
The Boatload of Trouble: William Maclure and Robert Owen Revisited

Charles Burgess*

No ill-fated communitarian venture has been examined or analyzed more than Robert Owen's attempt to create an ideal society at New Harmony in the 1820s. Calamitous in failure yet magnificent in legacy, New Harmony calls to mind Walt Whitman's "Vivas to those who have fail'd!" For more than a century and a half, historians, antiquarians, and not a few latter-day utopians have conducted countless postmortem inquiries into Owen's short lived venture on the banks of the Wabash. Many shortcomings in Owen's scheme and strategy are familiar. The insightful observations of Arthur Bestor, fleshed out further by many fellow historians, identify a host of crippling managerial miscues committed by Owen. As Bestor convincingly noted, "Each of Owen's personal mistakes had been sufficient in itself to wreck the experiment." Which mistake was the most serious? In response to this question Bestor posed a pointed rhetorical query of his own: "In a firing squad, if all the guns are loaded, which man performs the execution?"¹

In sharp contrast to his serious managerial difficulties, however, Owen has also been credited with some flashes of brilliance. By most accounts, no flash outshone his success in persuading William Maclure to join forces with him at New Harmony. In this instance, again as Bestor put it, Owen "achieved his most significant triumph in America."² Bestor's claim makes eminent sense from the perspective of western educational history. Indeed, when seen from this angle of vision, the Owen-Maclure alliance merits lasting triumphal acknowledgement. But when considered from the perspective of Owen's immediate communitarian plans, it was nothing less than a disastrous marriage. The alliance may have been Owen's most grievous miscalculation.

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¹Arthur E. Bestor, *Backwoods Utopias: The Sectarian and Owenite Phases of Communitarian Socialism in America, 1663-1829* (Philadelphia, 1950), 227, 228.

²*Ibid.*, 134.

What brought these two reformers together? What made them think they could work profitably as a team? Several apparent similarities could have formed the basis of mutual attraction. Here were two men, each brilliant in his own right, each dedicated to the ideals of social cooperation, meliorism, and education.

Robert Owen, for example, had formulated a generally consistent theory of ideal community life that rested upon the plinth of education. Since 1800, when Owen became the manager of the cotton mills—and village life—of New Lanark, Scotland, he had gained an international reputation as an educational and social reformer. Owen had in fact become a social reformer because of the “logic of his educational doctrine.”³ Upon the strength of his plan for the schooling of New Harmony children he rested his hopes for the long range success of his Indiana experiment. He came to New Harmony strong in the faith that he could so control “external circumstances” as to shape every child according to certain general specifications for cooperative enterprise in an ideal community. Owen came believing his program of education could be wielded “with the certainty of a law of nature.”⁴ And he also came believing that William Maclure and he shared compatible social and educational doctrines.

Owen was greatly impressed with Maclure’s brilliant reputation. Since retiring at the turn of the century from lucrative years in business and settling in Philadelphia, Maclure had won wide acclaim as a leading scientist, philanthropist, and patron of social reform through Pestalozzian education.⁵ Maclure was more than an eminent pioneering geologist, the first president of the American Geological Society, and president of the Academy of Natural Sciences. He was also an astute student of Johann Pestalozzi’s educational theories and practices, a builder of an experimental school-centered community in Spain, and a patron of such Pestalozzian teachers as Joseph Neef and Marie Duclos Fretageot. And Owen rightly knew Maclure to be first and foremost an educational reformer.

But it required admirable powers of persuasion for Owen to convince Maclure to join in the utopian venture at New Harmony, for Maclure still nursed wounds from an ill-fated venture of his own. In 1820, eager to test his own ideas of social reform through education, Maclure had put aside his scientific and educational activities

³Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., ed., *Education and Reform at New Harmony: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot* (Indiana Historical Society Publications, Vol. XV; Indianapolis, 1948), 292.

⁴Robert Owen, *Essays on the Formation of the Human Character* (London, 1840), 6. The essays were first published in 1812.

⁵Some sources put the date of Maclure’s “retirement” in America at 1799. See J. Percy Moore, “William Maclure—Scientist and Humanitarian,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, XCI (1947), 236; and Charles Burgess, “William Maclure and Education for a Good Society,” *History of Education Quarterly*, III (June, 1963), 58-76.

in the United States to launch an experiment in Spain. There he had purchased a ten-thousand acre tract near Alicante and embarked on an ambitious schooling venture based on his faith in education as the key to the Good Society. But turmoil in Spain gave him little opportunity to test his ideas. In the midst of national insurrections, marauding guerrilla bands, monotonous uncertainty about the durability of the Cortes, and local threats to reestablish the terrors of the Inquisition, Maclure's educational venture sputtered fitfully, and in 1824, after nearly four years of uphill struggles, it ended abruptly with the confiscation of Maclure's property.⁶ Maclure found refuge in America, his adopted land. There, as he licked his wounds, he grew wary. But he kept a firm grip on his ideals and remained a staunch advocate of educational reform.

It was in the capacity of educational reformer that Owen particularly wanted Maclure. Owen sensed correctly that through their partnership Maclure's connections in the international community of scholars would attract a distinguished faculty to New Harmony. Out of their discussions grew a proposal to divide the communitarian labors. Owen would manage the general community; Maclure would supervise the educational program. Maclure seemed relieved at the prospect of fixing his energies exclusively on educational matters. This was not to be a return to Old World Spain. Not only did Maclure draw "courage" from Owen's successes "against a powerfull [*sic*] combination of both church and state," he also fervently believed "the field of moral experiment in the United States to be the finest in the Globe."⁷ Maclure's opposition softened and he agreed to forge an alliance. He further delighted Owen by agreeing to invest money of his own in the New Harmony venture and to accept responsibility for the proposed scholarly and educational programs. In 1825, with one disastrous investment of time, energy, and money barely behind him, Maclure found himself organizing a new educational crusade.

From the outset, Maclure's prestige and infectious enthusiasm attracted famous scientists to New Harmony—Thomas Say, Gerard Troost, and Charles-Alexandre Lesueur among them. He also enlisted such Pestalozzian specialists as Joseph Neef, Marie Duclos Fretegeot, and Phiquepal d'Arusmont and ordered a "vast collection" of books and scientific instruments to be shipped from New Orleans. In 1826, the famous "Boatload of Knowledge" transported Maclure's paraphernalia, friends, and associates down the Ohio to the banks of the Wabash.⁸ Word of this stunning educational migration spread

⁶Alberto Gil Novales, *William Maclure in Spain*, trans. Alonso Carnicer (Madrid, 1981). The Cortes, a parliamentary assembly, supported the Constitution of 1812 and limited royal power. The assembly strove fitfully for legitimacy until 1823 when Ferdinand became an absolute monarch.

⁷Bestor, *Education and Reform*, 207.

⁸For an instructive account of the "Boatload of Knowledge," see Donald E. Pitzer, "The Original Boatload of Knowledge Down the Ohio River: William Maclure's and



FRANCES TROLLOPE, MARY CARROLL,
WILLIAM MACLURE, AND
FRANCES WRIGHT IN MARY CARROLL'S
NEW ORLEANS HAT SHOP

Reproduced from Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London, 1832), opposite page 12.

rapidly. New Harmony was indeed gaining a reputation as the coming site of “the best library and the best School in the United States.”⁹

But the glow of expectation soon darkened into the gloom of disappointment. Once in New Harmony Owen quickly became unhappy with the pedagogical practices of Maclure and his colleagues. He launched a determined attempt to gain control of the educational enterprise that rightfully regarded Maclure as its director. Owen’s preferred pedagogical principles failed to win the support of Maclure, Neef, and, as it developed, of his own sons. Bitter debates ensued with disastrous abandon over several central pedagogical issues that neither disputant had fully anticipated when they joined forces.¹⁰

In 1825 Owen handed Maclure the educational reins in New Harmony, believing that he and Maclure were in essential agreement on pedagogical matters. Both accepted the argument that a thoroughgoing social reconstruction depended upon an enlightened pedagogy. They shared a belief in the power of environment. For both men all human traits were, and must always be, necessary results of conditions in the physical world. But while both partners pursued the same general objectives, they approached them from vastly different directions. Owen framed his objective as a rigid syllogism in support of welfare corporatism. If human character is everywhere imposed upon the individual by external forces, and if society is the creator of those forces, then society bears full responsibility for the conduct and attitudes of its members. And the demands of society dictate the general character to be stamped on each of its members.

Robert Owen’s Transfer of Science and Education to the Midwest, 1825–1826,” *Ohio Journal of Science*, LXXXIX (December, 1989), 128–42.

⁹Harlow Lindley, ed., *Indiana as Seen By Early Travelers*, (*Indiana Historical Collections*, Vol. III; Indianapolis, 1916), 411.

¹⁰Robert Owen, *Life of Robert Owen* (1857; New York, 1920), xii; Bestor, *Education and Reform*, 362, 367f., 385, 387f., 394f.; Will S. Monroe, *History of the Pestalozzian Movement in the United States* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1907), 122; Paul Brown, *Twelve Months in New Harmony* (Cincinnati, 1827), 100–16 *passim*.

Fixed firmly in Owen's mind, this argument became the goal, and education became the "most important" vehicle, for social reconstruction.¹¹

Owen wanted to establish at New Harmony an exemplary school of communal education to showcase his "new view" of community life in the New World. In America he sought to replace the Jeffersonian suspicion of a strong central government with his own utilitarian credo: that government is best which defines and provides the greatest happiness for the greater number. Happiness grew out of effective relations between the paternal leader and a cooperative, productive populace.

Ever the entrepreneur, Owen believed that the successful industrialist knew best how to provide the greatest happiness in the social setting. While praising the ideas of "mental independence" and individual rights, Owen maintained that the needs of community were paramount. When individual and community inevitably collided, Owen's community emerged unscathed; the individual invariably found the limits of "mental independence" and individual rights determined by community interests. As historians Jacob Bronowski and Bruce Mazlich observe, Owen substituted "his Captains of Industry for Plato's Philosopher Kings; he was saying that the organizational skills necessary for entrepreneurship in industry are also those needed in undertakings for the reconstruction of society."¹² The enlightened "Captain of Industry" was one who looked after the psychological, social, and physical needs of his workers. One might legitimately call Owen a seminal philosopher of corporatism, an early advocate of the "organized man" in the corporate community. Since the 1820s, those with ideas similar to Owen's have striven to pull the United States toward "a plurality of welfare communities, i.e., the corporations, rather than a single national welfare state . . ."¹³ Certainly those who looked hopefully to communitarianism as the solution to the social and economic problems of the Gilded Age often agreed that reform could succeed best under the aegis of leaders "who have at least as much ability and intelligence as is required, for instance, in the successful management of a railroad or a bank or large manufactory."¹⁴

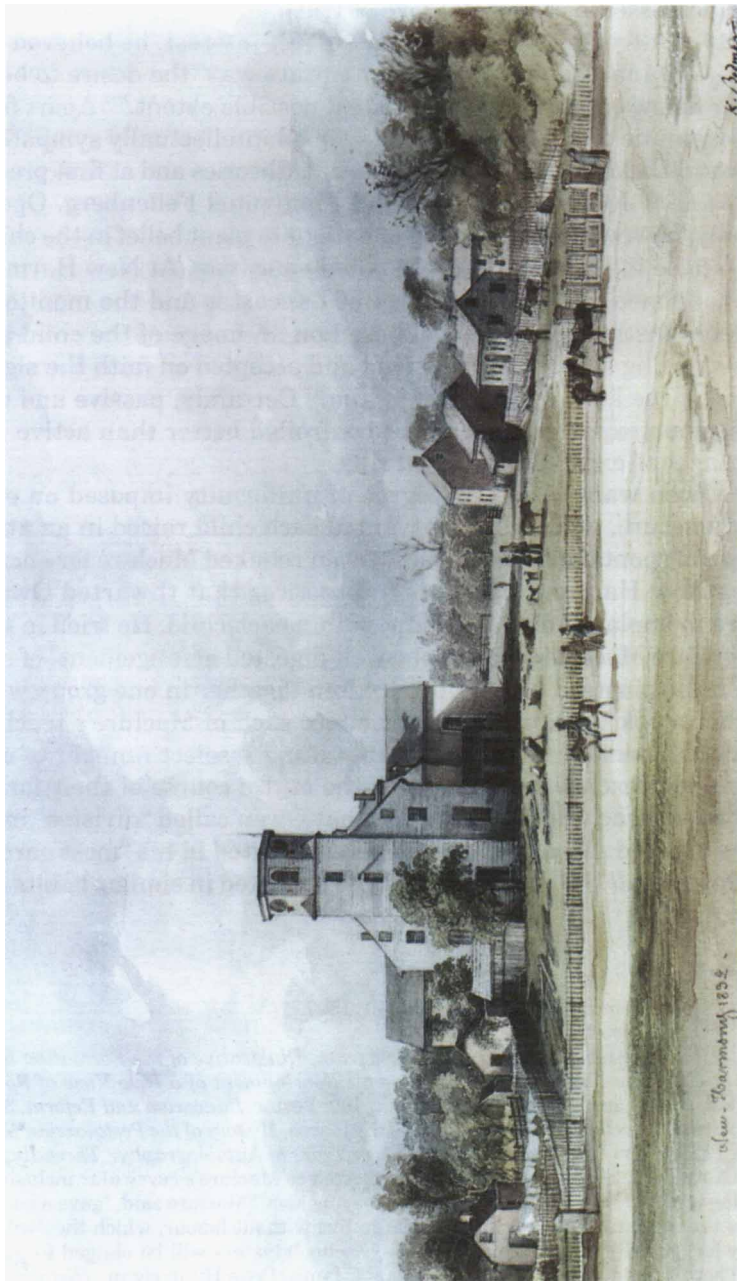
Owen represented management ideals; he wanted New Harmony children educated for a world of benevolent paternalism. The group was vastly more important to Owen than its individual members; the cooperative character acquired by the community's children more important than the creative intelligence endowed to each.

¹¹Robert Owen, *Two Discourses on a New System of Society*. . . (London, 1825), 34; see also Owen's address in the *New Harmony Gazette*, November 22, 1826.

¹²Jacob Bronowski and Bruce Mazlich, *The Western Intellectual Tradition From Leonardo to Hegel* (New York, 1960), 469, 450-71 passim.

¹³*Ibid.*, 467, 467n. See also William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (Garden City, N.Y., 1957), 8; G. D. H. Cole, *Robert Owen* (London, 1925), 105.

¹⁴William Alfred Hinds, *American Communities* (New York, 1961), 163.



VIEW OF NEW HARMONY
BY ARTIST KARL BODMER
WATERCOLOR ON PAPER,
1832; 61/4" x 103/4"

Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha,
Nebraska, Gift of the Enron
Art Foundation, and Historic
New Harmony, New Harmony,
Indiana.

Owen's view of human nature reinforced this preference. He believed original human nature to be good. Each human being, he declared, is "a delightful compound, containing the germs of unalloyed excellence" that requires but a "kindly soil and careful cultivation" to develop sound character.¹⁵

Owen beheld still other important innate dispositions: each child possessed a congenital love of truth and a remarkably strong faculty of altruism. Despite his talk of self-interest, he believed one of the "original faculties" of human nature was "the desire to benefit our fellow creatures to the greatest possible extent."¹⁶ Apart from this dramatic qualification, Owen seemed intellectually sympathetic toward Lockean and Helvetian learning theories and at first praised the work of Johann Pestalozzi and Emmanuel Fellenberg. Operationally, however, he proved too impatient to plant belief in the child's heart to be in league with these noted educators. At New Harmony he abandoned Pestalozzi in favor of Lancaster and the monitorial model of instruction—a model based on an image of the child as a passive being who quietly received and accepted on faith the significance of the knowledge given to him.¹⁷ Certainly, passive and uniform group experiences could be controlled better than active and spontaneous experiences in learning.

Owen wanted a high degree of uniformity imposed on each child's nature, while Maclure wanted each child raised in an atmosphere of spontaneity and choice. Owen rebuked Maclure for encouraging New Harmony teachers in practices that thwarted Owen's desire to implant "similar habits" within each child. He tried in vain to convince Maclure to form "one well-digested arrangement" of education. But instead of keeping children together in one group while teachers took turns giving instruction, each of Maclure's teachers followed a semi-Rousseauian plan, taking a select number of children under exclusive tutelage for the entire course of their formal education. Maclure thus brought what Owen called "divisive" influences into the school. Owen was here thwarted in his "most earnest desire, that *all* the children should be educated in similar habits and

¹⁵New Harmony Gazette, January 10, 1827.

¹⁶Owen, *Two Discourses*, 9.

¹⁷*Ibid.*; see also Robert Owen, *A Diagram, Illustrative of the Formation of the Human Character, suggested by Mr. Owen's Development of a New View of Society* (London, 1824), *passim*; Cole, *Robert Owen*, 100; Bestor, *Education and Reform*, 367f., 387f.; Brown, *Twelve Months*, 100f., 107-16; Monroe, *History of the Pestalozzian Movement*, 122; Robert Dale Owen, *Twenty-Seven Years of Autobiography: Threading My Way* (New York, 1874), 195f. Owen also objected to Maclure's curricular inclusion of farming and mechanics. "Mr. Owen in his enthusiasm," Maclure said, "gave a bad lesson to the communicants, teaching them to live without labour, which they will not easily forget." He predicted that someday "schoolmasters will be obliged to understand both farming and mechanics." Thomas James De la Hunt, comp., *History of the New Harmony Working Men's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana, Founded by William Maclure, 1838-1927* (Evansville, Ind., 1927), 27.

dispositions, and be brought up truly as members of one large family, without a single discordant feeling."¹⁸

Owen linked his concern for implanting similar attitudes and beliefs in all New Harmony children to a peculiar and unexpected antagonism to the boarding school program that Maclure preferred and initiated. By common consent among the avant garde of the early nineteenth century, boarding schools were at the cutting edge of "enlightened" education. They were widely held as vastly superior to day schools if one desired to mold children to fit some ideal type. American academies were frequently boarding schools. Philips Andover, Philips Exeter, Deerfield, and Milton come readily to mind. The Roundhill School of Joseph Green Cogswell and George Bancroft, the Quaker school Oakwood at Poughkeepsie, several Shaker schools, and Emma Willard's Troy Female Seminary had followed this principle. Pestalozzi and Fellenberg, two of the most respected "modern" educators of the era, ran internationally famous boarding schools. Indeed, Owen himself had sent his four sons—Robert Dale, William, Richard, and David Dale—to board with Fellenberg. How could Owen have been surprised or dismayed at Maclure's preference for the boarding school? Did he forget that Maclure had been master of his own boarding school in Spain and that he had encouraged Joseph Neef in boarding school ventures from Pennsylvania to Kentucky?

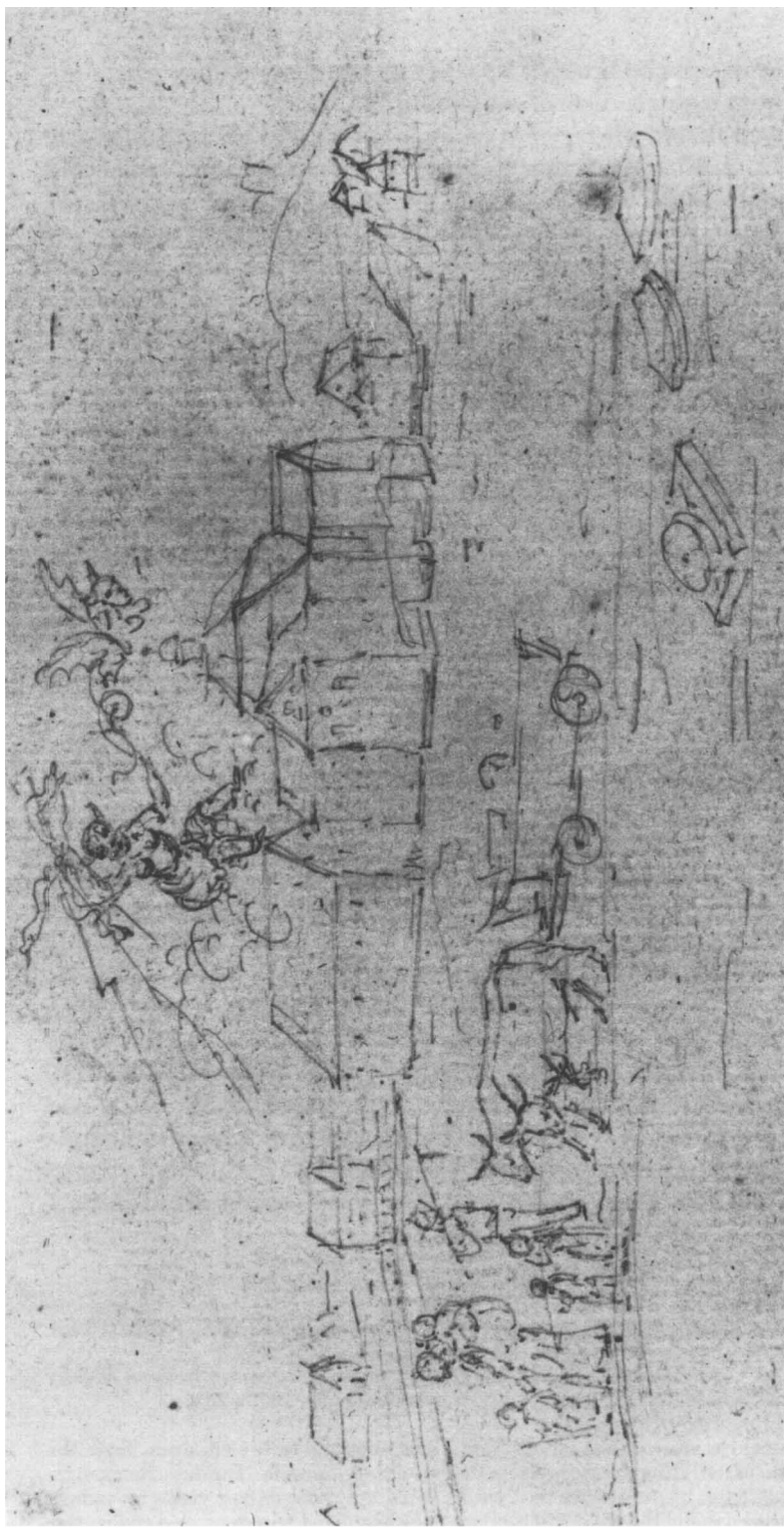
New Harmony's adults were not transplanted, dutiful New Lanarkians. They came representing a hodgepodge of values. Certainly some parents strongly objected to the boarding school arrangement.¹⁹ But by allying with them, Owen put himself in a peculiarly inconsistent position. On the one hand, Owen wanted all children to be educated in similar habits and dispositions, but on the other hand, he wanted them returned to their own homes every evening where they would "be under the eye and inspection of their parents."²⁰ Owen here trampled on one of Maclure's central requirements for sound education. Maclure built for utopia gradually, through education. Owen hoped to be recognized as the Benevolent Leader as he had been at New Lanark and thereby transform a tumultuous multitude into instant utopians. Owen was optimistic about his ability to transplant new values in older minds. Maclure was skeptical about reshaping adults' values.²¹

¹⁸From an address Owen delivered on May 6, 1827, quoted in Brown, *Twelve Months*, 100f.

¹⁹Gayle Thornbrough and Dorothy Riker, comps., *Readings in Indiana History* (*Indiana Historical Collections*, Vol. XXXVI; Indianapolis, 1956), 233.

²⁰Owen, *Two Discourses*, 34.

²¹Maclure argued that a boarding school should free the children "from the temptation of imitating the vices and passions of their parents." But here he momentarily relented in his insistence that adults could not change their views by adding, "The improvement of the child will conduce to a change in the parent, and civilization be advanced at both ends." As the New Harmony encounter continued to run sour, however, Maclure began to think utopia was possible only through boarding schools filled exclusively with orphans. See Bestor, *Education and Reform*, 301, 308f., 351.



**THEATRE BACKDROP OR SOCIAL COMMENTARY?
SKETCH BY CHARLES-ALEXANDRE LESUEUR**

Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle du Havre, Le Havre, France (#46245).

In an age when institutions were more flexible and transitory, Maclure, like Pestalozzi, saw education as the only way to bring both individual and institutional improvements. Perfection—of individual and group—could come only by providing an enlightened education for children. Such had been the argument presented by Pestalozzi himself in his book *Leonard and Gertrude* (1781). Cast as a social essay in the fictionalized manner of Rousseau's *Emile*, *Leonard and Gertrude* had provided an excellent example of how the powers of education could lead to the spiritual and moral uplift of the imaginary village of Bonnal. The town leaders of Bonnal came alive to the possibilities of far-reaching reform through proper—meaning Pestalozzian—education; and the residents rallied behind their school.

Together “they regarded the proper education of the youthful population as the only means of elevating the condition of the corrupt village.”²² Their patience and steadfastness produced wondrous results. The village prospered. The moral tone and sense of social responsibility among the villagers rose to the point that the public gallows could be torn down and a new hospital erected. Temperance became a way of life. Education brought to Bonnal the spirit of intelligent social brotherhood. Soon other villages were following the example set by Bonnal. Educational reformation and social uplift were on the march. *Leonard and Gertrude* represented a process of improvements that Maclure could applaud.

Joseph Neef could also smile upon Pestalozzi's slow-but-sure approach to perfection. Neef supported Maclure's gradualism and accused the impatient Owen of trying to prepare youth for life in a “feudal barony” rather than in an enlightened community.²³ Maclure, too, wrapped Owen in dreary Old World imagery. He called Owen a “Bonaparte” who sought to bring monarchy to America with his “superficial” knowledge of proper education.²⁴ Uniformity in subject, method, and procedure destroyed for Maclure all that was central in learning.²⁵ He sought instead to bring the power of reason to the child,

²²Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, *Leonard and Gertrude*, trans. Eva Channing (Boston, 1885), 135. Maclure did abandon the religious dimensions of Pestalozzi's pedagogy, the stress on love, and those “softer” aspects of his pedagogy in favor of the more reason-driven expectations of a modern Deist.

²³Brown, *Twelve Months*, 109.

²⁴Bestor, *Education and Reform*, 362, 366, 368. Neef best expressed his views on education in his *Sketch of a Plan and Method of Education* (Philadelphia, 1808).

²⁵Maclure made abundantly clear his opposition to lock-step teaching in his collection of *Opinions on Various Subjects, Dedicated to the Industrious Producers*, (2 vols., New Harmony, 1831–1837), I, 62, 447, II, 29, 58, 287, 524, *passim*. For an analysis of the relationship between education and society developed in Maclure's *Opinions* and other papers, repositated at the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana, see Burgess, “William Maclure,” *passim*. Regarding the *Opinions*, it should be noted that there are extant editions of this work in two- and three-volume sets. For an explanation, see Bestor, *Education and Reform*, 407f., and Bestor, *Backwoods Utopias*, 146. See also Monroe, *History of the Pestalozzian Movement*, 122.

encouraged spontaneity in teaching, and accepted the development of character as a by-product of creative inquiry.

Owen must by this time have realized that Maclure was an unorthodox communitarian, since Maclure believed radical reformism was only a young and unsteady movement in an atmosphere of widespread ignorance. He viewed New Harmony as a potential utopia, but its full promise was in the distant future. The mission of his school therefore was simply to teach "the rising generation to *think* by a useful and practical education." Owen's dreams of perfect community, chided Maclure, drifted into his mind from a world still "some ages" away.²⁶ Experimentation, respect for facts, and avoidance of opinion brought intelligence to Maclure's students. But Owen was impatient for consensus to reign in the community. Maclure sternly decried Owen's conformist goals. Here was a man, Maclure noted, who, lacking even "the smallest idea of a good education," preferred to fill young heads with little more than precepts and abstractions. Maclure was aghast at Owen's "parrot method of sticking incomprehensibles into the memory of Children as you would do pins into a pincushion . . ." The correct antidote to Owen's pedagogy was "the Pestalozzian System as taught by Mr. Neef."²⁷

In short, Maclure argued, it was essential to reject Owen's insistence that dogma be laid down in the classroom. Dogma was repugnant to those who shared Maclure's views of learning.²⁸ Outraged by Owen, Joseph Neef fumed, "A rational man is a man who consults experience and acts in conformity with the results of his experience; whose actions are invariably based on his knowledge and not on his belief." Students should be trained "to gather knowledge by their own senses, to consult experience in every instance, to analyze, to examine, to investigate everything, to believe nothing."²⁹

Maclure and his like-minded colleagues argued for rational encounters, inquisitive and even skeptical behavior, suspended judgments, an experimental attitude, and for a future world where honest and reasonable persons might disagree without rancor, redesign their collective purposes, and embrace a process based on experimentation. In Owen's eyes, Maclure's plan for a village full of men-

²⁶Bestor, *Education and Reform*, 387f. Emphasis the author's.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 367f., 376, 385.

²⁸Not all the faculty stood behind Maclure. Marie Duclos Fretageot was critical of the scientific researches of Maclure's associates such as Thomas Say, Gerard Troost, and Charles Alexandre Lesueur. She branded their inquiries and attitudes toward learning as amounting to "hurtful" knowledge that "carries the mind astray, in fact it is false knowledge," and dismayed Maclure by defending Owen's pedagogical views. Given either her professional posture or considering the shaky state of New Harmony, Maclure hesitated to speak abroad of her Infant School because it was built on "volcanic soil." See Bestor, *Education and Reform*, 371, 390. Nonetheless, the Maclure-Fretageot friendship and collaboration continued long after Owen had abandoned his New Harmony venture.

²⁹Quoted in Brown, *Twelve Months*, 114f.

tally independent individuals amounted to subversion. Belief, commitment, loyalty—these were the character traits Owen treasured! He rejected a pedagogy that cast confusion in the form of skeptical reasoning before the student. Owen wanted New Harmony children to grow in loyalty to community dictates. In return he promised to guide their shared purposes and satisfy their collective needs. If youth entered adulthood less able to rely on their own initiative, they would be better able to accept leadership and counsel.

Owen and Maclure labored at an impossible task, one that involved creating two significantly different good societies with shared raw materials. Maclure might have known this early; Owen later, if never fully. Maclure militantly opposed every form of learning that did not permit doubting; he held such pedagogy to be the instrument of tyranny over the human mind. He firmly believed that the good society awaited a universal education in enlightened self-interest and rational skepticism. There were no shortcuts. He pressed uncompromisingly for critical inquiry as the method and aim of learning. He beheld in the common people of both sexes the potential to exercise intelligent, independent judgment on all matters. With knowledge “as taught by Mr. Neef” made accessible to all, a moral life of equality of concern in all spheres of social enterprise would at last open to the human family. In the interests of that moral life to come and especially to teach young people how to face vexing problems forthrightly and intelligently, Maclure urged the New Harmony school faculty to compare critically the ends served by his and Owen’s teaching methods and purposes.

Owen, meanwhile, kept calling for public “happiness” and pursuing it as if it were an obligation incurred by successful entrepreneurship. Guided by his inner light and the power of wealth, Owen celebrated corporate paternalism. The ideal school, it followed logically, should induct the child into the way of life sanctioned by the community management. The school educated for happiness by promoting perfected employee-employer relations in an ideal work-a-day world. Owen was to be the liberal employer. He would provide work, supervise its progress and return profits to the community, distribute the fruits of the corporate effort equally, care for the sick, and educate the children to take assigned places in the community’s quest for happiness. In return he asked for gratitude expressed only in wholehearted cooperation.³⁰

One might well suspect that a full series of carefully conducted case studies of “company towns” and communities dominated by one fairly stable corporate industry would confirm that Robert Owen,

³⁰Owen “could lead, but could not follow; could organize, but could never really co-operate. He demanded from all his associates an unquestioning obedience to his inner light.” Cole, *Robert Owen*, 238f.; see also Frank Podmore, *Robert Owen* (2 vols., London, 1906), I, 343.

as an important pioneer of corporatism, laid plans more prophetic than Maclure's. Paternalism meant progress in his lexicon. But such an approach to progress led Jane Addams to observe, "In so far as philanthropists are cut off from the influence of the *Zeitgeist*, from the code of ethics which rules the body of men, from the great moral life springing from our common experience, so long as they are 'good to people' rather than 'with them,' they are bound to accomplish a large amount of harm. They are outside the influence of that great faith which perennially springs up in the hearts of the people, and recreates the world."³¹

Owen's communitarian views, when set against Maclure's, were more orthodox. Preachment and positive reinforcement of communal beliefs had by then become common pedagogical devices in utopian plans. Plato had imposed similar restrictions on teaching in his Republic; and Augustine had made a seminal link between pagan and Christian planners by stressing the will more than reason and elevating belief above understanding. Many religious communitarians had followed suit dutifully and logically.

Owen and Maclure were most unlikely collaborators. It was as if a Plato had undertaken a New Harmony venture with an Aristotle as a partner. Their alliance carved the mark of tragedy on Owen's communitarian dreams. The banks of the Wabash glowed fiery in the heat of their stormy clashes. Theory became plural, disheveled, and left no prospect for unified community practice. Perhaps the alliance amounted to more than one additional error to add to the list of Owen's miscues, more than one extra loaded gun to add to the firing squad. Owen's union with Maclure might have been sufficiently suicidal to make one wonder whether the firing squad had pumped its shots into a cadaver.

³¹Jane Addams, "A Modern Lear," in *American Social Thought*, ed. Ray Ginger (New York, 1961), 200.