



# Western Civilization from 1650 to the Present

Dr. Edrene S. McKay ■ (479) 855-6836 ■ Email: esm@cox-internet.com

## TOPIC 9.1. UTOPIAN SOCIALISM

Supplement to Chambers, *The Western Experience*, Chapter 23: Learning to Live with Change, pp. 814-830.

<p><b>EARLY SOCIALISM</b></p>	<p>The early SOCIALISTS generally applauded the new productive capacity of industrialism. They denied, however, that the free market could adequately produce and distribute goods the way the classical economists claimed. The socialists saw these results arising from an unregulated industrial economy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Mismanagement</li> <li>■ Low wages</li> <li>■ Maldistribution of goods</li> <li>■ Suffering</li> </ul> <p>They thought that human society should be organized as a community rather than merely as a conglomerate of selfish individuals.</p>
<p><b>UTOPIAN SOCIALISM</b></p>	<p>Among the earliest people to define the social question were a group of writers called the UTOPIAN SOCIALISTS by their later critics. They were considered utopian because their ideas were visionary and because they frequently advocated the creation of ideal communities. They were called socialists because they questioned the structures and values of the existing capitalistic framework.</p> <p>A significant factor in the experience of almost all these groups was the discussion and sometimes the practice of radical ideas in regard to sexuality and the family. People who might have been sympathetic to their economic concerns were profoundly unsympathetic to their views on free love and open family relationships.</p>
<p><b>Saint-Simonianism</b></p>	<p>Count Claude Henri de SAINT-SIMON (1760-1825) was the earliest of the socialist pioneers. He believed that modern society would require RATIONAL MANAGEMENT. Private wealth, property, and enterprise should be subject to an administration other than that of its owners. His ideal government would have consisted of a large board of directors organizing and coordinating the activity of individuals and groups to achieve SOCIAL HARMONY. In a sense he was the ideological father of TECHNOCRACY. Not the redistribution of wealth but its management by experts would alleviate the poverty and social dislocation of the age.</p>
<p><b>Owenism</b></p>	<p>The major British contributor to the early socialist tradition was ROBERT OWEN (1771-1858), a self-made cotton manufacturer. Owen was a firm believer in the ENVIRONMENTALIST PSYCHOLOGY of the Enlightenment. If human beings were placed in the correct surroundings, they and their character could be improved.</p> <p>Owen saw no incompatibility between creating a humane industrial environment and making a good profit. At New Lanark, he put his ideas into practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Workers were provided with good quarters.</li> <li>■ Recreational possibilities abounded and the children received an education.</li> <li>■ There were several churches, although Owen himself was a notorious freethinker on matters of religion and sex.</li> <li>■ In the factory itself, various rewards were given for good work.</li> <li>■ His plant made a fine profit.</li> </ul> <p>Visitors flocked from all over Europe to see what Owen had accomplished through enlightened management. Owen favored a reorganization of industry based on his own successful model. He envisioned a series of communities shaped like</p>

	<p>PARALLELOGRAMS in which factory and farm workers might live together and produce their goods in cooperation.</p>
<p><b>Fourierism</b></p>	<p>In the 1820s, Owen established the community of New Harmony, Indiana, in the United States. When quarrels among the members led to the community’s failure, he refused to give up his reformist causes. He returned to Britain, where he became the moving force behind the organization of the Grand National Union, an attempt to draw all British trade unions into a single body.</p> <p>CHARLES FOURIER (1772-1837) was the French intellectual counterpart of Owen. Fourier believed that the industrial order ignored the passionate side of human nature. He advocated the construction of communities, called PHALANXES, in which LIBERATED LIVING would replace the boredom and dullness of industrial existence.</p> <p>Agrarian rather than industrial production would predominate in these communities. Sexual activity would be relatively free, and marriage was to be reserved only for later life. He also urged that no person be required to perform the same kind of work for the entire day. People would be both happier and more productive if they moved from one task to another. Through his emphasis on the problem of boredom, Fourier isolated one of the key difficulties of modern economic life.</p>
<p><b>ONLINE RESOURCES</b></p>	<p>For more information on this topic, explore one or more of the following online resources:</p> <p><a href="#">Utopians and Socialists</a>: Links to principal socialist thinkers.</p> <p><a href="#">Utopian Socialism</a>: Good overview of the movement. Includes all major participants.</p> <p><a href="#">Henri de Saint-Simon</a>: Brief biography with links to his works.</p> <p><a href="#">Robert Owen</a>: Brief biography with links to his works.</p>
<p><b>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b></p>	<p>Drawing on the resources you have had an opportunity to explore (textbook, course documents, online resources, library resources), answer one or more of the following questions:</p> <p><b>What contribution did the utopian socialists make to modern economic thought?</b></p> <p><b>How did the utopian socialists differ from 19th century liberals?</b></p> <p><b>Why were the utopian socialists unsuccessful in making fundamental changes to society?</b></p>