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The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation

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Although Bentham theoretically championed laissez-faire in the name of freedom, he was intent on subordinating all aspects of life to the interests of accumulation. Bentham limited his passionate concern with laissez-faire to those who conformed to the norms of a capitalist society; a jarring confrontation with state power was to be the lot of the rest. According to Bentham, "Property—not the institution of property, but the constitution of property—has become an end in itself" (Bentham 1952, 1:117).

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A strict regimen, unremitting supervision and discipline, and economies of diet, dress, and lodging would make profits possible. Jeremy Bentham, vigorous advocate of freedom of commerce that he was, dreamed of the profits that would accrue from the use of inmate labor:

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According to classical political economy, all social conditions and all social institutions were to be judged merely on the basis of their effect on the production of wealth. In this spirit, Bentham recommended that children be put to work at four instead of fourteen, bragging that they would thereby be spared the loss of those "ten precious years in which nothing is done! Nothing for industry! Nothing for improvement, moral or intellectual!" (cited in

Himmelfarb 1985, 81).

Note:
