

The Book Trail
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It seems that in these columns I have imparted my calm, reasoned reflections on current economic literature with an eagerness that has been mistaken for acerbity on the loose. Now in the matter of criticism it is a question whether feeling precedes reasoning or vice versa. For my part, I try to reserve judgment until all the evidence, pro and con, is in; and then I form conclusions, at that point unleashing my convictions, to praise or blame in the intensity warranted, as I see it, by the facts.

You will say that this pattern of procedure is one to which no mortal can adhere with any degree of perfection; and to this I readily agree. Yet it is a pattern to which I aspire and I am willing at all times to entertain evidence of my failure. The Book Trail has a "welcome" sign out to those able to prove my conclusions, in quality or in intensity of expression, are unjustified by the facts.

I believe it is a mistake, in tactics as well as in logic, to present George's writings as the sole repository of truth, in spite of my belief that the author of "Progress and Poverty" has established a covering doctrine in economics and sociology of incontestable validity and incomparable perspicacity. But it is one thing to admit the human fallibility of George and another to admit disproof of his conclusions. I have not yet seen an attack on George which shook his doctrines in any fundamental aspect.

Now what is wrong with economic thinking today is its lack of covering doctrine. I have had occasion to speak of current writers as "make-it-up-as-you-go-along economists." They write without basic guidance, substituting statistics of evanescent or superficial nature for basic theory or natural law. They mistake the respectability of academic or official approval for the stamp of scientific approbation.

There is a crying need for economic writings which measure given problems with the laws of nature and which utilize covering doctrine for practical purposes.