

The Benthamite Theories on the Central Administrative State and Public Education

Choy, Sun-hong*

I

Jeremy Bentham was a faithful disciple of the Enlightenment. He taught his age the importance of rational criticism and systematic reform, firmly believing in progress and in the rationality in mankind. According to Bentham, man is a creature of sensation, of pleasure and pain. Moral judgment is simply one case of the judgment of happiness. Man's failure to attain his end of happiness is simply, therefore, the result of ignorance or miscalculation. Knowledge can show men their true state and enable them to calculate aright. Reason is patently the instrument which alone can be productive of any useful effect. To a Benthamite, ethics is to be scientific and experimental. There is no moral judgment such as in Kantian ethics. Bentham went so far in rejecting the *a priori* and the transcendental that he denied any qualitative difference in pleasure and happiness.¹⁾

Bentham was a thoroughgoing optimistic rationalist, and to him this spirit of rationalism required the administrative growth of the modern state. Bentham was one of the political theorists who emphasized the view that the state is *an* institution. He was convinced to the importance of institutions in determining behavior, institutions which were to be built on the basis of exact, purposeful calculation. Bentham taught men to ask whether an institution, including the state itself, was useful, efficient, and conducive to human happiness, not whether it agreed with custom or tradition.²⁾ Primarily a legal reformer, Bentham believed in the ameliorative function of the state and exemplified the late eighteenth-century desire for social improvement. He provided a new basis for "improvement" in his *An*

*Associate Professor, Department of History, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (Seoul)

1) David Lyons, *In the Interest of the Governed: A Study in Bentham's Philosophy of Utility and Law* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 22-23.

2) David Baumgardt, *Bentham and the Ethics of Today* (Princeton, 1952), pp. 63ff.

Introduction to the Principle of Morals and Legislation (1789). He thought that laws which were based on scientific principle would, in the final analysis, be more effective in reforming society than those which were not.

Bentham hated revolutions almost instinctively, because they were the work of passion. Revolutions were not ascribable to the purely intellectual movement alone.³⁾ Bentham was hostile to the principles of the French Revolution: the ideas of natural rights and the social contract theory. He criticized these theories because they served only as catchwords in politics.⁴⁾ In the name of utility, he refuted the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen." He denied flatly that man had any natural rights, because it was law and law alone that was the source of rights.⁵⁾ He hated the abstract character of the "rights of man" theory. Rights existed only by virtue of law; they did not precede society, but were produced by it. He referred to natural rights as "simple nonsense; natural imprescriptable rights, rhetorical nonsense—nonsense upon stilts."⁶⁾ What rights a man had were, according to Bentham, not natural but granted or allowed man by law. Bentham allowed no place for natural rights that stood outside the law. As the goodness of the law itself was based on its utility, the theory of natural rights was replaced by the theory of utility.⁷⁾

Bentham also rejected the theory that man had a political obligation to a social contract. To Bentham, there was no evidence that such a contract ever existed, and, in addition, the the end of such a contract was nonetheless a utility. The sole justification of government was not contract but the satisfaction of human needs.⁸⁾ How are the people to know whether the governor has broken his contract? The only test that would enable him to distinguish between trivial and serious illegality was the test of utility.

Bentham in his first published work, *A Fragment on Government* (1776), attacked the Whig notion of a social contract. He argued that the state was based, not on consent, but on the habit of obedience. The state existed because of its obvious utility. William Blackstone in his writing had tried to base his defense of the British Constitution on the concept of a social contract. Bentham's attack on Blackstone's view of the contractual origin of government was based on his exasperation with tradition, his desire for efficiency, and his faith in reason.⁹⁾ Bentham denied every form of the contract theory, regardless of whether the contract

3) Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians* (New York, 1950), p. 194.

4) John Stuart Mill, "On Bentham (1838)," *Jeremy Bentham: Ten Critical Essays*, ed. by Bhikhu Parekh (London, 1974), p. 8.

5) Jeremy Bentham, *The Theory of Legislation*, ed. by C. K. Ogden (London, 1931), p. 84.

6) *Ibid.*

7) W. L. Davidson, *Political Thought in England: the Utilitarians from Bentham to Mill* (London, 1947), p. 47.

8) Dwight Waldo, *The Administrative State* (New York, 1948), p. 77.

9) John Bowle, *Politics and Opinion in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1954), p. 63; Baumgardt, *Bentham and the Ethics of Today*, p. 63.

was thought to exist between the governor and the governed or among the governed.

The starting point of Bentham's political theory was his conviction that there was a need for extensive reforms in English law and judicial procedure. English law, in fact, had grown rather than been made. The Tories praised the English law as a natural growth in accordance with divine providence. Bentham was against this tradition of common law. He thought that statute law must be supreme and that a popularly responsible parliament must be entirely free to legislate. He did not agree that common or judge-made law was supreme.

Bentham's opposition to the common law tradition reveals his rational individualism. According to him, the community was simply a fictitious body, and the public interest was an "abstract term" covering the mass of individual interests.¹⁰ Individual interests were the only real interests, and he argued that "the interest of the community then is . . . the sum of the interests of the several members who composed it."¹¹ In other words, the interest of the community was an aggregate of particular interests, even though in times of "extraordinary public danger," such as war, individuals would develop a "social interest stronger than the interests peculiar to themselves."¹² Therefore, the ultimate reason why men submitted to the requirements of law and government was not that they or their ancestors had promised to do so but that it was in their interest to do so.

The principle of utility was designed to make the individual in every society a free and responsible agent, leading a life of conscious deliberation and choice. In this sense, utilitarianism was a movement for individualism, seeking to liberate the individual from the slavery of custom. This individualistic aspect of utilitarianism, therefore, can be easily understood by its claim for having caused the breakdown of aristocratic tradition of English society. When Bentham opposed the unreasonable tradition of Tory conservatives, his arguments often paralleled those of Whig liberals. But he was not a liberal in the Whig sense when he rejected their theories of natural rights and of a social contract.

The foundation of legislative utilitarianism was the belief that the end of human existence was the attainment of happiness or, in other words, faith in the principle of utility and the assurance that the aim of law was the promotion of human happiness.¹³ In *The Theory of Legislation* (1802), Bentham argued that once society accepted the principle of utility, utility could be achieved by the simple expedient of legislating it into being. Legislation

10) Jeremy Bentham, *The Works*, ed. by John Bowring (11 vols.; Reprinted ed., New York, 1962), I, "Principles of the Civil Code," 321.

11) *Works*, I, "An Introduction to the Principle of Morals and Legislation," 2.

12) *Works*, IX, "Constitutional Code," 127.

13) A. V. Dicey, *Lectures upon the Relation between Law and Public Opinion in England during the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1905), p. 142.

was a science based on a rational understanding of the characteristics of human nature. Therefore, "all social phenomena were reducible to laws."¹⁴ Bentham believed that legislation was merely the process of shaping some fundamental rules so as to fit the superficial differences of a particular nation. He believed that the substantive requirements for all communities were the same.

Bentham adopted the theory that the conflicting egoisms of men could be harmonized only artificially by the legislators. In other words, individual interests could artificially be harmonized by legislation, inflicted by the sovereign employing the felicific calculus of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Until men were fully educated and until they had sufficiently disciplined themselves to forego immediate pleasures for the sake of lasting happiness, however, a "severe schoolmaster" was necessary in the form of law. For Bentham, it also meant that human legislators must assist men to avoid harmful acts by artificially weighting such acts with the pains of punishment. Therefore, the primary influence determining human character was in the first instance the legislators and their commands, i.e., the form of government and the laws. Bentham hoped to make of the legislative body a machine to grind out a new order and to create out of the laws a code of pains and pleasures so finely adjusted as to produce almost complete individual well-being and social harmony. By legislation and education he believed that the harmony of interests in society could be realized.¹⁵

Bentham believed in good government rather than in liberty. He thought that since men were fundamentally selfish, government should be benevolent and teach them to be aware of their own best interests. Bentham questioned the logic of the assumption that the proper object of all government was to establish the most perfect liberty, arguing that government could operate only at the expense of liberty. Liberty was possible only where government exercised no discipline.¹⁶ Therefore, the end of government must be happiness and not liberty. The task of determining what constituted an abuse of liberty was left to the legislators, but, to Bentham, every law was a restriction on liberty.¹⁷ The worst government ever known was infinitely better than no government at all, because the governmental regulation of society would promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number.¹⁸

Given the necessity of government and law, the nature of the government most beneficial to the members of society was of great concern to Bentham. In explaining the origin of the state, he accepted the postulate that political society consisted essentially of governors

14) Élie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, trans. by Mary Morris (London, 1928), p. 433.

15) *Ibid.*, p. 478; Baumgardt, *Bentham*, pp. 416-428.

16) *Works*, IX, "Constitutional Code," 123.

17) *Works*, I, "Principles of the Civil Code," 301.

18) James Marshall, *Swords and Symbols, the Technique of Sovereignty* (New York, 1939), p. 16.

and subjects to the governor's commands or laws.¹⁹⁾ Bentham stated that:

When a number of persons (whom we may style *subjects*) are supposed to be in the *habit* of paying *obedience* to a person, or an assemblage of persons, of a known and certain description (whom we may call *governor* or *governors*), such persons together (*subjects* and *governors*) are said to be in a state of political society.²⁰⁾

What makes a state is the habit of command in the few coupled with the habit of submission in the many. "Are those habits formed? He is a lawful sovereign. Is it as yet unformed? He is an usurper."²¹⁾ That is Bentham's description of a state's origin.

Bentham, along with Thomas Hobbes and John Austin, believed that from a legal point of view the sovereign authority must be absolute.²²⁾ Bentham argued that "the supreme governor's authority though not *infinite*, must unavoidably, I think *unless where limited by expressed convention*, be allowed to be indefinite."²³⁾ Bentham defined sovereignty as legally unrestricted power, saying that "by the sovereignty it means the supreme constitutive authority and the sovereignty is in the hands of the people."²⁴⁾ The first sentence of the above quotation shows the relation between sovereignty and the legislature. To Bentham, it was impossible to set predetermined limits on sovereign power, because whatever the sovereign declared to be the law was the law. He believed that there must be a single source of authority in the institutions of government, and that this must be located in the legislature. The second sentence of the above quotation also, however, reveals his ideas on the relation between sovereignty and the people. Bentham accepted the complete legal sovereignty of parliament. He believed that ultimate political sovereignty should be in the people; only then can the interest of government be made to coincide with the general interest. The *Constitutional Code* states the point quite clearly: "the hands in which the supreme legislative power is lodged ought to be located by the great body of the people."²⁵⁾ In short, Bentham tried to clarify the triangular relationship between sovereignty, the people, and law. Law is the expression of the sovereignty of the people.

Once through the device of representative democracy the commands of the legislators or the laws are identified with the people's will, the executive and judiciary become nothing more than creatures to carry them into effect.²⁶⁾ In other words, if Bentham's doctrine of the sovereignty of the legislature is accepted, the independence of the judiciary is questioned.

19) *Works*, I, "A Fragment on Government," 261-62.

20) *Ibid.*, p. 263.

21) Mary Peter Mack, *Jeremy Bentham, an Odyssey of Ideas, 1748-1792* (London, 1962), p. 179.

22) Marshall, *Swords and Symbols*, p. 6.

23) *Works*, I, "A Fragment on Government," 288.

24) *Works*, IX, "Constitutional Code," 96.

25) *Ibid.*, p. 114.

26) Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1959), p. 72.

Bentham denied that any limits could be set on the authority of the supreme body (the legislature) and opposed the grant to judges of authority to make or unmake law, directly or indirectly.²⁷⁾ Bentham did not believe that the jury system could play the part of an omniscient providence and by itself harmonize all interests. The fundamental theme of the *Constitutional Code* was that the legislature must be omnipotent: it should be subject to no restrictions on the topics on which it could legislate.²⁸⁾ Bentham declared his hostility to any idea of a balance or a separation of powers.²⁹⁾ This is the principle of omnicompetence. For Bentham sovereignty was single and indivisible; its instrument was law speaking the language of commands. Eric Stokes illustrates it in these words: "Bentham's problem was to make Hobbes's Leviathan the slave of the demos."³⁰⁾

In the *Constitutional Code* Bentham transferred the sovereignty from the king to the people. It meant the depersonalization of sovereignty. However, the attributes of absoluteness in sovereignty remain although its location was altered. The sovereignty of the people, the absolute powers of the majority, is as arbitrary in law and can be as harmful in its consequences as the sovereignty of the monarch or the absolute power of a single man. To prevent this arbitrariness Bentham's idea of constitutional law was formulated. Sovereignty is omnipotent, and yet it can be manufactured by a voluntary arrangement among the individual members of society. The arrangement is the constitutional law, which represents the ultimate source of all political power and supplies the motives for obedience.³¹⁾

Immediately following the discussion of the origins of the state in the *Constitutional Code*, Bentham proposed the spirit of constitutionalism, the foundation of the modern administrative state. Even though Bentham viewed government as "one vast evil" under the general doctrine that "every where the whole official establishment is a corruptive establishment,"³²⁾ he saw in government an instrument for active social innovation. The central government alone could maintain the continual advance of rationalism, knowledge, and science and, at the same time, eradicate the evils and abuses of industrial England. Bentham saw the need for a strong, benevolent government and an efficient, uniform administration, for which he had established his constitutional scheme. This administrative machine would transform into concrete practical arrangements the cloudy, metaphysical notion of the general will expounded by the French revolutionaries. Of all the areas needing the attention of the centralized, administrative state none was more pressing than educa-

27) *Works*, IX, "Constitutional Code," 411-412.

28) *Ibid.*, p. 430.

29) Stokes, *The English Utilitarians*, p. 72.

30) *Ibid.*

31) Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, II, 303.

32) *Works*, IX, "Constitutional Code," 24, 67.

tion.

II

In 1830 Bentham published the first volume of his *Constitutional Code* in which he outlined an elaborate scheme for a modern administrative state based on the spirit of constitutional law. Two years later he died. The *Constitutional Code* presented his final conclusions on the means for systematic reform of the old society. Bentham treated law as the fundamental instrument of government. He tried to establish in the legislature a monopoly of legislative activity and authority, to subordinate administrative activity to the legislature, to define and limit the authority and discretion of administrators, including the monarch, under the constitutional law, and to contribute to the creation of a complete code of law.³³⁾

One very significant aspect of his *Constitutional Code* was Bentham's insistence on the need for a large, central administration staffed by paid and trained experts chosen by examination. Bentham wanted the administrative state to be active and effective; only the centralized administration could reconcile individual liberty with the collective welfare and maintain order and justice in social affairs.³⁴⁾ For over a century, Locke's conception of government as an institution needed to secure and to maintain private property had been unquestioned. Now, Bentham argued that the true duty of government was not to secure property but to achieve the greatest good of the greatest number.³⁵⁾ He assumed the necessity of change.

Bentham's elaborate scheme of central administration shows how far he had reached ahead of his times toward the modern conception of social service. As Dwight Waldo argues, the modern administrative state is in a sense a collectivist society.³⁶⁾ In the *Constitutional Code*, Bentham demanded manhood suffrage, the secret ballot, and a single-chamber legislature. The *Code* gave ample powers to thirteen ministers who were to preside over an extensive central bureaucracy. Trained judges, a simple rule of evidence, and a codified law would guarantee justice. Bentham cried for public, secular education—replacing prejudicial aristocratic and religious education, as we shall see later—and effective police, good roads, and efficient poor relief.³⁷⁾

Bentham's blueprint for an administrative state was translated into the reality of the

33) L. J. Hume, "Jeremy Bentham and the Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government," *Historical Journal*, 4 (1967), 375.

34) *Works*, IX, "Constitutional Code," 241.

35) C. R. Lovell, *English Constitutional and Legal History* (New York, 1962), p. 447.

36) Waldo, *Administrative State*, p. 66.

37) David Roberts, *Victorian Origins of the British Welfare State* (New Haven, 1960), p. 30.

mid-Victorian bureaucracy. Bentham had a great impact on the intellectual climate of the reform era. The passing of the Reform Act in 1832 should be understood as a first step toward the realization of the teaching of Bentham. The Factory Act of 1833 and the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 were greatly influenced by the arguments of Edwin Chadwick, who was one of the most stubbornly orthodox disciples of Bentham. As a Victorian bureaucrat, Chadwick worked "with his insistent finger in every interventionist pie from Poor Law, factory acts, and police to the century-long battle over public responsibility for public health."³⁸⁾ Therefore, it is not strange that scholars have located the origins of the welfare state in the period 1832-54³⁹⁾ or argued that "in the middle quarters of the nineteenth century, the collectivist system of the present day began to take its shape."⁴⁰⁾

Bentham's principle of utility was a consistent theme in the antagonism directed against the medieval aristocracy, in the individualism to free the people from prejudice and tradition, and in the legislative collectivism of the modern administrative state. Dicey's remark that "around the time between 1860 and 1900, faith in laissez-faire suffered an eclipse; hence the principle of utility became an argument in favor, not of individual freedom, but of absolutism of state; state by collective sovereignty"⁴¹⁾ can be understood according to this interpretation. Beatrice Webb pointed out that there was a close interrelationship between the Benthamites and latter-day Fabians.⁴²⁾ Dicey made the same point, stating that "English collectivists have inherited from their utilitarian predecessors a legislative doctrine, a legislative instrument, and a legislative tendency preeminently suited for the carrying out of socialist experiments."⁴³⁾

Bentham's emphasis on speed and efficiency in the building of a central administration has led to charges of authoritarianism. One of his major critics in this regard was Halévy. Halévy's chief point was to stress the authoritarian element in Bentham's constitutional and legal thought, arguing that "Bentham had never been a liberal; always impatient of philanthropic reforms, he merely passed from a monarchic authoritarianism to a democratic authoritarianism, without pausing at the intermediary position, which is the position of Anglo-Saxon liberalism."⁴⁴⁾ The phrase "democratic authoritarianism" seems improper

38) Brebner, "Laissez-Faire and State Intervention," *The Journal of Economic History*, VIII (1948) p. 64; See also S. E. Finer, *Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick* (London, 1952, reprinted 1970), pp. 129-35.

39) David Roberts, "Jeremy Bentham and Victorian Administrative State," *Victorian Studies*, II (March 1959), p. 194.

40) Oliver MacDonagh, "The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal," *Historical Journal*, I (1958), 15.

41) Dicey, *Law and Public Opinion*, p. 310.

42) Beatrice Webb, *Our Partnership* (New York, 1948), p. 210; See also Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880* (London, 1969), pp. 324-25.

43) Dicey, *Law and Public Opinion*, p. 310.

44) Halévy, *Philosophic Radicalism*, pp. 375-76.

for an understanding of Bentham's rationalism. Bentham's attachment to calculation and his pursuit of scientism were beyond the scope of authoritarianism, which relied on authority rather than on rationality for its power source. Bentham was a political and legal scientist who searched for the formulation of a collective bureaucracy. Bentham was once regarded as one of the founders of a philosophy which became known as liberalism. Later socialists described it as "bourgeois ideology." The confusion as to whether Bentham's ideas were socialistic or liberal was caused by the fact that both ideologies occupied the same ground of rationalism and individual enlightenment.

Bentham never ignored the importance of the public education of the individual members of society. He actually regarded education as an essential prerequisite of building a constitutional state. His proposal to create an education ministry in the central administration was aimed at achieving the goal of public enlightenment.

When Bentham made this proposal, however, few Englishmen believed in a national system of education. The great majority argued that the state had no responsibility for the instruction of its individual members. Some prominent figures disagreed, however. William Blackstone, who defended the traditional English constitution in opposition to Bentham, expressed in 1765 the hope that all countries would turn their attention to the enlightenment of the masses and, as a preliminary measure, he insisted upon compulsory schooling.⁴⁵⁾ Adam Smith in 1776 asserted boldly that the intellectual, spiritual, and physical condition of the people was beginning rapidly to degenerate and that it would continue to do so unless the state itself devised an adequate means of protection. Smith's suggestion that a system of compulsory, if not free, education be introduced for the benefit of the ignorant was based on his firm belief in human progress by education.⁴⁶⁾ But their prophetic cries were not accepted by their contemporaries. During the Napoleonic wars, on the continent a crucial period in the history of the nation state, Britain never seriously considered a state role in education.⁴⁷⁾

The major hindrance to the erection of a state system of education was the fear that it would destroy civil and religious liberty and the established order. Conservative opinion on education was strongly supported by most leaders of the Church of England. They believed that it was safe and desirable for the government and the Church to let the people remain in the state of ignorance in which nature had originally placed them. The Church

45) William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Oxford, 1765; reprinted in 1966), I, 450.

46) Adam Smith, *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. by Ernest Berfort Bax (2 vols., London, 1913), II, 301-305; H. C. Barnard, *A Short History of English Education, 1760-1944* (London, 1947), pp. 53-54.

47) Hugh Pollard, *Pioneers of Popular Education, 1760-1850* (London, 1956), p. 144; See also J. W. Adamson, *English Education, 1789-1902* (Reprinted ed., Cambridge, 1964), pp. 96-121.

of England claimed the sole responsibility for the moral instruction of all the people. The Sunday Schools, in which children were taught to read the Bible, were an early attempt to spread religious instruction among the poor. Elementary education in Britain was in the hands of religious societies. There was no genuine teaching, no conception of the processes of education. The motive of those societies was "a mixture of pure charity, a desire to relieve misery and ignorance, and a fear of the possible dangers of an increasingly large and illiterate urban population."⁴⁸⁾

The British government had no administrative power to meet social needs. The progress of industrialism brought about the problem of social cohesion; increased social mobility, a marked increase in population, unemployment, the absence of formal education, and the increase in specialized occupations, skills, and knowledge. Actually, the growth of manufacturing was accompanied by a decline in popular education even in Scotland, where the educational system was in fact better than anywhere in England.⁴⁹⁾ In 1796 William Pitt proposed to build schools of industry in every parish, but nothing of the kind was done.⁵⁰⁾

The elder Robert Peel in 1802 produced legislation concerned with the education of the children of the working classes. The Health and Morals of Apprentices Act provided for the teaching of apprentices during the working day and at least one hour on Sunday.⁵¹⁾ However, in 1806 an estimated 2,000,000 children in England and Wales received no education of any kind.⁵²⁾ It was said in 1810 that 75 percent of the agricultural laborers were unable to read and that one person in every seven was receiving parish relief. Malthus proclaimed that pauperism could be rooted out only if the poor classes were taught to exercise moral control, that illiteracy could be eliminated if the state accepted the responsibility of instructing all its citizens, and that the welfare of the greatest percentage of the population could effectively be secured if political economy was introduced into elementary education. He lamented the state of education, stating that "it is surely a great national disgrace that the education of the lower classes in England should be left entirely to a few Sunday Schools, supported by a subscription from individuals, who can give to the course of instruction in them any kind of bias which they please."⁵³⁾ This was the back-

48) Llewellyn Woodward, *Age of Reform, 1815-1870* (2nd edition, Oxford, 1962), p. 477. For English education before the industrial revolution see W. H. G. Armytage, *Four Hundred Years of English Education* (2nd ed., Cambridge, 1970), pp. 1-66 and James Murphy, *Church, State, and Schools in Britain, 1800-1970* (London, 1971), pp. 1-25.

49) Élie Halévy, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1949-52), I, 256.

50) Adamson, *English Education*, p. 20.

51) Woodward, *The Age of Reform*, p. 11.

52) Patrick Colquhoun, *A Treatise on Indigence; Exhibiting a General View of the National Resources for Productive Labour; With Propositions of Ameliorating the Condition of the Poor, and Improving the Moral Habits and Increasing the Comforts of the Labouring People . . .* (London, 1806), p. 142.

53) Robert Malthus, *Essays on the Principles of Population* (London, 1817), III, 203-05.

ground of the Benthamite movement for educational reform.

Compared to other reformers, the Benthamite interest in the establishment of a national education system is best understood in the broad context of Bentham's prophetic idea of constructing a modern administrative state. The writing of Bentham was not a philosophical justification of things as they were but a revolutionary demand for the reconstruction of things as they ought to be. What the Benthamites criticized when discussing education was the system which had existed before the industrialization of Britain. This system had been operated for very limited and inherently conservative ends. English education in its pre-industrial setting performed a homogenizing function only for the new entrants into the elite group ordained and destined to govern and hold power. Elementary education, if provided at all for the masses, was promoted by the ruling classes for humanistic reasons, and viewed mainly as a tool for sustaining social balance and social responsibility.⁵⁴⁾ The educational system of the modern state with its provisions for the education by the central government, universal and compulsory education, emphasis on education in science and technology, and the neutralization of religious influences was the "ought to be" for Benthamites. The Benthamite principle of education was to be found in modern educational systems which attempt to provide vast social and cultural changes and to extend the homogenizing function to the masses.

Bentham and his school had a wide definition of education, meaning a total environmental influence. While Bentham was active as an uncompromising advocate of political utilitarianism, demanding that all governments should be judged by the test of utility, James Mill's interest in the philosophy of utilitarianism really started when he was engaged in writing the article on education for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Mill regarded education as much more than formal schooling. Because of this he developed his concept of social and political education, the education of society and the state. He believed that a bad society and a bad government could pervert the characters of its members by rewarding bad instead of good qualities. This was why the Benthamites emphasized the educational aspect of constitutional changes and parliamentary reform.⁵⁵⁾

The Benthamite belief that evil was social rather than individual, a disease and corruption of the body politic and not a fall of the single soul, was fundamental to the development of the idea of the modern administrative state. James Mill envisaged educational change as an essential aspect of a wider social transformation. He saw that the aim of conventional education, which was basically to train an elite to rule the ignorant masses, was no longer

54) Manuel Zymelman, "Labor, Education and Development," *Education in National Development*, ed. by Don Adams (London, 1971), p. 99.

55) W. H. Burston, *James Mill on Philosophy and Education* (London, 1973), pp. 198-227.

valid. He agreed with Bentham that education should be broadened to include the masses on the assumption that the most neglected classes must become the principal object of care. Mill asserted that "the proper education of this portion of the people is therefore of the greatest possible importance to the well-being of the state."⁵⁶ The task of educating the masses necessarily fell to the state. "The less parents are able to discharge this duty, the more necessary it is for government to fulfill it."⁵⁷

The Benthamite principle of education was that the individual character can by education be molded to any desired pattern. It represented the environmental theory of educational psychology: all human character is formed by circumstances through the universal principle of association. Consequently, it is unlimitedly possible to improve the moral and intellectual condition of mankind by education.⁵⁸ In other words, education properly conducted was capable of almost anything, and society had therefore in its own hands the power of creating the social material to make possible its ideal of social justice. The significance of the mechanistic conception of human psychology held by the Benthamites was that it introduced the critical, unimaginative, and unemotional outlook on life to their contemporaries.

As educationists the Benthamite reformers greatly worried about the social disintegration, allegedly caused by aristocratic pride, which was found in all ranks of London society. They observed that "this spirit [aristocratic pride] not only separates gentlemen from trademen but the latter have also their classes & divisions."⁵⁹ James Mill himself, according to his son, considered vanity or self-conceit as the enemy of all students. "He kept me, with extense vigilance, out of the way of hearing myself praised."⁶⁰

The study of the problems of public education which Bentham had earlier made in collaboration with James Mill confirmed their anti-clericalism. As a theorist of social reform, Bentham rejected the current religion for moral rather than for metaphysical reasons. "What is called religion, occupies a principal place" among the causes of most human evils.⁶¹ By the beginning of the nineteenth century society had become much more secular in outlook. The industrial revolution and the requirements of commerce and science were creating a need for social studies far beyond the purview of the clergy. The Benthamites believed that insignificant differences in religious belief led to disaffection and civil strife. James Mill condemned the alliance of the Church of England and the aristo-

56) James Mill, "Edinburgh Review," *Westminster Review*, I (January 1824), 206ff.

57) Bentham, *Works*, I, "Principles of Penal Law," 570.

58) John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (London, 1873), p. 75.

59) Samuel Hanson to Francis Place, [n.d.], Place Papers, British Museum, Add. MSS, 35144, f. 392.

60) J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 23.

61) Bentham, *Works*, I, "A Fragment on Government," 81.

cracy as survivals of medievalism.⁶²⁾

Because Benthamites believed that controversies over religious belief were endless and absurd, their basic attitude toward religion was “neither to attack, nor to affect religion, but to ignore it.”⁶³⁾ In practice they found it expedient not to provoke any more hostility than was absolutely unavoidable. However, Bentham could not refrain from a series of criticisms of religious belief. He estimated the value of religion from the point of view of utility, as distinct from the point of view of truth, since he was convinced that nothing could be known concerning the origins of things. The Benthamites regarded religion as not simply a mental delusion but as a great moral evil, because Christian morality continued to stress blind tradition under the name of a religious creed.

To the Benthamites science and technology were integral parts of education. The emphasis on science and technology was designed to meet the requirements of the contemporary society. Bentham accepted the vocational principle of education, not in the sense of a narrow specialized training, but by advocating a general survey and understanding of science and technology as the basis for a future choice of occupation. Classical teaching was suppressed, and scientific teaching was justified by its utility.⁶⁴⁾

The principle of state interference in popular education was expressed to the public when Samuel Whitbread introduced his Parochial Schools Bill in the House of Commons in 1807, the first attempt to realize the Benthamite idea of national education. The principles of the bill were the nationalization of education by means of administrative aid from the central government to local parish schools and the freeing of popular education from church influence. Benthamite ideas were thus brought into prominence, and the resulting educational controversies would endure for over a century.

62) Burston, *James Mill*, p. 58.

63) Alfred William Benn, *The History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1906), I, 297.

64) *Works*, VIII, “Chrestomathia,” 18, 24.