

## The Character of Wells

In *The Invisible Man*, one of his early science fiction tales from 1895, H.G. Wells reveals in the amorality and disregard for “convention,” which he supposes is the necessary posture for a really successful man. Wells clearly draws on his own emotions and life experience to portray the character of Griffin, the Invisible Man. Griffin is a medical student, deeply interested in science, who has discovered a means to alter the optical refractive index of living matter so as to render it invisible. After experimenting successfully on his landlady’s cat, he decides to carry the process out on himself. This is the figure of the invisible man speaking, describing the process of his discovery to a Dr. Kemp, a former school colleague he has met up with:

“To do such a thing would be to transcend magic. And I beheld, unclouded by doubt, a magnificent vision of all that invisibility might mean to a man,—the mystery, the power the freedom. Drawbacks I saw none. . . .

“And after three years of secrecy and exasperation, I found that to complete it was impossible,—impossible.”

“How?” asked Kemp.

“Money,” said the Invisible Man, and went again to stare out the window.

He turned round abruptly. “I robbed the old man—robbed my father.

“The money was not his, and he shot himself.”. . .

For a space Griffin sat silent, and then he resumed abruptly. . . .

“. . . I went to bury him. My mind was on this research, and I did not lift a finger to save his character. . . .

“I remember walking back to the empty home, through the place that had once been a village and was now patched and tinkered by the jerry builders into the ugly likeness of a town. Every way the roads ran out at last into the desecrated fields and ended in rubble heaps and rank wet weeds. I remember myself as a gaunt black figure, going along the slippery, shiny pavement, and the strange sense of detachment I felt from the squalid respectability, the sordid commercialism of the place.

“I did not feel a bit sorry for my father. He seemed to me to be the victim of his own foolish sentimentality. The current cant required my attendance at his funeral, but it was really not my affair.”

Enough? Perhaps for you, but Wells is not quite satisfied. He must add this:

“But going along the High Street, my old life came back to me for a space, for I met the girl I had known ten years since. Our eyes met.

“Something moved me to turn back and talk to her. She was a very ordinary person.

“It was all like a dream, that visit to the old places. I did not feel then that I was lonely, that I had come out from the world into a desolate place. I appreciated my loss of sympathy, but I put it down to the general inanity of things. Re-entering my room seemed like the recovery of reality. There were the things I knew and loved. There stood the apparatus, the experiments arranged and waiting. And now there was scarcely a difficulty left, beyond the planning of details.”

us of a release from the pressure of the struggle for existence on ourselves; and

Thirdly, the urgent necessity of protective resistance against the present traditional drift towards war.

There is no clearer statement of the program of that influential grouping which called itself, and came to be known as, the Utopians.

### Buchman’s Cue

The first and third points of Wells’ program were to be the basis for the first mass organizing project of the Open Conspiracy. Frank Buchman’s Oxford Group, the seed crystal for the Moral Re-Armament Movement which was to spawn the Moonies, would be the vehicle. Wells had spelled it out precisely in Chapter XII:

The putting upon record of its members’ reservation of themselves from any or all of the military obligations that may be thrust upon the country by military and diplomatic effort, might very conceivably be the first considerable overt act of Open Conspiracy groups. It would supply the practical incentive to bring many of them together in the first place. It would necessitate the creation of regional or national *ad hoc* committees for the establishment of a collective legal and political defensive for this dissent from current militant nationalism. It would bring the Open Conspiracy very early out of the province of discussion into the field of practical conflict.

But to promote a mass movement for peace after 1933, as Hitler was mobilizing for war, with Russia the expected tar-