It could then issue the notes, preferably non-interest bearing, *ad libitum* and save itself the interest.

Bentham was scarcely at his best answering the question of what limit there might be to this government paper issue. The limit, he answered, would obviously be 'the amount of paper currency in the country'. Bentham's modern editor is properly scornful of this patent claptrap: 'It is like saying "the sky's the limit" when we do not know how high the sky may be.'[3]

In his later writings on the subject, Bentham searched for some limits to paper issue, if unsuccessfully. But his commitment to a broadly inflationist course deepened further. In his unfinished 'Circulating Annuities' (1800), he developed his government paper scheme further, and hailed the serviceability of inflation in wartime. Indeed, Bentham makes an all-out assault on the Turgot–Smith–Say insights and actually declares that employment of labour is directly proportional to the quantity of money: 'No addition is ever made to the quantity of labour in any place, but by an addition made to the quantity of money in that place ... In this point of view, then, money, it should seem, is the cause, and the cause *sine qua non*, of labour and general wealth.' Quantity of money is all; so much for Smithian doctrine! In fact, Bentham went further in *Circulating Annuities*, heaping scorn on his alleged mentor for denouncing the mercantilist preoccupation with the state's piling up of gold and silver and with a 'favourable' balance of trade. There is no absurdity, averred Bentham,

> in the exultation testified by public men at observing how [great] a degree of what is called the balance of trade is in favour of this country ... Seduced by the pride of discovery, Adam Smith, by taking his words from the kitchen, has attempted to throw an ill-grounded ridicule on the preference given to gold and silver.

After once again calling for the elimination of bank paper for the benefit of a government monopoly of paper issue (in the fragmentary 'Paper Mischief Exposed', 1801), Bentham reached the acme of inflationism in his 'The True Alarm (1801). In this unpublished work, Bentham not only continued the full-employment motif, but also grumbled about the allegedly dire effects of hoarding, of money saved from consumption that went into hoards instead of investment. In that case, disaster: a fall in prices, profits and production. Nowhere does Bentham recognize that hoarding and a general fall in prices also means a fall in costs, and no necessary reduction in investment or production. Indeed, Bentham worked around to the Mandeville fallacy about the beneficial and uniquely energizing effects of luxurious spending. In the mercantilist and proto-Keynesian manner, saving is evil hoarding while luxury consumption animates production. How capital can be maintained, much less increased, without saving is not explained in this bizarre model.

James Mill and David Ricardo have been considered loyal Benthamites, and this they were in utilitarian philosophy and in a belief in political democracy. In economics, however, it was a far different story, and Mill and Ricardo, sound as a rock on Say's law and the Turgot–Smith analysis, were firm in successfully discouraging the publication of the 'The True Alarm'. Ricardo scoffed at almost all of later Benthamite economics and, in the case of money and production, asked the proper questions: 'Why should the mere increase of money have any other effect than to lower its value? How would it cause any increase in the production of commodities ... Money cannot call forth goods ... but goods can call forth money.' Bentham's major theme ... 'that money is the cause of riches' – Ricardo rejected firmly and flatly.

In his penultimate work of importance on economics, Jeremy Bentham came full circle. He had launched the economic part of his career with a hard-hitting attack on usury laws; he ended it by defending maximum price control on bread. Why? Because the mass of the public would favour cheap bread (assuredly so!), and so there would then be a 'rational' and 'determinate standard' for the good and moral price of bread, a standard which apparently free contract and free markets cannot set. What would such a standard be? Showing that for Bentham his *ad hoc* utilitarianism and cost–benefit analysis had totally driven any sound economics out of his purview, he answered that it would have to be empirical and *ad hoc*. Casting economic logic to the winds, Bentham maintained that the authorities should set a 'moderate' maximum price, which would weigh the costs and benefits, the advantages and disadvantages, of each possible price. And Bentham assured his readers of his moderation: he did 'not mean it [his proposal] as a whip or scorpion for the punishment of the growers or vendors of corn'. But that would be the inevitable result.

Ad hoc empiricism was now rampant in Bentham. Admitting that all previous attempts at maximum price control were disasters, like any later institutionalist or historicist Bentham denied any relevance, since the circumstances of each particular time and place are necessarily different. In short, Bentham denied economics altogether – that is, denied the possibility of laws abstracting from particular circumstances and applying to all exchanges or actions everywhere.

In arguing against the opponents of price control, Bentham often used reasoning that was tortuous and even absurd. For example, to the charge that maximum price control would lead to attempted consumption exceeding supply (one of the greatest problems with price control), Bentham insisted that this could not happen in Britain, where the Poor Law ensured welfare payment to the poor with an increase in the price of bread. The opinion that, at some time or other, the demand curve can be vertical and not falling is in every century the hallmark of an economic ignoramus, and Bentham now

passed that test. For centuries, writers and theorists knew that demand increased as price fell, and Bentham was now writing as if economics had never existed – and could never exist.

Since consistency was the realm of despised deductive logic, Bentham denied that his opposition to usury laws had any relation to his defence of price control on bread. But while he still maintained that his earlier analysis had been correct, he now offered a crucial revision: he had overlooked that a notable advantage of a usury law is that the government can then borrow more cheaply (at the expense, of course, of squeezing out marginal private borrowers). And he went on to admit that he now found this 'advantage' decisive, so that now he would place usury laws on the governmental agenda: 'I should expect to find the advantages of it in this respect predominate over its disadvantages in all others.' In short, Bentham, the alleged 'individualist' and exponent of *laissez-faire*, finds that advantage to government outweighs all private disadvantage!

Again treating his earlier views on usury, Bentham denied that he had ever believed in any self-adjusting and equilibrating tendencies of the market, or that interest rates properly adjust saving and investment. He went on in a revealing diatribe against *laissez-faire* and natural rights, to demonstrate to one and all the incompatibility between utilitarianism on the one hand and *laissez-faire* or property rights on the other:

> I have not, I never had, nor shall have, any horror, sentimental or anarchical, of the hand of government. I leave it to Adam Smith, and the champions of the rights of man ... to talk of invasions of natural liberty, and to give as a special argument against this or that law, an argument the effect of which would be to put a negative upon all laws. The interference of government, as often as in my jumbled view of the matter the smallest balance on the side of advantage is the result, is an event I witness with altogether as much satisfaction as I should its forbearance, and with much more than I should its negligence.

One wonders by what mystical standard the 'scientific' Bentham managed to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of every particular law.

Three years later, in 1804, Jeremy Bentham lost interest in economics, a fact for which we must be forever grateful. It is only unfortunate that this waning of zeal had not occurred a half-decade before. The case of Jeremy Bentham, however, should be instructive to that host of economists that attempt to weld utilitarian philosophy with free market economics.

One would think that the master of utilitarianism would have contributed to utility analysis in economics, but oddly enough Bentham proved to be interested only in the 'macro' realms of economic thought. The only exception came in the largely unfortunate *True Alarm* (1801), in which Bentham not only declared that 'all value is founded on utility', but also enters into a

cogent critique of Adam Smith's alleged 'value paradox'. Water, Bentham noted, can and does have economic value, while diamonds *do* have value in use as a foundation of its economic value. Continuing on, Bentham approaches the marginalist refutation of the value paradox:

> The reason why water is found not to have any value with a view to exchange is that it is equally devoid of value with a view to use. If the whole quantity required is available, the surplus has no kind of value. It would be the same in the case of wine, grain, and everything else. Water, furnished as it is by nature without any human exertion, is more likely to be found in that abundance which renders it superfluous; but there are many circumstances in which it has a value in exchange superior to that of wine.

2.2 Personal utilitarianism

As we have seen, Jeremy Bentham's strictly economic views, especially when he slid back to mercantilism, had no impact on economic thought, even upon his own philosophic disciples such as James Mill and Ricardo. But his philosophic views, introduced into economics by these same disciples, left an unfortunate and permanent impact on economic thought: they provided economics with its underlying and dominant social philosophy. And that dominance would be no less powerful for being generally implicit and unexamined.

Utilitarianism provided economists with the ability to square the circle: to allow them to make pronouncements and take firm positions on public policy, while still pretending to be hard-headed, 'scientific', and therefore 'value-free'. As the nineteenth century proceeded and economics began to become a separate profession, a guild with its own code and practices, it became possessed of an overwhelming desire to ape the success and the prestige of the 'hard' physical sciences. But 'scientists' are supposed to be objective, disinterested, unbiased in their scientific work. It was therefore assumed that for economists to espouse moral principles or political philosophy was somehow introducing the virus of 'bias', 'prejudice', and an unscientific attitude into the discipline of economics.

This attitude of crude imitation of the physical sciences ignored the fact that people and inanimate objects are crucially different: stones or atoms don't have values or make choices, whereas people inherently evaluate and choose. Still, it would be perfectly possible for economists to confine themselves to analysing the consequences of such values and choices, *provided* they took no stand on public policy. But economists burn to take such stands; in fact, interest in policy is generally the main motivation for embarking on a study of economics in the first place. And advocating policy – saying that the government *should* or *should not* do *A*, *B* or *C*, – is *ipso facto* taking a value position and an implicitly ethical one to boot. There is no way of getting around this fact, and the best that can be done is to make such ethics a rational inquiry of what is best for man in

accordance with his nature. But the pursuit of 'value-free' science precluded that path, and so economists, by adopting utilitarianism, were able to pretend or to delude themselves that they were being strictly scientific, while smuggling unanalysed and shaky ethical notions into economics. In that way, economics embraced the worst of both worlds, implicitly smuggling in fallacy and bias in the name of hard-nosed value-freedom. The Benthamite infection of economics with the bacillus of utilitarianism has never been cured and remains as rampant and as predominant as ever.

Utilitarianism consists in two fundamental parts: *personal* utilitarianism, and *social* utilitarianism, the latter being built upon the former. Each is fallacious and pernicious, but social utilitarianism, which we are more interested in here, adds many fallacies, and would be unsound *even if* personal utilitarianism were to be upheld.

Personal utilitarianism, as launched by David Hume in the mid-eighteenth century, assumes that each individual is governed only by the desire to satisfy his emotions, his 'passions', and that these emotions of happiness or unhappiness are primary and unanalysable givens. The only function of man's reason is use as a *means*, to show someone how to arrive at his goals. There is no function for reason in setting man's goals themselves. Reason, for Hume and for later utilitarians, is only a hand-maiden, a slave to the passions. There is no room, then, for natural law to establish any ethic for mankind.

But what, then, is to be done about the fact that most people decide about their ends by ethical principles, which cannot be considered reducible to an original personal emotion? Still more embarrassing for utilitarianism is the obvious fact that emotion is often a hand-maiden of such principles, and is patently *not* an ultimate given but rather determined by what happens to such principles. Thus someone who fervently adopts a certain ethical or political philosophy will feel happy whenever such philosophy succeeds in the world, and unhappy when it meets a setback. Emotions are then a hand-maiden to principles, instead of the other way round.

In grappling with such anomalies, utilitarianism, priding itself on being anti-mystical and scientific, has to go against the facts and introduce mystification of its own. For it then has to say, *either* that people only *think* they have adopted governing ethical principles, and/or that they *should* abandon such principles and cleave only to unanalysed feelings. In short, utilitarianism has either to fly in the face of facts obvious to everyone (a methodology that is surely blatantly unscientific) and/or to adopt an unanalysed ethical view of its own in denunciation of all (other) ethical views. But this is mystical, value-laden, and self-refuting of its own anti-ethical doctrine (or rather, of any ethical doctrine that is not a slave to unanalysed passions).

In either case, utilitarianism is self-refuting in violating its own axiom of not going beyond given emotions and valuations. Furthermore, it is common

human experience, once again, that subjective desires are *not* absolute, given and unchanging. They are not hermetically sealed off from persuasion, whether rational or otherwise. One's own experience and the arguments of others can and do persuade people to change their values. But how could that be if all individual desires and valuations are pure givens and therefore not subject to alteration by the intersubjective persuasion of others? But if these desires are not givens, and *are* changeable by the persuasion of moral argument, it would then follow that, contrary to the assumptions of utilitarianism, supra-subjective ethical principles *do* exist that can be argued and can have an impact on others and on their valuations and goals.

Jeremy Bentham added a further fallacy to the utilitarianism that had grown fashionable in Great Britain since the days of David Hume. More brutally, Bentham sought to reduce all human desires and values from the qualitative to the quantitative; all goals are to be reduced to quantity, and all seemingly different values – e.g. pushpin and poetry – are to be reduced to mere differences of quantity and degree. The drive to reduce quality drastically to quantity again appealed to the scientistic passion among economists. Quantity is uniformly the object of investigation in the hard, physical sciences; so doesn't concern for quality in the study of human action connote mysticism and a sloppy, unscientific attitude? But, once again, economists forgot that quantity is precisely the proper concept for dealing with stones or atoms; for these entities do not possess consciousness, do not value and do not choose; therefore their movements can be and should be charted with quantitative precision. But individual human beings, on the contrary, are conscious, and do adopt values and act on them. People are not unmotivated objects always describing a quantitative path. People are qualitative, that is, they respond to qualitative differences, and they value and choose on that basis. To reduce quality to quantity, therefore, gravely distorts the actual nature of human beings and of human action, and by distorting reality, proves to be the reverse of the truly scientific.

Jeremy Bentham's dubious contribution to personal utilitarian doctrine – in addition to being its best known propagator and popularizer – was to quantify and crudely reduce it still further. Trying to make the doctrine still more 'scientific', Bentham attempted to provide a 'scientific' standard for such emotions as happiness and unhappiness: quantities of pleasure and pain. All vague notions of happiness and desire, for Bentham, could be reduced to quantities of pleasure and pain: pleasure 'good', pain 'bad'. Man, therefore, simply attempts to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. In that case, the individual – and the scientist observing him – can engage in a replicable 'calculus of pleasure and pain', what Bentham termed 'the felicific calculus' that can be churned out to yield the proper result in counselling action or non-action in any given situation. Every man, then, can engage in what neo-

Benthamite economists nowadays call a 'cost–benefit analysis'; in whatever situation, he can gauge the benefits – units of pleasure – weigh it against the costs – units of pain – and see which outweighs the other.

In a discussion which Professor John Plamenatz aptly says 'parodies reason', Bentham tries to give objective 'dimensions' to pleasure and pain, so as to establish the scientific soundness of his felicific calculus. These dimensions, Bentham asserts, are sevenfold: intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, purity and extent. Bentham claims that, at least conceptually, all these qualities can be measured, and then multiplied together to yield the net resultant of pain or pleasure from any action.

Simply to state Bentham's theory of seven dimensions should be enough to demonstrate its sheer folly. These emotions or sensations are qualitative and not quantitative, and none of these 'dimensions' can be multiplied or weighted together. Again, Bentham raised an unfortunate scientistic analogy with physical objects. A three-dimensional object is one where each object is linear, and therefore where all these linear units can be multiplied together to yield units of volume. In human valuation, even with pleasure and pain, there is no *unit* common to each of their 'dimensions' and therefore there is no way to multiply such units. As Professor Plamenatz trenchantly points out:

> the truth is that even an omniscient God could not make such calculations, for the very notion of them is impossible. The intensity of a pleasure cannot be measured against its duration, nor its duration against its certainty or uncertainty, nor this latter property against its propinquity or remoteness.[4]

Plamenatz adds that it is true, as Bentham states, that people often compare courses of action, and choose those they find most desirable. But this simply means that they decide between alternatives, not that they engage in quantitative calculations of units of pleasure and pain.

But one thing can be said for Bentham's grotesque doctrine. At least Bentham attempted, no matter how fallaciously, to ground his cost–benefit analysis on an objective standard of benefit and cost. Later utilitarian theorists, along with the body of economics, eventually abandoned the pleasure–pain calculus. But in doing so, they also abandoned any attempt to provide a standard to ground *ad hoc* costs and benefits on some sort of intelligible basis. Since then, the appeal to cost and benefit, even on a personal level, has necessarily been vague, unsupported and arbitrary.

Moreover, John Wild eloquently contrasts utilitarian personal ethics with the ethics of natural law:

> Utilitarian ethics makes no clear distinction between raw appetite or interest, and that deliberate or voluntary desire which is fused with practical reason. Value, or pleasure, or satisfaction is the object of any interest, no matter how incidental or

> distorted it may be. Qualitative distinctions are simply ignored, and the good is conceived in a purely quantitative manner as the maximum of pleasure or satisfaction. Reason has nothing to do with the eliciting of sound appetite. One desire is no more legitimate than another. Reason is the slave of passion. Its whole function is exhausted in working out schemes for the maximizing of such interests as happen to arise through chance or other irrational causes ...
>
> As against this, the theory of natural law maintains that there is a sharp distinction between raw appetites and deliberate desires elicited with the cooperation of practical reason. The good cannot be adequately conceived in a purely quantitative manner. Random interests which obstruct the full realization of essential common tendencies are condemned as antinatural ... When reason becomes the slave of passion, human freedom is lost and human nature thwarted ...
>
> (T)he ethics of natural law sharply separates essential needs and rights from incidental rights. The good is not adequately understood as a mere maximizing of qualitatively indifferent purposes, but a maximizing of those tendencies which qualitatively conform to the nature of man and which arise through rational deliberation and free choice ... There is a stable universal standard, resting on something firmer than the shifting sands of appetite, to which an appeal can be made even from the maximal agreements of a corrupt society. This standard is the law of nature which persists as long as man persists – which is, therefore, incorruptible and inalienable, and which justifies the right to revolution against a corrupt and tyrannical social order.[5]

Finally, in addition to the problems of the pleasure–pain calculus, personal utilitarianism counsels that actions be judged not on their *nature* but on their *consequences*. But, in the non-Bethamite, mere cost–benefit (rather than 'objective' pleasure–pain) analysis, how is anyone to gauge the consequences of any action? And why is it considered easier, let alone more 'scientific', to judge *consequences* than to judge an act itself by its nature? Furthermore, it is often very difficult to figure out *what* the consequences of any contemplated action will be. How we are to find the secondary, tertiary, etc. consequences, let alone the more immediate ones? We suspect that Herbert Spencer, in his critique of utilitarianism, was correct: it is often easier to know what is *right* than what is expedient.[6]

2.3 Social utilitarianism

In extending utilitarianism from the personal to the social, Bentham and his followers incorporated all the fallacies of the former, and added many more besides. If each man tries to maximize pleasure (and minimize pain), then the social ethical rule, for the Benthamites, is to seek always 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number', in a social felicific calculus in which each man counts for one, no more and no less.

The first question is the powerful one of self-refutation: for if each man is necessarily governed by the rule of maximizing pleasure, then why in the world are these utilitarian philosophers doing something very different – that

is, calling for an abstract social principle ('the greatest happiness of the greatest number')?[7] And why is *their* abstract moral principle – for that is what it is – legitimate while all others, such as natural rights, are to be brusquely dismissed as nonsense? What justification is there for the greatest happiness formula? The answer is none whatever; it is simply assumed as axiomatic, above and beyond challenge.

In addition to the self-refuting nature of the utilitarians clinging to an overriding – and unanalysed – abstract moral principle, the principle itself is shaky at best. For what is so good about the 'greatest number'? Suppose that the vast majority of people in a society hate and revile redheads, and greatly desire to murder them. Suppose further, that there are only a few redheads extant at any time, so that their loss would entail no discernible drop in general production or in the real incomes of the non redheads remaining. Must we then say that it is 'good', after making our social felicific calculus, for the vast majority to cheerfully slaughter redheads, and thereby maximize their pleasure or happiness? And if not, why not? As Felix Adler wryly put it, utilitarians 'pronounce the greatest happiness of the greatest number to be the social end, although they fail to make it intelligible why the happiness of the greater number should be cogent as an end upon those who happen to belong to the lesser number'.[8]

Furthermore, the egalitarian presumption of each person counting precisely for one is hardly self-evident. Why not some system of weighting? Again, we have an unexamined and unscientific article of faith at the heart of utilitarianism.

Finally, while utilitarianism falsely assumes that the moral or the ethical is a purely subjective given to each individual, it on the contrary assumes that these subjective desires can be added, subtracted, and weighed across the various individuals in society so as to result in a calculation of maximum social happiness. But how in the world can an objective or calculable 'social utility' or 'social cost' emerge out of purely subjective desires, especially since subjective desires or utilities are strictly ordinal, and cannot be compared or added or subtracted among more than one person? The truth, then, is the opposite of the core assumptions of utilitarianism. *Moral principles*, which utilitarianism claims to reject as mere subjective emotion, are intersubjective and can be used to persuade various persons; whereas utilities and costs are purely subjective to each individual and therefore *cannot* be compared or weighed between persons.

Perhaps the reason why Bentham quietly shifts from 'maximum pleasure' in personal utilitarianism to 'happiness' in the social realm is that talking about the 'greatest pleasure of the greatest number' would be too openly ludicrous, since the emotion or sensation of pleasure is quite clearly not addable or subtractable between persons. Substituting the vaguer and looser 'happiness' enabled Bentham to fuzz over such problems.[9]

Bentham's utilitarianism led him to an increasingly numerous 'agenda' for government intervention in the economy. Some of this agenda we have seen above. Others items include: a welfare state; taxation for at least a partial egalitarian redistribution of wealth; government boards, institutes and universities; public works to cure unemployment as well as to encourage private investment; government insurance; regulation of banks and stockbrokers; guarantee of quantity and quality of goods.

2.4 Big brother: the panopticon

Utilitarian economists have often been – in my view properly – accused of trying to substitute 'efficiency' for ethics in advocating or developing public policy. 'Efficiency', in contrast to 'ethics' sounds unsentimental, hard-nosed and 'scientific'. Yet extolling 'efficiency' only pushes the ethical problem under the rug. For in *whose* interests, and at *whose* expense, shall social efficiency be pursued? In the name of a spurious science, 'efficiency' often becomes a mask for exploitation, for plundering one set of people for the benefit of another. Often, utilitarian economists have been accused of being willing to advise 'society' on how to build the most efficient 'concentration camps'. Those who have held this charge to be an unfair *reductio ad absurdum* should contemplate the life and thought of the prince of utilitarian philosophers, Jeremy Bentham. In a profound sense, Bentham was a living *reductio ad absurdum* of Benthamism, a living object lesson of the results of his own doctrine.

It was in 1768, at the age of 20, when Jeremy Bentham, returning to his *alma mater*, Oxford, for an alumni vote, chanced upon a copy of Joseph Priestley's *Essay on Government*, and came across the magical phrase that changed and dominated his life from then on: 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. But, as Gertrude Himmelfarb points out in her scintillating and devastating essays on Bentham, of all his numerous schemes and tinkerings in pursuit of this elusive goal, the one closest to Jeremy's heart was his plan for the panopticon. In visiting his brother Samuel in Russia, in the 1780s, Bentham found that his brother had designed such a panopticon, as a workshop, and Bentham immediately got the idea of the Panopticon as the ideal physical site for a prison, a school, a factory – indeed, for all of social life. 'Panopticon', in Greek, means 'all-seeing', and the name was highly suitable for the object in view. Another Benthamite synonym for the panopticon was 'the Inspection House'. The idea was to maximize the supervision of prisoners/school children/paupers/employees by the all-seeing inspector, who would be seated at a tower in the centre of a circular spider-web able to spy on all the cells in the periphery. By mirrors and other devices, each of the spied-upon could never know where the inspector was looking at any given time. Thus the panopticon would accomplish the goal of a 100 per cent inspected

and supervised society without the means; since everyone *could* be under inspection at any time without knowing it.

Bentham's apologists have reduced his scheme to merely one of prison 'reform', but Bentham tried to make it clear that all social institutions were to be encompassed by the panopticon; that it was to serve as a model for 'houses of industry, workhouses, poorhouses, manufactories, mad-houses, lazrettos, hospitals, and schools'. An atheist hardly given to scriptural citation, Bentham nevertheless waxed rhapsodic about the social ideal of the panopticon, quoting from the Psalms: 'Thou art about my path, and about my bed; and spies out all my ways ...'

As Professor Himmelfarb aptly puts it:

> Bentham did not believe in God, but he did believe in the qualities apotheosized in God. The Panopticon was a realization of the divine ideal, spying out the ways of the transgressor by means of an ingenious architectural scheme, turning night into day with artificial light and reflectors, holding men captive by an intricate system of inspection.[10]

Bentham's goal was to approach, or simulate, the 'ideal perfection' of complete and continuous inspection of everyone. Because of the inspector's 'invisible eye', each inmate would conceive himself in a state of total and continuing inspection, thus achieving the 'apparent omnipresence of the inspector'.

Consistent with utilitarianism, the social arrangement was decided upon by the social despot, who acts 'scientifically' in the name of the greatest happiness of all. In that name, his rule maximizes 'efficiency'. Thus, in Bentham's original draft, every inmate would be kept in solitary confinement, since this would maximize his being 'safe and quiet', without chance of unruly crowds or planning of escape.

In arguing for his panopticon, Bentham at one point acknowledges the doubts and reservations of people who appear to want maximum inspection of their children or other charges. He recognizes a possible charge that his inspector would be excessively despotic, or even that the incarceration and solitary confinement of all might be 'productive of an imbecility', so that a formerly free man would no longer in a deep sense be fully human: 'And whether the result of this high-wrought contrivance might not be constructing a set of *machines* under the similitude of *men*?' To this critical question, Jeremy Bentham gave a brusque, brutal and quintessentially utilitarian reply: who cares? he said. The only pertinent question was: 'would *happiness* be most likely to be increased or diminished by this discipline?' To our 'scientist' of happiness, there were no doubts of the answer: 'call them soldiers, call them monks, call them machines; so they were but happy ones, I should not care.'[11] There speaks the prototypical humanitarian with the guillotine, or at least with the slave-pen.

Bentham was only willing to modify the solitary confinement of each inmate in the panopticon because of the great expense of constructing an entire cell for each person. Economy was an overriding concern in running the panopticon – economy and productivity. Bentham was concerned to maximize the coerced labour of the inmates. After all, 'industry is a blessing; why paint it as a curse?' Seven-and-a-half hours a day sufficed for sleep, and an hour-and-a-half total for meals, for after all, he admonished, 'let it not be forgotten, meal times are times of rest: feeding is recreation.' There is no reason why inmates should not be forced to work 14 or even 15 hours a day, six days a week. Indeed, Bentham wrote to a friend that he had been 'afraid' of revealing many of his proposed savings, 'for fear of being beat down'. He had in mind working the inmates no less than 'sixteen and a half profitable hours' a day, dressing them without stockings, shirts or hats, and feeding them exclusively on potatoes, which at that time were regarded even by the poorest citizens as fit only for animal fodder. Bedding was to be as cheap as possible with sacks used instead of sheets, and hammocks instead of beds.

Bentham's overriding concern with economy and productivity is made understandable by a crucial element in his panopticon plan – an element often neglected by later historians. For the Great Inspector was to be none other than Bentham himself. Prisons of the realm, and presumably eventually schools and factories, were to be contracted out to Bentham, who would be contractor, inspector and profit-maker from the scheme. It is no wonder then, that Bentham had such supreme confidence in the ability of the inspector to maximize his own happiness along with the happiness of the 'greatest number' of panopticon inmates at the same time. Bentham's long-term gain, if not the 'greatest happiness' of the prisoners, was also to be ensured by long-run provisions that would keep 'released' prisoners in the almost permanent thrall of the inspector. In Bentham's final plan for his panopticon, no prisoner would be released unless he enlisted in the army; enlisted in the navy; or had a bond of £50 posted for him by a 'responsible householder'. It must be realized that £50 was a handsome sum at a time when the average unskilled labourer received a wage of about 10 shillings a week – or about two year's salary. The bond was to be renewed annually, and any failure to renew would subject the prisoner to be shipped back to the panopticon, 'though it should be for life'. Why would any responsible householder be interested in posting a £50 bond for an ex-prisoner? To Bentham, the answer was clear: only if the prisoner was willing to contract his labour to that householder, with the understanding that the householder would have the same power over the labourer as that 'of a father over his child, or of a master over his apprentice'. Since this mammoth bond had to be renewed every year, the ex-prisoner was envisioned by Bentham as a perpetual slave to the householder. If there was

no bond, the prisoner would have to shipped to a 'subsidiary establishment', also run on panopticon principles. And who better to run such establishments than the main prison contractor, i.e. Bentham himself? Indeed, all the conditions of the panopticon were designed to induce the prisoners or other inmates to be enslaved to the contractor (Bentham) virtually for life.

In view of Bentham's overriding concern with the panopticon, and of his explicit identification of himself as the contractor, we must remark on what Himmelfarb points to as:

> the strange, almost willing inattentiveness of biographers and historians to the most striking feature of the plan and the decisive cause of its rejection. To them Bentham was a philanthropist who sacrificed years of his life and most of his fortune to the exemplary cause of penal reform and who was inexplicably, as one biographer put it, 'not to be allowed to benefit his country'. Most books on Bentham and even some of the most respectable histories of penal reform do not so much as mention the contract system in connection with the Panopticon, let alone identify Bentham as the proposed contractor.[12]

Finally, Bentham's panopticon was supposed to be intimately connected with a woodworking machine that his brother Samuel had invented in Russia about the same time as the panopticon workshop. What better use for thousands, if not many thousands of inmates than to be busily and cheaply at work making an enormous amount of wood? Samuel's woodworking machine proved to be too costly to be built and powered by a steam engine; so why not, in Bentham's own terms, 'human labour to be extracted from a class of person, on whose part neither dexterity nor good will were to be reckoned upon, ... now substituted to the steam engine ...?'

That Bentham scarcely aimed to confine the panopticon to the class of prisoners is shown particularly by his panopticon poorhouse scheme. Written originally in 1797 and reissued in 1812, Bentham's *Pauper Management Improved* envisioned a joint-stock company, like the East India Company, contracted by the government to operate 250 'Industry Houses', each to house 2 000 paupers subject to the 'absolute' authority of a contractor–inspector–governor, in a building and suffering under a regimen very similar to the panopticon prison.

Who would constitute the class of paupers living under the slave labour regime of the panopticon poorhouse? To Bentham, the company – of which he, of course, would be the head – would be assigned 'coercive powers' to seize anyone 'having nether visible livelihood or assignable property, nor honest and sufficient means of livelihood'. On that rather elastic definition, the average citizen would be legally encouraged to aid and abet the coercive powers of the poorhouse company by seizing anyone he considered of insufficient livelihood and trundling him off to the panopticon poorhouse.

Bentham's envisioned scale of the network of panopticon poorhouses was nothing if not grandiose. The houses were to confine not only 500 000 poor but also their children, who were to continue bound to the company, even if their parents were discharged, as apprentices until their early 20s, even if married. These apprentices would be confined in an additional 250 panopticon houses, bringing the total number of inmates in the industry houses up to no less than one million. If we consider that the total population of England at that time was only nine million, this means that Bentham envisioned the confining in slave labour, regimented and exploited by himself, of at least 11 per cent of the nation's population. Indeed, sometimes Bentham envisioned his panopticons as incarcerating up to three-fifths of the British population.

Jeremy Bentham conceived of his panopticon in 1786 at the age of 38; five years later, he published the scheme and fought hard for it for two more decades, also urging France and India in vain to adopt the scheme. Parliament finally rejected the plan in 1811. For the rest of his long life, Bentham mourned the defeat. Near the end of his life at the age of 83, Bentham wrote a history of the affair, paranoiacally convinced that King George III had sabotaged the plan out of a personal vendetta arising from Bentham's opposition, during the 1780s, to the king's projected war against Russia. (The book's title is *History of the War Between Jeremy Bentham and George III* (1831), By 'One of the Belligerents'.) Bentham lamented, 'Imagine how he hated me ... But for him all the paupers in the country, as well as all the prisoners in the country, would have been in my hands'.[13] A tragedy indeed!

Jeremy Bentham started out in life as a Tory, a typical eighteenth century believer in 'enlightened despotism'. He looked to the enlightened despots, whether Catherine the Great of Russia or George III, to put his reforms and crank schemes for the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number' into effect. But the failure to push through the panopticon soured him on absolute monarchy. As he wrote, 'I ... never suspected that the people in power were against reform. I supposed they only wanted to know what was good in order to embrace it'. Disillusioned, Bentham allowed himself to be converted, partially by his great disciple James Mill, to radical democracy, and to the panoply of what came to be known as philosophic radicalism. As Himmelfarb summed up the new radicalism, its innovation 'was to make the greatest happiness of the greatest number dependent upon the greatest power of the greatest number', the greatest power to be lodged in an 'omnicompetent legislature'.[14] And if, as Himmelfarb puts it, the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number' might require 'the greatest misery of the few', then so be it.

It seems scarcely an exaggeration when Douglas Long compares Bentham's social outlook with that of the modern 'scientific' totalitarian, B.F. Skinner. Bentham wrote toward the end of his life that the words 'liberty' and 'liberal' were among 'the most mischievous' in the English language, because they

obscured the genuine issues, which are 'happiness' and 'security'. For Bentham, the state is the necessary cradle of the law, and every individual citizen's duty is to obey that law. What the public needs and wants is not liberty but 'security', for which the power of the sovereign state must be unbounded and infinite. (And who is to guard the citizen from his sovereign?) For Bentham, as Long puts it:

> by its very nature the idea of liberty more than any other concept posed a continual threat to the completeness and stability Bentham sought in his 'science of human nature'. The indeterminate, open-ended quality of the libertarian view of man was alien to Bentham. He sought rather the perfection of a neo-Newtonian social physics.[15]

It is certainly apt if grandiloquent that Bentham saw himself as the 'Newton of the moral world'.

The philosophic radicals, despite their proclaimed devotion to *laissez-faire*, adopted not only Bentham's later democratic creed, but also his devotion to the panopticon. John Stuart Mill, even when most anti-Benthamite in the course of his eternally wavering career, never criticized the panopticon. More starkly, Bentham's brilliant 'Lenin', James Mill, despite his eagerness to bury Bentham's statist economic views, admired the panopticon with the extravagance of the Master himself. In an article on 'Prisons and Prison Discipline', written for the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1822 or 1823, Mill praised the panopticon to the skies, as 'perfectly expounded and proved' on the great principle of utility. Every aspect of the panopticon received Mill's plaudits: the architecture, the hammocks instead of beds, the all-seeing inspection, the labour system, the contract system, the perpetual slavery of the 'released prisoners'. Mill's lavish praise was private as well as public, for in a letter to the editor of the *Encyclopedia*, Mill insisted that the panopticon 'appear(s) to me to approach perfection'.

2.5 Notes

1. William E.C. Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals: Nine Studies in Theory and Practice 1817–1841* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 25.
2. See, ibid., pp. 35–6.
3. Werner Stark, 'Introduction', in Stark (ed.), *Jeremy Bentham's Economic Writings* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1951), II, 18–19.
4. John Plamenatz, *The English Utilitarians* (2nd ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), pp. 73–4.
5. John Wild, *Plato's Modern Enemies and the Theory of Natural Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 69–70.
6. Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1970), pp. 3ff.
7. As Plamenatz points out, Bentham and his followers assert 'that no man can desire any pleasure except his own', and yet, paradoxically, 'they both insist that the greatest happiness, no matter whose, is the only criterion of morality'. Plamenatz, op. cit. note 4, p. 18.

And Professor Veatch points out that 'the utilitarians have always had some difficulty in showing why anyone has any obligation to think about others. If one begins by basing one's ethics on straightforward hedonistic principles, asserting that pleasure is the only thing of any value in life and recommending that the moral agent simply do as he pleases, it is patently difficult to make the transition from such a starting point to the further assertion that this same moral agent ought to concern himself not merely with his own pleasure, but equally with the pleasure of others'. Henry B. Veatch, *Rational Man: A Modern Interpretation of Aristotelian Ethics* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1962), pp. 182–3.

8. Felix Adler, The Relation of Ethics to Social Science', in H.J. Rogers, (ed.), *Congress of Arts and Science* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), VII, p. 673. Peter Geach also makes the point that what if, even in utilitarian terms, more social happiness can be obtained by following the wishes of the *smaller* number? See Peter Geach, *The Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 91ff.
9. There are many other deep flaws in utilitarianism. For one, even assuming that happiness can be added or subtracted between persons, why couldn't more total social happiness be obtained by following the wishes of the *smaller* number? And what then? See Geach, op. cit., note 8. And further, the utilitarian assumption of complete moral indifference among subjective utilities or preferences will often prove counter-intuitive. How many people, for example (the majority?) will stubbornly hold with the utilitarians that someone's desire to see an innocent person hurt should count as fully in the social calculus as other, less harmful, preferences? Cf. Murray N. Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1982), p. 213.
10. Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Victorian Minds* (1970, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1975), p. 35.
11. Ibid., p. 38.
12. Ibid., pp. 58–9.
13. Ibid., p. 71.
14. Ibid., p. 76.
15. Douglas C. Long, *Bentham on Liberty* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 164. And Long wrote: Bentham 'broadened his view of the functions attributable to a lawmaker until they ... seemed to include every imaginable form of social control over the universe of human actions'. Ibid., p. 214.