

UC Berkeley

ISUS-X, Tenth Conference of the International Society for Utilitarian Studies

Title

"Happiness, Well-Being, and William Thompson's Social(ist) Utilitarianism"

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8d59f306>

Author

Kaswan, Mark

Publication Date

2008-08-20

Happiness, Well-Being, and William Thompson's Social(ist) Utilitarianism

Mark Kaswan
University of California, Los Angeles
Department of Political Science

Prepared for
ISUS X: The 10th Conference of the International Society for Utilitarian Studies
11–14 September 2008
University of California, Berkeley

Abstract: William Thompson (1775-1833), best known as author of *An Inquiry into the Principles for the Distribution of Wealth Most Conducive to Human Happiness* and described by Bentham as a “disciple” at one point, is not much studied by utilitarian scholars. He is of interest in utilitarian studies, however, because he took Bentham’s basic premises—the greatest happiness of the greatest number as well as the subsidiary principles of security, subsistence, abundance and equality—in very different direction. What Thompson’s work demonstrates is the flexibility of the principle of utility, and the range of possibilities for utilitarian theory: Where Bentham is seen as one of the great contributors to liberal capitalist theory, Thompson is considered one of the founders of socialism. A reading of Thompson provides a new perspective on the politics of utilitarianism, bringing in ‘the social’ and recognizing the important role social institutions play in shaping the conditions within which we seek our happiness. Thompson’s significance stands out best in contrast to Bentham, so the paper examines elements of Bentham’s theory—the role of well-being in his thought, its relationship to his hedonism, and the importance of the concepts of security and wealth—that are not often examined.

Happiness, Well-Being, and William Thompson's Social(ist) Utilitarianism

“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. In Bentham’s ‘Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation,’ and the first chapters of the celebrated ‘Traité de Legislation,’ this principle . . . is developed and established for ever, to the exclusion of all other pretended tests of morals.”

–William Thompson¹

William Thompson (1775-1833), best known as author of *An Inquiry into the Principles for the Distribution of Wealth Most Conducive to Human Happiness* (1824, hereafter the *Inquiry*) and described by Bentham as a “disciple” at one point (Bentham 1989: 360), is not much studied by utilitarian scholars. To the extent that he is studied at all it is as an important figure in early British socialism (Beer 1940: 218–228), and for his radical feminist *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”* (1825, *Appeal*). He is of interest in utilitarian studies, however, because he took Bentham’s basic premises—the greatest happiness of the greatest number as well as the subsidiary principles of security, subsistence, abundance and equality—in very different direction. What Thompson’s work demonstrates is the flexibility of the principle of utility, and the range of possibilities for utilitarian theory.

Because his work is not well known, a bit of background on Thompson will be valuable. Following this, we will have a brief discussion of Bentham’s conception of happiness and some aspects of the theory of utility, in order to set the stage for a more extensive presentation on Thompson. In our discussion of Bentham, we are particularly interested in the role of well-being in his thought, its relationship to his hedonism, and the importance of the concepts of security and

¹ (Thompson 1968: 1).

wealth. A basic premise of this paper is that it is impossible to attain an adequate understanding of Thompson's work without having some understanding of Bentham; indeed, reading Bentham through Thompson draws our attention to elements of Bentham's work on economics that are not often examined.

1. William Thompson

William Thompson was a curious chap.² A wealthy Irish landowner, he could be seen walking around his estates with a French tricolor attached to the top of his walking stick. Although his views were not unique for his time, Thompson laid out a thorough and forceful critique of capitalism while articulating in greater detail and depth than had been done previously the philosophical and political foundations for a social and economic system based on mutual cooperation, based roughly on the plan laid out by Robert Owen. Thompson saw himself as a political economist, applying the scientific method to social questions—indeed, he probably introduced the term “social science” to the English language (Claeys 1986: 83). His intention, however, was not merely to study his subject from an objective position, but to use scientific inquiry as a means for addressing social problems, to “assist in wiping out the stain from science, noticed thirty years ago by Condorcet . . . that although she had done much for the *glory* of mankind, she had done nothing or little for their *happiness*” (Thompson 1968 [1824]: xiv).

Not a lot is known about Thompson's early life.³ There is no reason to believe that he was formally educated, although he read widely and traveled to France, where he met up with and was

² The biographical information in this section comes from (Pankhurst 1991).

³ There exists only one book-length biography of Thompson (Pankhurst 1991). In a chapter of her book, Dooley tries to fill in some details missing from Pankhurst's account (Dooley 1996). Almost all of what we have is from published material. None of his manuscripts or notes have been found, and only four of his letters (including one to Owen in which he mentions other correspondence) are available.

influenced by the Saint Simonians. He appears on the public scene in 1818, when he published a short pamphlet on education reform. Around this time he wrote Bentham a letter about reforming a school along the lines Bentham outlined in his *Chrestomathia*. By the time Thompson came to stay with Bentham for three months in the fall of 1822, he was already working on political economy. It was here, at Bentham's home and in a nearby apartment he let after leaving Bentham's, that much of the *Inquiry* was written.

Thompson argues consistently through all of his work that it is impossible under conditions of the newly-dominant liberal-capitalist system to achieve the one great moral aim, the "greatest happiness of the greatest number." He argues that this objective cannot be attained except under conditions of the greatest possible equality. However, such equality is impossible within a system of private property and competition, because these lead necessarily to subordination, and relations of subordination are antithetical to happiness. What is required instead is a system that ensures that everyone, equally, is able to receive the full fruits of their efforts, as opposed to the capitalist system where capitalists reap the fruits of workers' efforts, whose pay is limited to the wages the capitalists are willing to give them (we may recognize here the rudiments of Marx's theory of surplus value). Thompson argued that the kind of equality he envisioned could only be achieved in a system—a "social system"—of mutual cooperation. Such a radical egalitarianism would require a fundamental reconfiguration of social power such that democratic practices would be deeply embedded within all social institutions. There is much more to be said about these points; we will return to them after we have built up the foundations of the concept of happiness and the theory of utility as Bentham articulated them.

2. Bentham's Conception of Happiness and the Theory of Utility

a. *Security and wealth in Bentham's conception of happiness*

Happiness rests at the center of Bentham's philosophy. What is rarely considered is the relationship of pleasure and well-being to his conception of happiness.⁴ It is common to refer to his theory as hedonism, which is reasonable, considering Bentham's extensive discussions of pleasure, and his reference to pleasure and pain as sovereigns governing human behavior. What is often obscured, however, is the rather distant relationship between pleasure on the one hand, and, on the other, security and wealth, which are associated with well-being and yet are also of central importance to his theory.

In the contemporary literature, 'happiness' and 'well-being' are generally considered to be synonymous, especially a particular form of well-being referred to as 'subjective well-being'.⁵ Bentham uses 'well-being' and 'happiness' at various points, and his interpreters seem to take the terms as interchangeable, in keeping with contemporary usage. Bentham, however, understood them to be significantly different and, in any case, 'well-being' is never used to describe the kind of hedonism that Bentham is so famous for.

The hedonistic aspect of Bentham's conception of happiness is inescapable, as he

⁴ Surprisingly little has been written about the way Bentham conceptualizes happiness. For example, the four-volume set of 143 "Critical Assessments" of Bentham (Parekh 1993) does not include a single essay that specifically addresses his concept of happiness. Sumner doesn't help matters by including well-being and eudaemonics under hedonism, where it most certainly doesn't belong (Sumner 1992). More often, the topic is usually the *greatest* happiness, as, for example, in (Harrison 2002), which, as I discuss below, is not the same thing.

⁵ For an overview see (Gasper 2007). As McGillivray puts it, "Arguably the most thriving area of well-being research in recent years is that on subjective well-being or, as it is otherwise known, happiness" (McGillivray 2007: 10). When Veenhoven refers to "subjective appreciation of life" he notes that it is "commonly referred to [as] 'happiness'" and that "this concept is central in utilitarian moral philosophy" (Veenhoven 2007: 218). Elsewhere, in defining the "concept of happiness" he says, "Happiness is a state of mind. In common language the term is used for evanescent feelings as well as for stable appreciation of life. Here the term is used in the latter meaning only." He continues by saying that "Happiness is the degree to which a person evaluates the overall quality of his present life-as-a-whole positively" (Veenhoven 1997: 4-5, page numbers refer to English translation).

consistently defines happiness in terms of pleasure. As he puts it in the *Table of the Springs of Action*, “pleasure [is] the sole matter of happiness” (Bentham 1983b: 61). But what is pleasure? Despite his famous quip, “*pain* and *pleasure* at least, are words which a man has no need . . . to go to a Lawyer to know the meaning of” (Bentham 1988: 28), Bentham developed an extensive typography of pleasures (and pains), as well as a conceptual framework for considering them, which is discussed in both the *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (IPML) and the *Table*, where he lists new fewer than 54 pleasures and 67 pains (or, more accurately, synonyms for pleasure and pain). Pleasure and pain, to Bentham, are *real*, as opposed to *fictitious*, entities. All substantive nouns must refer to either “real” or “fictitious” entities; all that are fictitious must have their basis in the real. All motivations reduce to two things (or what may be seen as a single thing): the desire for pleasure and the avoidance of pain (Bentham 1983b: 74–6). In its hedonic sense, happiness itself may be understood as a fictitious entity supervenient on pleasure, much in the way Goldworth describes interest as supervenient on pleasure (Goldworth 1972: 342).⁶

The focus on the hedonism in Bentham’s writing is understandable since it was the major focus of his work. As Engelmann (2003) so well points out, and as is so thoroughly illustrated by Foucault (Foucault 1995), Bentham’s project involves the use of legislative measures in order to discipline a population to align self-interest with social interest (note: interest in the singular) and produce social order. The key to this project, for Bentham, is the management of pleasure. Therefore, the nature of pleasure (and, of course, its constant counterpart the exemption from pain) receives the bulk of his attention. But while happiness may be a fictional term that pertains to and

⁶ Supervenience is explained as a condition where two things cannot differ with respect to a set of properties (A) without also differing with respect to another set of properties (B); if they change with respect to A, they also change with respect to B (McLaughlin and Bennett 2005).

may be supervenient on pleasure, it is not therefore the same thing. Supervenience does not mean equivalence. Happiness is composed of—made up of—pleasures, which means that it is, itself, something different; it is the whole of which pleasures are the parts, the forest composed of trees, and it is easy to mistake the forest for the trees. We may recall the distinction Bentham makes between the functions of the censor and the expositor: the censor calls happiness the end of legislation and of social and moral theory; the expositor recognizes that the immediate end of the actions of individuals is pleasure. The satisfaction of pleasure, however, is not an end in and of itself, but the means for the larger goal of happiness. Government cannot make people happy (although it may be able to make them *unhappy*), but it can affect how people think about pleasure and pain; it can even create pleasures and pains. *But it cannot make people happy.* As a result, Bentham is much more concerned with investigating the nature and influences of/on pleasure. Given pleasure and the absence of pain, happiness is assumed. The goal is the greatest happiness of the greatest number, but the only means the government has to progress toward its goal is the management of pleasures and pains. This is the case whether or not legislators recognize this.

Bentham's primary concern is *happiness*, not pleasure, but considering his focus on pleasure we may be surprised to find Bentham saying that,

“Directly or indirectly, *well-being*, in some shape or other, or in several shapes, or all shapes taken together, is the subject of every thought, and object of every action, on the part of every known *Being*, who is, at the same time, a sensitive and thinking being. Constantly and unpreventably it actually is so: nor can any intelligible reason be given for desiring that it should be otherwise” (Bentham 1952d: 82).⁷

Well-being, however, receives little attention in his work. In fact, Bentham argues that well-being is different from happiness. A draft version of *Deontology* carried the subheading “Well-being what

⁷ We also may be surprised that Bentham didn't use the term “hedonism,” although he invented the term ‘eudaimonics’ to describe the science and art of well-being (Bentham 1952d: 83–4).

—Happiness not exactly synonymous to it.”⁸ In the section that follows (included in the published version), Bentham says that happiness leaves “pain in all its shapes altogether out of the account,⁹ but to give it to be understood that . . . the pleasures that have been experienced [are] in a high and . . . superlative degree.” Well-being, on the other hand, indicates “the *difference* in *value* between the sum of the pleasures of all sorts and the sum of the pains of all sorts, which down to the point of time (suppose the end of his life) a man has experienced” —if positive, well-being; if negative, “ill-being” (Bentham 1983a: 130).

There seem to be two differences between happiness and well-being: that well-being is the net value of pleasure over pain (ill-being if the value is negative), whereas happiness is a condition where pain is not present or at least not worth considering; and that well-being is measured over a long stretch of time, while happiness is short-lived. “[F]ew men . . . would be found who . . . , the whole length of their lives taken together, have not been in the enjoyment of a measure more or less considerable of well-being. Much fewer, or rather none at all, who during an equal period have been in the possession and enjoyment of *happiness*” (Bentham 1983a: 130).

Well-being enters into his theory through the principle of security and in the relationship of wealth to happiness. Both of these necessarily introduce the element of a span of time and the relative balance of pleasures over pain. Security is, with pleasure, the essential element of Bentham’s theory of motivation. Security is the degree of assurance we have that our actions will carry the consequences that we anticipate. We do things because we expect them to either bring pleasure or relieve pain, now or in the future; our willingness to endure present pain is entirely based on the

⁸ See the footnote by Goldworth (Bentham 1983a: 130 fn 1).

⁹ I take this to mean not that the degree of pain is not considered (accounted for), but that no pain is present.

security we have that it will bring greater pleasure in the future. Bentham refers to security as the “pre-eminent object” of law because of its future-regarding nature (Bentham 1931: 97). We make judgments to balance between the degree of security and other elements of pleasure such as intensity, duration, etc., so that we might undertake things for which we have very low expectations if the benefits are great enough—as in any cost-benefit analysis. The lack of security would likely produce only the most vulgar sort of hedonism involving actions that immediately bring pleasure or relieve pain, because we would have no assurance that anything we do now would do us any good in the future. “The man who subsists only from day to day is precisely the man of nature—the savage” (Bentham 1931: 113), Bentham says, and in a Hobbesian tone asks us to “consider the condition of savages. They strive incessantly against famine . . . Rivalry for subsistence produces among them the most cruel wars; and, like beasts of prey, men pursue men, as a means of sustenance” (Bentham 1931: 109).

“The care of security,” says Bentham, is “the principal object of law,” but it is more than that: it is also “entirely the work of law” (Bentham 1931: 109). Security is, in this sense, a social concept, as it has to do with the social infrastructure that may help to maintain the connections between action and consequence, or, from the opposite direction, guard against those factors that may undermine expectations. But its social nature is almost entirely negative: “Security is not to be understood but by its reference to mischief; the chance of which is *danger*, and the expectance *fear*, or apprehension” (Bentham 1952c: 309).

There is a positive aspect to security, however, in the sense that it promotes productive activity: “Nothing but law [security] can encourage men to labours superfluous for the present, and which can be enjoyed only in the future” (Bentham 1931: 110). But it goes beyond that: Any activity

that requires the investment of resources is impossible without security. Because of these economic effects, which affect society as a whole, Bentham considers the lack of security—or of the pains that arise as a result—the most important sort of pain. “*Expectation*,” he says, “is a chain which unites our present existence to our future existence Every attack upon this sentiment produces a distinct and special evil, which may be called a *pain of disappointment*.” This is a matter of “extreme importance” (Bentham 1931: 111). His concern for security takes on a Lockean tone here: “What men want from government is, not incitement to labour, but security against disturbance: security to each for his portion of the matter of wealth while labouring to acquire it, or occupied in enjoying it” (Bentham 1952c: 324)—simply swap “property” for “wealth” and we see Locke’s justification for the state as the protector of property (Locke 1988: II. §124). The primary objects of security, then, are wealth and property.

To increase one’s wealth is, Bentham tells us, “with a very few exceptions, the constant aim and occupation of every individual in every civilized nation. Enjoyment is the offspring of wealth: wealth of labour” (Bentham 1952c: 323). Wealth itself comprises “every object which, being within the reach of human desires, is within the grasp of human possession, and as such either actually subservient, or capable of being made subservient, to human use.” *Use* is essential to understanding wealth; it can be said that an object that has no use cannot be an object of wealth.¹⁰ Money, being neither something of use nor an item of wealth (since it has no direct use), but as the medium by which we can exchange one thing (say, our labor) for another, is the ultimate measure of pleasure: “If we must not say of a pain or a pleasure that it is worth so much money, it is in vain, in point of

¹⁰ What constitutes “use” may be quite broad, of course, since any object that brings us pleasure can be said to have a “use,” including objects that could be exchanged in the future for objects that would bring us pleasure. So a stock certificate that has no use in and of itself (being just a piece of paper) constitutes wealth because we can exchange it for money or use it as part of a transaction to acquire some other object of wealth.

quantity, to say anything at all about it;” Bentham compares money to a thermometer in this way (Bentham 1952d: 117–8). Money can buy happiness only in the sense that it is what we use to acquire wealth; otherwise it does not itself add to happiness. Wealth, on the other hand, must be used to produce pleasure. “The ends or uses of wealth may be all comprized under the four following terms: 1. subsistence: 2. enjoyment: 3. security: 4. encrease” (Bentham 1952b: 226). In another, later work he notes, “enjoyment being inseparable from the application of the articles of subsistence to their respective uses, an article of subsistence is also an article of enjoyment” (Bentham 1952c: 321). We might as well say: Wealth is used to produce pleasure or relieve pain. As Bentham himself puts it, “The matter of wealth is not of any value . . . otherwise than in so far as the general effect of it is to serve for the attainment of pleasure or for the avoidance of pain” (Bentham 1983a: 152). It would be entirely consistent with Bentham’s thinking to also say that no articles of wealth would ever be used except as such use adds pleasure or relieves pain.

While the *use* of wealth may be said to pertain to pleasure, the *possession* of wealth may be better said to be relevant to well-being. It is not insignificant, then, that Bentham refers to well-being, not pleasure, as the “final” cause of wealth (Bentham 1952c: 324). The possession of wealth may be said to contribute to happiness in the hedonic sense that at any particular moment we may experience the pleasure of security it may bring.¹¹ However, the possession of wealth may also lead to feelings of distress or anxiety (clearly pains) if we do not feel that our wealth is secure¹² or if we

¹¹ Although if we take it on the authority of the *Table*, security is not a pleasure, as he doesn’t list it as a synonym of pleasure (Bentham 1983b: 87), and it only appears as a motive once, as a neutral term in table No. XIII: Pains “*of DEATH, and BODILY Pains in general*” (Bentham 1983b: 86), which doesn’t seem to capture the sense of the term as he uses it elsewhere.

¹² We may see in this Bentham’s emphasis on security of property, and on legally-established and -ensured rights of property as a kind of security (Bentham 1931: 111–3).

have insufficient wealth. But, in a larger sense, the possession of wealth contributes mostly to well-being in the degree to which the possession now (without enjoyment) carries with it the potential value represented by its future use.

Wealth occupies a central position in the greatest happiness principle as “the matter” of concern in the four subsidiary principles to utility: security, subsistence, abundance and equality (Bentham 1952d: 105). But the notion of wealth carries with it elements that are incompatible with a purely hedonic conception of happiness, both in terms of the effort required to produce it and in the time factor associated with possession for later use. It is for this reason that Bentham associates wealth with well-being. But this is also why Bentham’s conception of happiness cannot be simply hedonic: The importance of wealth in his theory carries an element of eudaemonism that cannot be suppressed.

I think I have shown fairly clearly that Bentham’s conception of happiness contains both hedonistic and eudaemonistic elements. However, there is no question that hedonism predominates in Bentham’s work. Pleasure is clearly the prime mover in all human action. One of the features of that hedonism is its individualistic nature: because it is only individuals who experience pleasure and pain,¹³ and only individuals who can experience happiness, individuals *qua* individuals are ultimately the only objects of interest. Social institutions serve the interests of individuals, not the other way around. Once again we can hear echoes of Locke as he articulates the limits of obedience: “It is their *duty* to obey, just so long as it is their *interest*, and no longer” (Bentham 1988: 56). Now let us briefly examine some aspects of Bentham’s theory of utility.

¹³ And, we might note, only *real* individuals—corporate entities need not apply.

b. *Utility and the opposition of security and equality*

In this section I want to focus on the principle of security in a different way, within its context as one of the subsidiary principles of utility and, in particular, in its relationship to equality. Security and equality are what Bentham refers to as “subsidiary principles” to the greatest happiness principle, along with subsistence and abundance. Despite Bentham’s claim that subsistence comes first (Bentham 1952c: 309), the positions of subsistence and abundance are beside the point; the main interest here is that Bentham argued forcefully that equality conflicted with security, and that concern for security would always trump the desire for equality. To seek equality before the other conditions are met would consign society to “an equality of misery” (Bentham 1931: 109). Although he proposed measures to limit the accumulation of wealth on the upper end, such as a tax on estates and an end to primogeniture, Bentham believed that the pain of destitution was an important spur for production, and he argued that, as Stark puts it, the poor should “starve himself into riches” (Stark 1941: 76).¹⁴

This is not to say that Bentham was unconcerned about inequality. Stark argues that “the great idea of human equality . . . though unexpressed, underlies all Bentham’s philosophy,” and that Bentham’s writings “prove that he was concerned with the well-being of all men, and, indeed, of all living creatures” (Stark 1941: 69–70). Bentham articulated a theory of marginal utility precisely to

¹⁴ This is Stark’s phrase, not Bentham’s. Stark’s point here is that this is the only *positive* measure possible to achieve equality—for the most part, Bentham didn’t believe in redistributive measures through taxes and welfare programs as long as the object of such programs were equalization. Bentham did argue for the establishment of “Frugality Savings Banks” by which ordinary laborers could make deposit to accumulate savings (Bentham 1843b: 409), but these are meant for those whose lives are closely managed in the prison-like environment of the Panopticon and it is unclear where other laborers whose lot has not sunk quite so low would get the extra funds to deposit in such an institution. That said, he did support taxation “for the wants of indigence, it being understood that those only are to be regarded as indigent who are in want of what is absolutely necessary. . . . [T]heir title as indigent is stronger than the title of the proprietor of superfluities as proprietor. For the pain of death . . . would always be a more serious evil than the pain of disappointment which falls upon the rich when a portion of his superfluity is taken from him” (Bentham 1931: 132).

reflect and to justify equality:

- “(1) Each portion of wealth has a corresponding portion of happiness.
 - (2) Of two individuals with unequal fortunes, he who has the most wealth has the most happiness.
 - (3) The excess in happiness of the richer will not be so great as the excess of his wealth.
 - (4) For the same reasons, the greater the disproportion is between the two masses of wealth, the less it is probable that there exists a disproportion equally great between the corresponding masses of happiness.
 - (5) *The nearer the actual proportion approaches to equality, the greater will be the total mass of happiness. . . .*
- Fortunes being unequal, the loss of happiness produced by a given loss of wealth will become less in proportion as the distribution of the loss shall tend towards the production of an exact equality”¹⁵ (Bentham 1931: 103–4).

Rosen argues that, “the greatest happiness principle meant an ‘equal quantity of happiness’ for every member of the community in question. . . . a substantive goal which aimed at an equality of condition” (Rosen 1996: xxxvii). And Bentham certainly argues that as each person has equal “sensibility . . . to suffering,” so “the part which their happiness constitutes of the universal happiness” is equal, as is “their right to have as much regard shown to their happiness as to that of . . . other persons” (Bentham 1843a: 610).¹⁶ All this said, Bentham’s commitment to equality rested on the faith that, should a legislature enact a system of laws completely conformable to the principle of utility, this would tend toward equality of outcome. “*Security*,” Bentham argues, “leads indirectly to *Equality*” (Bentham 1931: 123), not on the implementation of programs to redistribute wealth.

Bentham, then, is hardly an egalitarian. Security trumps equality: “When security and equality are in conflict, it will not do to hesitate a moment. Equality must yield. The first is the

¹⁵ Emphasis in the original. See also (Stark 1941: 73–4).

¹⁶ However, Bentham also said that “To lay down as a principle that all men ought to enjoy a perfect *equality of rights*, would be . . . to render all legislation impossible” (Bentham 1931: 99). The only way we might reconcile these two passages is if the first refers in some general sense to natural rights—which would be difficult, given Bentham’s famous claim that the notion of natural rights is “nonsense” (Bentham 2002: 330).

foundation of life . . . Equality produces only a certain portion of good” (Bentham 1931: 120). Security is the source of stability, while equality “will never be perfect; it may exist a day; but the revolutions of the morrow will overturn it. The establishment of perfect equality is a chimera; all we can do is to diminish inequality” (Bentham 1931: 120). It is here, in fact, that his commitment to liberal principles stands out most clearly, and his antipathy toward proposals for what might today be thought of as communitarian redistributive principles. “[I]f property should be overturned with the direct intention of establishing an equality of possessions,” he warns, “the evil would be irreparable. No more security, no more industry, no more abundance! Society would return to the savage state whence it emerged” (Bentham 1931: 120).

One of Bentham’s names for security is as the “disappointment-preventing principle.” This term captures the sense of security as a matter of human psychology, a future-regarding sentiment or feeling. Macpherson argues that Bentham’s theory contains an implicit assumption of the conditions of liberal capitalism (Macpherson 1977: 33), and we can recognize that Bentham’s idea of security could be interpreted as bourgeois in its perspective—after all, investors, more than producers, may be expected to think about security in terms of expectations.¹⁷ While Bentham does argue that the demands of subsistence require that “the laws [protect] men while they labour, . . . making them sure of the fruits of their labour” (Bentham 1931: 100), this does not necessarily mean (as we will see it does for Thompson) that to producers should be secured the produce of their labor. In fact, there is no reason to believe that this means anything more than that laborers be compensated for their labor; Bentham certainly had no philosophical problem with people working for wages (not that he ever did so himself, of course). What’s more, he opposed the setting of any kind of minimum

¹⁷ Which is not to say that producers don’t have expectations: expectations of a paycheck, or (if an independent producer) that their goods will sell. But “security” doesn’t seem to fit as well here.

wage in favor of market forces (Bentham 1952a: 539). That the value of labor is set by those who pay for it, not by those who perform it, and that those in the latter group but not the former need it to provide for their sustenance, doesn't seem to concern him.

For Bentham the “greatest happiness of the greatest number” is not a statement of *collective* good, but of the greatest happiness for the greatest number of *individuals* within a collectivity. Bentham does not consider the community as a constituted whole; even when aggregated a society retains its character as a collection of individuals. Certainly, these individuals are engaged in social interactions, and individuals should, of course, be encouraged to act on the basis of what he referred to as “social motives,” but this was to be a product of various social institutions, including educational and religious institutions as well as government and the legal system. But for Bentham the purpose of law, including enforcement and punishment, was not to get individuals to consider the greater good in their private actions, but rather to help produce beneficent public effects (including limiting harm) from private actions by affecting the calculation of pleasure or pain that one might expect to arise as the outcome of any particular (private) act.

Bentham's hedonism clearly takes center stage in his theory, but Bentham's argument that self-interest was the only rational basis for human action should not be construed as an endorsement or even a sanctioning of self-interested behavior. Rather, Bentham saw self-interest as a *problem* that must be overcome by legislation and other formal social institutions (such as education and the penal system). If the simple notion of utility in a thing is the tendency to produce happiness or reduce pain, and the principle of utility is the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the tendency of individuals to seek their own benefit is likely to be the greatest barrier to the happiness of the greatest number. The proper role of government, then, is to utilize legislation to affect individual

calculations of self-interest, mostly by imposing pain for anti-social or harmful behavior.

Crimmins notes two contending versions of Bentham, one individualistic and one authoritarian (Crimmins 1996). In a sense, understanding Bentham’s approach in the way I have laid it out allows us to avoid this dichotomy. Bentham was very much *both* an individualist and an authoritarian. He was individualistic in the sense that he felt individuals required as much liberty to pursue happiness as possible, while recognizing that this pursuit, if left unchecked, could be productive of great harm. The key to this picture of Bentham is recognizing the emphasis he placed on security: there is no happiness without it. The function of the law—of the legal system, of the institutions of government—is to place just enough limits on individual action in order to ensure security, but with the recognition that the placement of those limits would, in effect, limit the ability of some to pursue their own particular sort of happiness.¹⁸ Thus, Bentham can be said to recognize that individuals act within a social context, while at the same time ignoring (or denying) the extent to which the social context creates the condition for individuals’ happiness. It is precisely this attention to social context that William Thompson addresses in his theory.

3. William Thompson: Equality and the Political Economy of Happiness

a. Social happiness

For better or worse, Thompson does not give us nearly as much material to work with as does Bentham. Thompson saw himself more as a political economist and social reformer, less as a philosopher, and he was not nearly as prolific as Bentham—all we have, really, are four published books and a few short articles and reports (not even texts) of speeches. Nonetheless, the principle

¹⁸ Englemann puts it well when he writes with regard to Bentham’s conception of government (which he refers to as “economic government”) that “the devices of sovereignty are adjustable tools that must enable, without themselves interfering with, the security of expectations and the maximization of interest” (Engelmann 2003: 8).

elements of Thompson's conception of happiness are clear, and in many ways they reveal a view that is the mirror image of Bentham.¹⁹

Dooley provides a useful summary of Thompson's conception of happiness, which highlights some of his differences with Bentham (Dooley 1996: 155–67); one of these is that Thompson uses the terms happiness, well-being and utility “interchangeably” (Dooley 1996: 155). Like Bentham, Thompson sees pleasures as the “component parts, of which happiness is the aggregate, or result,” but what is emphasized is the overall condition experienced over a lifetime: “Happiness denotes that continued state of well-being which is compounded of the different items of pleasurable feelings, experienced during a considerable space of time” (Thompson 1968: 17). Later he notes that happiness may be the aggregation of pleasures, “or their preponderance over the pains” one may experience (Thompson 1968: 554). Thus, his version of happiness, while retaining a basis in hedonism, emphasizes well-being.

The hedonic aspect surfaces in Thompson's theory at important points, which is to say that the experience of pleasure remains important. Dooley identifies four forms of pleasure: “1) of the senses, 2) intellectual, 3) social, and 4) sympathetic” (Dooley 1996: 157). Thompson says that, “Not wisdom, but insanity, is the conduct which refuses to avail itself of the utmost possible enjoyment from all and every one of these sources” (Thompson 1968: 554). In contrast to Bentham, who famously asserts an equivalency between pushpin and poetry,²⁰ Thompson refers to some pleasures

¹⁹ There are similarities, as well, but since I expect these will be apparent from the discussion we will not dwell on or explore them in any detail.

²⁰ Although this may be overblown. Marginal 730.3 for the *Table* reads: “Consequences apart, magnitude the same, one pleasure is as good as another” (Bentham 1983b: 66); the first two words seem to have gotten lost somewhere, as they would clearly point toward a basis for differentiation. Marginal 781, in a section titled “Psychology,” reads, “Purely *speculative*, it were no better than *push-pin*” (Bentham 1983b: 71), which seems to indicate that he did not think so highly of push-pin after all (maybe he didn't care much for poetry, either).

that would be “of a less value” as compared to “those of a superior order” (Thompson 1968: 554–5). Indeed, we might see that he believes that those pleasures are best that involve all the various pleasures together. The “simple pleasures,” he argues, may be “raised in value” when, in a community, “the sphere of choice is enlarged . . . to the utmost possible extent . . . the health, intelligence, and benevolence of all . . . aspirants to mutual sympathy are . . . universally excited, that the attractions of the lowest and the capacity to increase mutual happiness, must exist in a higher degree than amongst the best gifted . . . in general society” (Thompson 1968: 555).

As for Bentham, questions of interest and motivation also play a significant role in Thompson’s work, and Thompson recognizes that these must necessarily be understood on individualistic terms:

“All enjoyment must be individual enjoyment: all motives to produce individual action must be brought home to the individual to be acted upon . . . [A] motive not individual . . . is no motive: a social motive, if you please, and not a selfish motive; but selfish or social, it must be individual, must come home to the real or supposed interest of the agent, or he cannot act” (Thompson 1968: 514–5).

Thompson, however, makes a sharp distinction between self-interest and selfishness, which Bentham does not recognize. “Self-interest,” he says, “implies a general desire to promote our own individual well-being, without reference to any particular means. Selfishness implies a desire to promote by all *immediate* and *direct* means in our power our well-being, without calculating the effects of our conduct on the feelings and conduct of those whom it may affect, nor . . . their reflect operation on ourselves.” Both have the same object: “well-being, happiness” to the greatest possible degree. “The difference is in the *means* by which” it is sought. “The general pursuit of self-interest, is only . . . the general pursuit of happiness” (Thompson 1968: 446). Where selfishness can be seen to have undesirable social consequences, there is no reason why, given the appropriate sort of social

institutions, self-interest should not be completely conformable to the common interest, such that “private interest and public interest, . . . private virtue and public virtue, both as to the individual and the community, are one and the same” (Thompson 1968: 466).²¹ The only reason why self-interest is not seen this way is because of the nature of the social institutions, which—principally through an economic system founded on competition—set individuals in opposition to one another.²²

Thompson and Bentham largely agree on the ways in which wealth contributes to happiness, although they differ sharply on its limits. Bentham argues that even opulence must be protected on the basis of the principle of security, since “abundance is never so distinct from subsistence, that one can be destroyed without a dangerous blow at the other” (Bentham 1931: 118; see also Bentham 1952c: 327). Thompson, on the other hand, sees a variety of dangers in opulence, not only for those who, in his eyes, suffer the pains of excess, but also in its effects on members of the lower classes. The wealthy suffer from “positive vices . . . the peculiar products of excessive wealth” (Thompson 1968: 187–91). The poor suffer not only from deprivation caused by excessive inequality (Thompson 1968: 180–3), but also from the diffusion of vices of the rich through imitation and the “*over-anxious pursuit of wealth*” (Thompson 1968: 191–5).

As we will see, Thompson argues that the insecurity experienced by wage laborers undermines their productivity, reducing the production of the wealth that is essential to happiness. At the same time, he also argues—again, in opposition to Bentham, although not directly so²³—that

²¹ The sort of social institutions he has in mind are what were known at the time as Owenite or cooperative communities, as we will see below.

²² Many passages could be cited in support of this as it is a central point for Thompson; we will discuss this in more detail below.

²³ Thompson only cites Bentham in order to praise him—he never criticizes him directly. It is hard to say whether he saw himself as revising Bentham’s principles or rescuing Bentham from his interpreters.

there are what we might call ‘natural’ limits to wealth accumulation.²⁴ In his view, “average comforts” being secured, most happiness comes from sources (i.e., pleasures) other than wealth (Thompson 1968: 26)—although, as we will see, his principal criticism of capitalism is that these average comforts are *not* secure for most people. Below we will discuss in detail Thompson’s “natural laws for the distribution of wealth,” but for our discussion here we will note that he argues that, under these conditions, where all laborers retain full rights to the produce of their labor, all exchange is equal and voluntary and all labor is voluntary, accumulation would be limited by the fact that the desire for leisure time will restrict the accumulation of property. Again, the necessities of life being secured, most people would rather enjoy what wealth they have than labor simply in order to accumulate more of it. “[A]ll individual motives being centered in those of wealth [as in the current system], no stimulus to high exertion can remain, when these are removed” (Thompson 1968: 515, see also 520–3 for the benefits of greater leisure time). It should be noted that, in his advice for those designing cooperative communities, while he saw agriculture as providing health benefits of outdoor work, he advocated for mechanization in the production of finished goods. He anticipated that, once established, most community members would work 6 hours a day (Thompson 1830).

We noted above that Bentham considers money to be the measure of pleasure and pain. In a sense, then, money enables intersubjective measurement of happiness, based on the monetary value of the wealth held by the parties involved. Thompson argues that intersubjective comparisons of happiness are impossible, although he does not discuss Bentham’s argument about money.²⁵ In

²⁴ For Bentham’s argument against limits, see (Bentham 1931: 101–2).

²⁵ Although he may be making an oblique reference when he says the capacity for enjoyment “can no more than the galvanic fluid be seized and measured” (Thompson 1968: 22).

arguing for fundamental equality based on all people's capacity to experience pleasure and pain, Thompson argues that "inequalities of capabilities of enjoyment *do not exist*, because they are by us inappreciable." As a result, "they cannot enter into our moral and political calculations" (Thompson 1968: 22). Even if they were somehow measurable, then in asking, "Who are to be the *measurers* of these susceptibilities?" Thompson points to the necessary presence of social institutions to carry out the measurement. As opposed to Bentham, who makes the assumption that, given the proper constitutional framework legislators will set aside all self-interest in carrying out their functions, Thompson assumes that, in a system in which individuals are inclined to look after their own advantage, given power, they will tend to exercise it in a way that benefits themselves.

It should be noted that in Thompson's theory motivation does not come from purely internal drives as with Bentham; rather from "[t]he circumstances surrounding the actors" (Thompson 1968: 289).

"By these expedients, or institutions, men's actions are restrained and regulated . . . It is evident that no mere words, no precepts or commands . . . can alter these circumstances, can supply any *motives* to action: they may point out to the attention the motives actually existing, but they can call no new ones into existence. Nothing but the relations which a man bears to the persons and things surrounding him can effect this" (Thompson 1968: 290).

The Owenite philosophy of the effects of circumstance on character is crucial for Thompson.²⁶ This underlines the fundamentally social character of his conception of happiness: If our circumstances determine our character, then what constitutes pleasure is similarly defined for us. The structure of the system itself determines for us what is in our interests. This becomes the basis for a very strong critique of a social system structured so as to perpetuate the advantages of the rich and powerful;

²⁶ From Owen's *A New View of Society*: "[T]he character of man is, without a single exception, always formed for him . . . chiefly created by his predecessors . . . they give him . . . his ideas and habits, which are the powers that govern and direct his conduct. Man, therefore, never did, nor is it possible he ever can, form his own character" (Owen 1991: 43).

we will explore this in greater detail below. The point to note here is that our tastes, our preferences, and the means we use to go about pursuing the objects of our desire, are not innate, but rather develop out of the society within which we live and—most importantly—are educated (Thompson 1968: 282–5).

The social element in Thompson’s work stands in marked contrast to Bentham’s theory. This difference can be attributed, to an extent, to his emphasis on well-being over pleasure. This shift of emphasis enables him to see more of the ways in which social institutions affect happiness. He does not lose sight of the individual, however: “There is no such thing as a general, abstract, happiness. All happiness is made up of that of individuals. . . . Let wealth and all other means of happiness exist in ever such profusion . . . , little is done as to happiness, until these *means* are rightly *distributed*” (Thompson 1997: 90). This relationship between the individual and the social institutions that make up their society is of crucial importance to Thompson’s theory of utility, to which we now turn.

b. *Thompson’s theory of utility*

The epigraph that begins this paper is the beginning of the *Inquiry*, Thompson’s *magnum opus*. He reasserts his fealty to Bentham in his next work, the *Appeal*, where Bentham stands “At the head of moral, including political, philosophy” (Thompson 1997: 57). But as we have just explored, what Thompson means by “happiness” is different in important ways from what Bentham means, so the meaning Thompson gives “the greatest happiness of the greatest number” (Thompson 1968: 1) must be somewhat different from the meaning Bentham gives it.

It should be no great surprise that someone who holds that happiness is a social condition, and that people’s character is a product of their circumstances, would be critical of 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. Thompson is, in fact, a forceful critic of capitalism, articulating one of the most substantial early attacks on virtually all aspects of the multi-headed Hydra of the hegemony of liberal capitalism, from the inequality of wealth, to slavery and racial domination, to the oppression of women by men—in short, all forms of subordination. Most importantly he argues, *contra* Bentham, that security and equality are not only not opposed to one another, but in fact are interrelated. Capitalism, he argues (though he does not use the term itself), is a system of insecurity for workers, and the opposition of security and equality is one of its products.

In Thompson's view, systems of subordination and inequality not only harm those on the losing end of a sort of Hobbesian war of each against all.²⁷ The "greatest happiness" is not only undermined when the poor suffer from destitution, from poverty in the midst of plenty, but also in the ways 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 contribute to the greatest happiness, Thompson argues that in the system of individual competition, the advantaged few tend to limit the educational opportunities of the rest of society and thereby limit the advancement of knowledge. Further, workers' lack of security acts as a limit to their productivity, meaning that less wealth is generated, making the society as a whole less wealthy—and, to the degree that wealth is a prerequisite for happiness, less happy.

Thompson's answer to all this is an endorsement of Robert Owen's proposal for cooperative communities in which all property would be owned in common and the products of the collective labor would be distributed equally. As will be discussed in further detail below, Thompson went

²⁷ Hobbes' view of competition seems strikingly similar to Thompson's, when he asserts that in consequence of competition "amongst men there ariseth on that ground, Envy and Hatred, and finally Warre," although it should be noted that in this passage he is referring to competition for "Honour and Dignity," not wealth (Hobbes 1968: 225–6).

well beyond Owen's proposals for relief for the lower classes. Thompson meant his communities to be open to members of all classes, and indeed he argued (as Owen himself later did) that the cooperative model, as a more rational system, would eventually predominate over one based on competition. The removal of the desire for the private accumulation of wealth substantiated through the institution of private property, and the establishment of attitudes of cooperation substantiated through the institution of common property, would lead to the establishment of conditions of complete equality and security and, thereby, lead to the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

i. Reconciling security and equality

Although an individualistic understanding of happiness may be able to put distributional questions in the background, equality must be a central concern for a theory of utility that understands happiness as a social concept because equality is itself a social concept. To illustrate, we can compare equality with the other subsidiary principles Bentham identifies. Security appears to have social implications, although not necessarily: the vicissitudes of fate, for example, may be as much natural in origin as relative to the actions of other people. Although they can be considered in social terms, subsistence and abundance may be purely personal in reference (and Bentham certainly can be interpreted in this way); as they may be applied to a society they can only have meaning in the aggregate in a way that largely leaves out distributional questions. Equality, however, *only* has meaning within the context of social relations. Thompson argues (as does Bentham) that since all have an equal capacity for happiness, all can be said to have an equal right to it (Thompson 1968: 21–4).²⁸ Thompson says more generally that, “Whatever right, founded on its tendency to produce happiness . . . any one individual has . . . every other adult individual ought

²⁸ For Bentham, see (Bentham 1931: 3).

to have, for exactly the same reasons, the same right” (Thompson 1968: 535).²⁹ This reflects an understanding of the relationship between utility and rights such that rights derive from their utility, but the rights of one individual (or group) cannot be overridden by the interests of another, *given conditions of equality*, because both have an equal right to happiness.³⁰ In other words, by its very nature, utility requires equal rights.

Equality of rights—which Bentham endorses in concept, at least—does not imply equality of outcomes, but Thompson argues for this as well through a version of Bentham’s theory of marginal utility that conforms to Bentham’s but differs in important respects. In Thompson’s terms, in the acquisition of wealth, “every succeeding portion [of wealth] diminishes in effect” of contributing to the happiness of the possessor (Thompson 1968: 73). For example, an increase of a unit of wealth for someone with, say 1000 units, will not produce as much of an increase in happiness as for someone who has 10 or even 100 units. A consequence of this is that someone who already has great wealth requires a greater absolute flow of wealth to secure the same amount of happiness than someone who has much less wealth. Thompson’s version therefore is concerned with the flow of wealth in society, as compared to Bentham’s, detailed above, in which the focus is on the portion of happiness contained in the relative levels of wealth themselves and is in that sense

²⁹ We should not read this reference to “rights” as an endorsement of the concept of natural rights; we may assume that, like Bentham, Thompson saw rights as established and guaranteed by law: “*Rights*, properly so called, are the creatures of *law* properly so called; real laws give birth to real rights” (Bentham 1931: 84).

³⁰ It isn’t entirely clear that Thompson would agree completely with this characterization, as he does say that, if the “interests of the few” are “incompatible with” the “interests of the many,” then “The less must yield to the greater” (Thompson 1968: 37). But this argument is used to support his assertion that the interests of the “productive classes” (i.e., workers), who form the majority, should come before the interests of the capitalist class—in other words, specifically in order to address conditions of inequality of wealth (as we will see, this puts him directly at odds with Bentham). Therefore, it is consistent to say that utility trumps rights in conditions of inequality. Indeed, it may be argued that the inequality arises from the denial of rights (specifically, rights to security and equality, as will be discussed below) to those who suffer under unequal conditions.

static. Bentham's theory therefore fails to provide any insight into the dynamics of utility in an economic sense, whereas Thompson's theory of marginal utility tells us that inequality is not only self-perpetuating but continually expanding, particularly to the degree that those who enjoy greater wealth also enjoy greater political power, whether through legal exclusion or by practice (Thompson 1968: 210 ff).

Political and social power may be gained through the accumulation of wealth, which translates to various forms of coercion to sustain itself; the presence of coercion would seem to indicate that one party in the exchange is not happy with it. No economic or social system can be said to conform to the principle of utility if the majority of its participants must be coerced or fooled into participating—a sure sign that the terms are unfavorable to them, or at least are perceived as such. Thus, the dictates of utility appear to require both equality and the removal of all forms of coercion: equality can only be produced if labor and the exchange of its products are truly voluntary. Thus his first task in developing his political economy is to articulate the “natural laws of distribution,” which may be considered “natural” because no coercion, whether direct or indirect, is required to support them (Thompson 1968: 178).³¹

Capitalism is incompatible with these natural laws for several reasons. In capitalism, wealth becomes inseparable from its particular form as private property, and the private accumulation of property leads to coercive labor and exchange and the loss of equality. That the owners of property

³¹ For further elucidation as to what makes them “natural,” see (Thompson 1968: 2–3). In his *Elements of Political Economy*, James Mill argues that if the “*natural laws* of distribution were allowed to operate freely” it would produce circumstances such that “Society would . . . be seen in its happiest state” (Mill 1821b: 52). In citing this passage Thompson notes that these natural laws are “no where developed,” but that it is his intention to do so (Thompson 1968: x–xiv). He later comments more generally that “political economists have frequently used these words [“natural laws”] without any accurate definition” and goes on to note that “No natural laws of distribution . . . any where exist. [What these words] mean, or ought to mean [is] those general rules or first principles, on which all distribution of wealth ought to be founded, in order to produce the greatest aggregate mass of happiness” to society (Thompson 1968: 3).

retain security in the produce of their investments, while laborers lose security in the produce of their labor reflects an inequality of security: Capitalism is a system of security for the ownership class and a system of *insecurity* for the working class. For Thompson this inequality of security is fundamental, as it is the essential cause of all other forms of inequality.³² Thus, inequality of outcomes can be said to derive from an inequality in the application of rights—specifically, the right to security.

Thompson argues that the conflict between equality and security is therefore a creation of the capitalist system and a hold-over from feudalism. The “Industrious Classes” have been forced and defrauded into their position of subservience, first by the feudal aristocracy and then by the capitalists. He points out that,

“In the actual state of our social arrangements there are three modes of acquiring wealth: 1st, by production; 2nd, by voluntary and satisfactory exchanges; 3rd, by force or fraud, separate, or combined. . . . Forcible seizure, fraudulent or voluntary exchanges, have always been, and still are, the only efficient means of acquiring large masses of individual wealth” (Thompson 1996: 10–11).

People’s willingness to work for subsistence wages—or less—only reflects their lack of security. If the produce of their labor has been “abstracted” from them (Marx would say “alienated”), then they are denied the ability to fulfill their needs through the produce of their labor—i.e., to enjoy the security of self-sufficiency. The second form of acquiring wealth is also denied them, for two reasons. First, they don’t have control over the produce of their labor, so they don’t have the goods they would need in order to engage in voluntary exchanges. Second, if the choice is between starvation and the terms offered by the capitalist, the worker can hardly be said

³² Actually, he is not entirely consistent about this, as in the context of his feminist argument in the *Appeal* he argues that there are natural causes of inequality (superior strength of men, for example), social causes (denial of education), and political causes (denial of political rights) (Thompson 1997).

to enter into a voluntary exchange of labor for wages—and if they do consider it a matter of free choice, then they have clearly been tricked into thinking that such an obviously unequal exchange is equitable. Therefore, in order for workers to have security, they must have full control over the produce of their labor, and the ability to engage in nothing but voluntary exchanges—and, because voluntary in a true sense, therefore equitable.

The restoration of security to laborers has three parts: First, to ensure that laborers have secured to them the full produce of their labor. Second, to ensure that all exchanges are truly voluntary. Finally, all labor should likewise be voluntary—that is, not coerced, whether by lack of access to capital or by destitution. These three points make up “the *natural laws* of distribution [of wealth] . . . by which security, impartially applied to all, and not exclusively and hypocritically applied to a few, may become the firmest guarantee, instead of being the eternal opponent, of rational and healthful equality.” These laws “*reconcile equality with security* [and] *reconcile just distribution with continued production*” (Thompson 1968: xiv). Thompson claims that, “The literal and impartial execution of these laws of distribution, will produce . . . the greatest happiness to a community. . . and will ensure the greatest reproduction of wealth” (Thompson 1968: 178). What Thompson calls true “*security* as to property,” would lead to “the utmost possible, nearly approaching to a perfect, equality of distribution of wealth, and thus to the greatest happiness derivable from it” (Thompson 1968: 178). Thus are the principles of equality and security reconciled.

Thompson’s version of ‘security’ is very different from Bentham’s, while retaining some similarities. Referring to workers’ retention of the fruits of their labor as ‘security’ has none of the Benthamic sense of security as expectation. For Thompson, security seems to refer more to the

ability to control the disposition of material goods. As its inverse, insecurity, it can refer to the *lack* of control such that it takes on the characteristics (in a negative sense) of security as expectation.

This remarkable sentence (truncated here) summarizes Thompson's view:

“The paramount mischief of all systems of insecurity . . . is, that by throwing into the hands of a few the dwellings of the whole community, the raw materials on which they must labor, the machinery and tools which they must use, and the very soil on which they live and from which their food must be extracted,—these few, by combining together, seizing on or allying themselves with political power, reserving knowledge to themselves and keeping the mass of the community ignorant, acquire the absolute regulation of the remuneration of all the productive laborers of the community, and possess the faculty of forcing that community or any portion of it to starve, whenever . . . the exercise of their industry does not . . . yield such a return [or] profits on capital, which they have been accustomed . . . to look upon as their due” (Thompson 1968: 422).

Clearly there are elements of Bentham's psychologically-based principle of security. People do not engage, Thompson says, “in voluntary laborious exertion for the mere sake of the pleasure of the exertion, but for some advantage, some means of pleasure beyond, to be derived from it. The greater the advantage, the more productive the means of pleasure, the more likely is it that the exertion will ensue” (Thompson 1968: 38). Any taking of the produce of labor without the freely given consent of the laborer is a violation of security. The effect would be to induce apprehension on the part of the laborer, which would have a negative effect on their motivation to produce, resulting in lowered productivity and therefore less wealth produced and, ultimately, less happiness (Thompson 1968: 35–45). But security itself has less of the characteristics of a psychological state, and more of that of a status or condition, something along the lines of the ability to enjoy the fruits of one's labors. As opposed to investors, who might be primarily concerned with the security of their investments (their expectations of returns), laborers, those who are engaged directly in production, might be expected to be more concerned with securing the tangible material result of their labor and, thereby,

of the material means of subsistence. Thus, while the psychological state of apprehension may apply under conditions of *insecurity*, security for the laborer has a lot more to do with the means by which they “secure” the means for their continued existence.

ii. *The “system of individual competition”*

Thompson is not satisfied with the articulation of the natural laws for the distribution of wealth. He considers and rejects the idea that these natural laws could be fully realized under a system of competition, even if it were “truly free.” Although Claeys asserts that Thompson “retained some elements of ambiguity” on this point (Claeys 1987: 91), Thompson seems quite clear in his major works that competition can never produce the greatest happiness. For example: “Competition makes us regard from birth the interests of every one as opposed to and incompatible with the interest of every other person because it really puts all interest in opposition to each other. In every happy face, we now see a successful rival” (Thompson 1996: 65).³³ This opposition is an unavoidable feature of a system that encourages accumulation of wealth:

“The object of all the exertions of individual competition as to wealth, is to acquire for immediate enjoyment or accumulation, individual property. Every individual, striving for *self* at the ultimate peril of want, destitution, and death, there is a constant motive operating to regard the interests of others as opposed to his own” (Thompson 1968: 370).

Competition is a problem not only because of the inequality of wealth it engenders, but because it depends on the establishment of social relations in which individuals see their interests

³³ Claeys is correct that Thompson does identify positive effects from competition, although these are primarily economic in nature, while his opposition is entirely based on moral issues. However, Thompson clearly considers the advantages of competition to be outweighed by its evils. We might note that in arguing that capitalism is a stage in the historical development toward communism, Marx also praises certain aspects of the competitive system, in particular improvements in the standard of living and technological advancement (Marx and Engels 2002: 222–6); see Stedman-Jones’ discussion (Stedman-Jones 2002: Ch. 12). It may be that I am reading Thompson’s works as more polemical than does Claeys.

as opposed to the interests of everyone else. Someone who believes, as Thompson did, that the character of individuals is shaped largely by the society in which they live (as discussed above), a competitive society would produce people bred for competition: “The very gathering together by every one of an individual heap of wealth, necessitates individual as opposed to general feelings, selfishness as opposed to benevolence” (Thompson 1968: 370). Even under the most favorable circumstances, competition would be problematic:

“[A]fter all that can be done under the best arranged system of perfect equal security, with the undeviating observance of the natural laws of distribution, there will still remain evils inherent in the very frame of society, arising out of that very healthful, active, competition of individual interests put into motion by security for individual well-being” (Thompson 1968: 392).

Inequality of wealth also undermines utility by producing a kind of perverse justification for limiting educational opportunities. He argues, in effect, that knowledge itself becomes separated from labor in a kind of division of labor, ultimately becoming *opposed* to labor, as its antithesis rather than its aid (Thompson 1968: 274). Thompson was an advocate of universal education, as all “sentient rational beings . . . should be educated for their own sakes [and] for *their own sakes alone*” (Thompson 1968: 337), not in order to produce more efficient, more complaisant workers. While he did believe that people should receive a practical education that would enable them to engage in productive activity, in his view intellectual activity constitutes a particular kind of pleasure in and of itself, within an “intellectual culture” that contributed to happiness by enabling individuals to engage in “interesting conversation” and exercise their “curiosity, judgment, anticipation” (Thompson 1997: 113). “The vacuum of an unemployed mind,” on the other hand, “is not simply the absence of happiness; it is a state of positive torment” (Thompson 1997: 113–4). But, in a society composed of institutional arrangements that were based on, and perpetuated, inequality, education

would not be expected to enliven the mind, at least not for the working class: “Under bad institutions, what is called the teaching of morality is nothing more than the inculcating *habits of submission to oppression*” (Thompson 1968: 313). The progress of human society requires the development and diffusion of knowledge; the competitive system was an impediment to it: “It is on the diffusion, by individual effort, of moral knowledge, that all hopes of human improvement and happiness must be founded. From existing institutions the most that can be expected, is a mitigated hostility” (Thompson 1968: 319).

iii. Critique of subordination

The emphasis on equality in Thompson’s theory makes him an opponent of all forms of subordination, or the personal subjection of one individual to the will of another. He refers to it as “one of the greatest sources of human helplessness and misery” (Thompson 1997: 127). Thompson clearly recognized that subordination takes on different forms within different social institutions, and he did not reduce, as Marx later did, all forms of subordination to different facets of economic subordination. He recognized that women’s struggle against subjugation by men was a different struggle from that of workers’ struggle against the forces of capital in that it required political equality that was being denied them on a basis different from that of workers, yet at the same time both were part of a broader fight for a social system based on the establishment of equal relationships. He also saw that the fight against slavery (and, in contrast to Bentham, for abolition³⁴) as a part of this same struggle. His radical (especially for his time) argument that equality should extend to all, without discrimination or relationships based on subordination, arises from his perspective on what it means to pursue the greatest happiness of the greatest number: “The

³⁴ Despite his principled opposition to slavery, Bentham argued against emancipation (Bentham 1931: 206).

happiness of *every individual*, and of course of *all classes, of the human race*, ought to be promoted for the sake of such individual or individuals, and not in subserviency to the happiness of any other individuals or classes whatever. When every individual is made happy, the happiness of the whole is promoted” (Thompson 1997: 142).³⁵

Thompson’s arguments for equality and against subordination come out most clearly in his *Appeal of one Half of the Human Race, Women . . . in Reply to a Paragraph of Mr. Mill’s Celebrated “Article on Government”* (Thompson 1997). In his article, which originally appeared in the 1820 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, James Mill presents the traditional argument for the union of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy as found in Britain as the only means by which the “ends of Government can be attained in perfection” (Mill 1821a). Much of the article is a discussion of various aspects of the “system of representation,” which he refers to as “the grand discovery of modern times” (Mill 1821a: 16). It is in a discussion of the appropriate extent of the franchise that Mill asserts, “that all those individuals whose interests are indisputably included in those of other individuals, may be struck off without inconvenience.” Included in this group are children and “women . . . the interest of almost all of whom is involved either in that of their fathers or in that of their husbands” (Mill 1821a: 20–1). This claim is the focus of Thompson’s *Appeal*.

Leaving aside the exclusion of children, Thompson points out that the exclusion of women means the exclusion of “one-half of the human race” or any defined group thereof (e.g., a nation). If, on Thompson’s estimation, children make up about half the population (possibly true in his time, if not in ours), and women are half of the remaining adult population, then Mill is saying that, “one

³⁵ Emphasis added. When Thompson says that everyone should be “made” happy, he means that they should be able to make themselves happy, as he argues elsewhere that happiness is something that generally comes out of active engagement rather than passive acceptance.

fourth of the human race . . . is the greatest number whose interests ought to be directly consulted in the making of laws” (Thompson 1997: 62). If, as Mill asserts, a “grand governing law of human nature” is that all men “desire . . . that power which is necessary to render the persons and properties of human beings subservient to our pleasures” (Mill 1821a: 9), and that the interests of any aristocracy (rule by a group greater than one but less than a majority) will be to “take from the rest of the community as much as they please of the objects of desire” (Mill 1821a: 7), then, argues Thompson, Mill makes the implausible claim that the “ruling quarter is necessarily benevolent toward the three fourths,” while ignoring its own interests (Thompson 1997: 62).

If, as Mill argues, self-interested individuals will subjugate others when given the chance, then *any* relationship of subordination will follow the same logic: the interests of the persons subjugated will be subordinated to those who have control. Such relationships will be purely instrumental, as the servant’s happiness will be subordinated to the master’s. While Thompson’s discussion focuses on husbands and wives, the situation of one who works for wages is similar: the worker’s interests are subordinated to the interests of the person for whom they work or who pays their wages. In other words, the worker is not working for their own happiness, but for the happiness of the employer; thus, the worker’s own happiness can be said to be diminished in favor of the owner’s. Women’s subjugation to men means that the happiness of half the adult population is subjugated to the happiness of the other half; but of this other half, if we then add all the men who work for wages, then clearly the vast majority of the (adult) population finds themselves in subordinate relationships.

In fact Thompson recognizes the connection between the subjugation of women and other forms of oppression: “The penalty of injustice to women is . . . the justification . . . of similar

injustice from men to men” (Thompson 1997: 68). Where one person or group both asserts and effects superiority over another group, who will be the ones to exercise judgment about the rightness of their actions? “Such are to be the judges in the last resort of the political rights of women—*men!*” (Thompson 1997: 66). So it is with workers, colonial subjects, and slaves. Thompson draws an interesting parallel between women’s condition and that of slaves and colonial subjects in his discussion of the marriage contract. He begins by noting that a contract is understood to be a voluntary agreement between the parties. He notes, “As little as slaves have had to do [with] the enacting of slave-codes, have women . . . had to do with . . . that most unequal and debasing code, absurdly called the *contract* of marriage.” Against the view that women freely enter into marriage, and therefore voluntarily accept the terms of the contract, he points, in a tone dripping with irony, to “happier times of East India monopoly” when, “under the shield of mercantile political power, the poor people were kindly told, ‘They were at liberty to buy or not to buy.’ But if they did not buy, the trifling inconvenience of the alternative was, that they must starve.” So it is with the marriage contract: “[T]he great majority of adult women must marry on whatever terms their masters have willed, or starve” (Thompson 1997: 96–7).

That women might benefit in some—superficial—ways from marriage Thompson does not deny. He notes that,

“The ox is better fed when the master is rich—so far the common interest extends—but wherefore? Because it is the interest of the master that the ox should be fattened as speedily as possible The *permanent* interest of the ox, that of health and long life, is sacrificed. So with respect to all other beings The interest of each of them, is promoted, in as far only as it is coincident with, or subservient to, the master’s interest” (Thompson 1997: 92).

On the other hand, if a true “identification of interests” did exist, there would be no need for laws the assign control to one of the parties; neither would require power over the other (Thompson 1997:

127).

Thompson in fact rejects Mill's basic premise, that people are by nature exploitative. While Mill, one of Bentham's most ardent disciples, deploys a version of the theory of utility that highlights self-interest as the problem that must be overcome in any system of government, Thompson argues from Bentham's fundamental psychological principle that the basic rule of human nature is "simply the desire of happiness and aversion to misery," which in its pure form comes "without any wish, kindly or malignant, to others. . . . It is neither an original, nor an universal principle of human beings to trample on, any more than it is to promote, the happiness of others" (Thompson 1997: 64). To argue, as Mill does, that Bentham's hedonic principle is egoistic is to conflate self-interestedness with selfishness, but (as was discussed earlier) Thompson rejects this conflation. For one group of people to abuse or misuse their power over others, they must be "shut out from the moral knowledge requisite to show them the identity of their real comprehensive interest with that of their fellow creatures and . . . divested of those dispositions or habits of sympathy necessary to enable to act according to their knowledge" (Thompson 1997: 64). The opposition of interests is a product of the conditions within which we live and an instance of the ways in which our character is shaped by social institutions. So Thompson admits that, "*Under the existing and all past circumstances of society*, Mr. Mill's proposition is doubtless correct as applied to the immense majority of men (Thompson 1997: 65). However, "Were knowledge and benevolence so increased and improved . . . that all men saw their interest in tracing the consequences of their actions on the happiness of others as well as on their own, and that they were disposed to regulate their actions by this knowledge . . . men would not wish for power over each other" (Thompson 1997: 64–5).

Thompson recognizes that systems of oppression undermine utility by reducing the happiness of the master as well as that of the slave. He argues that, in marriage, “The happiness of both [husband and wife] is sacrificed” (Thompson 1997: 101). The husband’s mastery over his wife means that,

“He surrenders the delights of equality, namely those of esteem, of friendship, of intellectual and sympathetic intercourse, for the vulgar pleasure of command. . . . [T]he whole moral structure of the mind of *man* is perverted. . . . He has been rendered incapable of considering the effects of his actions on all whose interests they may reach. He calculates their effects with reference to himself alone” (Thompson 1997: 106).

The exercise of this nearly unlimited power “necessarily hardens the heart and destroys sympathy for those subjected to it” (Thompson 1997: 128). Thus he says to women, “As your bondage has chained down man to the ignorance and vices of despotism, so will your liberation reward him with knowledge, with freedom and with happiness” (Thompson 1997: 209).

iv. *The political economy of happiness*

The central tenets of Thompson’s political economy are the elimination of competition and the securing of the produce of labor to the worker. The rest of his basic premises can be seen to flow from these, including the other two elements of the “natural laws of distribution.” Anything other than voluntary exchange and voluntary labor obviously would violate the principle of security; the implementation of the natural laws themselves would produce equality. In addition, Thompson identifies private property as the object of competition and the essential element in maintaining the insecurity of labor and the inequalities of wealth, providing the justification and motivation for all forms of oppression. Therefore, at the center of his political economy is the elimination of privately-held capital and property.

The elimination of private property might seem contradictory given the requirement of

ensuring security of the produce of labor to the worker. Thompson's answer to this is in a particular form for the collectivization of property. For Thompson, the elimination of private property does not imply its transfer to the state. Rather, property is to be held in common within the context of fairly small cooperative communities (of 300–2000 persons) like those envisioned by Robert Owen. Eliminating private property therefore does not constitute the further alienation of property—or, what might be a more apt term here, wealth—from individuals. In the capitalist system wealth is alienated from those who produce it by the owners of capital; in a state-ownership model (we are not necessarily talking about what later came to be called the “state socialist” model here) wealth is alienated from the producers by the state. In neither case do the producers exercise anything like direct control. The distinctive feature of the cooperative communities, however, is that all members of the cooperative retain control on an equal basis with all the other members. No one member retains complete control over any part of the wealth (i.e., ‘property’) of the community against or even on behalf of any other fully-vested member, but each retain equal control over all of it in its entirety. On this basis each retains full security in the produce of their labor, as their consent is required in all matters pertaining to the wealth of the community (Thompson 1968: 386–91).

That all wealth is owned in common by the community is not to say that there would not be any possession of personal items. Objects for consumption may be distinguished from capital by the fact that objects of consumption are used “*without any view to any further exchange.*” On the other hand, an object that is held (“owned”) not for consumption or use by the owner but “capable of being made the instrument of profit” is considered capital (Thompson 1968: 240–1).

Capital itself does not entirely go away under the system of mutual cooperation, but instead of being held by non-laborers for the purpose of increasing its value through the exploitation of

labor, laborers use it to control the conditions of their labor—i.e., they control the means of production. Capital would not be held privately in the sense that individuals hold it, and there would be no ‘capitalist class’ that stands opposed to a ‘laboring class’. Rather, each group or cooperative community would hold it collectively, such that no one member of the group can be thought of as having a greater interest in the enterprise than any other member. Net proceeds from the operation of an economic enterprise, then, are not extracted by providers of capital who may take as much as they can in profit, but retained by the producers—the members of the community—themselves (who provided the capital themselves).

One problem that Thompson never effectively addresses is the economic relationship among communities and with the society beyond. For the most part he anticipates that each community would be self-sufficient and autarchic, but he has little to say about what would happen under conditions of shortage or surplus. In his last book, *Practical Directions for the . . . Establishment of Communities . . .* (1830), he doesn’t consider the possibility of crop failures or other calamities that would undermine the viability of a community. He recognizes that communities may produce a surplus, of either agricultural or manufactured goods,³⁶ but he presents a fairly weak argument as to why the communities would not engage in competitive practices against each other. As he sees it, the members of the communities would have beneficence so thoroughly ingrained in their character that they would only consider exchange on the basis of a direct exchange of labor value (Thompson 1968: 523–6). But he claims that surplus production in any great quantity is unlikely, because of “the inconvenience of production” (Thompson 1968: 529)—given a choice between

³⁶ He explicitly argues that only “fully-formed” communities should attempt to engage in exchange for their necessities; nascent communities should focus on self-sufficiency and only consider producing a surplus for exchange of items of “secondary utility” (Thompson 1830: 135–6).

leisure time and production of surplus, most producers would choose leisure time.

v. *Thompson's theory of utility*

If we were to articulate for Thompson an equivalent set of principles to Bentham's "subsidiary" principles of security, subsistence, abundance and equality, what would they be?

It seems quite clear that Thompson would reduce Bentham's four principles to two: security and equality. Subsistence and abundance are of little concern, since, he argues, it is the opposition of security and equality that constitutes the greatest barrier to productivity; reconciled, workers will be as productive as they want to be. There would be, therefore, no question of subsistence, since it would be clear that they must contribute to production in order to have something to exchange, and the limits of their own comfort would mean that while they might produce in abundance, they would not produce in over-abundance. Security and equality are clearly interdependent, not set in opposition to one another.

Thompson's theory, however, is not complete with security and equality, because Thompson did not divorce these principles from a consideration of the institutions within which they would operate. Because Thompson's theory is—unlike Bentham's—explicitly social, we must include elements that take this sociality into account. On this basis, it seems reasonable to add democracy as a principle of interaction that incorporates security and equality and yet is separate from them. Note here that democracy is not a principle of rule per se, although Thompson does use it in that sense.³⁷ Rather, democracy articulates a kind of relationship between equals wherein a consideration of public questions is a regular facet of the interactions among members of a community. In a very real sense democracy is a form of self-rule exercised as the on-going practice of consideration and

³⁷ Although even here it is attenuated, as he says, "Let us not, as soon as we get power and influence into our hands, use them for the purposes of command, but of persuasion only"(Thompson 1830: 228).

decision-making, founded on a sense of common purpose and respect. Crucial to this is the kind of alignment of self-interest and the interest of the community, which also depends on the elimination of the sorts of institutional factors—competition, private property and systems of subordination—that set individuals against one another.

4. Thompson’s Utilitarianism and Socialism

Does it make sense for us to refer to Thompson as a utilitarian? Is the question absurd, given Bentham’s reference to him as a “disciple” and Thompson’s extensive use of the term, “utility”? However, Thompson’s version of utilitarianism differs quite sharply from Bentham’s on a number of points, and it may be that the differences are great enough that the label simply does not apply.

It is difficult to get away from the fact that Thompson deploys the concept of utility repeatedly in his work, and asserts unequivocally that it forms the basis for his theory. He most certainly would have considered himself a utilitarian. But, even though he doesn’t acknowledge the differences, Thompson cannot be counted as a Benthamite. Thompson’s conception of happiness is different; he gives central place to distributional questions in a way that stands in direct opposition to Bentham; and he argues forcefully against all forms of subordinate relationships, with which Bentham seems unconcerned. That said, Thompson seems closer to Bentham than to contemporary utilitarians; he certainly would be included in the group Rawls calls “classical utilitarians,” who are more concerned with social concerns than the contemporary version (Rawls 1971: 185 fn 21).

We may, therefore, be able to call Thompson a utilitarian, but to do so requires a distinctive categorization in order to differentiate him from the Benthamite school, as well as its modern-day variants. We might call this “Thompsonite utilitarianism.” The basic tenet of utilitarianism, “the greatest happiness of the greatest number,” rests as its fundamental aim. Equality arises not out of

a forced system of redistribution but in an egalitarian system of production and distribution that secures the means necessary for well-being to all. Equality also extends to the means by which the productive capacities of the society are organized, which is to say that decision-making is deeply democratic and participatory. Because equality permeates all social relations, there can be no social institutions founded on subordination, including and especially with regard to the material means of well-being, which is to say wealth; private property is anathema.

If this sounds a lot like socialism, it is, although Thompsonite utilitarianism is not much like what socialism came to be. Then again, Thompsonite socialism isn't much like what utilitarianism came to be; the study of origins is always an examination of roads not taken and of shifts in supposedly bedrock principles. For Bentham scholars reading Thompson provides a different perspective on some of Bentham's core ideas, such as security, and opens up the possibility of alternate readings of Bentham. The value of reading Thompson for utilitarian scholars more generally is to gain a different perspective on the politics of utilitarianism, to bring in 'the social' and to recognize that social institutions play an important role in shaping the conditions within which we seek our happiness.

Works Cited

- Beer, Max. 1940 A History of British Socialism. One Volume Edition ed. New York: The Humanities Press.
- Bentham, Jeremy. 1843a "Radicalism Not Dangerous". In The works of Jeremy Bentham, published under the superintendence of his executor John Bowring, edited by J. Bowring. Edinburgh: W. Tait; London: Simpkin, Marshall.
- . 1843b "Tracts on Poor Laws and Pauper Management". In Works of Jeremy Bentham, edited by J. Bowring. Edinburgh: William Tait.
- . 1931 The Theory of Legislation. Translated by R. Hildreth, *International library of psychology, philosophy and scientific method*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd.
- . 1952a Jeremy Bentham's Economic Writings: Critical Edition Based on his Printed Works

- and Unprinted Manuscripts. Edited by W. Stark. 3 vols. Vol. 3. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.
- . 1952b "Manual of Political Economy". In Jeremy Bentham's Economic Writings: Critical Edition Based on his Printed Works and Unprinted Manuscripts, edited by W. Stark. New York: Burt Franklin.
- . 1952c "Method and Leading Features of an Institute of Political Economy (including finance) considered not only as a Science but as an Art". In Jeremy Bentham's Economic Writings: Critical Edition Based on his Printed Works and Unprinted Manuscripts, edited by W. Stark. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.
- . 1952d "The Philosophy of Economic Science". In Jeremy Bentham's Economic Writings: Critical Edition Based on his Printed Works and Unprinted Manuscripts, edited by W. Stark. New York: Burt Franklin.
- . 1983a "Deontology". In Deontology ; together with A table of the springs of action ; and the Article on Utilitarianism, edited by A. Goldworth. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . 1983b "A Table of the Springs of Action". In Deontology; together with A Table of the Springs of Action ; and the Article on Utilitarianism, edited by A. Goldworth. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . 1988 [1776]. A Fragment on Government. New authoritative ed, *Cambridge texts in the history of political thought*. Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1989 The Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham: January 1817 to June 1820. Edited by S. Conway. Vol. 9. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . 2002 "Nonsense upon Stilts". In Rights, Representation, and Reform: Nonsense upon Stilts and Other Writings on the French Revolution, edited by P. Schofield, C. Pease-Watkin and C. Blamires. Oxford ; New York: Clarendon Press.
- Claeys, Gregory. 1986. "'Individualism,' 'Socialism,' and 'Social Science': Further Notes on a Process of Conceptual Formation, 1800-1850". *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47 (1 (Jan.--Mar.)).
- . 1987 Machinery, money, and the millennium : from moral economy to socialism, 1815-60. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire: Polity Press.
- Crimmins, James E. 1996. "Contending Interpretations of Bentham's Utilitarianism". *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 29 (4):751-777.
- Dooley, Dolores. 1996 Equality in Community: Sexual Equality in the Writings of William Thompson and Anna Doyle Wheeler. Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press.
- Engelmann, Stephen G. 2003 Imagining Interest in Political Thought: Origins of Economic Rationality. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1995 Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. Translated by A.

- Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books.
- Gaspar, Des. 2007 "Human Well-being: Concepts and Conceptualizations". In Human Well-being: Concept and Measurement, edited by M. McGillivray. New York: Plagrave Macmillan.
- Goldworth, Amnon. 1972. "Bentham's Concept of Pleasure: Its Relation to Fictitious Terms". *Ethics* 82 (4):334-43.
- Harrison, Ross. 2002 [1983]. "The Greatest Happiness Principle". In Bentham: Moral, Political and Legal Philosophy, edited by G. J. Postema. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Hobbes, Thomas. 1968 [1651]. Leviathan. Edited by C. B. Macpherson. New York: Penguin Books.
- Locke, John. 1988 "Two Treatises of Government". In Two Treatises of Government, edited by P. Laslett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Macpherson, C. B. 1977 The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marx, K, and F Engels. 2002 The Communist Manifesto. London: Penguin Classics.
- McGillivray, Mark. 2007 "Human Well-being: Issues, Concepts and Measures". In Human Well-Being: Concept and Measurement, edited by M. McGillivray. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McLaughlin, Brian, and Karen Bennett. 2008. *Supervenience* 2005 [cited May 27 2008]. Available from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/supervenience/>.
- Mill, James. 1821a The Article Government, Reprinted from the Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica. London.
- . 1821b Elements of Political Economy. London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy.
- Owen, Robert. 1991 A New View of Society and Other Writings. London: Penguin Classics.
- Pankhurst, RKP. 1991 William Thompson (1775-1833): Britain's Pioneer Socialist, Feminist, and Co-operator. London: Pluto Press.
- Parekh, Bhikhu C., ed. 1993. Jeremy Bentham: Critical Assessments. 4 vols. London, New York: Routledge.
- Rawls, John. 1971 [Philosophical Review, vol 64, pp 3-32 (1955)]. "Two Concepts of Rules". In Utilitarianism with Critical Essays, edited by S. Gorovitz. Indianapolis,: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Rosen, F. 1996 "Introduction". In An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Stark, W. 1941. "Liberty and Equality or: Jeremy Bentham as an Economist". *The Economic Journal* 51 (201):56-79.
- Stedman-Jones, Gareth. 2002 "Introduction". In Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: The

- Communist Manifesto, edited by G. Stedman-Jones. London: Penguin Classics.
- Sumner, L.W. 1992. "Welfare, Happiness, and Pleasure". *Utilitas* 4 (2):199-223.
- Thompson, William. 1830 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.
- . 1968 [1824]. 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, *Selected essays in history, economics & social science*, #54. New York: B. Franklin.
- . 1996 [1827]. "Labor Rewarded: The Claims of Labor and Capital Conciliated: or, How to Secure to Labor the Whole Products of its Exertions". In Ricardian Socialism, edited by D. Reisman. London: Pickering & Chatto.
- . 1997 [1825]. "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"', edited by D. Dooley. Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press.
- Veenhoven, Ruut. 1997. "Advances in Understanding Happiness". *Revue Quebecoise de Psychologie* 18 (2):29-74.
- . 2007 "Subjective Measures of Well-being". In Human Well-being: Concept and Measurement, edited by M. McGillivray. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.