2023

An Equality of Security. Bentham, Thompson, and the Principles Subsidiary to Utility

Mark J. Kaswan
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, mark.kaswan@utrgv.edu

Recommended Citation

Kaswan, Mark J. "An Equality of Security. Bentham, Thompson, and the Principles Subsidiary to Utility." Revue d'études benthamiennes 23 (2023). https://doi.org/10.4000/etudes-benthamiennes.10469

Revue d'études benthamiennes

Revue d'études benthamiennes

23 | 2023
Utilitarianism and Socialism

An Equality of Security

Bentham, Thompson, and the Principles Subsidiary to Utility

Egalité de la sûreté : Bentham, Thompson et les principes subsidiaires à l'utilité

Mark J. Kaswan

OpenEdition Journals

Electronic version
URL: https://journals.openedition.org/etudes-benthamiennes/10469
DOI: 10.4000/etudes-benthamiennes.10469
ISSN: 1760-7507

Publisher
Centre Bentham

Electronic reference
Mark J. Kaswan, "An Equality of Security", *Revue d'études benthamiennes* [Online], 23 | 2023, Online since 20 January 2023, connection on 14 March 2023. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/etudes-benthamiennes/10469 ; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/etudes-benthamiennes.10469

An Equality of Security

Bentham, Thompson, and the Principles Subsidiary to Utility

Egalité de la sûreté : Bentham, Thompson et les principes subsidiaires à l'utilité

Mark J. Kaswan

1 According to Gregory Claeys, the word "socialism" was coined in 1825 in the course of a series of debates held in London taverns between members of the London Cooperative Society, led by William Thompson of Cork, Ireland, and a group of Benthamites called the Philosophical Radicals, led by a young John Stuart Mill. Its initial meaning was as a concatenation of "social system," which is what Thompson and the cooperativists were proposing.[1] Thompson was himself a friend and disciple of Jeremy Bentham, so in some ways the debates could be seen as a discussion over the proper interpretation and application of Bentham's ideas.[2]

2 William Thompson (1775-1833) came from a wealthy Protestant merchant family in Cork. He is often mentioned in historical accounts of the development of socialism, at least briefly, but rarely receives the attention he deserves. His contributions are significant, although often overshadowed by those of another associate of his, Robert Owen. However, as JFC Harrison has pointed out, while Owen was no doubt important as a visionary, it was Thompson who provided much of the theoretical substance for early-stage socialism in Britain.[3] In the late 19th century, Anton Menger (brother of Carl Menger, one of the founders of marginal economics) identified Thompson as the "eminent founder of scientific socialism" and the originator of the theory of surplus value. Menger suggested that Thompson's articulation of the theory surplus value is superior to Marx's, and that Marx should be understood as a disciple of Thompson.[4] Lowenthal's seminal work on the Ricardian socialists includes a lengthy chapter on Thompson,[5] even if the "Ricardian" designation is a bit misleading.[6] Beer refers to Thompson as the "most distinguished" of the cooperative socialists, and has a short section on him after a long discussion of Owen.[7] These few references, however, are really exceptions that prove the point that Thompson's role has often been overlooked. Indeed, he is rather more often ignored than included.[8]

3 What I hope to do in this paper is to help establish Thompson's central role in the early history of socialism.[9] This claim rests on several elements of his thought that are either first or most clearly articulated in his work and that remain consistent through most varieties of socialism. These include a very strong concept of equality; the right of workers to the full product of their labor within the context of industrial production (which distinguishes it from the Lockean argument for the labor theory of property); an analysis of surplus value; collective ownership of property; and communitarianism and a critique of liberal individualism.[10]

4 The focus of this paper is to show how Thompson transforms some of Bentham's core ideas that form the basis for liberal capitalism into core ideas that form the basis for socialism. There are many ways to address the topic; what I will focus on here is a set of ideas that Bentham referred to as the "principles subsidiary to utility." I interpret Thompson as offering a revised set of subsidiary principles that reorient utilitarianism away from its individualistic core, making it much more, well, socialistic. Where Bentham articulates his principles in the context of legal institutions and legislation, Thompson's are oriented toward the development of cooperative communities, which are social institutions. They are still, however, *political* principles and, as a result, Thompson's theory opens the way to an understanding of the political nature of social institutions that is a critical element of socialist theory and stands in stark contrast to liberalism. At the end of the paper I will offer some thoughts on the practical implications of this engagement with Thompson's ideas. But to get to Thompson, we must go through Bentham.[11]

Utility and the Subsidiary Principles I : Bentham

5 Bentham was first and foremost an Enlightenment philosopher and legal theorist who understood law to be a fundamentally moral system. The purpose of the law is to establish conditions to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number (utility, broadly understood). In order to produce laws that promote the greatest happiness it is necessary for the law to be founded on the principle of utility; to ensure that the laws were founded on utility it is necessary to establish legal institutions (legislatures) that are founded on principles that suppress the tendency of public officials to promote their own "sinister" interest and instead ensure that utility would reign supreme. This can be seen through any number of his political writings, from early works such as *A Fragment on Government*[12] and *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*[13] to later works such as the *Constitutional Code*.[14]

6 Bentham's *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (IPML), first published in 1790, is generally considered to be his most complete statement of his utilitarianism. Here, utility appears as quite a general idea: "By utility is meant that property in any object whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness… or…to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered." The "party whose interest is considered" could be an individual or it could be an entire community—and the interest of the community is understood as the "the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it." Somewhat more specific is the *principle* of utility, which is the feeling of approval or disapproval that we have for anything depending on its tendency to produce or inhibit pleasure or pain for the person making the judgment (who may be the actor, the recipient, or an

observer of an action). Utility and the principle of utility can therefore be understood at both micro (individual) and macro (community) levels, as both ethical and political ideas.

7 One of the interesting things about Bentham, of course, is that he wrote a great deal but didn't publish that much of it himself, in some instances leaving that to his disciples. One of these was a Genevan pastor, Etienne Dumont, who approached him in the 1790s with the idea of publishing an edition of his work in French. Bentham furnished him with various material, both published and unpublished, and with much back-and-forth between them the result, published in 1802, is called the *Traités de Législation.*[15] The three volumes of this work include (in the English translation) the *Principles of Legislation* (which is basically an edited version of the IPML), *Principles of the Civil Code*, and *Principles of the Penal Code*. The significance here is that it focuses on the macro, political, level of utility, with less attention to individual morals and ethics.

8 Recognizing that the principle of utility is insufficient to provide guidance to legislators in making laws, in the *Principles of the Civil Code* Bentham offers a set of subordinate principles that provide greater specificity and clarity. These are subsistence, abundance, equality, security. Understanding these subordinate ends is important to understanding how Bentham's theory establishes fundamental principles of liberalism.

9 The four subordinate ends are not equal in importance: subsistence and security are primary; abundance and equality are "of inferior importance."[16] Between subsistence and security, it is obvious that subsistence is very important but, he says, there is little for law to do here, as people are sufficiently motivated by nature to pursue their subsistence. What they need is security, so they can be assured that what they act to obtain they will be able to enjoy. So, of the four, security is "pre-eminent" because it is future-oriented.[17] Once subsistence has been secured, then abundance becomes possible.

10 When it comes to equality things get a bit more complicated. Equality is important—after all, it is included as one of the four subordinate ends of legislation. In articulating an early version of the theory of marginal utility, Bentham concludes that, "The nearer the actual proportion [of wealth within a body of people] approaches to equality, the greater will be the total mass of happiness."[18] Further, in a passage Rawls might have referenced with regard to the difference principle, Bentham argues that the impact of an increase in wealth depends on the status of the recipient—in other words, for someone who only has $ 100, an increase of $ 100 in wealth is a tremendous gain, but for someone who has $ 10,000, $ 100 is fairly insignificant.[19] In other words, the degree of pleasure that $ 100 represents is different, such that it takes a smaller absolute change to produce the same degree of change in the level of happiness in someone who has less to start with. At the same time, when there are two people of equal fortune and a transfer is made from one to the other, the pain felt by the person experiencing a loss will be greater than the pleasure felt by the person who experiences a gain.[20] This means that it can be more costly, in terms of happiness, to take wealth away from one person than to give that wealth to someone else who has more or less the same level of wealth.

11 Bentham claims that this points to the importance of the principle of equality, since it suggests that the overall level of happiness will be greater if more people experience an increase in their level of wealth, and some interpreters have suggested that equality is, in fact, of great importance to Bentham.[21] However, the principle of security, taking

precedence as it does over equality, could be seen as preserving or even expanding inequality, because it prioritizes the security of property, and his theory of marginal utility could suggest that the more wealth one has, the more they must take in to maintain their level of happiness. While Bentham suggests that free-market economics will tend to lead to greater equality because of the wasteful tendencies of the rich and the frugality of the poor,[22] history suggests otherwise.

12 That issue aside, the problem Bentham identifies is the degree to which security and equality may be inherently incompatible, as the means by which equality may be achieved will tend to undermine security. Bentham sounds almost Hobbesian as he describes the consequences of the absence of security, referencing "the condition of savages" who struggle "incessantly against famine" and engage in "the most cruel wars" to ensure their subsistence; and the condition of "civilized society" when at war, which wipes out all forms of wealth. It is security, founded in law, which "can encourage men to labours superfluous for the present, and which can be enjoyed only in the future."[23] To take someone's wealth (their property) in order to establish greater equality undermines the security of the one whose wealth is taken. When one person's property is taken it undermines the security of wealth for everyone—what happens to one person could happen to anyone. "When insecurity reaches a certain point, the fear of losing prevents us from enjoying what we possess already."[24] If we are unsure of our ability to enjoy what we work for, we will be unwilling to work. If we are unwilling to work, society crumbles. "The field of industry, beaten by perpetual storms, at last becomes a desert."[25] So, he states firmly, "When security and equality are in conflict, it will not do to hesitate a moment. Equality must yield. The first is the foundation of life; subsistence, abundance, happiness, everything depends upon it. Equality produces only a certain portion of good."[26]

13 To establish perfect equality may be impossible and do irreparable harm to a society, but it is possible to reduce the level of inequality. The most important measure to move toward equality, in Bentham's view, is to establish security, and he offers little in the way of proposals for the redistribution of wealth. He offers three direct means for policy to move toward equality: limited taxes, as long as they are not excessive and not imposed without due notice (so that individuals may engage in activity with the full awareness of them); the "sacrifice of security to security," where legislators may engage in some redistribution in order to avoid civil unrest, although this must be used with great caution and only in extreme circumstances; and by changing the laws of inheritance, eliminating primogeniture, allowing women to inherit (and retain) property on an equal basis with men, and allowing that the property of people who die intestate and without a clear successor would revert to the state for the purpose of redistribution. Of these, the last was to be preferred.[27]

14 While utilitarianism is often presented as an alternative to liberalism, Bentham's emphasis on security and its primacy over equality reflect a deep commitment to fundamental liberal principles. Indeed, elements of Bentham's thought can be understood as foundational to liberal ideology.[28] There is no question that Bentham's philosophy of government is firmly rooted in the macro idea of utility as pursuing the greatest happiness of the greatest number; the means by which that goal is to be pursued is through affecting the way individuals understand and pursue their interests. Government cannot make people happy. The best it can do is prevent harm. Individuals are understood to be self-interested, motivated by their desire to seek pleasure and

avoid pain—these are, in the final analysis (also Bentham's starting-point) the "two sovereign masters."[29] But because individual interests may conflict, leading to harm, Bentham requires that the institutions of government act in such a way as to avoid that harm. In other words, the function of government is to impose constraints on the exercise of individual liberty so that they can pursue their self-interest without causing problems for others—something fully compatible with Lockean liberalism.

Utility and the Subsidiary Principles II : Thompson

15 Thompson's *Inquiry* begins as follows: "Utility, calculating all effects, good and evil, immediate and remote, or the pursuit of the greatest possible sum of human happiness, is the leading principle constantly kept in view, and to which all others are but subsidiary, in this inquiry."[30] To clarify he adds, "In Bentham's 'Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation,' and the first chapters of the celebrated 'Traités de Legislation,' this principle, recognized by Helvetius, Priestley, Paley and others, is developed and established for ever, to the exclusion of all other pretended tests of morals." But, even though a significant portion of the *Inquiry* was written while Thompson was staying in Bentham's London home and, one might imagine, the two engaged in extensive conversation about utility, there are significant differences in Thompson's articulation of the principles—indeed, it can be said that he offers a revised set.[31] So, although Thompson clearly states that he is "following in the road" of his mentor,[32] he takes what we might today recognize as a hard left turn away from that road, such that, while Bentham's work helps establish fundamental principles of liberal capitalism, Thompson helps to lay the foundations for socialism.

16 A significant difference between Bentham and Thompson is that while Bentham approaches his task from the perspective of a legal scholar, Thompson approaches his as a political economist. More specifically, his work is a critique of capitalism (as we call it) and an argument for the development of cooperative communities—what we would identify as cooperative socialism. Thus, while Bentham is concerned with legal institutions, Thompson is interested in social institutions. The principles retain their character as political principles, however, and asserting the political character of social institutions later becomes a hallmark of socialist theory.

17 Thompson begins his *Inquiry into the Principles for the Distribution of Wealth Most Conducive to Human Happiness* with "Preliminary Observations" in which he offers a critique of political economics, introduces the notion of "social science" to the English lexicon and sets forth his aim: to identify what he considers to be the "natural laws for the distribution of wealth" that will "*reconcile equality with security*" and reconcile "*just distribution with continued production.*"[33] It requires a long first chapter (178 pages!) to reconcile equality and security and to identify the natural laws of distribution, best understood as the conditions necessary to ensure the absence of coercion in the economic system. Thompson's concern with coercion is a central point, as its presence implies the absence of both equality and security. If one's starting point is the principle of utility—the greatest happiness of the greatest number—happiness is at best diminished, if not missing altogether, on the part of those who are being coerced. Coercion may come in various forms, but it is certainly the case that having to engage in exploitive and oppressive wage labor to avoid starvation would be included. Not only does this coercion reduce the happiness of the workers, it also reduces their

productivity. Since all wealth is the product of labor, the reduction in productivity directly means a reduction in the level of wealth available. To the extent that happiness derives from wealth, this then means a lower level of happiness for society. To prevent coercion, Thompson identifies three natural laws for the distribution of wealth. These are:

> First. All labor ought to be free and *voluntary*, as to its direction and continuance.
> Second. All the products of labor ought to be secured to the producers of them.
> Third. All exchanges of these products ought to be free and *voluntary*.[34]

18 Several things may be said about these laws.[35] The first, as Bentham no doubt would have pointed out, is that there is no such thing as "natural laws." In any case, all of these use the word "ought" which also makes them something less than laws. We might say that they are principles, and we can clearly see equality at work ("All labor," "All the products of labor," "All exchanges"). Security is here, too, in the securing of the produce of labor to the producer. A third principle, not articulated by Bentham, is also present: voluntarism, which is the antithesis of coercion. These three principles, then, of equality, security, and voluntarism, make up the essence of what we might identify as Thompson's version of Bentham's subsidiary principles.

19 Thompson does not stop here, however. One of his key arguments is that the pursuit of private property within a system of individual competition that turns all the members of a society against one another as potential rivals in the pursuit of accumulated wealth is a greater threat to the greatest happiness than removing the ability of some members of the society to oppress the rest. Thompson was a critic of all forms of subordination as incompatible with the greatest happiness, and he articulates one of the most substantial early attacks on an emerging liberal capitalist order premised on wealth inequality and class domination but also characterized, especially in his time, by slavery and racial domination and the oppression of women by men.[36]

20 The critique of the system of individual competition and private property (his term for capitalism, a word not yet in common usage)[37] are essential elements of Thompson's argument. He argues that this is what produces the opposition of security and equality. But systems of subordination and inequality do not only harm those on the losing end of a sort of Hobbesian war of each against all. Not only do the poor suffer from destitution, from poverty in the midst of plenty, but the idle rich themselves suffer from various vices that result from their own condition. Moreover, to the degree that the development and dissemination of knowledge is advantageous for all members of society and thus crucial to their happiness, the system of individual competition enables those who enjoy its advantages to limit the educational opportunities of the rest of society—the majority—and thereby limit the advancement of knowledge.

21 Embodying the principles of equality, security, and voluntarism yields another important principle, which I refer to as common effort/common property. This is manifested by the establishment of a version of Robert Owen's proposal for cooperative communities.[38] Thompson takes the idea much further than Owen does, however.[39] The heart of the cooperative community is that all property is owned in common, and the products of the collective labor are distributed equally. But while Owen promoted it as primarily a form of relief for the lower classes,[40] Thompson argued for the communities to be open to members of all classes, and claimed that the cooperative model, as a more rational system, would eventually predominate (or, as we might say now, achieve hegemony) over one based on competition. Laboring together for the common welfare

of the community, where all together would own the produce of the labor of the community (and all, with the exception of small children and the infirm, would work), the members of the community would understand that their own self-interest was firmly connected with the interest of the community;[41] working for the sake of their own happiness they would be helping to achieve the happiness of all. Removing the desire for the private accumulation of wealth manifested through the institution of private property and creating conditions where attitudes of cooperation could flourish would enable the members of the community to enjoy both equality and security to the greatest possible extent and, thereby, the greatest happiness. If self-interest was a *problem* for Bentham (and liberal theory more generally) that needed to be addressed by placing bounds on people's liberty, in the cooperative community it would be the driving force that would produce the greatest happiness for all.

22 It is important to note that Thompson is not advocating for a kind of return to a primordial village life based on agricultural subsistence. In fact, he strongly advocated for industrial production, because this would reduce the amount of labor required for the community to support itself. The community, which would ideally have between 500 and 2000 people, would be self-sufficient, only trading any excess production. It would include agricultural production, but also extensive workshops and housing for all the members, schools for the children, and facilities for entertainment and recreation as well as for research and the pursuit of knowledge.

23 It is also important to recognize that the elimination of private property does not mean the alienation of the produce of labor to the state. The produce of labor is equally the property of all the members of the community. In keeping with the principle of equality, all members of the community have equal control over the community (although they might elect a board of directors for the purpose of governance). Thus, the principles of equality, security, and voluntarism imply one further principle: democracy.

24 If security stands as a principal organizing principle for Bentham, equality plays that role for Thompson in a way that leads directly to democracy. Democracy is not merely an instrumental procedure for ensuring that rulers fulfill their fiduciary duties and are accountable to the ruled, as it is for Bentham, but a principle of social interaction deeply rooted in the institutional structure of the cooperative community. Indeed, it is the democratic character of the community that holds the other elements together. The produce of the labor of the community is secured to the community as a whole, and everyone has an equal claim to it as equal members of the community. All members of the cooperative retain control of their collective property on an equal basis with all the other members. No one member retains complete control over any part of the "wealth" (explicitly avoiding the term *property* here) of the community against or even on behalf of any other fully vested member, but each retains equal control over all of it in its entirety. Each member can be said to retain full security in the produce of their labor, as they have full political rights within the community to participate in all decision making with respect to the common property. But democracy is manifested not simply through the establishment of democratic governance through an elected committee to make decisions on behalf of the community, although this is part of Thompson's model. Within the limited sphere of the cooperative community, small enough so that all of the members would be at least familiar with everyone else, public opinion serves as a means through which people directly engage in self-government in their daily

interactions with those around them. Thus, self-governance is a function of people's regular interactions with each other, understood as equals within the context of the community.[42]

25 From this, we can identify Thompson's version of the subsidiary principles. Like Bentham, there are two levels here: security, equality, and voluntarism are primary. These abstract principles require a further set of practical principles in order for them to be put into practice: common effort/common property and democracy. These are manifested in the form of the cooperative community, which establishes the conditions for relationships based on cooperation and benevolence, which then become the basis for benevolent and cooperative relationships with those outside of the cooperative.

Socialism and Social Institutions

26 Liberal political theory, generally speaking, recognizes two domains of activity: a public sphere and a private sphere. The public sphere is the domain of government, where diverse interests interact and compete, where policy is adopted that affects all members of a society, and where democratic practices ensure that the government is accountable to the people. The private sphere nearly always includes the household and usually includes all private organizations, such as businesses and social institutions that are not associated with the public sphere, like private clubs and civil society organizations (except as far as they engage in lobbying). In a sense, a distinctive characteristic of liberalism is that a distinction is made between "politics" and "society." While each acts on the other in various ways through clearly identifiable institutional frameworks, they operate as separate domains. Elements that are seen as essential to the public sphere, such as democracy and civil rights, are not guaranteed—or even expected to exist—in the private sphere.

27 In liberalism, and especially in its contemporary, dominant variant, neoliberalism, it is generally considered that the smaller the domain of politics, the better. The primary function of government, as Bentham suggested, is security, primarily the security of property. Equality is a concern only to the degree necessary to avoid social upheaval as long as formal equality before the law establishes at least a nominally level playing field. The central concern of liberalism is the exercise of freedom, and it is assumed that there is an inverse relationship between the degree of freedom and the relative size of government—the smaller the government, the greater the domain of freedom and vice versa.

28 Socialism refuses this distinction. The central premise of socialism, from a Thompsonite perspective, is the idea of the members of a community coming together to address common problems and pursue common interests. Political institutions are social institutions, and social institutions are political, and no clear distinction can be made between the public and private spheres. Thompson advocates for a highly participatory political system, saying that, "no regulations tending to the *benefit of all* can be expected except where *all interested* are concerned in the formation of them." As did Mill after him, Thompson argued that the primary benefit of such participation is educative.[43] Further, while Thompson was skeptical about the ability of legislators to affect real social change, his second book, the *Appeal of One Half of the Human Race, Women, Against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, to Retain them in Political, and thence in Civil and Domestic, Slavery* is a powerful argument for extending suffrage to women

(something Bentham opposed).[44] However, like Marx's *On the Jewish Question* (written about 20 years later), the *Appeal* concludes by arguing that merely winning the vote would be insufficient to attain the emancipation of women—full emancipation required the dismantling of capitalism and the establishment of a society organized around cooperative communities.[45]

29 Where Bentham's utilitarianism is concentrated on the actions of individuals (including legislators), Thompson's is concerned with the conditions in which people live. Specifically, he focuses on the way that social institutions establish the conditions in which people live and relate to one another. Unlike liberalism, which tends to isolate individuals from the institutional context in which they operate, Thompson clearly recognizes that individuals always act from within an institutional context. That institutional context shapes and orients the actions of individuals. Institutions themselves are always locations or vehicles for power relations, so all social institutions are, in a sense, always already political. So, the question of the structure of social institutions is a key element in Thompson's analysis.

30 If we understand social institutions as inherently political—both in the effects and as sites of politics—then it makes it possible to understand the notion of a democratic society on very different terms than is possible in liberal theory. In Thompson's socialism, any social institution, from the halls of government to a business to a family, can be organized democratically. Indeed, that is exactly what the cooperative community is—a democratic social institution.

31 Cooperative communities can be understood as embodiments of Thompson's subsidiary principles. First of all, all members of the community are equal. Even though some may have greater endowments of strength or ability, all contribute to the welfare of the community to the extent that they can and all enjoy the fruits of the community's labor. The property of the community is not owned severally, but is owned in common, and each can be said to have an equal share. All members join the community voluntarily, and voluntarily exchange their labor within the community, for which they receive an equal share of the produce of the community. And, as is implied by the principle of equality, the community is governed democratically.

Implications

32 Highlighting William Thompson's role in the history of socialist thought offers some interesting possibilities for a rethinking of contemporary socialism. The first is to reorient socialism away from the state, both in the sense of the need to capture state power and in the sense that socialism can only function through the strong arm of the state. The second is to reestablish a firm connection between socialism and the cooperative movement. Emphasizing the utilitarian foundations of Thompson's thought also can remind us of the central principle of utilitarianism.

33 State-based socialism does not have a very good track record, so it may be worth noting that the state does not have a clear role in Thompson's theory. He is suspicious of representative democracy, although he did think that, with universal suffrage, it could lead to the elimination of "every expedient of insecurity."[46] In a different work he lays out a sketch of a model for governance based on the cooperative communities, where each community would elect delegates to a local body, which would then elect delegates to a regional body, and so on up to the national level, which could form "the

connecting bond of the interests and securing the co-operation for all useful purposes even of hundreds of millions of people."[47] But the greatest degree of power is local, in the cooperative community itself, and the function of the state is to facilitate community empowerment and the establishment and functioning of community-based democratic institutions.

34 It may be said that, if state socialism doesn't have a very good track record, Thompson's plans for cooperative communities fared even worse. There was great promise and energy at the start—one estimate is that "over 250 [cooperative] societies" were started in the British Isles between 1826 and 1835, although it seems that few of these went far beyond the formative stage.[48] However, the cooperative community model Thompson developed did not work very well, and it is very unlikely that it would have succeeded even if he had lived a lot longer and been able to see more of his plans through. Few were tried; those that did all collapsed within a few years—for example, Owen's own New Harmony community in the U.S. state of Indiana lasted less than three years; Orbiston in Britain lasted about three years, its failure hastened no doubt in part because of the early death of its founder, Abram Coombe; and Ralahine, in Ireland, which lasted from 1831 to 1833 might have lasted longer but for its founder's predilection for gambling.[49] Thompson himself had intended to leave the bulk of his estate to the formation of a community, but his sisters sued after his death to prevent the performance of the will, leading to the longest probate case in Irish history, which burned up most of the money.[50]

35 Admittedly, the failures may also be due to problems with Thompson's ideas. His attachment to Bentham's rationalism, itself a form of Enlightenment thinking, may in its own way lead to a kind of intellectual coercion, and risks devolving into a tyranny of the majority of the sort Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill were concerned about. His rationalism also leads him to certain universalizing assumptions that were perhaps questionable in his time but are certainly problematic today. His assertions that communities of 500-2000 people are "large" is almost laughable in today's urbanized mass society, so simply trying to adopt his plan for social reform is very unlikely to be successful.

36 Still, it is worth remembering that, at its beginning, socialism was *cooperative* socialism, and the cooperative movement today can be understood, at least to some degree, as a descendant of Thompson's ideas. While the idea of independent, self-sufficient communities didn't work out, in the 1840s the cooperative movement in the U.K. advanced rapidly by shedding the idea of autarkic communities and adopting an enterprise model. This meant that cooperatives could be understood as community-based businesses, and it led to not only explosive growth, but also internationalization. It also led to the absorption of the cooperative model into both the liberal capitalist system and, at the same time, its adoption as an enterprise model within state socialism in the 20th century.[51]

37 The global cooperative movement today is remarkable in its size and diversity. The International Cooperative Alliance, founded in 1895, bills itself as the world's largest non-governmental organization, with 233 member organizations representing over a billion people in over 100 countries worldwide, and well-integrated into national economies in everything from post-industrial to agricultural/extractive economies. In 1992 the United Nations (U.N.) estimated that over half the world's population is in some way affected by cooperatives.[52] In 1995 the U.N. established an annual

International Day of Cooperatives (the first Saturday in July), and later designated 2012 as the International Year of the Cooperative.

38 If cooperatives, instead of the state, are understood as the central institutional form of socialism, then the U.S. becomes one of the world's most socialist countries. As of 2009, there were nearly 30,000 cooperatives in the U.S. operating 73,000 places of business. Altogether, cooperatives in the U.S. own over $ 3 trillion in assets, generate over $ 500 billion in revenue and pay over $ 25 billion in wages. While the number of individuals who are co-op members is difficult to estimate (because one person or family can belong to more than one cooperative), cooperatives nationwide count over 350 million members, reflecting an estimated 120 million individuals. And from a political perspective, it seems that there are few things Americans agree on more than the value of cooperatives. In 2012, the U.S. Senate considered a proposal to adopt the UN-declared Year of the Cooperative. The measure, which was co-sponsored by a Democrat and a Republican and was under consideration in a Republican-controlled Senate during one of the most partisan periods in American history, passed on a *unanimous vote*, 97–0.[53]

39 The fact that cooperatives enjoy such support from across the ideological spectrum might, for supporters of socialism who see themselves firmly on the Left, give rise to a question about whether the cooperative movement is truly a progressive movement, or whether it has lost its ideological character by becoming fully incorporated into the lifeblood of capitalism. There is no simple answer to that, although there are good reasons why conservatives support them. First, cooperatives are democratic organizations and as such reflect the values and interests of their members. Thus, cooperatives based in conservative areas or with a conservative membership will, necessarily, reflect conservative values. Second, the emphasis by the cooperative movement on principles of self-help is attractive to conservatives, as is the idea of local control. Those on the Left are often surprised to learn that right-wing populists are often strongly anti-corporate,[54] which makes the cooperative form appealing. Third, rural America is deeply conservative but also deeply invested in cooperatives—agricultural cooperatives, primarily. Agricultural cooperatives tend to be more conservative than other types, in part for reasons already stated but also because they remain fully within the extractive logic of capitalism as enterprises that produce for exchange, not for use, which means that they may be more profit-driven than other types of cooperatives.

40 However, it may also be said that the idea that cooperatives *are* fully embedded in the capitalist system could reflect a kind of subversive influence. After all, farmers form cooperatives in order to escape exploitation by middlemen and enable them to compete against agribusiness—indeed, it can be said that agricultural cooperatives saved the traditional family farm in the U.S. People form and join credit unions and other consumer cooperatives because that way their economic activity will benefit them instead of merely lining the pockets of wealthy stockholders. And while it may be true that democratic norms in cooperatives may be weak, especially in the larger ones,[55] they are, fundamentally, democratic institutions that demonstrate the capacity of economic organizations to operate on democratic principles, however vaguely—which is far more than can be said of traditional capitalist firms. As the U.N. has noted, "[C]ooperatives in most countries are in fact 'schools for democracy.'"[56] In a subsequent report, the U.N. engaged in an extensive review of the impacts of cooperatives

worldwide, and its conclusions reflect goals that are of central importance in socialism: "creating significant public goods" from their operations; promoting "democratization and environmental rationality" in economies, as well as providing a model based on "equity, justice and subsidiarity;" contributing to the reduction of "unemployment, poverty and social disintegration;" and suggesting that they help to promote social cohesion.[57]

41 It is also true that the cooperative movement has long prided itself on its non-ideological character—indeed, it enabled the ICA, founded as an organization to promote democracy and working-class interests, to survive two world wars and the Cold War as an international organization that included powerful members from both Western and Eastern blocs.[58] While this view has also been challenged, it is clear that there has always been a tension between the micro-level concern for individual cooperatives to survive in a competitive marketplace, and the macro-level orientation of cooperatives to build a more just society.[59] While this may have come at the expense of its ability to advance a comprehensive social agenda, the cooperative movement has positively impacted the lives of billions of people for generations.

Conclusion

42 It is worth noting that classical liberalism (Bentham's version) was quite different in some ways from contemporary liberalism. While fully invested in individualism, classical liberals were nonetheless much more concerned than today with the character of the institutions that shape society. This attention to institutions is part of what Thompson carries forward into socialism, at a deeper and broader level. Whereas the liberal position is to establish institutions as a general framework within which individuals interact, for Thompson the institutions are deeply engaged in shaping the character of individuals and their relationships with those around them. Making the function of social institutions transparent means that they become accessible to the people who are affected by them, creating an opening for a demand—if not an imperative—for democracy.

43 From its very beginnings, socialism has exerted a powerful pull on those who wish to create a more just society. Utilitarianism is only interested in justice to the extent that a more just society is a happier one. Reconnecting socialism with its utilitarian roots offers a renewal of its fundamental principle, setting it apart from liberalism, in the idea that the happiness of each is deeply connected to the happiness of all. Thompson's emphasis on the importance of both equality and security, and his effort to reintegrate them, grows out of this basic insight.

44 To the degree that socialism has developed out of Thompson's theory, it is worth remembering that the strong principle of equality and its companions in security and voluntarism, and the further principles of common property and democracy, are not the primary principles of utilitarianism. The principal principle is utility, the greatest happiness of the greatest number. The other principles are intended to support it. We would do well to keep it in our sights.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources

Anon, "Lecture on Cooperation." *Manchester Times & Gazette* (Manchester), 4 June 1831

Bentham, Jeremy, "Constitutional Code, vol. 1." In *The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham*, eds. F. Rosen and J. H. Burns (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1983)

Bentham, Jeremy, *The Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham: January 1817 to June 1820,* ed. S. Conway, vol. 9 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989)

Bentham, Jeremy, *A Fragment on Government,* eds. J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart (Cambridge England, and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1988)

Bentham, Jeremy, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation,* eds. J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)

Bentham, Jeremy, "Supply without Burthen or Escheat Vice Taxation", in *Jeremy Bentham's Economic Writings: Critical Edition Based on His Printed Works and Unprinted Manuscripts*, ed. W. Stark (New York, Burt Franklin, 1952), pp. 279-367

Bentham, Jeremy, *The Theory of Legislation,* trad. Richard Hildreth, eds. E. Dumont and C.K. Ogden (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1931)

Carpenter, William, "Proceedings of the Third Cooperative Congress", in *Owenism and the Working Class: Six Pamphlets and Four Broadsides, 1821-1834* (New York, Arno Press, 1972)

Mill, John Stuart, Autobiography (London and New York, Penguin Books, 1989)

Owen, Robert. "Report to the County of Lanark", in *A New View of Society and Other Writings*, ed. G. Claeys (London, Penguin Classics, 1991), pp. 250-308

Smith, Adam, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations,* ed. E. Canaan. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976)

Thompson, William, *Appeal of One Half of the Human Race, Women, against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, to Retain Them in Political, and Thence in Civil and Domestic, Slavery; in Reply to a Paragraph of Mr. Mill's Celebrated "Article on Government"*, ed. D. Dooley (Cork, Ireland, Cork University Press, 1997)

Thompson, William, *An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth Most Conducive to Human Happiness, Applied to the Newly Proposed System of Voluntary Equality of* Wealth (New York, B. Franklin, 1968)

Thompson, William, "Labor Rewarded: The Claims of Labor and Capital Conciliated: Or, How to Secure to Labor the Whole Products of Its Exertions", in *Ricardian Socialism*, ed. David Reisman (London, Pickering & Chatto, 1996)

Thompson, William, *Practical Directions for the Speedy and Economical Establishment of Communities on the Principles of Mutual Co-Operation, United Possessions and Equality of Exertions and of the Means of Enjoyments* (London, Strange, and E. Wilson, 1830)

U.N., *Status and Role of Cooperatives in the Light of New Social and Economic Trends: Report of the Secretary-General* (New York, NY, United Nations, 1992)

U.N., *Status and Role of Cooperatives in the Light of New Economic and Social Trends: Report of the Secretary-General* (New York, United Nations, 1994)

Secondary sources

Beer, Max, *A History of British Socialism* (New York, The Humanities Press, 1940)

Bevir, Mark, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2011)

Claeys, Gregory, "'Individualism,' 'Socialism,' and 'Social Science': Further Notes on a Process of Conceptual Formation, 1800-1850", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47, 1 (1986), pp. 81-93

Claeys, Gregory, *Machinery, Money, and the Millennium: From Moral Economy to Socialism, 1815-60* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987)

Cole, G.D.H., *A Century of Co-Operation* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1944)

Epshtein, David, "Cooperative Movement in the Soviet Union: History and Future Prospects", in *Agricultural Cooperatives in Transition*, eds. C. Csaki and Y. Kislev (New York, Routledge, 2021), pp. 291-99

Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri, *Assembly* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2017)

Harrison, J. F. C., *Quest for the New Moral World: Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America* (New York, Scribner, 1969)

Hunt, E.K., "Utilitarianism and the Labor Theory of Value: A Critique of the Ideas of William Thompson", *History of Political Economy* 11, 4 (Winter 1979), pp. 545-571

Jevons, W. Stanley, *The Theory of Political Economy* (New York, Augustus M. Kelley, 1965)

Kaswan, Mark J., *Happiness, Democracy and the Cooperative Movement: The Radical Utilitarianism of William Thompson* (Albany, NY, State University of New York Press, 2014)

Kaswan, Mark J., "Cooperatives and the Question of Democracy", *Zeitschrift für Gemeinwirtschaft und Gemeinwohl/Journal of Social Economy and Common Welfare* 44, 4 (2021), pp. 486-500

Kelly, P. J., *Utilitarianism and Distributive Justice: Jeremy Bentham and the Civil* Law (Oxford and New York, Clarendon Press / Oxford University Press, 1990)

King, J.E., "Utopian or Scientific? A Reconsideration of the Ricardian Socialists", *History of Political Economy* 15, 3 (1983), pp. 345-73

Laidler, Harry W., *History of Socialism: An Historical Comparative Study of Socialism, Communism, Utopia* (United Kingdom, Taylor & Francis, 2013)

Lichtheim, George, *A Short History of Socialism* (New York, Washington, Praeger Publishers, 1971)

Lowenthal, Esther, *The Ricardian Socialists* (New York, Columbia University, 1911)

Menger, Anton, *The Right to the Whole Produce of Labour*, ed. H. S. Foxwell (New York, Augustus M. Kelley, 1962)

Ogden, C.K., "Introduction", in Bentham, Jeremy, *The Theory of Legislation*, ed. C.K. Ogden (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1931)

Pankhurst, Richard K.P., *William Thompson (1775-1833): Britain's Pioneer Socialist, Feminist, and Co-Operato*r (London, Pluto Press, 1991)

Pateman, Carole, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1988)

Rhodes, Rita, "The Internationalism of the Co-Operative Movement", in *Towards the Co-Operative Commonwealth: Essays in the History of Co-Operation*, eds. B. Lancaster and P. Maguire (Loughborough, The Co-operative College, 1996), pp. 105-108

Rosen, Frederick, "Introduction", in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996)

Schofield, Philip, *Utility and Democracy: The Political Thought of Jeremy Bentham* (Oxford, England, Oxford University Press, 2006)

Stark, W., "Liberty and Equality Or: Jeremy Bentham as an Economist", *The Economic Journal* 51, 201 (April 1941), pp. 56-79.

Watkins, W.P., *Co-Operative Principles: Today & Tomorrow* (Manchester, Holyoake Books, 1986

NOTES

1. Claeys, Gregory, "'Individualism,' 'Socialism,' and 'Social Science': Further Notes on a Process of Conceptual Formation, 1800-1850," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47, 1 (1986), pp. 81-93; see also Beer, Max, *A History of British Socialism* (New York, The Humanities Press, 1940), pp. 185-87.
2. Mill never cites Thompson in his work, but after one has read Thompson it is impossible not to see his influence on Mill. In his autobiography Mill has a brief passage where he makes his only reference to Thompson, calling him a "most estimable man with whom I was well acquainted," Mill, John Stuart, *Autobiography* (London & New York, Penguin Books, 1989), p. 106.
3. Harrison, J.F.C., *Quest for the New Moral World: Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America* (New York, Scribner, 1969), p. 64.
4. Menger, Anton, *The Right to the Whole Produce of Labour*, ed. H. S. Foxwell (New York, Augustus M. Kelley, 1962), pp. 101-102. Marx does not reference Thompson often, but there is no doubt that he was familiar with Thompson's work, with the *Inquiry*, at least. His regard for Thompson is evident in the fact that Marx, who is critical of just about every author he cites, offers no criticism of Thompson, even after quoting long passages. One of the factors that may have affected Thompson's reputation is that when Engels published some of Marx's work after his death, he cited an abridged edition of the *Inquiry*, Thompson's primary work (discussed below), rather than the full version. However, the abridged version has significant gaps that substantially diminish the power of its argument. The effects of this can be plainly seen in one of the only modern journal articles in the history of political economics focused on Thompson's thought, in which the author effectively concludes that the problem with Thompson is that he isn't radical enough. See Hunt, E.K.,"Utilitarianism and the Labor Theory of Value : A Critique of the Ideas of William Thompson," *History of Political Economy* 11, 4 (Winter 1979), pp. 545-571. But because Hunt references the abridged version—and only the abridged version—he misses important elements of Thompson's argument.
5. Lowenthal, Esther, *The Ricardian Socialists* (New York, Columbia University, 1911), pp. 15-46.
6. King, J.E., "Utopian or scientific? A reconsideration of the Ricardian Socialists," *History of Political Economy* 15, 3 (1983), pp. 345-373 ; see also Claeys, Gregory, *Machinery, Money, and the Millennium : From Moral Economy to Socialism, 1815-60* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987), pp. xxii-xxiii.
7. Beer, M., *A History of British Socialism*, p. 184, pp. 218-228.
8. For example, Thompson is not mentioned in any of Laidler's 984 pages on the history of socialism. See Laidler, Harry W., *History of Socialism : An Historical Comparative Study of Socialism, Communism, Utopia* (United Kingdom, Taylor & Francis, 2013). Lichtheim only mentions him in passing as one of the Ricardian Socialists. See Lichtheim, George, *A Short History of Socialism* (New

York, Washington, Praeger Publishers, 1971), 40. Bevir doesn't mention him at all. See Bevir, Mark, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton & Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2011).

9. To be clear, he is one of many, including many who are often ignored. However, I hope to show in this paper just how important his ideas were. See Kaswan, Mark J., *Happiness, Democracy and the Cooperative Movement : The Radical Utilitarianism of William Thompson* (Albany, NY, State University of New York Press, 2014) for a fuller discussion of Thompson's role than is possible in this paper.

10. The big difference between Thompson and modern forms of socialism has to do with the role of the state. Thompson is skeptical about state institutions and has doubts about representative democracy, so while he is not actively opposed to the concept of state governance, he doesn't have all that much to say about the role of the state in a socialist society. Instead, the theoretical focus for Thompson is on the cooperative community.

11. There is a vast and rich literature from and on Bentham and his ideas. This paper largely avoids that literature, in order to maintain a focus on William Thompson and his work. However, as Thompson can best be understood as reacting to and drawing from Bentham, I feel that an understanding of Thompson requires some engagement with him. However, that engagement is limited so as not to distract from the main focus.

12. Bentham, Jeremy, *A Fragment on Government*, eds. J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart (Cambridge, England, & New York, Cambridge University Press, 1988).

13. Bentham, Jeremy, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, eds. J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996).

14. Bentham, Jeremy, "Constitutional Code, vol. 1," in *The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham*, eds. F. Rosen and J. H. Burns (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1983).

15. There is some controversy over whether the *Traités* should be authentically considered to be Bentham's work. In his introduction to the 1931 edition, C.K. Ogden notes that Bentham gave Dumont a free hand in making revisions, although toward the end of his life he said of Dumont "in a moment of annoyance..., 'He does not understand a word of my meaning.'". See "Introduction," in *The Theory of Legislation*, ed. C.K. Ogden (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1931), p. xlvii. Yet earlier he had been full of praise for it, suggesting that it was the best available presentation of his work. See *The Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham : January 1817 to June 1820*, ed. Stephen Conway, vol. 9 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 360. However, any contemporary controversy over the *Traités* is irrelevant because it is Thompson's work that we are interested in here and, as will be seen, Thompson specifically references that work as his principal source. Since Thompson spent some considerable time with Bentham, we may assume that he had a good understanding of Bentham's ideas, and his referencing of the *Traités* should be sufficient to establish their authenticity as Bentham's ideas, at least for the purposes of this paper.

16. Bentham, Jeremy, *The Theory of Legislation*, trans. R. Hildreth, eds. E. Dumont and C.K. Ogden (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1931), p. 98.

17. Bentham, J., *Theory*, p. 97.

18. Bentham, J., *Theory*, p. 104.

19. Bentham, J., *Theory*, p. 105.

20. Bentham, J., *Theory*, p. 108.

21. Rosen, Frederick, "Introduction," in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996), xxxvii; Stark, W., "Liberty and Equality or: Jeremy Bentham as an Economist," *The Economic Journal* 51, 201 (April 1941), p. 69.

22. As Stark puts it, the poor would "starve themselves into riches". Stark, W., "Liberty and Equality," p. 76.

23. Bentham, J., *Theory*, p. 109-110.

24. Bentham, J., *Theory*, p. 116.

25. Bentham, J., *Theory*, p. 117.

26. Bentham, J., *Theory*, p. 120.

27. Kelly, P.J., *Utilitarianism and Distributive Justice: Jeremy Bentham and the Civil Law* (Oxford & New York, Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1990); see also Jeremy Bentham, "Supply Without Burthen or Escheat Vice Taxation," in *Jeremy Bentham's Economic Writings: Critical Edition Based on his Printed Works and Unprinted Manuscripts*, ed. W. Stark (New York, Burt Franklin, 1952).

28. It is worth noting that, in his seminal work that is one of the cornerstones of neoclassical economics, Jevons takes Bentham as his starting point. Jevons, W. Stanley, *The Theory of Political Economy* (New York, Augustus M. Kelley, 1965), p. 26.

29. Bentham, *IPML*, p. 11.

30. Thompson, William, *An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth Most Conducive to Human Happiness, Applied to the Newly Proposed System of Voluntary Equality of Wealth* (New York, B. Franklin, 1968), p. 1.

31. To be clear, Thompson never directly references Bentham's subsidiary principles, with the exception of security and equality. What I offer here is an interpretation of Thompson's ideas articulated as a corresponding set of principles. Subsistence and abundance receive little attention in the *Inquiry*, with which this paper is primarily concerned, although they make an appearance in a later work, *Practical Directions for the Speedy and Economical Establishment of Communities on the Principles of Mutual Co-operation, United Possessions and Equality of Exertions and of the means of Enjoyments* (London, Strange, and E. Wilson, 1830). There he considers the relationship between basic "necessaries," "comforts," and "superfluities." Necessaries are always worth the labor of production ; comforts are not necessary but the pleasure produced by them offsets the labor of production ; and superfluities do not provide sufficient pleasure to offset the pain of the labor required to produce them (2).

32. Thompson, W., *Inquiry*, p. x.

33. Thompson, W. *Inquiry*, p. xiv, emphasis in the original.

34. Thompson, W., *Inquiry*, p. 178.

35. Although not often noted, Adam Smith says that "The produce of labour constitutes the natural recompence or wages of labour". Smith, Adam, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 5th ed., ed. E. Canaan (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 72.

36. I do not mean to suggest that racial domination and the oppression of women by men are not features of our own times, but at least they are no longer directly enforced by statute. Thompson's feminism is discussed below.

37. Per the Google Ngram tool, the term "capitalism" only came into common usage around 1880. The chart shows a short period of usage in the early 1830s, but closer examination shows that many of the publication dates reported in the database are incorrect. (Google Ngram search on "capitalism" conducted 28/7/2022.)

38. Thompson, W., *Inquiry*, pp. 384-391. See also Owen, Robert, "Report to the County of Lanark," in *A New View of Society and Other Writings*, ed. G. Claeys (London, Penguin Classics, 1991), pp. 250-308.

39. While Owen's role as a visionary was of great importance, Thompson provides much greater substance and depth. It is not possible to determine what their personal relationship may have been like (Thompson's correspondence has been lost, and there is but one letter between them in the Owen archives), but Thompson was quite critical of Owen on a number of points. This came to a head at the Third Cooperative Congress of 1832, where Owen was, for lack of a better term, ejected from the meeting and Thompson was named its leader in his stead. See Carpenter, William, "Proceedings of the Third Cooperative Congress," in *Owenism and the Working Class : Six Pamphlets and Four Broadsides, 1821-1834* (New York, Arno Press, 1972).

40. Claeys, G., *Machinery, Money, and the Millennium*, p. 51. After seeing Owen speak in Dublin in 1822, Thompson referred to Owen's plans as "merely 'an improved system of pauper management'," although his endorsement of Owenism is much stronger in the *Inquiry*. See Pankhurst, Richard K.P., *William Thompson (1775-1833) : Britain's Pioneer Socialist, Feminist, and Co-*

operator (London, Pluto Press, 1991), p. 15. He later became quite critical of Owen, particularly in the wake of the failure of the New Harmony community in the U.S. See Anon., "Lecture on Cooperation," *Manchester Times & Gazette*, 4 June 1831, p. 600.

41. Thompson distinguishes between selfishness and self-interest. Like any Benthamite he recognizes self-interest as the only rational motivation for taking action. Selfishness is the pursuit of self-interest in ways that have undesirable social consequences and are short-sighted.

42. While it might be easy to critique this as failing to recognize informal structures of power and dominance that might be expected to form despite every attempt to maintain equality, it is important to remember that Thompson's theory is utopian in form. Thompson's claim is that by removing the principal features of society that drive us apart—competition and private property—the reasons for people exercising dominance would disappear.

43. Thompson, W., *Inquiry*, pp. 212-213; 91-92.

44. Thompson, William, *Appeal of One Half of the Human Race, Women, against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, to Retain them in Political, and Thence in Civil and Domestic, Slavery; in reply to a paragraph of Mr. Mill's celebrated "Article on Government"*, ed. D. Dooley (Cork, Ireland, Cork University Press, 1997). There is some confusion around Bentham's position on women's suffrage. After the French Revolution he was a strong advocate for universal suffrage—for France. Not for England. In a letter of 1792, he said he was, "a royalist in London...a republican in Paris" (quoted in Schofield, Philip, *Utility and Democracy : The Political Thought of Jeremy Bentham* (Oxford, England, Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 81). In the 1817 Radical Reform Bill he explicitly excluded women in his call for "virtual universality," and again in one of his last works, the *Constitutional Code*. See Kaswan, M., *Happiness*, pp. 139–40.

45. Pateman, saying that Thompson "laid the foundation for subsequent feminist criticism of marriage as a contractual relation," exclaims that, "The vehemence of his polemic has rarely been equaled." See Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 156. She also notes "striking similarities" between the *Appeal* and John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* written some forty years later (p. 160).

46. Thompson, W., *Inquiry*, p. 595.

47. Thompson, William, "Labor Rewarded: The Claims of Labor and Capital Conciliated: or, How to Secure to Labor the Whole Products of its Exertions," in *Ricardian Socialism*, ed. D. Reisman (London, Pickering & Chatto, 1996), p. 122.

48. Cole, G.D.H., *A Century of Co-operation* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1944), p. 25.

49. Harrison, J.F.C., *Quest for the New Moral World*, pp. 6, 27-32, 170-71.

50. Kaswan, M., *Happiness, p.* 6.

51. For example, David Epshtein discusses agricultural cooperatives in the early history of the Soviet Union. See Epshtein, David "Cooperative movement in the Soviet Union : History and future prospects," in *Agricultural Cooperatives in Transition*, eds. C. Csaki and Y. Kislev (New York, Routledge, 2021).

52. Fifty-seven percent in "developing countries," 62% of "developed market economies," and 70% of "transitional economies." U.N., Status and role of cooperatives in the light of new economic and social trends : Report of the Secretary-General, A/49/213 (New York, United Nations, 1994). Since the 1990s, the U.N. has produced an annual "Cooperatives in Social Development" report.

53. Actually, this might be a good reason *not* to associate the cooperative movement with socialism, given the strong anti-socialist attitudes in the U.S. But that is a topic for another paper.

54. See Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri, *Assembly* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2017), chapter 4 for a recent example.

55. Kaswan, Mark J. "Cooperatives and the Question of Democracy," *Zeitschrift für Gemeinwirtschaft und Gemeinwohl/Journal of Social Economy and Common Welfare* 44, 4 (2021).

56. U.N., Status and role of cooperatives in the light of new social and economic trends: Report of the Secretary-General, A/47/216 (New York, NY, United Nations, 1992).
57. U.N., Status and role of cooperatives in the light of new economic and social trends: Report of the Secretary-General, A/49/213 (New York, NY, United Nations, 1994).
58. Rhodes, Rita, "The Internationalism of the Co-operative Movement," in *Towards the Co-operative Commonwealth: Essays in the History of Co-operation*, eds. B. Lancaster and P. Maguire (Loughborough, The Co-operative College, 1996).
59. See, e.g., Watkins, W.P., *Co-operative Principles: Today & Tomorrow* (Manchester, Holyoake Books, 1986), pp. 4-5.

ABSTRACTS

In the "Principles of the Civil Code," Jeremy Bentham identifies four "principles subsidiary to utility": subsistence, abundance, equality, and security. Whereas these subsidiary principles form part of the bedrock of classical liberalism, in this essay I show that in the hands of his friend and disciple William Thompson, they are transformed into the foundations for socialism. Where Bentham prioritizes security over equality, and security of property takes a preeminent role, Thompson shows that the system of individual competition and private property—his way of describing capitalism—is best characterized by the "inequality of security." Based on the labor theory of property, Thompson argues that the system that assigns ownership to the providers of capital violates the workers' security—the right to have the full produce of their labor secured to them. Thompson then reconciles security and equality, understanding them as mutually constitutive instead of in conflict. From his work I identify a modified set of subsidiary principles that place security and equality at the same level, and then adds additional subsidiary principles as necessary conditions to enable full equality of security: voluntarism, democracy, and united effort/common property. With this as his basis, Thompson offers the outlines for important elements of socialist theory, including the theory of surplus value; a call for the abolition of private property; and full equal social, civil, and legal rights for women, establishing a firm grounding for socialism in utilitarian philosophy. Because Thompson also was a major influence on the early cooperative movement, which also adopted these principles, this has significant implications for how we view the cooperative movement, which today may justifiably claim to be the world's largest democratic social movement.

Dans ses « Principes du Code civil », Jeremy Bentham identifie quatre « principes subsidiaires à l'utilité » : la subsistance, l'abondance, l'égalité et la sûreté. Si ces principes subsidiaires fondent en partie le libéralisme classique, cet article montrent que, dans l'œuvre de son ami et disciple William Thompson, ils deviennent le socle du socialisme. Là où Bentham place la sûreté au-dessus de l'égalité pour accorder une place prépondérante à la sûreté de la propriété, Thompson montre que le système de la concurrence individuelle et de la propriété privée – ainsi qu'il décrit le capitalisme – se caractérise avant tout par une « inégalité de sûreté ». S'appuyant sur la théorie de la propriété-travail, Thompson postule que tout système qui accorde la propriété aux fournisseurs de capital bafoue la sûreté des travailleurs, soit le droit qu'ils possèdent de jouir pleinement des fruits de leur travail. Thompson réconcilie ensuite sûreté et égalité en les entendant comme mutuellement constitutives, et non comme étant en conflit. En m'appuyant sur son œuvre, j'identifie un ensemble modifié de principes subsidiaires qui place la sûreté et

l'égalité au même niveau pour penser ensuite d'autres principes subsidiaires comme les conditions nécessaires à l'avènement d'une véritable égalité de sûreté : le volontarisme, la démocratie et l'union des efforts, ou propriété en commun. À partir de ces réflexions, Thompson élabore des éléments qui formeront le socle de futures théories socialistes, tels que le principe de plus-value, un appel à l'abolition de la propriété privée et l'obtention d'une égalité pleine et entière pour les femmes en termes de droits sociaux, civiques et légaux. Ce faisant, Thompson ancre fermement le socialisme dans la philosophie utilitariste. Dans la mesure où Thompson a également eu une grande influence sur les débuts du mouvement coopératif, qui a lui aussi adopté ces principes, cette filiation a d'importantes conséquences sur la façon dont nous entendons ce mouvement coopératif, que l'on peut à juste titre considérer aujourd'hui comme le plus important mouvement démocratique à l'échelle mondiale.

INDEX

Keywords: Bentham Jeremy, cooperative movement, democracy, security, history of socialism, Thompson William, utilitarianism
Mots-clés: Bentham Jeremy, mouvement coopératif, démocratie, sûreté, socialisme, histoire du socialisme, Thompson William, utilitarisme

AUTHOR

MARK J. KASWAN

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (mark.kaswan@utrgv.edu)