeve in 2059 C.E. the Age of Frustration, the opening phase of the Era of the Modern State came to an end. Let us recapitulate that history in its barest outline. The World State had appeared dimly and evasively, as an aspiration, as a remote possibility, as the suggestion of a League of Nations, during the World War of 1914-18; it had gathered experience and definition throughout the decades of collapse and disaster; it had formally invaded human politics at the Conference of Basra in 1965 as manifestly the only possible solution of the human problem, and now it had completed its conquest of mankind." 11.

According to Wells, three major tasks now confronted the new World State:

> "In the first place traditions of nationality had to be cleared away for good, and racial prejudice replaced by racial understanding... Next a lingua-franca had to be made universal and one or other of the great literature-bearing languages rendered accessible to everyone... thirdly... issue had to be joined with the various quasi-universal religious and cultural systems, Christianity, Jewry, Islam, Buddhism... which right up to the close of the twentieth century were still in active competition with the modern state movement for the direction of the individual life and the control of human affairs." 12.

Needless to say, in Things to Come, the World State emerges victorious on all three counts. Recalling H.G.'s bias against established religion noted earlier in this paper, we may imagine with what delight Wells conquered religion in fiction.

The contemporary reader, and certainly the contemporary World Federalist, more pluralistic in his views, will probably find H.G.'s discussion of the conquest of religion as distasteful as it is unlikely. I do.

But there is much in the balance of his description of the World State and its activities which is both challenging and attractive. Take, for example, the ecological tidying up of the planet:

> "Directly we turn from humanity to other forms of life it is manifest that a most attractive realm is opening up to us. We may have new and wonderful forests; we may have new plants; we may replace the weedy and scanty greensward of the past by a subtler and livelier texture. Undreamt of fruits and blossoms may be summoned out of non-existence. The insect world, on which so much of the rest of life depends, may be made more congenial to mankind. The smaller fry of life and the little beasts and the birds can be varied now until they all come into a tolerable friendship with ourselves. As our hands lose their clumsiness we may interfere more and more surely with the balance of life. There is no longer fear of abundance now that man is sane. Our planning of human activities for the next few generations will involve no fundamental changes at all for humanity. It will be a keying-up for the sort of life for which our race... has always striven. At present deliberate weather control is too big a task for us, but we believe that a sure weather calendar for a year or so ahead is now becoming possible. An immense series of enterprises to change the soil, lay-out, vegetation and fauna, first of this region and then of that, will necessitate a complete rearrangement of the mines, deep quarries, road network and heavy sea transport of the globe... Industrial enterprises that formerly befouled the world with smoke, refuse and cinder heaps, are now cleaner in their habits than a well-trained cat." 13.

But the World State does not rest at simple ecological re-ordering. It moves into the area of what H.G. calls "geogonic planning":

"... the question the modern geographer puts to us is whether there is not a classification of habitats possible, into very desirable, undesirable and inimical, and whether a certain modification of the planet-levels operating in conjunction with the restorations of the forests now in progress would not greatly increase the desirable habitats, by a redistribution of rainfall, a change in the fall of the surface waters, protection from winds and so forth. A not very considerable rise in the Apennines, for instance, would bring them up to the permanent snow line and change the character of the entire Italian peninsula. And an increase in desirable habitats may bring with it an increase in the variety of desirable human types." 14.

But as always with H.G., first and foremost it is the people who are changed:

"We may now go naked, love as we like, eat, drink and amuse ourselves with our work or as we will, subject only to a proper respect for unformed minds. And no harm has been done at all... Properly nourished people do not take to gluttony, properly interested people are not overwhelmed by sex." 15.

Greater freedom and the relaxing of traditions and taboos in some areas of life does not mean that the World State is without standards:

"But while there has been release from... straitlaced sexual morals... in another field there has been no relaxation. The new order can tolerate no tampering with the monetary-property system which holds us all together. Not only is our police incessantly alert against robbery and cheating as the old world understood it, but many gainful practices that 1920 would have considered tolerable or even admirable are suppressed, and are likely to be suppressed for all time. Gambling, the mean desire and device to get the spending of someone else's earnings, is punished as heavily as the forgery of money checks... Money is a check for our personal needs, or for the giving of graceful presents. There must be no misuse of money to gain an advantage over another human being... There we are still bound. That sort of thing is the vice of cannibalism. Beyond that liberty increases daily." 16.

Thanks to the more equitable distribution of wealth in the World State, the world citizen of the future is able to enjoy his growing liberty to the full:

> "We have mentioned the travelling wealthy man of the seventeenth century, for then only the wealthy aristocrats could travel freely, and we have glanced at the cumbersome impedimenta of his voyage. Compare him with any ordinary man of today who decides to take a holiday and go to the ends of the earth. He may arrange with a travel bureau overnight for one or two special accomodations then off he goes in the clothes he wears. He takes a wallet with his money account, his identification papers and perhaps a memorandum book. He may wear... a personal ornament or so that has taken a hold upon his imagination. He may carry something to read or a specimen he wants to show. Whatever else he is likely to want on his way he will find on his way. He needs no other possessions because his possessions are everywhere. We have solved the problem of socializing property, the problem the early twentieth century was unable to solve. We have the use and consumption of material goods without the burden of ownership."

And how shall we describe this world travelling, world citizen in his World State?

> "... when we speak of a man today we really mean a different being from a nineteenth century man. Bodily he is sounder and fitter, almost completely free from disease; mentally he is clear and clean and educated to a pitch that was still undreamt of two centuries ago. He is over fifty instead of being under thirty. He is less gregarious in his instincts and less suggestible because he is farther away from the 'home and litter' mentality, but he is far more social and unselfish in his ideology and mental habits. He is, in fact, for all the identity of his heredity, a different animal. He is bigger and stronger, more clear-headed, with more self-control and more definitely related to his fellow creatures." 18.

In part, this increased level of relationship with his fellow creatures must be due to an increased capacity to communicate with them. H.G. as

narrator of the future tells how this came (will come?) about:

> "One of the unanticipated achievements of the twenty-first century was the rapid diffusion of Basic English as the lingua franca of the world and the even more rapid modification, expansion and spread of English in its wake." 19.

This "Basic English" was a very specialized language to say the least:

> "... an English of 850 words and a few rules of construction which would enable any foreigner to express practically any ordinary idea simply and clearly. It became possible for an intelligent foreigner to talk or correspond in understandable English in a few weeks. On the whole it was more difficult to train English speakers to restrict themselves to the forms and words selected than to teach outsiders the whole of Basic." 20.

Convenient though this may be, it hardly sounds like an attractive language. Fortunately, the World State would not be condemned to this functional "newspeak" any longer than necessary:

> "It is from phonetically spelt Basic English as a new starting-point that the language we write and speak today developed, chiefly by the gradual resumption of verbs and idioms from the mother tongue and by the assimilation of foreign terms and phrases. We speak a language of nearly two million words nowadays, a synthetic language in fact, into which roots, words and idioms from every speech in the world have been poured." 21.

But it is not simply through the mechanics of a common language that the human species has become more closely bound together, but through the assimilation of a common body of knowledge. Here H.G. exhibits that

leaning towards the Encyclopoedism of Diderot that Anthony West so astutely observes. For in the World State we find that:

> "... there has been what our great-grandparents would have considered an immense increase in the amount, the quality and the accessibility of knowledge... there... appears a collective Brain, the Encyclopoedia... which accumulates, sorts, keeps in order and renders available everything that is known." 22.

And the citizen of the World State is better equipped and freer to make use of this vast new knowledge than were his forebearers:

> "We are still creatures with brains like our fore-fathers... but we are not using those brains for the same purposes. The Modern State... has taken all the interests of the food-hunt and the food-scramble, and all the interests of the struggle to down-and-out our human competitors, away from the activities of the individual human brain... The work we must do is not burdensome in amount, it is the most congenial our educational guardians can find for us and help us to find... We are still competitive, more so perhaps than ever... but the interest we feel in our work is a masterful interest and not a driven interest, and our competition is for distinction..." 23.

As a result:

> "Man becomes more curious, more excited, more daring, more pleasantly occupied every year. The more we learn of the possibilities of our world and the possibilities of ourselves, the richer, we learn, is our inheritance. This planet, which seemed so stern a mother to mankind, is discovered to be inexhaustible in its bounty. And the greatest discovery man has made has been of himself. Leonardo da Vinci with his immense breadth of vision, his creative fervour, his curiosity, his power of intensive work, was the precursor of the ordinary man, as the world is now producing him." 24.

On the face of it, the vision of such a world seems ridiculously optimistic; and yet, even now, a small percentage of humanity, in North America and

western Europe, enjoy many of those hopes that H.G. holds for all humanity. What stands in our way, except ourselves? So felt Professor Raven of the dream-book which is The Shape of Things to Come: so felt H.G.:

> "Plainly the thesis is that history must now continue to be a string of accidents with an increasingly disastrous trend, until a comprehensive faith in a modernized World State, socialistic, cosmopolitan and creative takes hold of the human imagination. When the existing governments and ruling theories of life, the decaying religious and the decaying political forms of today, have sufficiently lost prestige through failure and catastrophe, then and only then will world-wide reconstruction be possible." 25.

And who will it be who causes the idea of such a World State to take hold of the human imagination? For H.G., the Open Conspirator:

> "And it must needs be the work, first of all, of an aggressive order of religiously devoted men and women who will try out and establish and impose a new pattern of living upon our race." 26.

2. The World State in H.G.'s "Main-Line" Fiction.

I have noted repeatedly, and quoted the observations of others, that the idea of the World State is all-pervasive in Wells'-writing. Having illustrated his vision of the World State in specific instances of his science fiction, I should like to turn to his "main-line" fiction: by which distinction I mean those works which take place in what we might term the "real world"; the world of our day-to-day experience.

The World of William Clissold is such a novel; and for the purposes of this thesis it is an almost ideal selection. It was published in 1926, two years before H.G. published The Open Conspiracy: Blue Prints for a World Revolution, and its primary theme is the struggle of its hero, William Clissold, to articulate his vision of the World State and of an Open Conspiracy.

It is one of H.G.'s more unusual books. It is enormous, comprising two volumes of nearly eight hundred pages. In many places it is pedantic, even polemical. And it harbours a thesis which cost its author much support in the English left: the idea that transnational corporations can be transformed to a working model of service rather than profit-making; and more, that the American model of business might be the real hope of the future.

These elements, and at least a dozen others, would be worthy of a thesis in their own right. Of importance for this paper is the book's

clear articulation of the World State and the Open Conspiracy; the latter of which I shall return to in the next chapter.

First, to set the scene: the novel purports to be a series of writings of the late William Clissold, killed prematurely, along with his mistress, in an automobile accident in the south of France. As always with H.G., there is much autobiography. The papers are edited into book form by Clissold's brother, who also figures prominently in the story, and is the way by which Wells introduces the idea of the potential of the right kind of mass advertising in propagandizing for the World State.

The story details the lives of William and Dickon from the time their financier father commits suicide after being exposed in a swindle, through their schooling and education, and on into their adult lives, with all the complication of adulthood.

Dickon becomes an advertising genious, and William, having first dedicated himself to a career of pure scientific research, finds himself through the vagaries of fortune as an industrial researcher, and eventually as a businessman of no mean talent. But he is not satisfied with the world as he finds it, nor with his contribution to its transformation. So it is that in his fifties he retires to his French Villa to write his book, which will sort out not only his own life, but the collective life of humanity.

His researches and his reflections lead him to the conclusion that the

World State is not only inevitable, but necessary:

> "I do not regard the organization of all mankind into one terrestrial anthill, into Cosmopolis, the greater Athens, the Rome and Paris and London of space and time, as a Utopian dream, as something that fantastically might be. I regard it as the necessary, the only possible continuation, of human history. To fail to take that road will mean a fraying-out and a finish to that history, a relapse through barbarism to savagery, to the hard chances of animal life, for a creature too scarce and long-lived to be readily adaptable, and so at last surely to extinction." 27.

To avoid such a tragic destiny, Clissold perceives that what must be achieved is a World State which will be:

> "... a single terrestrial system of economic production and social cooperation." 28.

But Clissold lives during the time of the troubled League of Nations, and he is not at all certain that a Federation would be the best form for the World State:

> "In the end it might, under the most hopeful conditions, give the World... a Supreme Court of international law and a confederated world government with a limited ability to call upon national armies and navies to enforce its decisions. But though this is the only proper legal way, I doubt if it is the effective or desirable way, and I doubt still more whether the sort of Federal World Congress it might ultimately produce, with its delegated and attenuated powers and its constitution repeating the most approved features of its constituent governments, would be able to perform any of the chief functions of an adequate world control." 29.

He goes still further in defining, with respect to governmental form, what the desired World State will not be:

> "People are too apt to assume that a world directorate, a world

> republic, would have to be just the sort of government we find today in a typical sovereign state, magnified to a world size - a sort of Parliament of Mankind with a World President, a World Emperor, in some suitably placed palace. They imagine someone hoisting the 'world flag' amidst an uproar of military bands and a blaze of 'world' uniforms. I think that is an entirely misleading assumption." 30.

The management and priorities of the World State will be, Clissold imagines, something entirely different:

> "The old type of government from which our present ones derive, regarded war as the primary fact in life and took the small scale multitudinous economic affairs of its people almost for granted. The world government we desire will be primarily social and economic. It will have hands instead of teeth and claws. It will not be a descendant or a direct development; it will have evolved along different lines." 31.

Clissold wishes his reader to be perfectly clear that there will be no martial bent to the World State, that:

> "... a world government will not be a combative government; there will be nothing to combat. The world republic will be fighting nothing but time and space and death. It will have no foreign minister. It will have no army or navy. Its general suavity will be tempered by an effective intolerance of armaments and of the making of lethal weapons anywhere... It will neither expand nor conquer nor subdue nor include the governments of today; it will efface them." 32.

But Clissold the world-builder, as with H.G. the world-builder, has no intention of defining the World State solely or even primarily by what it will not be:

> "If on the one hand the coming world directorate will obliterate

> many of what we now regard as the most essential aspects of contemporary governments, it will on the other penetrate far more deeply than they do into the current life of mankind. It will be actively organizing the world production and the world distribution of most staple products; it will have incorporated the steel trust, all the mineralogical industries, all the chemical industries, power production and distribution, agricultural production and distribution, milling, catering, the transport organizations of the world and the chief retailing businesses into one interlocking system. It will exploit all the wind and water power of the world... It will be not a world kingdom, nor a world empire nor a world state but a world business organization." 33.

And a well-run business it will be, with form strictly following function;

> "... it will no doubt have an extremely intricate constitution but one nevertheless in practical harmony with its functions. It will be checking its efficiency and varying and improving its processes easily and naturally through the research departments it will have evolved. It will be making a record of its proceedings and exposing itself freely to criticism. And it will be directing the education and biological life of the world community..." 34.

And, Clissold feels, such a change in the running of the affairs of humanity was even then within the capacity of the international business community to achieve:

> "It is only now that the men of finance and industry are coming together freely and talking plainly, that we begin to realize how much of the old order is already existing merely on our suffrance. It is within the power of the bankers of the world now to forbid the growth or even the maintenance of armaments. They can forbid the building of battleships and insist on education. They can turn expenditure from unproductive to productive channels. If they do not do so it is because they are disunited and unaware or unsure of their power." 35.

Or possibly because they discovered, or perfected, that which Eisenhower labelled the "military - industrial complex." There are flaws in the <u>World of William Clissold</u>. But before the reader becomes too exercised,

please be sure that H.G. was his own best critic and editor:

> "The World of William Clissold... was published as an important book and it received a very considerable amount of useful destructive criticism. So that I reconsidered... almost as soon as it was launched. It was a sound instinct which made me do that book not in my own first person but in the form of a trial personality. I was soon struggling to disentangle myself from rash commitments of Clissold's and get on to a revised view." 36.

In his Experiment in Autobiography, published eight years after The World of William Clissold, H.G. explained some of the book's limitations, and the reasons for them:

> "All this was written before anyone was thinking of such an American president as Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his astonishing effort so to regulate a loose capitalist system as to thrust it rapidly towards state socialism. Where the Clissold version... is least defensible is in its easy disregard of the fact that though privately created productive, industrial and distributive organization is to a large extent capable of direct socialization, private finance is something absolutely and incurably different in its spirit and conduct from any conceivable sort of public finance... The public control of credit and a scientific reorganization of the world's monetary system is the necessary preliminary stage in carrying out a planned economy." 37.

H.G. also confesses that he was still too caught up in his own battle against what he believed were the disastrous doctrines of Marxism:

> "... in an exaggeration of my own aversion from the class-war doctrine - too wide a gap was set by Clissold in his world between the industrial organizer and the technological assistant and skilled artisan... I was identifying myself with my imaginary business man almost too thoroughly. I was evidently still sore about the Labour Party as I had found it... I underrated the steadily increasing intelligence of the more sophisticated workers and of the ambitious younger working men. To them at any rate William Clissold is an impersonation to apologize for." 38.

But the book should not be judged too harshly. For all its failings, the final vision of the World State, as Clissold says:-

> "... is visibly greater and nobler than the old; it liberates the last of the slaves, rejects servility, calls on every man for help and service." [39.]

And it should be remembered that The World of William Clissold was an experiment; a testing of the waters. As H.G. wrote in 1934:

> "I had had this first exercise in general political statement handed back to me with ample corrections - mostly in red ink, - and I wanted to profit by them." [40.]

Profit by them he did. In Experiment in Autobiography, H.G. explains that:

> "The World of William Clissold ... anticipated a more serious attempt at social analysis... The Open Conspiracy (1928) and The Shape of Things to Come (1933)." [41.]

That makes The World of William Clissold a very important experiment indeed.

3. The World State in H.G.'s Non-fiction.

There seems to be a kind of progression in realism in H.G.'s vision of the World State, running from his science fiction, through his novels, and into his non-fiction. In his science fiction, the World State is by far the most ideal, and its founding far the most drastic (at least in Things to Come); in The World of William Clissold, the World State is to be ushered in far less catastrophically; and by the time we reach H.G.'s non-fiction, we are listening to the voice of sweet reason. Nevertheless, the vision of a unified, organized World State remains constant.

If the World State was the great issue of H.G.'s life, then it seems only appropriate in examining it in his non-fiction, to turn to what was surely the greatest of his non-fiction works: The Outline of History. Even more so if the reader will recall from the section of this paper which dealt with H.G. as an historiographer, that the aim of The Outline of History was to present a unified picture of the whole history of humanity. In a sense, The Outline of History is the foundation for the building of the next phase of the human construct, the World State.

The earlier, and detailed, discussion of The Outline of History, and of its impact on the English speaking world, should be an entirely adequate introduction to the text. Let me turn immediately, therefore, to the discussion of the World State, which forms a part of the conclusion of the second volume of the revised edition.

The study of history leads us to a variety of conclusions. One that seems particularly obvious to H.G. is that:

> "Unless we are to suppose that spontaneous outbreaks of supermen have occurred in the past, it is reasonable to conclude that the Athens of Pericles, the Florence of the Medici, Elizabethan England, the great deeds of Asoka, the Tang and Ming periods in art, are but examples of what a whole world of sustained security would yield continuously and cumulatively." 42.

Such a world-wide golden age would be rendered possible through the establishment of the World State:

> "Whatever be the fate of the United Nations, there can be little question that the attainment of a federation of all humanity, together with a sufficient measure of social justice, to ensure health, education, and a rough equality of opportunity to most of the children born into the world, would mean such a release and increase of human energy as to open a new phase in human history." 43.

H.G., his life drawing to a close amidst the slaughter and waste of another world war, had adopted what might be described as a minimalist approach to a World State: a world federation, not unlike the one William Clissold had been so unsure of nearly twenty years earlier.

The spectacle of the tragic waste all round him had modified his stridency to something like a plea for sanity:

> "... since the liberation of human thought in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a comparatively few curious and intelligent men... have produced a vision of the world and a body of science that is now, on the material side, revolutionizing life... It is impossible to believe that these men were the maximum intellectual harvest of their generation... All the world over, there must have been myriads of potential first-class investigators, splendid artists, creative minds, who never caught

a gleam of inspiration or opportunity, for every one of that kind who had left his mark upon the world... But a world with something like a secure international peace, and something like social justice, will fish for capacity with the fine net of universal education... It is such considerations as these which justify the concentration of effort in the near future upon the making of a new world state of righteousness out of our present confusion." 44.

In introducing his epic novel, The Winds of War, Herman Wouk refers to the French Jew, Julien Benda:

"Peace, if it ever exists, will not be based on the fear of war, but on the love of peace. It will not be the abstaining from an act, but the coming of a state of mind. In this sense the most insignificant writer can serve peace; where the most powerful tribunals can do nothing." 45.

H.G. would have agreed, and, in The Outline of History, is clearly serving peace according to the standards of Benda:

"War is a horrible thing... but the strongest incentive to constructive political and social work for an imaginative spirit lies not so much in their mere hope of escaping evils as in the opportunities for great adventures that their suppression will open to our race. We want to get rid of the militarist, not simply because he hurts and kills, but because he is an intolerable thick-voiced blockhead who stands... in our way to achievement. We want to abolish many extravagances of private ownership just as we should want to abolish some idiot guardian who refused us admission to a studio in which there were fine things to do." 46.

Wells stresses that it is not a static utopia he envisions:

"... people... seem to imagine that a world order and one universal law and justice would end human adventure. It would but begin it." 47.

He continues with a bit of daydreaming about the future:

> "To picture to ourselves something of the wider life that world unity would open to men is a very attractive speculation... We have already laid stress on the vast elimination of drudgery... through the creation of a new race of slaves, the machine. This, and the disappearance of war and the smoothing out of endless restraints and contentions by juster social and economic arrangements, will lift the burthen of toilsome work... from our children. Which does not mean that they will cease to work, but that they will cease to do irksome work under pressure, and will work freely, planning, making, creating, according to their gifts and instincts." 48.

In the World State, humanity will reinterpret Genesis: we shall no longer see ourselves as dominating nature, but as exercising stewardship over it:

> "Men will turn again with renewed interest to the animal world... one of the first fruits of an effective world state would be the better protection of what are now wild beasts. It is a strange thing in human history to note how little has been done since the Bronze Age in taming, using, befriending, and appreciating the animal life around us..." 49.

The possibilities, H.G. would tell us, are virtually limitless. One of the great frustrations of his life and work continued to be the difficulty of convincing people on the one hand of the enormous, unimaginable possibilities before us, and on the other, that these possibilities can be realized:

> "... one of the hardest; most impossible tasks a writer can set himself, is to picture the life of people better educated, happier in their circumstances, more free and more healthy than he is himself. We know enough today to know that there is infinite room for betterment in every human concern. Nothing is needed but collective effort and mutual toleration." 50.

But he knows this is easier said than done; and now we place in context a phrase quoted much earlier in this thesis:

> "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe. Against the unifying effort of Christendom and against the unifying influence of the mechanical revolution, catastrophe won. We cannot yet tell how much of the winnings of catastrophe still remain to be gathered in, what vast harvests of wasted lives still await the reaper." 51.

Nevertheless, H.G. continues to take the long view. Indeed, we might ask, what other view is there?

> "It is not more than five hundred years since the great empire of the Aztecs still believed that it could only live by the shedding of blood... The day may be close at hand when we shall no longer eat out the hearts of men, even for the sake of our national gods. Let the reader but refer to the earlier time charts we have given in this history, and he will see the true measure and transitoriness of all the conflicts, deprivations, and miseries of this present period of bleak and painful, and yet, on the whole, of hopeful change." 52.

Let me pause for a moment to summarize H.G.'s vision of the World State as I have tried, in some measure in this chapter, to articulate it.

Regardless of its genesis, the World State will be marked by, among unimaginable other things:

- universality;
- peace and prosperity;
- justice and the civilized rule of law;
- political simplicity but administrative complexity;
- great personal growth and freedom;
- unthought of collective possibilities;
- ecological sanity;
- scientific living.

And, ideally, the World State will not have to arise from the ashes of today's world; but will grow from within it, through the beneficent offices and the concerted effort of the Open Conspiracy, to which we now turn our attention.

Chapter Three: The Open Conspiracy.

Although the idea of the World State had been uppermost in his mind since the turn of the century, the Open Conspiracy, which was to be H.G.'s optimal vision of how such a World State might be brought into existence, was a somewhat later creation. In H.G. Wells: Aspects of a Life, Anthony West offers a helpful synopsis of how the idea of the Open Conspiracy crystallized. He locates its orgins as flowing from an address H.G. gave at the Sorbonne in March of 1927, entitled "Democracy Under Revision."

> "My father's Sorbonne presentation... received the final accolade of being published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf... later in the year... it reads more convincingly today than it did then. It now seems far-sighted in its expression of faith in the proposition that Democracy has a future... My father had the acumen to tell his Sorbonne audience that it was not living through the start of a new authoritarian or totalitarian age but enduring a time of troubles marking the transition from one democratic epoch to another." 1.

According to West, H.G. saw this transition as necessary:

> "He felt that something had gone very wrong with the adversary parliamentary democracy of the era that was coming to an end, because its characteristic features... led almost inevitably to polarization and confrontation... Under the norms of parliamentary democracy, the first concern of any incoming government... was as likely as not to be the annulment or reversal of the largest possible part of its predecessor's policies and programs... it (was)... less concerned with the common good than with the establishment of its tenuous identity." 2.

It would have been entirely out of character for H.G. not to have had a solution to this problem:

"My father's belief was that the revitalization of democracy could be achieved by a shift from adversary to consensual politics.— He felt that the first step in this direction was electoral reform, holding that proportional representation... would bring in government by coalition and break up the party system. He thought that when that happened the energy that had traditionally gone into the maintenance of the distinctions between parties... would be channeled into a search for common ground, and into collaborative efforts to achieve genuinely worthwhile legislative aims." 3.

However, H.G. was not convinced that electoral reform would be enough:

"He didn't believe that any form of democracy could survive over the long haul while the greater part of the voting mass remained marginally literate and effectively innumerate." 4.

And so he took the plunge, and identified himself with what must have seemed an elitist philosophy, but which, in essence was not:

"He was arguing that the time had come for the educated to save democracy from itself by becoming a political force. The intelligentsia of the world was appealed to. Its members were to commit themselves en masse to the creation of a liberal-humanitarian consensus based on the scientific outlook... What was there to prevent a drive for social and economic world unity from succeeding if the educated minority in every country - ... all of mankind that mattered - got behind it?" 5.

What H.G. was describing, of course, was the Open Conspiracy. According to West:

"My father was not proposing a take-over by jack-booted thought-controllers, or, indeed, any kind of authoritarianism. He had something more like the working of yeast in the body of a loaf in mind - it was to be a matter of permeation, influence and persuasion... The Open Conspirators, as

> he was later to call them, were simply to be there wherever and whenever policies were to be framed and decisions made. They were to be routinely present in the political parties, in the agencies of national and local governments, on the boards of the public companies and the great multinational corporations, in banking, in the professional organizations, and in the trades unions. They were to be inescapable, and they were to speak in the cause of reason and the common good. Rationality was to come in like an irresistible tide." 6.

In the balance of this chapter I intend to expand on this idea of the Open Conspiracy: first by studying its experimental and fictional roots in fiction, in The World of William Clissold; second, by examing its particulars in H.G.'s own articulation, The Open Conspiracy; and last, by drawing a sketch of a typical Open Conspirator, from H.G.'s novel Meanwhile.

1. The Open Conspiracy in Fiction.

The shortcomings of The World of William Clissold were discussed at some length in the preceeding chapter. But despite its failings, I would again ask the reader to bear in mind its experimental nature, and to remember that out of its corrected faults grew The Open Conspiracy.

As we return to our hero, William Clissold, we find him discussing yet again the state of human affairs, and what is necessary if humanity is to become the master and not the victim of those affairs:

> "Humanity is confronted by the necessities and opportunities of a great metamorphosis, and our wills and imaginations are lagging and we are failing to square ourselves and prepare our successors for the great tasks of our inheritance. This "Open Conspiracy" I am now setting myself to explain, is a project to make the apprehension of this metamorphosis fundamental and directive in human affairs. It is an attempt to harmonize people's lives with this metamorphosis and to undermine and defeat the resistances that may divert its forces towards destruction." 7.

As West has pointed out, the conspirators are to be drawn from the intelligentsia; but in the case of Clissold's vision, from a particular segment of the intelligentsia:

> "... it is absurd to think of creative revolution unless it has power in its hands, and manifestly the chief seats of creative power in the world are on the one hand modern industry associated with science and on the other world finance." 8.

Today when we think of the Open Conspiracy being led and dominated by this particular group we shudder somewhat. We think of the Gnomes of

Zurich; of Anaconda Copper and the Central Intelligence Agency; of the dark plotting of a Robert Ludlum thriller like The Matarese Circle. But I have already acknowledged Wells' own critique of this original choice of conspirator, and he states reservations in The World of William Clissold itself:

> "I admit how poor are the present materials for this creative conspiracy." 9.

But, personalities and even types aside, the basic idea of the Open Conspiracy is solidly established in The World of William Clissold. Its method is clear:

> "It is not a project to overthrow existing governments by insurrectionary attacks, but to supersede them by disregard... It will respect them as far as it must. What is useful of them it will use; what is useless it will efface by its stronger reality; it will join issue only with what is plainly antagonistic and actively troublesome. It seeks to consolidate and keep alive and develop the living powers in the world today by an illumination, a propaganda, a literature, a culture, an education, and the consciously evolved expectation of a new society." 10.

Its quality as "Open" is explained:

> "Because of its continual progressiveness this great revolution which is now becoming apparent must necessarily continue to be open and explicit, continue to appeal to fresh types and extend its spirit and understanding into the lives of a larger and larger proportion of mankind. In no other way can it escape frustration. In that sustained openness it differs from any preceding process of success and replacement." 11.

With but relatively minor changes, the final definition Clissold provides for the Open Conspiracy remains recognizable in H.G.'s subsequent work on the idea:

"It is the simplification by concentration into large organizations of the material life of the whole human community in an atmosphere of unlimited candour. It is explanation and invitation to every intelligent human being to understand and assist. It is the abandonment of all reservation in the economic working of the world. It is the establishment of the economic world-state by the deliberate invitation, explicit discussion, and co-operation of the men most interested in economic organization, men... fully aware of its importance and working with the support of an increasing general understanding." 13.

2. The Open Conspiracy.

By 1928, armed with the corrections demanded by The World of William Clissold, H.G. felt prepared, and indeed pressed, to articulate in his own name the precepts and principles of the Open Conspiracy. In May, the book of the same name was published. It is not a large volume, but it is a significant one; particular was it significant to H.G.:

> "This book states as plainly and clearly as possible the essential ideas of my life, the perspective of my world. Everything else that I have been or done seems to me to have been contributory to or illustrative of these ideas and suggestions. My other writings, with hardly an exception, explore, try over, illuminate, comment upon or flower out of the essential matter that I here attempt at last to strip bare to its foundations and state unmistakably. This is my religion. Here are my directive aims and the criteria of all I do." 14.

With the intensity and certainty of a prophet he states:

> "I am discussing here the possibility of an immense and hopeful revolution in human affairs and of an enlivening and ennobling change in our lives. I am discussing whether our species... is to live or die." 15.

He continues on the theme of religion, taking what he sees as a religious impulse in humanity very seriously. This book is a call to treat the Open Conspiracy as a call to religion: a religion of service, of liberation, of hope. Like all healthy religions and religious impulses, it must exist in and of the light:

> "The conspiracy of modern religion against the established institutions of the world must be an open conspiracy and

> cannot remain righteous otherwise. It is lost if it goes underground. Every step to world unity must be taken in the daylight, or the sort of unity that will be won will be found to be scarcely worth the winning. The essential task will have to be recommenced within the mere frame of unity attained." 16.

A significant portion of the book discusses the problems and difficulties which the Open Conspiracy will have to face and surmount: challenges from without and within the movement. But for our purposes, we are more concerned with the qualities and characteristics of the Open Conspiracy:

> "At the outset, the Open Conspiracy, as it reaches beyond the range of exceptionally well-informed and mentally active people, must be very largely an educational propaganda..." 17.

A complex organizational structure will not be a first priority of the Open Conspiracy:

> "The form in which the Open Conspiracy will first appear will certainly not be that of a centralized organization. Its most natural and convenient method of coming into being will be the formation of small groups of friends, family groups, groups of students and employees or other sorts of people meeting and conversing frequently in the course of their normal occupations, who will exchange views and find themselves in agreement upon the general idea." 18.

If the conspiracy is to be truly open, then it follows that "the Open Conspiracy must be heterogeneous in origin." 19.

It will find itself expressed in a variety of groups with a variety of capabilities:

> "These initial groups will be of no uniform pattern. They will be

> of very different size, average age, social experience and influence... It is highly improbable that the name of the Open Conspiracy will be applied to any of them. That is just a provisional name in these Blue Prints... A group of students may find itself capable of little more than self-education and personal propaganda; a group of middle-class people in a small town may find its small resources fully engaged at first in such things as... seeing that desirable literature is for sale or in the local public library, protecting books and news-vendors from suppression, or influencing local teachers. Most parents of school children can press for the teaching of universal history and sound biology and protest against the inculcation of aggressive patriotism. On the other hand, a group of ampler experience and resources may undertake the printing, publication and distribution of literature, and exercise considerable influence upon public opinion in turning education in the right direction. The League of Nations societies, the Birth Control movement... are fields into which groups may go to find adherents more than half prepared for them."[20]

Regardless of the diversity of the groups, and the difference in their capacity to act, one issue will be common, "from the outset, the Open Conspiracy will set its face against militarism."[21]

As long as this common ground at least is maintained, H.G. saw real advantage in a diversity of groups:

> "A comprehensive organization attempting from the first to cover all activities would necessarily rest upon and promote one prevalent pattern of group and hamper or estrange the more interesting and original forms... Each group should come together and develop its ideas, frankly and freely, at something like a common level of understanding and in a friendly atmosphere."[22]

The primary objective of any group of Open Conspirators must be to understand and to communicate the essential goal of the conspiracy: the establishment of the World State. Therefore:

"A normal group in the early stages of its existence will find most of its energy engaged in confirming and cleaning up its conception of the Open Conspiracy and in dealing with people invited to join in, trying out its ideas upon interested visitors and so forth... The clear conception of the Open Conspiracy is a considerable but necessary intellectual effort..." 23.

Ultimately, H.G. believed, the task of the Open Conspirator would become easier and less tentative:

"The concepts of the Open Conspiracy will appear increasingly in books and periodicals until some of these latter become recognized definitely as means of communication within the movement. It will acquire or provoke its own periodic literature." 24.

Throughout, H.G. accords the most complete level of gradualism and freedom to the Open Conspirators, trusting them to take up the challenge in their individual ways and according to their unique interests and talents. But there are certain basics in the Open Conspiracy, and these he is careful to delineate:

"The only binding restraint upon independent initiatives in the Open Conspiracy should be its broad essential requirements, namely:

(1) The complete assertion, practical as well as theoretical, of the provisional nature of existing governments and of our acquiescence in them;
(2) The resolve to minimize by all available means the conflicts of these governments, their militant use of individuals and property and their interferences with the establishment of a world economic system;
(3) The determination to replace private local or national ownership of at least credit, transport and staple production by a responsible world directorate serving the common ends of the race;
(4) The practical recognition of the necessity for world biological controls, for example, of population and disease;

(5) The support of a minimum standard of individual freedom and welfare in the world; and
(6) The supreme duty of subordinating the personal life to the creation of a world directorate capable of these tasks and to the general advancement of human knowledge, capacity and power."[25]

I can hardly do better than this in summarizing the basic tenets of the Open Conspiracy as a movement. But what shall we say concerning the individual Open Conspirator?

3. Portrait of an Open Conspirator.

I suppose one might say that H.G. himself is the prototypical Open Conspirator; and from that point of view, this whole thesis becomes a portrait, not only of one of the breed, but of its master.

That thought aside, it seemed to me valuable, having articulated the characteristics of the World State and of the Open Conspiracy, to attempt to portray some of the aspects of a member of the conspiracy.

H.G. closes his Experiment in Autobiography with the assertion that:

> "The educated modern mind, constrained to face forward, is systemized but not abstracted. For all his devotion to larger issues, for all his subordination of lesser matters, the Open Conspirator, like the Communist or the posivitist man of science, remains as consistently actual as blood or hunger, right down to the ultimates of his being." 26.

The Open Conspirator is not only to be "real," but to be "really" involved:

> "Let us come back... to the ordinary adherent to the Open Conspiracy, the adherent considered not in relation to his special aptitudes and services, but in relation to the movement as a whole and to those special constructive organizations outside his own field. It will be his duty to keep his mind in touch with the progressing concepts of the scientific work so far as he is able and with the larger issues of the economic reconstruction that is afoot, to take his cues from the special groups and organizations engaged upon that work, and to help where he finds his opportunity and when there is a call upon him. But no adherent of the Open Conspiracy can remain merely and completely an ordinary adherent. There can be no pawns in the game of the Open Conspiracy, no 'cannon fodder' in its war. A special activity quite as much as a general understanding is demanded from everyone who looks creatively towards the future of mankind." 27.

Such a man, with just such a special activity is Mr. Sempack. Mr Sempack is the resident Open Conspirator in H.G.'s 1927 novel, Meanwhile. The story concerns a number of the English and American upper crust trying to make some sense of their lives, relationships and world, while idling in an Italian villa during the height of Mussolini's regime. Mr. Sempack brings it to their attention that a new world must eventually dawn, and presses them to ask of and for themselves the difficult question of what they intend to do with their lives until then: In other words, meanwhile.

The hostess at the villa is the charming Mrs. Rylands, and it is through a conversation between her and one of her guests that we are introduced, indirectly to Mr. Sempack:

> "'Utopias!' he said. 'Quite lately. It must have been in some review... In the 'Nation' I think... I have it. He has been reading and writing about all the utopias in the world. He's a utopographer!" [28.]

In the Bible, some of the most unlikely characters are singled out for greatness: including some of the more significant prophets. Mr. Sempack was graced with that same unlikely appearance:

> "Mr. Sempack was the gawkiest man she had ever looked at. He became monstrous as she scrutinized him. He became a black blot on the scene, that had the remotest resemblance to a human form. His joints made her think of a cow... His shoe reminded her of a cattle boat adapted to human service. His socks fell in folds over his ankles. Probably this man whom every one was listening to as if he was an oracle, had never found out that there were such things as sock suspenders in the world. An oracle who had never heard of sock suspenders!" [29.]

If Mr. Sempack's experience of the world did not include sock suspenders, it included things far more significant; and once again H.G. has made his point between the trivial and the real:

> "We have to work for the sake of work and take our happiness for the wild flower that it is. Some day men will grow their happinesses in gardens, a great variety of beautiful happinesses, happinesses under glass, happinesses all the year round. Such things are not for us. They will come. Meanwhile - "[30]

Thus spake Mr. Sempack, utopographer and Open Conspirator. And so we come to the crux of the matter. For H.G. the vision was the World State, so eloquently described in so many of his books. For him, 'meanwhile' meant the Open Conspiracy. What does it mean for us?

Chapter Four: City of God, City of Man.

The title of this chapter of critique and analysis should not be taken too literally. The reader will be well aware of the danger of pressing an analogy too far. But Augustine's thinking is suggestive as a setting for the discussion of H.G.'s vision of the World State and the Open Conspiracy from a Christian perspective.

Augustine of Hippo's City of God was written between 413 and 426 A.D.: a time of enormous change in the Roman world. Geoffrey Ashe describes briefly that particular change which, in a sense, made The City of God possible:

> "Constantine... in 330... having enlarged the city of Byzantium, on the Bosporous... turned it into a new capital, which in his honour was called Constantinople. Rome then ceased to be a centre of government in the Empire (even when the West had separate emperors again, they usually preferred Milan or Ravenna), but the great city's ancient prestige could never be blotted out or replaced. In the absence of an Emperor, some of this began to pass to its Bishop. As successors to St. Peter the Bishops of Rome held a special place. Their see was revered as the fountainhead of orthodoxy. Now they were no longer overshadowed by an imperial neighbour, and they lived in the impressive quarters which Constantine had allotted to them. Increasingly they were looked to for authority; increasingly they were known by the title of Pope." [1.]

The church was now in a position to wield some power in the world:

> "At Constantinople, the Emperor might manage, sometimes, to dictate to the Church. In large parts of the Empire, and more particularly the West, he could not." [2.]

We can see immediately that this would cause some tension between the divine and temporal natures of the church: it certainly raised questions as to the relation of church and state. It was St. Augustine who explained how creation worked:

> "There were two communities, he said, the city of this world - in effect, of fallen and unregenerate man - and the City of God. The former committed and suffered evil. The latter could influence it for good, but was primarily concerned with eternal things. While the City of Man was not exactly the state, and the City of God was not exactly the Church, Augustine's argument forbade seeing the two as one."[3]

H.G. was not concerned with the City of God. He was very definitely concerned with the transformation of the City of Man. Keeping in mind the inexactitude noted in the quotation above, for the purposes of this chapter I would like to suggest that the City of God might be a reasonable metaphor for the beliefs, traditions and values of Christianity; while the City of Man might be a reasonable metaphor for the vision of the World State, achieved by an Open Conspiracy, which H.G. held so dear. My question is whether the two are compatible. With due respect to Augustine, I would suggest that, at least in the broadest terms, they are.

I believe very strongly that H.G.'s vision is worthy of serious consideration and comment from the Christian perspective. Not only does he speak in the language of an ethical humanist with respect to the human condition; he asks the profound ethical questions with which the Church, too, must wrestle: Where are we going? and How will we get there?

His answer to the first, of course, is the World State. His answer to the second is the Open Conspiracy. The Christian may or may not agree, in whole or in part, with H.G.; but I submit that in this age of crisis, it is an ethical imperative of the first order to treat his ideas seriously.

One method of so doing might be to compare H.G.'s vision with the various schools or systems of ethics operant within Christianity.

For example, one might examine the ideas of the World State and the Open Conspiracy against the precepts of "Natural Law;" either in its articulation by Thomas Aquinas, or in that of his modern successor, C.S. Lewis. I think one could make a strong case, for example, for the compatibility of H.G.'s thinking with a reasonably open interpretation of what Lewis terms in The Abolition of Man, the "Law of General Beneficence."[4.]

I think, too, that we might convincingly and effectively judge the World State and the Open Conspiracy by the principle defined by Joseph Fletcher, in his influential Situation Ethics. Fletcher notes that:

> "The very first question in all ethics is, what do I want?... (pleasure in Hedonism, adjustment in naturalism, self-realization in eudaemonism, etc.)... The primary issue is the "value" problem... This is a preethical or metaethical question..." [5.]

H.G. knew exactly what it was that he wanted: and he knew the 'why' and the 'how' and the 'when' and the 'who' and the 'where' and the 'which', as Fletcher says.[6.] And how should all this be assessed? Fletcher answers:

> "Christianly speaking... the norm or measure by which any thought or action is to be judged a success or failure, i.e., right or wrong, is love... the situationist, whether a Christian or not, follows a strategy that is pragmatic. In James' words: "A pragmatist turns... toward concreteness and adequacy, toward facts, toward actions, and toward power.'" 7.

When I recall Priestly's words at H.G.'s funeral, that he had, "worked with passionate loyalty for the whole toiling, contriving, endlessly hopeful family of Mankind;"[8.] then I remember the love with which H.G. fashioned his work. When I recall H.G.'s own question, "What, then, will work?", I recall the pragmatism of his vision. By these standards, I am convinced that the World State and the Open Conspiracy are, in general, consistent with a Christian world view.

Nevertheless, I should like to go farther in my analysis. It seems to me evertop easy to either accept or dismiss H.G. and his work by one's concurrence or nonconcurrence with a particular school of ethics. I intend therefore, to proceed with the more protracted method which I described in declaring my aims for this thesis: the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

Before proceeding, I should like to make one thing very clear. I intend, for the most part, to examine H.G.'s work, within the parameters of the Quadrilateral, globally. Beyond the obvious, that an analysis of all particulars of the World State and the Open Conspiracy would be beyond the scope of this project; there is the sense that such pickiness would be unfair to H.G. As he wrote in the conclusion to The Open Conspiracy:

"That this presentation of the current phase of human life as the occasion for an Open Conspiracy to establish a world commonwealth will seem to many an extreme simplification of our circumstances, should not condemn it. The value of a map lies in the fact that it is not a model nor a picture of reality but a reduced abstraction, sufficiently clear and sufficiently true to essentials and sufficiently free from irrelevancies to guide." 9.

Does H.G.'s map describe a country in which the Christian might live and journey peacefully?

1. Judgement by Scripture.

Perhaps the most obvious area for comparison between H.G.'s thinking and the scriptures would be that of the idea of the World State as compared to the vision of the Kingdom of God. Wells himself suggests such a comparison in such books as God the Invisible King and The Soul of a Bishop. The immediate response of orthodox Christianity might well be to reject such a comparison offhand as odious in the extreme. Alan Richardson, in A Theological Word Book of the Bible, a basic study text, writes:

> "... the Kingdom of God as it is presented in the teaching and work of Jesus is essentially God's Kingdom and not ours. It is something which God gives, not something which men 'build.' It is not a Utopia or a new social order; and it is not a mere disposition within men's hearts..." [10.]

Up to a point, I would concur with Dr. Richardson. Whatever the Kingdom of God might be, it is surely more complex than any human construct, H.G.'s included. Nevertheless, I find Dr. Richardson to be overly narrow in his interpretation of the Kingdom of God; particularly when one turns to the conflicting, yet fully supported views of Professor Walter Rauschenbusch, the greatest voice for what came to be known as the "Social Gospel."

Dr. Rauschenbusch's studies of the scriptures, both old and new testaments, led him to the deep and abiding conviction that the "establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth was the proper goal of religious endeavour."[11.] According to Rauschenbusch, the Kingdom of God "is humanity organized according to the will of God."[12.] Furthermore, this Kingdom was global in its nature:

> "The Kingdom of God is not confined within the limits of the Church and its activity. It embraces the whole of human life... The Church is indispensable to the religious education of humanity and to the conservation of religion, but the greatest future awaited religion in the public life of humanity."[13.]

Rauschenbusch was convinced that the Kingdom of God touched every aspect of human endeavour.

> "The saving of the lost, the teaching of the young, the pastoral care of the poor and frail, the quickening of star intellects, the study of the Bible, the reorganization of the industrial system, international peace..."[14.]

There is little here that cannot be reconciled with the beneficent aspects of H.G.'s vision of the World State. And more to the immediate point, Rauschenbusch based his vision of the Kingdom on his reading of the prophets of the Old Testament:

> "The prophets were public men, and their interest was in public affairs. Some of them were statesmen of the highest order. All of them interpreted past history shaped present history, and foretold future history on the basis of the conviction that God rules with righteousness in the affairs of nations, and that only what is just, and not what is expedient or profitable, shall endure. Nathan determined the succession of Solomon... the insight of Isaiah into the international situation of his day saved his people for a long time from being embroiled in the destructive upheavals that buried other peoples... The suffering of Jeremiah came upon him chiefly because he took the unpopular side in national politics..."[15.]

In short, according to Rauschenbusch, the Kingdom of God could be seen as synonymous with the transformation of this world to a realm typified by justice, peace, and prosperity, under the rule of God's spirit. I would suggest that H.G. and Rauschenbusch were drawing maps of the same

basic terrain; and that in the end their maps differed only according to elements of personal perspective and vantage point. At the very least, the work of the one does not negate the work of the other. To my mind, the idea of a World State is, at the very least, not contradicted by biblical evidence; and at the most, is consistent with it. Even the Tower of Babel story must be seen as an explanation for human disunity, more than a warning against any attempt to realize it.

With respect to the New Testament, Rauschenbusch sees Jesus as continuing, implicitly and explicitly, in the mode of the prophets:

> "... a comprehension of the essential spirit and purpose of the prophets is necessary for a comprehension of the purpose and spirit of Jesus and of genuine Christianity... the thought of the prophets was the spiritual food that he assimilated in his own process of growth." 16.

Accordingly, Rauschenbusch sees the Jesus of the synoptic gospels as concerned fully with the great task of transforming the world:

> "Jesus... was not merely an initiator, but a consummator. Like all great minds that do not merely imagine utopias, but actually advance humanity to a new epoch, he took the situation and material furnished to him by the past and molded that into a fuller approximation to the divine concept within him." 17.

As I read the above interpretation, I am reminded again of Wells' essay on "Jesus", referred to in Chapter One of this thesis. If one continues logically, one comes quickly to the conclusion that there is little contradiction between the teachings of Jesus and Wells' vision of a World

State - at least in general terms.

But what of the Open Conspiracy? Here I would like to refer to two of the parables of the Kingdom, recounted in Matthew 13. The first is the parable of the mustard seed.

> "And this is another parable that he put before them: 'The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. As a seed, mustard is smaller than any other; but when it has grown it is bigger than any garden-plant; it becomes a tree, big enough for the birds to come and roost in its branches.'" [18]

The second is the parable of the yeast:

> "He told them also this parable: 'The Kingdom of God is like yeast, which a woman took and mixed with half a hundredweight of flour till it was all leavened.'" [19]

These are very short parables, to be sure, but very significant. It will not take much stretching of the reader's imagination to recognize in these parables the essence of the Open Conspiracy. Recall once more the words of Anthony West concerning his father's Open Conspiracy:

> "He had something more like the working of yeast in the body of a loaf in mind - it was to be a matter of permeation, influence and persuasion." [20]

With respect to the compatibility of the vision of the World State and the Open Conspiracy with scripture, at least in broad terms, I rest my case.

2. Judgement by Tradition.

In keeping with the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, our discussion should be limited to Christian tradition. And yet, at the beginning, surely a word concerning Plato would be in order.

His Republic must surely have influenced Augustine; it clearly influenced Sir Thomas More; and we have noted its influence on the young H.G. His hypothetical republic, complete with its structured and productive life, equality of the sexes, controlled breeding and philosopher king, grew out of a tradition rooted in real life: the state of Sparta, and its attendant myths. Christian and secular thinkers alike owe much to Plato when they engage in either the critique of contemporary society, or the planning of a future world. Thus we might say that from the very beginning, the Christian tradition has had within it the tendency to hope for and to plan more ideal societies.

In the early centuries of the Church, and the later centuries of the Roman Empire, the idea of the World State was clearly a part of Christian tradition. In The Discovery of King Arthur, Geoffrey Ashe writes:

> "'Romanitas' meant civilization, and while that word can be awkwardly translated as 'Romanness', it is best left in its Latin majesty. From the Stoic philosophy of the Greeks had come the idea of a cosmopolis, a world unity. In the eyes of the more thoughtful Romans, Rome was not so much unity's creator as its custodian."[21]

As the Empire, at least in the West, waned, and as the power of the

Church in the West waxed, and "since orthodoxy involved communion with the Roman see, the Church was a vehicle for 'Romanitas'".[22.] The vision of the World State was transferred from the Roman Empire to the Roman Church universal.

And the result, at least in part, was Augustine's City of God. But Augustine's distinction between the fallenness of the City of Man and the elevation of the City of God did not prevent the ongoing creation of utopian, world transforming visions. From More to Tolstoy, from Savonarola to Robert Owen, thinkers and activists within the Christian tradition have struggled with the vision of a world transformed much along the lines of H. G.'s World State.

During the last century their efforts have been mounted with increasing vigour, and their voices heard with increased seriousness. The work of Walter Rauschenbusch is one significant example. Gustavo Gutierrez in A Theology of Liberation writes:

> "The term utopia has been revived within the last few decades to refer to an historical plan for a qualitatively different society and to express the aspiration to establish new social relations among men... what really makes this utopian thought viable and highlights its wealth of possibilities is the revolutionary experience of our time." [23.]

He might well have been occupying a speakers' platform with H.G., as the latter urged humanity to take seriously the idea of the World State, and to enlist in the Open Conspiracy.

Gutierrez' words are reinforced by yet another Roman Catholic scholar, Leslie Dewart, who writes:

> "Henceforth we can only be guided in international politics by the widest loyalty to the whole of mankind. We have become one world. What we need to do for our own good, collectively and severally, is to recognize this truth and to act upon it. This is the political vocation of the Christian citizen of our time."[24.]

It is also, as we have seen, the vocation of the Open Conspirator. Clearly there are those within Christian circles who have some reservations concerning these issues; but again I would say to the reader that for the purposes of this paper it does not matter if some are against H.G.'s vision, as long as there are clear voices for it. For me, the compatibility between the World State and the Open Conspiracy of H.G. and Christian tradition is summed up in the words of Edward Schillebeeckx in his recent book, Ministry:

> "... one can never make an adequate distinction between dedication to a better and more righteous earthly future for mankind and dedication to the one thing that is necessary: God's honour shown forth in living man."[24.]

3. Judgement by Experience.

Is there that in the human experience which might indicate that the vision of the World State and the Open Conspiracy would be either possible, or even desirable?

In Meanwhile, Mr. Sempack, the utopographer, notes that:

> "Every enduring peace in the world had been and would have to be a peace under one government. When people spoke of the Pax Romana and the Pax Britannica they meant one sovereignty... For the Pax Mundi there could be only one sovereignty." 25.

There seems no better place to begin a comment on the World State out of human experience than with these two great periods of somewhat universal "pax."

Having already commented on the experience of the Roman Empire and 'Romanitas,' there seems little reason to belabour a point. To all intents and purposes, the West has experienced world government: flawed to be sure, but experientially universal nonetheless.

It will also bear pointing out that with respect to the co-opting of "Romanitas" by the Church, we have for fifteen hundred years and more seen the remarkably durable existence of the Christian Church as an international organization. Even the Reformation did not destroy its transnational nature, as witnessed in the simple existence of the World Council of Churches in the Protestant and Orthodox spheres. The struggle for peace and toward human unity is a significant factor in the Christian

Churches; and through bodies such as the World conference on Religion and Peace, in the realm of inter-faith work as well. The existence of such significant world religious community and dialogue is an indicator of some compatibility with H.G.'s vision. In the arena of peace work, church people are becoming Open Conspirators.

Nor is the Pax Britannica and its offspring, the Commonwealth of Nations to be dismissed lightly. In The Last Lion, William Manchester describes the significance of the British Empire at its peak as a world community:

> "It was the Tory journalist John Wilson of 'Blackwood's Magazine' who first observed in 1817, that 'the sun never sets on the Union Jack.' At any given moment, wherever dawn was breaking, Britain's colurs were rippling up some flagpole. If one could have ascended high enough in one of those balloons which fascinated Jules Verne... the view of Britain's colonial sphere would have been breathtaking. Victoria reigned over most of Africa, virtually all that mattered in the Middle East, the entire Indian sub-continent, from Afghanistan to Thailand, including Ceylon... which was actually the size of Belgium; Malaya, Singapore, Australia, islands spread all over the Pacific and the Atlantic, and Canada... The Canadians... issued a stamp depicting a world map with the Empire's lands coloured red. It was a study in crimson splotches... the British Isles... ruled a quarter of the world's landmass and more than a quarter of its population... To its classically educated patricians, London was what Rome had been: 'caput mundi,' the head of the world." 26.

Of course, an imperial world order, governed by "gunboat" diplomacy, would hardly have been consistent with H.G.'s optimal vision. But it does indicate a possibility for some kind of world unity. More important is the way in which the empire dissolved to form the British Commonwealth of Nations. The Commonwealth is not without its critics, yet it may be

that it is a very useful model, a significant experiment on the road to a World Federal State. Arnold Smith, a Canadian diplomat, was the first Secretary-General for the Commonwealth. He held the post from 1964 to 1974, through the tensions of the Commonwealth's formative years, and the challenges of issues such as the independence of Zimbabwe. He sees great possibilities for the future of the Commonwealth:

> "To build a global community we must stretch the horizons of knowledge, understanding and goodwill and develop habits of consultation and cooperation that transcend the limits of race, region, or economic level. This is precisely what the Commonwealth is about." 27.

The hope of a World State, realized through an Open Conspiracy, may seem hard pressed by our experience of the League of Nations and its apparently dismal failure. But again, if we think in terms of the scientific method of which H.G. was so fond, the League was an experiment; and experiments often fail before ultimate success is achieved, even in the laboratory of human experience.

And, the League paved the way for the United Nations. It too, has received its fair share of criticism, from all sides. But this is the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, which, with all its faults, continues to provide an arena for exchange amongst nations: occasionally with startlingly hopeful results. Possibly the single most hopeful of which has been the "Law of the Sea Treaty," called "the single most important international diplomatic event since the creation of the United Nations." 28.

The process by which the treaty was realized, and its objective, are remarkable:

> "... over a period of more than eight years, diplomats from over 150 nations put together the provisions of a draft treaty... for... customary law to regulate the use of the resources of the major part of the earth's surface." 29.

Furthermore, the treaty makes provision for one of the key elements in the progress toward a World State: a supranational agency:

> "... named the Seabed Authority with its headquarters in the developing Caribbean island of Jamaica. Its mining arm, to be known as the Enterprise, regulates the entire exploration and exploitation of seabed resources whether on a private or public basis." 30.

Here at least, we have one aspect of our experience which is entirely, and positively, consistent with H.G.'s vision.

Not only is this development consistent with the idea of a World State and a Open Conspiracy, as Anthony West points out, there is a sense in which it springs from it:

> "It was... an international consensus of educated opinion that first brought the United Nations and then the European Economic Community into being... It is the same nebulous force that has kept these supranational organizations alive ever since. I am convinced that my father played an honourable and useful part in creating that force by going against the grain of the history of his times." 31.

Beyond politics, the human experience of recent years has seen, for better or worse, the growth of the transnational corporation into something

resembling the ponderings of William Clissold. Alvin Toffler, the American futurist, resembles H.G. in a great many ways: not the least of which is in his breadth of vision. In his recent book, The Third Wave, Toffler describes in some detail the impact of the transnational on the world scene.

Toffler quotes economist Lester Brown, who writes:

> "For the past few centuries... the world has been neatly divided into a set of independant sovereign nation states... With the emergence of literally hundreds of mult-national or global corporations, this organization of the world into mutually exclusive political entities is now being overlaid by a network of economic institutions." [32.]

In his analysis of this trend, Toffler reads exactly like an Open Conspirator of the Clissold mold:

> "... the power that once belonged exclusively to the nation-state when it was the only major force operating on the world scene is, at least in relative terms, sharply reduced." [33.]

It is far too early to say whether these great corporations will learn the lessons of service, as H.G. would call them, that might lead them to be a blessing to humanity. But in any event, their advent on the world scene, in the last twenty-five years or so, must be seen as a step toward a global community.

Explicit in H.G.'s vision of one world, was the pre-eminence of a scientific mind-set. It seems fitting thus to close this section on judgement by experience with a sign of human unity which has come from the world

of science. Jeff Wheelwright, in an article entitled "Antarctica as Utopia," writes of:

> "... the astounding success of the Antarctic Treaty, which 34 years ago... created an international zone of peace that all its signers are determined to preserve... The treaty seems now so strong that its supporters would like to apply it elsewhere... At the Beardmore conference a full-bearded Antarcticist... proposed that the treaty's demilitarization provisions, currently limited to latitude 60 degrees and south, be advanced by ten degrees a year. Imagine, if you will, a tide of disarmament, sweeping unstoppably north, from the kingdom of rock, wind and ice."[34]

Why not? Wells could have asked,

4. Judgement by Reason.

I am considerably tempted to write that it is unreasonable to consider anything other than a World State as the obvious goal for humanity, and to proceed to my epilogue. Such a truth, to coin a phrase, seems "self-evident." But it would hardly be acceptable scholarly form to offer an unsupported opinion.

Therefore let me cite Jonathan Schell. Mr. Schell, after pleading with his readers to confront the threat of nuclear holocaust with every weapon the arsenal of human reason may contain, concludes his devastating book, The Fate of the Earth, by saying:

> "We must lay down our arms, relinquish sovereignty, and found a political system for the peaceful settlement of international disputes. The task we face is to find a means of political action that will permit human beings to pursue any end for the rest of time. We are asked to replace the mechanism by which political decisions, whatever they may be, are reached. In sum, the task is nothing less than to reinvent politics: to reinvent the world."[35]

Surely these are the words of an Open Conspirator.

Consider the words of Gerald and Patricia Mische, in Toward a Human World Order:

> "Let us look to the future with common sense. This is not the end of time - unless we choose to make it so... We are not powerless. We are not pitiful creatures without the capacity to ensure our survival and fulfillment. Everything we need has been given to us... There is today a growing consciousness of the fact that we are unalterably bound together. We share

> a common dependency on one earth system. We stand together in relationship with one air, water, land, and life-support system. We have the same needs, the same potentialities, the same capacities for participating in destruction or for participating in creation... We no longer have many diverse and isolated histories. Our cultural and national histories have converged in one commonly shared present and future reality."[36].

Arthur C. Clarke, author, scientist, and inventor of the communications satellite, is actually optimistic. If we can avoid destroying ourselves, he sees technology as being the really revolutionary force in building one world. In Spring 1984: A Choice of Futures, he writes:

> "... many of you carry on your wrists miracles of electronics that would have been beyond belief even twenty years ago. The symbols that flicker across the digital displays now merely give time and date... at the end of the century they will do far more than that... They will give you direct access to most of the human race, through the invisible networks girdling our planet. The long-heralded global village is almost upon us, but it will last for only a flickering moment in the history of mankind. Before we even realize that it has come, it will have been superseded - by the global family."[37].

Reason tells us that the future may be bleak: but it also tells us, as did H.G., that it need not be. I, like H.G. at the end of The Outline of History, try to take the long view. Dr. Jerry Pournelle, author and former NASA scientist writes:

> "... how can you take anything but a long view?... I literally went from riding horses and jumping over fences, supervising tenant farmers, who were only a degree removed from slavery... to seeing people land on the moon. Now, that's a transition."[38].

Larry Niven, Dr. Pournelle's sometime collaborator, and author in his own right, describes his long view:

> "In the far term, we want all the pollution-producing factories out in space, and the earth made into one great park."[39]

This particular "long view of reason" might well have come from The Shape of Things to Come or the conclusion to The Outline of History.

So then, within the framework of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, which is, I trust, as good a "hook" as any upon which to hang my arguments, there seems clearly to be compatibility between H.G. and Christianity. In order to argue from a position of strength, my analysis has been based largely on elements of Christian thought which tend to emphasize that compatibility. Objectivity demands at least a nod to those whose vision of Christianity differs substantially.

Allow me to dwell briefly on certain suggested incompatibilities.

The late Reinhold Niebuhr was one of the most influental Protestant ethical thinkers of this century. He was also a harsh critic of utopian thought - and of H.G. Wells.

In Faith and History, Niebuhr separates utopianism into categories which he labels "soft" and "hard". Soft utopias look towards a future of human love and harmony achieved through the practise of the law of love. They are invariably pacifistic. Although he acknowledges this is clearly within the Christian tradition, particularly in such movements as Quakerism, he condemns it for a lack of realism, an inability to stand against real evil and tyranny, and an over-appreciation of the possibility of innate human goodness.

Hard utopians, on the other hand, are prepared to see their visions realized by violence. This form of utopianism has also been too often and too tragically present in Christianity, and is condemned by Niebuhr for obvious and appropriate reasons.

Professor Niebuhr's critique is significant, and indeed valid: so far as it goes. What seems to have escaped him is that H.G. would likely have been in agreement with his assessment of soft and hard utopias. H.G.'s vision of love and fine thinking was the farthest thing from a naive affection for humanity, unrelated to hard work, sound planning and a very definite educational task. Nor was H.G. a pacifist. At the same time, he loathed tyranny.

In fact, in many respects H.G. can hardly be counted a utopian - at least a traditional utopian-at all! Here I would ask the reader to refer to earlier chapters in this paper.

Actually, Professor Niebuhr has some strong, rather patronizing criticism reserved for H.G. in Faith and History. He describes H.G. as a:

> "... perfect example... of a typical liberal optimist... The most representative evolutionary idealist of the past generation..." 40.

Professor Niebuhr see's H.G. as moving from this high optimism, clearly evident in The Outline of History, to an inevitable despair, born of H.G.'s faith in human perfectability. He cites Mind at the End of its Tether, and concludes that:

"Shortly before his death, Mr. Wells' desperate optimism had finally degenerated to complete despair." [41]

I can only suppose that Professor Niebuhr had actually read very little of H.G., and had succumbed to a popular but clearly mistaken impression of him. I believe that the descriptive portion of this thesis, deliberately expansive to avoid just such misunderstandings, will serve as significant evidence that H.G. was never a liberal optimist. Furthermore his early training would not allow him to be an evolutionary idealist. H.G. knew all too well that evolution and our misuse of science and technology could as easily be our end as our hope. As I believe I have shown, this was his warning from the very beginning of his career, as even a superficial reading of The Time Machine would show.

H.G. may have ended his career with the same fears and doubts with which he began it; but to say he degenerated to despair is nonsense.

In addition, I believe that some of the comments of Anthony West cited earlier in this work; and certain images from the epilogue of the revised edition of The Outline of History, suggest strongly that H.G. did not exhibit near his death the despair so widely quoted by his critics.

If Professor Niebuhr's evaluation of H.G. particularly is less than convincing, he does represent an important Christian position - a position I have already noted in the work of Professor Alan Richardson: namely, that neither the Kingdom of God, nor anything resembling it, will result solely

from human effort and as the result of human progress. This is fair enough, but should be seen as a cautionary note from Christianity to any Open Conspirator, not as a declaration of incompatability.

And for that matter, as cautionary notes go, I find those of Michael Novak in Freedom with Justice more helpful:

> "... Jewish and Christian wisdom has always seen that the perfect is the enemy of the good. Maintaining the highest possible human vision is always in order, but patience in trying to realize it is inevitably necessary... because... in our haste, even our ideals are often ill-chosen or badly designed... human weakness and human malice often sabotage them." 42.

He continues by affirming that:

> "It is altogether orthodox to discern and then to denounce the sinfulness of this world and its institutions. But to suggest that some new worldly structures will be sinless, goes beyond Jewish and Christian belief." 43.

Dr. Novak, a Roman Catholic, seems to follow the wisdom of St. Francis:

> "Practical wisdom is the heroic (and rare) virtue of realizing the maximum good achievable at any one moment, no more, no less." 44.

These are fair and important warnings to an Open Conspirator bent on establishing a World Federal State: but they do not prove incompatable with the gradualism of the Open Conspiracy proposed by H.G. As Novak writes:

> "... just persons must organize themselves socially... Where a lone individual may not prevail, over time and with patience associations organized to achieve reform may eventually give birth to more just social practices. In any case, every step

> in this direction expresses social justice in action. It is not required that such acts succeed; but they must be set in motion. One must sometimes be content with small beginnings." 45.

What else is the Open Conspiracy if not a cautious beginning? Cautious, but I continue to submit, necessary: indeed, critical.

Still another cautionary note comes from the voice of experience, the philosopher/historians, Will and Ariel Durant. In The Lessons of History, they wrote:

> "Since we have admitted no substantial change in man's nature during historic times, all technological advances will have to be written off as merely new means of achieving old ends... One of the discouraging discoveries of our disillusioning century is that science is neutral: it will kill for us as readily as it will heal, and will destroy for us more readily than it can build." 46.

True, of course; but H.G. did not overlook this truth in his work. Rather he looked for the gradual modification of this truth through education - through love and fine thinking, if you will. Surely that is hope, not simplistic optimism.

And further to the Durants' comments, our reason screams at us from every side that nationalism and nuclear weapons cannot coexist.

Perhaps it is easy for Professor Niebuhr and others to attack Wells: after all, H.G. does make of himself a large and easy target. Certain aspects of his writing deserve to be criticized, and strongly.

H.G. is far more a prisoner of his time and his parochial "Englishness"

than either he or his supporters would willingly admit. Sometimes he does read like Tennyson's "Parliament of Man" writ large.

Certainly he shows little appreciation of the global cultural mosaic. His anti-semitism and unconscious Kiplingesque paternalism towards other races is often appalling to our contemporary global consciousness.

He has few friends in the church, no doubt in large measure because his lifelong antipathy to orthodox Christianity so often took such childish and malicious forms. No doubt, too, because he seemed so little aware of how much his own thought owed to the prophetic and apocalyptic visions of the faith he so regularly attacked. But then, to recall Shakespeare, perhaps he protested too loudly. It is in any case, ironic that the struggle for a just world order in our day comes, perhaps most strongly, from the very church that he was convinced was determined to block it. But then perhaps Christians, and all people of good will, owe more unconsciously than we realize.

Reason suggests that H.G.'s World State may be lost forever in nuclear fire and nuclear winter; or that, if realized, it may come of an unholy alliance of the great superpowers to exploit the world more thoroughly and terribly than ever before. But hope, and yes, faith, demand that we live as though a better world were possible; as though the long view might be achieved. Hope and faith are the Christian's stock-in-trade.

And if H.G.'s call to "love and fine thinking" does not translate directly into the two great commandments issued by Christ in the gospel

according to John, then at least the ideas expressed in each are not mutually exclusive.

I would submit, based on the preceding pages, that H.G.'s vision of a World State, realized by an Open Conspiracy, is in keeping with the spirit of scripture and of the Christian tradition; and that, furthermore, our human experience and reason bear out the possibility and the desirability of realizing this vision. I would further submit that the agenda for Christianity is to rethink Jesus' words in John 17: "that all may be one;" and to dedicate our efforts not in the fruitless and largely academic pursuit of Christian unity, but in the cause of global federalism.

As this century closes, I find myself reminded of the challenge to the Church of Walter Rauschenbusch, echoing Deuteronomy:

> "It rests upon us to decide if a new era is to dawn in the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God, or if Western civilization is to descend to the graveyard of dead civilizations, and God will have to try once more." 47.

Epilogue: Science and Spirituality.

Antonina Valentin, one of H.G.'s biographers, and one of his admirers, author of H.G. Wells: Prophet of our Day, once remarked that the tragic thing about the Open Conspiracy was that H.G. was its only member. This is manifestly untrue; at least in the terms in which H.G. understood the Open Conspiracy. The last chapter of this thesis abounds with the thoughts of Open Conspirators. That they might not know themselves by the title is of no account. From Arnold Smith to Alvin Toffler to Arthur C.Clarke to Jerry Pournelle, their writings and their vision serve the eventual establishment of the World State: and, overt or not, that is the work of an Open Conspirator.

But in addition to these and countless other "implicit" Open Conspirators, there are thousands more throughout the world who work for a World State explicitly. Many of them may not realize their debt to H.G. He would not care; nor, perhaps, should we. These are the members of the World Citizen Movement, the United Nations Associations worldwide, the World Association of World Federalists, and, here in Canada, the World Federalists of Canada. These are the names of but a few of the groups who make the Open Conspiracy a live option in the mind of humanity. As H.G. foresaw in The Open Conspiracy, none of the groups are known by that name: but a rose by any other name...

The self-description in the information flyer of the World Federalists

of Canada might have been written by H.G. himself:

> "World Federalists regard the planet as our largest social unit embracing all of humanity in all its diversity... We believe the development of a world community - one based on justice and a toleration of differences - is the greatest intellectual, moral, and political challenge of our time. It requires above all a wide-spread shift in thinking from a self- and nation-centred world view to an Earth-centred one. This shift in thinking begins with each of us." 1.

The activities in which the World Federalists of Canada, and its fellow organizations world-wide engage are precisely those illustrated in part three of chapter three of this thesis, cited directly from H.G.'s Open Conspiracy. At the simplest level is serious conversation and information sharing; at the most sophisticated, the lobbying of governments and the presentation of briefs to government bodies. This latter has in part led to the foundation of the Parliamentarians for World Order: a group of legislators, of all parties, who are working towards the goal of world federation. Such groups of legislators exist in other countries, under other names.

And so I have come to the end. I have written a great many words about a man who wrote a very great many more. I have thought long and hard concerning the thoughts with which I would like to leave the reader, who has borne with me so graciously.

The words I have chosen have long captivated me; and seem at the same time to sum up the essence of H.G.'s life and message. They were spoken

by Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, to the Ceylon Association for the Advancement of Science, at Colombo, in what is now Sri Lanka, on October 15, 1962:

> "Politics and religion are obsolete; the time has come for science and spirituality."

How long and hard did H.G. urge us to pursue such a course.

Slowly, oh so slowly, we are beginning to learn the lessons he would have taught us. In the realm of spirituality, we are coming to see that humanity's spiritual quest has as strong a capacity to unite as to divide.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith, in Towards a World Theology writes:

> "Those who believe in the unity of humankind, and those who believe in the unity of God, should be prepared therefore to discover a unity of humankind's religious history." 2.

He concludes this revolutionary little book with the observation that:

> "Through Islamic patterns God across the centuries has been participating in the life of Muslims; through Buddhist patterns in the life of Buddhists; through Hindu modes in the life of India; through Jewish forms, also after the first century, in the life, individual and social, of Jews; and some of us know, through Chrisitian forms in our lives... Right now, He is calling us to let Him act through new forms, continuous with the old, as we human beings across the globe enter our strange new age." 3.

What a strange new age it is. If Cantwell Smith speaks from a new spirituality, Dr. Carl Sagan of Cornell University speaks from the new science:

"Human history can be viewed as a slowly dawning awareness that we are members of a larger group. Initially our loyalties were to ourselves and our immediate family, next, to small bands of wandering hunter-gatherers, then to tribes, small settlements, city-states, nations. We have broadened the circle of those we love. We have now organized what are modestly described as super-powers, which include groups of people from divergent ethnic and cultural backgrounds working in some sense together - surely a humanizing and character-building experience. If we are to survive, our loyalties must be broadened further, to include the whole human community, the entire planet earth. Many of those who run the nations will find this idea unpleasant. They will fear the loss of power. We will hear much about treason and disloyalty. Rich nation states will have to share their wealth with poor ones. But the choice, as H.G. Wells once said in a different context, is clearly the universe or nothing." 4.

Having quoted H.G., Dr. Sagan goes on to describe that longest of all views: the view that was H,G.'s from his earliest days, from The Time Machine, to the last moments of his life:

"Some 3.6 million years ago, in what is now northern Tanzania, a volcano erupted, the resulting cloud of ash covered the surrounding savannahs. In 1979, the paleoanthropologist Mary Leakey found in that ash footprints - the footprints, she believes, of an early hominid, perhaps an ancestor of all the people on the earth today. And 380,000 kilometres away, in a flat dry plain that humans have in a moment of optimism called the Sea of Tranquility, there is another footprint, left by the first human to walk another world. We have come far in 3.6 million years, and in 4.6 billion and in 15 billion.

For we are the local embodiment of a cosmos grown to self-awareness. We have begun to contemplate our origins: starstuff pondering the stars; organized assemblages of ten billion billion atoms considering the evolution of atoms; tracing the long journey by which, here at least, consciousness arose. Our loyalties are to the species and the planet. We speak for earth. Our obligation to survive is owed not just to ourselves but also to that Cosmos, ancient and vast, from which we spring." 5.

Sagan leaves us in his book, Cosmos, with that photograph that has

become so familiar to a new generation - the picture of our beautiful, blue-green world in space; earthrise over a lunar landscape. We see it as a whole; there are no boundary lines on its surface. Seeing it like that I recall the vision of another writer, telling again an old story; one of the oldest stories of the English tradition: the story of Arthur, the once and future king, retold by T.H. White, in his book by the same name.

On the eve before his final battle, the aging Arthur recalls how Merlin, the wizard, had for a time changed him into a wild goose; and how he had soared above the earth with the wild goose, Lyo-lyok; and of what he had seen:

> "He remembered Lyo-lyok and the island which they had seen on their migration, where all those puffins, razor-bills, guillemots and kittiwakes had lived together peacefully, preserving their own kinds of civilization without war - because they claimed no boundaries. He saw the problem before him as plain as a map. The fantastic thing about war was that it was fought about nothing - literally nothing. Frontiers were imaginary lines. There was no visible line between Scotland and England, although Flodden and Bannockburn had been fought about it. It was geography which was the cause - political geography... Nations did not need to have the same kind of civilization... any more than the puffins and the guillemots did. They could keep their own civilizations... if they would give each other freedom of trade and free passage and access to the world. Countries would have to become counties - but counties which could keep their own culture and local laws. The imaginary lines on the earth's surface only needed to be un-imagined. The airborne birds skipped them by nature. How mad the frontiers had seemed to Lyo-lyok, and would to man if he could learn to fly." 6.

We have built machines, and we have taught our bodies to fly; but our

souls are still earthbound. When the day comes, for come it must, when we see the world as the wild geese see it, it will be in no small part thanks to Herbert George Wells. As Anthony West writes:

> "The kindly, generous, impatient, but in the main good-natured individual of my mature knowledge who possessed the marvellous imagination, who wrote all the books, who looked so far and so searchingly into the past and into the future, and who cared so profoundly about the present well-being and the future happiness of the whole foolish race of men, transcended his origins and made himself a very big man indeed." 7.

A Word Concerning Originality.

As is required of me, let me state briefly where I believe this thesis to be an original contribution to scholarship.

First, although there has been a book written on H.G. Wells and the World State, this is the first time, to my knowledge that this subject has been approached from a religious perspective, and with a Christian-based analysis: by the Wesleyan quadrilateral, or any other method.

Second, I believe that reference to World Federalist of Canada work with respect to a discussion of the Open Conspiracy is original.

Third, the use of the short story, "The Queer Story of Brownlow's Newspaper" as a classic example of the World State realized by an Open Conspiracy is original.

Fourth, I believe that the method I used of describing H.G. biographically is original.

Beyond the comments and advice which one would normally receive from one's thesis supervisor, the preceeding work is entirely my own.

Section III: Source Notes and Bibliography

1. Source Notes.

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