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WILLIAM GODWIN AND ROBERT OWEN

ATSUSHI SHIRAI

I

In spite of the passage of 200 years since the birth of Robert Owen his ideas are not necessarily fully understood. The ideological development shown in his publications ranging from *A New View of Society*, 1813–14—the work by a successful bourgeois—to the communistic *Report to the County of Lanark*, 1821 are generally considered as representing his ideological transition from the bourgeois to the proletarian with the panic of 1815 as the turning point.⁽¹⁾

There are, on the other hand, some people who take Owen as one of the philosophic radicals. They think Owen's communism is merely an unmitigated, thoroughgoing capitalism; they consider Owen's *Report to the County of Lanark* as a bourgeois treatise.⁽²⁾

In order to better understand Owen's thought, the writer introduce here Godwin who seems to have exerted the largest influence on Owen.⁽³⁾ By studying Owen's relation to Godwin, we shall be able to look into the Owen's ideological peculiarities.

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE FORMATION OF THE HUMAN CHARACTER IN *A New View of Society*

Being written under the influence of J. Bentham's utilitarianism, *A New View of Society*⁽⁴⁾ is very much bourgeois in nature. It, however, not only exhibits the capitalist rationalism, but presents a criticism on capitalism, indicating its future possibility of developing into communism.

(1) The Environmental Criticism of Society.

Here, we shall examine the critical seed on capitalism, as was developed by

(1) D. Rosenberg: *History of Political Economy*, 1934.

Kozo Matsuda: *The Formation Process of Scientific Economics*, (Kagaku-teki Keizaigaku no Seiritsu Katei, 1959).

(2) Yoshio Nagai: *A Study of English Radicalism—The Formation of the Utopian Socialism*, (Igirisu Kyushinshugi no Kenkyu—Kusoteki Shakaishugi no Seiritsu), 1962.

(3) F. Podmore: *Robert Owen, A Biography*, 1923, pp. 119–121.

G. D. H. Cole: *Robert Owen*, 1925, p. 112.

M. Cole: *Robert Owen of New Lanark*, 1953, p. 27.

B. R. Pollin, *Education and Enlightenment in the Works of William Godwin*, 1962, p. 116.

Robert Owen on Education, selections edited with an introduction and notes by Harold Selver, 1969, pp. 12, 16.

(4) Robert Owen: *A New View of Society* in *Everyman's Library*, 1927, p. 67.

A New View, from the standpoint of environmental theory, criticism of selfishness, and education.

First, we take up the environmental argument. The mechanical environmental theory—though it is by no means without fault—considers the miseries of life as due to social environment. This theory played a great role in providing the people with a bright outlook on life, explaining that society would be bettered, if the social environment were changed, instead of merely preaching on the rectification of individual weaknesses. The criticism, which was at first vaguely raised against social environment such as institution, education, religion and customs, as the criticism came to gain the depth, came to be specifically directed against the capitalism which largely conditioned people's life. As typical examples, the criticisms against economics, law and religion are discussed here.

(a) *Economic Criticism.*

The *New View* aims mainly at the relief of the miseries of the working masses; even their crimes were considered due to their ignorance or uneducated state, in other words, to their bad social environment. This created, on one hand, an easy-going, imaginary thought of social reform depending on education and environment, but on the other, it produced the revolutionary thought to change the existing social environment, that is, to remodel the existing social structure of capitalism.

His economic criticism is based on the sympathy toward the workers' miseries resulted from their ignorance and the shortage in labor demand, necessity of political criticism, and conviction of rapid increase in productive power. These were not sufficient as a criticism of capitalism, but they were good enough as a preamble for the consideration of such problems as the alienation of labor, the unemployment caused by the mechanized industry and the poverty in affluence.

(b) *The Legal and the Penal Criticism.*

The social criticism so far discussed naturally led to the appearance of legal and penal criticism. In politics, Owen attacks ruler's ignorance. In the actual enforcement of law, however, environment is held responsible for anything which occurs. So, he advocated the abolition of law and penalty which will inevitably cause crimes one after the other.

(c) *Religious Criticism.*

Owen recognized the existence of God and the Church in his "Institute of the Formation of Human Character." His concept of God, however, was more or less like a pantheistic power, as he embraced none of the religions extant in his time.

Admitting no such erroneous idea as forming one's own character by one self, he advocated the abolition of the doctrine which dangerously implants the teaching of this sort, and the confession which can not conscientiously be approved, and

the so-called "Test." It is important to know that he was against Christianity, which supported the existing social order.

(2) The Criticism of Selfishness and the Blind Pursuit of Profit.

Owen claimed: "His individual happiness can be increased and extended only in proportion as he actively endeavours to increase and extend the happiness of all around him."⁽⁵⁾ In fact, "into this playground (the New Institute of New Lanark) the children are to be received as soon as they can freely walk alone," and were given the simple precept "never to injure his play-fellows; but that, on the contrary, he is to contribute all in his power to make them happy." Such was the way they were disciplined to behave rationally and deny selfishness,⁽⁶⁾ and the persons who behave according to the principle of commercialism as well as the lawyer, the statesman, the conqueror, the religionist and the fashion hunter are rejected.⁽⁷⁾

It is to be noted that criticizing commerce, Owen denied not only commerce, as was the case with the early socialists, but selfishness in general. It is true that the criticism of the blind pursuit of profit is not necessarily in contradiction to capitalism itself as a social policy from the standpoint of total capital. It is important, however, to know that Owen's criticism not only aimed at the effective preservation of labor power, but also was an attempt to have the denial of blind pursuit of profit closely related to the realization of the happiness of all the people, that is, to the interest of all, already pointing the way toward the idea of cooperation. This thought of his is markedly different from the notion of the classical economists who, standing on the assumption of natural selfishness, the competition based on the exercise of selfishness makes the motive force for the progress of society.

(3) The Theory of Education. The Combination of Labour and Education.

Owen's view of education is essentially a bourgeois attempt to preserve the labor power of superior quality and mitigate classstrife. It is significant, however, that it not only emphasized relieving the working class of their poverty, but tried to adjust the weaknesses of the capitalist system by applying the principle of character formation as a means for social reform, instead of letting education work to heighten the enterpriser's bigoted individual interest.

Originally his view aimed at the cultivation of superior labour power, but there was stressed the importance of combining labour with education,⁽⁸⁾ and created the idea of humanity which is beyond the logic of capitalism by stressing the importance of social criticism and condemning selfishness.

As is clear from the above, *A New View of Society* set the foundation for the

(5) R. Owen: *op. cit.*, p. 18.

(6) *Ibid.*, p. 40.

(7) *Ibid.*, p. 61.

(8) K. Marx: *Das Kapital, Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, Bd. I, Dietz, S. 509.

growth of socialism with emphasis on three points: social criticism, the denial of selfishness and the combination of labour and education, although it was bourgeois in its general run of thought.

(4) Godwin and Owen's "Principle of the Formation of Human Character."

(a) *The Difference between the Two as Environmentalists.*

Both Owen and Godwin had the following visions of life in common: Assuming that human beings are primarily equal, both of them considered that human character is basically derived from environment; both were optimistic in considering that human beings can attain an infinite progress by improving the environment which is the cause of the existing miseries of life; and indicating the poverty in affluence, they attacked the Malthusian theory of population.

Coming, however, to analyzing environment, they were entirely different in method. Owen understood the environment in terms of education, and attributed the existing miseries to the ignorance of the ruler and the ruled, whereas Godwin took environment as a power machinery, with the institution of private property as its basic agency. So, his idea of ignorance is not an abstract one; he took ignorance as resulting from private property and the state. The liberation, therefore, from ignorance in this sense can not be attained by merely educating the people: the only way is in the very realization of anarchism and communism. Thus Godwin was far more substantial than Owen in the grip of the essentials of human society; Owen, who might have been amply experienced with social realities, fell in fact into a comical fantasy.

Here follows Owen's famous definition of the "Principle of the Formation of Human Character:" "Any general character, from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to any community, even to the world at large, by the application of proper means: which means are to a great extent at the command and under the control of those who have influence in the affairs of men."

The first part of this statement is somehow in agreement with Godwin's thought but the second part is quite incompatible, for, such people as the religious or the political leader, the royalty, the factory owner and the government whose favor or support Owen expected were the very agencies which Godwin considered the author of ignorance and the errors of mankind, causing the plunder, fraud, and oppression through the instigation for injustice.

It is true that both Owen and Godwin denied political activities and violence, and emphasized the importance of a gradual social change, but they were by no means one in their implication. Godwin, defending complete freedom and believing in the power of reason, held to the ultimate realization of his idea, whereas Owen, standing aloof from class antagonism and disliking conflict, looked to the existing government to take care of social evils. He had the excellent idea of reforming the factory system and enforcing unemployment policies, but depend-

ing too much on them, he was not thoroughgoing in his criticism of law, penalty and religion as Godwin was, and expected much of the efficaciousness of the British Constitution and the possible enactment of some new legislations, the State Church with modified tenets, as well as the state education and the governmental employment. Owen and Godwin, therefore, were entirely different in that the former was bourgeois, whereas the latter was anti-bourgeois, although both of them were environmentalists in theory.

(b) *The Denial of Selfishness, their Common Stand.*

In spite of the difference between them with reference to political power and private property, and Owen's being a capitalist interested in pecuniary matter, here is an important point common to them, which we should not overlook. Owen's definition of the aim of politics was to give the greatest happiness to the greatest number. He is, therefore, often regarded as a Benthamite. But he never assumed self-interest as the theoretical basis in his argument as J. Bentham did. Neither was his criticism of the blind pursuit of profit to be concluded a bourgeois concept as seen from the standpoint of the total capital. Different from Bentham who comprehended pleasure as something sensual to the individual and who tried to measure the amount of happiness through its external manifestation, Owen embraced the pleasure which is highly positive and can be attained only by promoting the welfare of a society. In other words, he defined happiness as something which can be increased in proportion to one's positive effort to increase or enlarge the happiness of all neighbours.

Human beings start with the hunt for individual pleasure. As they acquire true knowledge, however, they realize the weakness of this sort of pleasure, and they begin to prefer to make an effort for the virtuous acts which will promote total happiness, that is, the pleasure of high level (such as true knowledge, total happiness, virtues, pleasures of elevated standard). This was exactly the kind of utilitarianism which was characteristically conceived by Godwin.

Godwin repudiated the sensual self-interest, taking it as something low, and commended the greatest amount of fair and just happiness, that is, the realization of justice which is rational and of high level. This qualitative distinction of value, and the idea of total happiness was upheld in the modern age by such persons as J.-J. Rousseau, Godwin and J. S. Mill. Owen's utilitarianism also can be said to be in the line with this thought as he sought the happiness of the above description by looking for the natural agreement of interest among the people by rejecting laws and regulations. One of the reasons he criticised Bentham was that his thought centered around the idea of total interest which, needless to say, developed later into his concept of cooperative socialism.

(c) *The Difference between the Two on Education.*

Owen's view of education is often regarded as being very similar to Godwin's,⁽⁹⁾ as can be seen in the following ideas which were entertained by both of them: the equality of human beings, the elucidation of human character as due to external environment, the emphasis on the importance of education and enlightenment, the attack on the old principle of education,⁽¹⁰⁾ the gradual social reform through reason, the idea of progress, etc. Certainly they were alike in holding such educational views for children as the no-scolding, the no-punishment, the principle of rationality, and some other minor points as exhibited in their writings.

Owen looked upon education as a means to exterminate the ignorance which is the basic cause for poverty. In other words, he considered it as a method for social reform, that is, for the adjustment of the weaknesses of capitalism, instead of letting education work only to foster the bigoted selfish interest of enterprisers. After all, however, his was a bourgeois argument. In spite of the multifariousness in contents including dance, military training, music, physical training, natural history, the combination of labour and education, national education, etc., it essentially aimed at the preservation of labour power and the mitigation of class conflict, looking upon the workers merely as living machinery, a passive existence. It is true that his thought was centered around the education of workers, but his contention was not for the extinction of class strife itself. He argued for the education of the workers, for the majority of the population consisted of workers and they played a big role as servants in molding the character of children. Such being the case, Owen's concept of education—despite the fact that it was a great deal suggested from Godwin—did not reach Godwin's level of development where education is required to realize a classless society and the total denial of politics so that the internal, self-directing reform of man would be effected.

III. COMMUNISM IN THE *REPORT TO THE COUNTY OF LANARK*

(1) The Encounter between the Two.

For the two whose thoughts seem to have been closely related, there came an opportunity to see each other in 1813 after the publication of *A New View of Society*. Ford K. Brown said:

"Curran, whom Fanny disliked for his profligacy, remained the philosopher's most constant friend, and one or two others came to Skinner Street from time to time. Among them was a later student of Godwin's ideas, Robert Owen; 'who is,' said Fanny, 'indeed, a very honest and true man. He told me the other day that he wished our mother were living, as he had never before met with a person who thought so exactly as he did, or who would have so warmly and

(9) For example, George Woodcock: *William Godwin, A Biographical Study*, 1946, p. 249.

(10) R. Owen: *A New View of Society*, p. 48.

zealously entered into his plans.' There is no other record of Godwin and Owen meeting."⁽¹¹⁾

Owen writes in his own *Autobiography*: "By this period of my life (from 1810 to 1815), my four 'Essays on the Formation of Characters,' and my practice at New Lanark, had made me well known among the leading men of that period. Among these were the Archbishop of Canterbury,—the Bishop of London, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury,—Burgess, Bishop of St. David's,—Mr. Wilberforce,—W. Godwin,—Thomas Clarkson,—Zachary Macaulay,—Mr. Thornton, banker,—William Allen,—Joseph Foster,—Hoare, senr, banker,—the first Sir Robert Peel,—Sir Thomas Bernard and his particular friend the Bishop of Durham, Barrington,—the Rev. William Turner of Newcastle,—Mr. Wellbeloved, Principal of the Manchester College in York,—the Bishop of Peterborough, and many others whose names have faded from society, and many whom I have forgotten. But I must not forget my friends of the political economists—Messrs. Malthus,—James Mill,—Ricardo,—Sir Thomas Macintosh,—Colonel Torrens,—Francis Place,—&c., &c."⁽¹²⁾

Examining Godwin's biography, we must say that Owen's appreciation of Godwin was extraordinary. Publishing the *Political Justice* in 1793, Godwin leaped into literary eminence. After the death of his beloved wife Mary, he was tormented by Pitt's oppressive measure against radicalism and Malthus's attack on Godwin in *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. Soon after, he was engaged in a publishing business, but suffering from poverty, he was completely forgotten. It was in 1812 that the poet P. B. Shelley, who had listed Godwin on the list of the admirable dead, rejoiced knowing that great Godwin was still in existence, and wrote a letter to him. Owen considered Godwin one of the leaders of the age and mentioned his name along with the Archbishop of Canterbury above the economists, but it seems that he had already lost his fame at that time.

Needless to say, Owen was aware of these affairs of Godwin. The fact, however, that Owen listed Godwin as the fifth greatest leader in those days, shows that he adored Godwin,⁽¹³⁾ and learned a great deal from Godwin's writings or directly from him, exercising a large influence on him, as after all they had something in common.

In his autobiography Owen writes of the literary men and women who showed him favor in relation to *A New View of Society* and his other works: "Among the literary men and women who were friendly to my views, were Mrs. Fletcher, so long, and I believe still considered Queen of the Uniterians, Miss Edgworth,

(11) Ford K. Brown: *The Life of William Godwin*, 1926, p. 310. Robert Dale Owen, Owen's son, also became the worshipper of M. Wallstonecraft. Ralph M. Wardle: *Mary Wollstonecraft, A Critical Biography*, 1951, p. 334.

About Godwin's impression on R. D. Owen, see: Robert Dale Owen, *Threading My Way. An Autobiography*, 1874. Reprinted in 1967, pp. 207-8.

(12) R. Owen: *The Life of Robert Owen, written by himself, with selections from his writings and correspondence*, vol. I, 1857, p. 103.

(13) Rosalie Glynn Grylls: *William Godwin and His World*, 1953, p. 39.

Miss Porter, William Godwin, William Roscoe, Thomas Clarkson, of anti-slavery memory, and many of the liberal writers of the day, . . . John Minter Morgan.”⁽¹⁴⁾

Among these people, Godwin was the only important person for Owen. Further, he refers to Malthus, James Mill, Ricardo, Joseph Hume, M. P., Francis Place and Thomas Attwood, M. P., who “were very friendly but opposed to me in some points of political science.” Comparing the two statements above, one can definitely say that Owen was not a Benthamite, but rather that he sided with Godwin. Between the publication of *A New View of Society* and that of *Report to the County of Lanark*, we should consider the intensified contradiction of capitalism and the progress of the labor movement resulted from transitional crisis, that is the happenings of prime importance making for social reform. But Owen’s personal exchange of view with Godwin after the publication of his *A New View of Society* might possibly be taken as the opportunity for Owen to become a communist.

(2) The Points in Common with Owen’s Utopia.

Here we examine Godwin’s criticism of capitalism, the characteristics of his Utopia, and the process to it, as compared with Owen’s thought presented in his *Report to the County of Lanark*.

Discussing capitalism, Owen started with his criticism of education, unemployment, law, religion, selfishness, the blind pursuit of profit, and the principle of commerce (*A New View of Society*), and he came to the recognition of the impoverishment of labourers owing to the accumulation of capital (*The Consideration on the Influence of Factory System*), criticism of social system, money, division of labour, and the denial of private property (*Report to the County of Lanark*). Godwin’s criticism of capitalism, on the other hand, was not a mere criticism of environment. Going so far as to deny the state authority and the private property which supported it, he was much more severe than Owen. Owen’s theory of environment was not developed to the extent that he completely denied the existing system and private property, but still he must have learned something from Godwin’s criticism of selfishness, free competition, luxury, accumulation of capital, division of labour, and private property.

Concerning the Utopias of these two gentlemen, we shall examine here the characteristics of Godwin, which Owen apparently acquired from Godwin or which shows a strong mutual similarity.

(a) *Extinction of Selfishness.*

The denial of selfishness, which was stressed already in *A New View of Society*, was naturally taken over in the *Report to the County of Lanark*, and was defined: “The leading principle” in a cooperative society, “is the public good, or the general interest of the whole population.”⁽¹⁵⁾

(14) R. Owen: *op. cit.*, p. 212.

(15) R. Owen: *Report to the Country of Lanark*, 1821, p. 17.

“This principle of individual interest, opposed, as it is perpetually, to the public good, is considered, by the most celebrated political economists, to be the cornerstone of the social system, and without which, society could not subsist.”⁽¹⁶⁾

“From this principle of individual interest have arisen all the divisions of mankind, the endless errors and mischiefs of class, sect, party, and of national antipathies, creating the angry and malevolent passions, and all the crimes and misery with which the human race has been hitherto afflicted.”⁽¹⁷⁾

“The principle on which these economists proceed, instead of adding to the wealth of nations or of individuals, is itself the sole cause of poverty.”⁽¹⁸⁾

“The system of individual opposing, has now reached the extreme point of error and inconsistency.”⁽¹⁹⁾

Owen denied the accumulation of wealth and the monetary system, but he differed from Godwin in that he admitted, disposed to being bourgeois as was mentioned before, the exchange of goods and stressed the significance of commercial interest both of employers and labourers. This was certainly a contradiction in him.

(b) *Work by the Entire Populace, the Shortening of Labour Hour, and the Denial of the Divisions of Labor.*

The shortening of the labour hour, the increase of leisure, and the improvement of character by education at leisure were strong beliefs of Owen's. He practised them in his factory, and devoted himself to the movement for labour law enactment. In the Utopia that he conceived: “Under a well devised arrangement for the working classes, they will all procure for themselves, the necessaries and comforts of life, in so short a time, and so easily and pleasantly, that the occupation will be experienced, to be little more than a recreation sufficient to keep them in the best health and spirits, for the rational enjoyment of life.”⁽²⁰⁾

But there still exist “The higher classes, those who live without manual labour, and those whose nice manual operations will not permit them at any time to be employed in agriculture and gardening,”⁽²¹⁾ and it shows his limit admitting an authoritative institution.

In general, he denies the division of labour: “Under the present system, there is the most minute division of mental power and manual labour in the individuals of the working classes. . . . The details now to be submitted, have been devised upon principles which will lead to an opposite practice; to the combination of extensive mental and manual powers in the individuals of the working classes; to a complete identity of private and public interest. . . .”⁽²²⁾

(16) *Ibid.*, p. 28.

(17) *Ibid.*, p. 29.

(18) *Ibid.*, p. 29.

(19) *Ibid.*, p. 30.

(20) *Ibid.*, p. 26.

(21) *Ibid.*, p. 26.

(22) *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.

“All will take their turn at *some one or more* of the occupations in this department (Author’s note: industry), aided by every improvement that science can afford, alternately with employment in agriculture and gardening. It has been a popular opinion to recommend a minute division of labour, and a division of interest. It will presently appear, however, that this minute division of labour, and division of interests are only other terms for poverty, ignorance, waste of every kind, universal opposition throughout society, crime, misery, and great bodily and mental imbecility.”⁽²³⁾ Owen cleverly indicated the practical necessity of the social division of labour and the importance to overcome the evils thereof by the occupational rotation between industry and agriculture, and came to deny both the occupational and the work division.

“Instead of the unhealthy pointer of a pin,—header of a nail,—piecer of a thread,—or clodhopper senselessly gazing at the soil, or around him, without understanding or rational reflection, there would spring up a working class full of activity and useful knowledge, with habits, information, manners, and dispositions that would place the lowest in the scale, many degrees above the best of any class which has yet been formed by the circumstances of past or present society.”⁽²⁴⁾ Such was Owen’s expectation.⁽²⁵⁾ Certainly he was advanced as compared with Godwin who merely criticized the division of labour.

(c) *The Reform of Human Nature.*

Thus Owen was also optimistic that human nature would largely change for the better with the change in environment. As Godwin did, he loved simpleness. All the facilities in the proposed cooperative society were to be plain, and the children there would turn rational beings. “With this knowledge, and the feelings which will arise from it, the existing thousand counteractions to the creation of new wealth will also cease, as well as those innumerable motives to deception which now pervade all ranks in society. A principle of equity and justice, openness and fairness, will influence the whole proceedings of these societies.”⁽²⁶⁾ The way he used such terms as equity, justice, openness and fairness was practically the same as Godwin.

(d) *The Idea of Infinite Progress.*

Needless to say, the idea of progress which is generally characteristic of an enlightening thought, was entertained by Owen, and also he acquired the concept of its perfectibility from Godwin. In *A New View of Society*, Owen already criticized the Malthusian theory of population; and to strengthen his argument, he called attention to the limitlessness in human power for the production of food and chemical development. He was, therefore, quite optimistic of the natural

(23) *Ibid.*, pp. 44–5.

(24) *Ibid.*, p. 45.

(25) On this point, Engels gives praise. F. Engels: *Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft*, in *Werke*, Band 20, SS. 272–3.

(26) R. Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

increase of population for many decades to come.⁽²⁷⁾ In the *Report to the County of Lanark*, he states at the beginning:

“3d. That manual labour, properly directed, may be made to continue of this value in all parts of the world, under any supposable increase of its population, for many centuries to come.

4th. That, under a proper direction of manual labour, Great Britain and its dependencies may be made to support an incalculable increase of population, most advantageously for all its inhabitants.

5th. That, when manual labour shall be so directed, it will be found that population cannot, for many years, be stimulated to advance, as rapidly as society might be benefited by its increase.”⁽²⁸⁾

The above is not so extreme as in the case of Godwin, but it was a succession to Godwin's contention for the rapid increase in food production, the moral restraint of population, and the infinite improvement and progress of society, as against the population theory of Malthus.

In fact, Malthus devoted 6 out of the 19 chapters of his *Principle of Population* (1st edition) to criticizing Godwin, but only 1 chapter was given to it in the 5th and 6th editions, and Owen was made the target for criticism instead of Godwin.

(3) The Differences of the Two and Their Mutual Influence.

The following are the points of difference between them:

(a) *Property on the Basis of Necessity.*

Concerning the exchange and the distribution, “5th: The disposal of the Surplus produce, and the relation which will subsist between the several establishments” in the *Report to the County of Lanark* explains: The existing society—gives rise to selfishness in general in order to secure the necessaries of life. The proposed social system—produces far more wealth; extinguishes the motive for selfishness, and the desire for the individual accumulation of wealth; conducts a fair exchange according to the amount of labour, and allows consumption according to need; has the different enterprises exchange their surplus products according to the amount of labour; and creates the persons and organs that will manage, exchange and distribute surplus products.⁽²⁹⁾

As opposed to Godwin, what Owen held was communism centering around free goods standing on the foundation of commercial production, exchange, and the paper which denotes the value of labour, as the transitional means for management.⁽³⁰⁾ Here is to be reminded that Godwin also admitted the right to one's own produce in the 3rd edition of his *Political Justice*, in a negative, supple-

(27) R. Owen: *A New View of Society: Essays on the Formation of Character*, in *Everyman's Library*, 1927, pp. 85–6.

(28) R. Owen: *Report to the Country of Lanark*, 1821, pp. 1–2.

(29) *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.

(30) F. Engels, a.a.O., S. 285.

mentary sense notwithstanding, providing the shifting steps toward communism based on property according to necessity. Here we find the similarity to the stage of Owen's communism, where the fair commercial exchange of good according to the amount of labour is recognized.

(b) *Emphasis on Private Judgement.*

Owen made emphasis on the right of private judgment, yet still considered: "Those founded by land-owners and capitalists, public companies, parishes or countries, will be under the direction of the individuals whom these powers may appoint to superintend them, and will of course be subject to the rules and regulations laid down by their founders.

Yet, the principles being understood, a man of fair ordinary capacity would superintend such arrangements, with more ease than most large commercial or manufacturing establishments are now conducted."⁽³¹⁾

(c) *The Exclusion of Cooperation.*

As related to the preceding description, here is a point which shows most conspicuously the difference between Godwin and Owen. It is that the former is an anarchist, whereas the latter a cooperative socialist; the former rejected any form of cooperation, whereas the latter made cooperation the basic principle for the new society as he conceived it.

In spite of such a marked difference between the two on the surface, we must not overlook the substantial commonness existing between them. First of all, the idea of the total benefit, which Godwin considered to define the political justice, is none but the cooperative mutuality. Only, he made every effort to take it as related to individual judgement, but Owen emphasized its economic effectiveness more than anything else. So, we might say that both of them were one in basic understanding.⁽³²⁾

Secondly, Owen made no critical issue of power, but like Godwin, he was a critic of political means in connection with parliamentary reform or revolution. The cooperative village he proposed was a simple community, the political and the economic power of which were confined to its narrow demarcation, the same as the small transitional community which Godwin proposed.⁽³³⁾ In other words,

"Yet, the principles being understood a man of fair ordinary capacity would superintend such arrangements, with more ease than most large commercial or manufacturing establishments are now conducted."⁽³⁴⁾

"Those formed by the middle and working classes, upon a complete reciprocity of interests, should be governed by themselves upon principles that will *prevent* divisions, opposition of interests, jealousies, or any of the common and vulgar

(31) R. Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

(32) G. Woodcock, *William Godwin, A Biographical Study*, 1946, p. 250.

(33) *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251.

(34) R. Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

passions which a contention for power is certain to generate. Their affairs should be conducted by a committee composed of all the members of the association between certain ages—for instance, of those between 35 and 45, or between 40 and 50. Perhaps the former will unite more of the activity of youth with the experience of age than the latter; but it is of little moment which period of life may be fixed upon. In a short time, the ease with which these association will proceed in all their operations will be such as to render the business of governing a mere recreation; and as the parties who govern will, in a few years, again become the governed, they must always be conscious that at a further period they will experience the good or evil effects the measures of their administration. By this equitable and natural arrangement, all the numberless evils of elections and electioneering will be avoided. . . .

The superior advantages which these associates will speedily possess, and the still greater superiority of knowledge which they will rapidly acquire, will preclude on their parts the smallest desire for what are now called honours and peculiar privileges.”⁽³⁵⁾

The contents of this proposal are very important. There are manifest such ideas as (1) the shrinkage in power, (2) the direct democracy, the criticism on the representative government, (3) the deprofessionalization of politics, the alternative administration, the extinction of the antagonism between the ruler and the ruled, (4) the confidence in the masses. These ideas are not anarchistic, but they are near to Godwin’s notions of the criticism of the representative government and the transitional small society. They signify a practical effacement of state.

Considering the above, and Owen’s unique ideas such as the reform of the value standard and spade farming instead of plowing, the author thinks that the following will remain as the essential and lasting differences between Owen and Godwin:

- (1) In order to realize the Utopia, the lucrative interests of capitalists are to be appealed to, and the management by them are to be expected by Owen.
- (2) The projection of capitalist ways, that is, the sales-commodity production the exchange, the wages and the profit are to be tenaciously retained in the Utopia by Owen;
- (3) The lack of criticism on state authority, and the expectation for state intervention by Owen.

These points were all derived from Owen’s bourgeois disposition fostered in the capitalist environment, heralding the advent of the industrial revolution, as distinct from Godwin’s intellectualism of the chair. It seems that the ideological difference owing to the difference of the environments in which they lived was fatally irreconcilable.

Exception these points, however, Owen’s Utopia seems to have come very near to Godwin’s, although we can see some other influence being exerted on him by

(35) *Ibid.*, p. 48.

such persons as Ricardo,⁽³⁶⁾ Rousseau, J. H. Pestalozzi, and J. Bellers.⁽³⁷⁾ Owen's ultimate vision of society was a free and equal communism, the same as Godwin's, where human reason would succeed in setting up the society of infinite progress without being harassed by a miserable environment. Being a businessman to the core Owen could not afford to let reason follow its natural course of development, for impoverishment was so pressing in the real society that reason was far from being cultivated.

In order, therefore, to demonstrate his great ideas, Owen set forth an exemplary society in this very world as a capitalist venture; it was none but the cooperative society.⁽³⁸⁾ It was certainly a "product of commercial calculation."⁽³⁹⁾ He embraced, however, another aspect of the matter—"another side of the shield," so to speak; his society was a perfect form of communism, proving far more thoroughgoing than, for example, the Fourier's phalanges which admitted capital. Inclusive as it was of such an alien element as spade farming, this Utopia of Owen's can be considered a double construction of thought: Godwin's Utopia with a projection from solid capitalism based on Owen's life experience. With this interpretation, we can understand why Owen came to devise the naive cooperative society with farming as its primary occupation; to effectuate this plan, Owen "turned toward the labor class,"⁽⁴⁰⁾ but 6 years after he had returned from the United States of America, he quit the labor movement; and he was attacked by both the bourgeois economists⁽⁴¹⁾ and Chartists; and he obtained many of his supporters from among the petty bourgeois.

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(36) Engels, *Vorwort zu Das Kapital*, Bd. II, S. 14.

(37) *The Life of Robert Owen, written by himself*, vol. I, 1857, reprinted with an introduction by M. Beer, p. 331.

R. Owen, *Address Delivered at the City of London Tavern on Thursday, August 21st*, in *A New View of Society and Other writings by Robert Owen*, p. 213.

(38) G. Woodcock, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-250.

(39) (40) F. Engels, *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft*, vierte unveränderte Auflage, 1894, S. 16.

(41) R. Torrens, *Mr. Owen's Plans for relieving the National Distress*, in the *Edinburgh Review*, Oct. 1819. Cf. L. Robbins, *Robert Torrens and the Evolution of Classical Economics*, 1958, *Bibliographical Appendix*.