

Introduction

BY ROBERT V. ANDELSON

I

“People do not argue with the teaching of George, they simply do not know it.” This sentiment, expressed by Tolstoy in 1905,¹ had a degree of validity even then. The writers of economic textbooks in particular, when deigning to mention George at all, have tended to dismiss his contribution with a few patronizing sentences that, more often than not, display a lamentable absence of real acquaintance with his thought.²

Henry George was one of a long succession of political economists—including Adam Smith, Malthus, the two Mills, Ricardo, Chalmers, Sidgwick, and Marx—with no official training in the discipline. Like that of most of the other members of this line, moreover, his pursuit of the subject was merely a particularization of broader social and even metaphysical concerns. It was his misfortune, however, to have launched his theory just as economics was becoming a specialized profession, as signaled by the founding of the American Economic Association in 1885 by scholars, many of whom had done postgraduate study in Germany. Henceforth, at least in the United States, he who presumed to write on economic theory without having first armed himself with advanced degrees in the field would run the risk of being disparaged as an amateur in academic circles. And George held no degrees at all—advanced or otherwise! His response to the coolness elicited by his ideas in these circles was scarcely calculated to dispel it. It was perhaps both understandable and inevitable that this self-taught reformer, who believed with passionate sincerity in the unassailability of his logic and the imperative necessity of his social program, should impute motives of intellectual cowardice to his scholarly detractors. “George’s unwarranted suspicion, even contempt, for the academic world, an attitude duplicated by many of his followers, undoubtedly created much antagonism for him among the very people whose endorsement he desperately needed.”³ And this antagonism all too often manifested itself in contemptuous silence or peremptory dismissal.

Yet there have been those who, Tolstoy to the contrary notwithstanding, *have* argued with the teaching of George. Not all of their arguments have been

sketchy, crude, or ill-informed; several have been detailed, closely reasoned, and based upon a careful study of his works. Had most of his disciples in this century taken Tolstoy's assertion (justifiably a commonplace among them) less literally, they might have discovered not a few criticisms worthy of their analysis and possible refutation, together with some areas in which the master's legacy could profit from judicious modification or supplementation.

I do not, of course, wish to impart the impression that George's thought met with only hostile or indifferent response among the literati. A formidable list of testimonials, ranging from Tolstoy and Sun Yat-sen to Nicholas Murray Butler and John Dewey, could be cited to show the opposite.⁴ The list would, in fact, contain statements from some prominent economists, although not many have accorded unqualified approval to the Georgist doctrine. Even George's most dedicated opponents have, almost without exception, paid tribute to the eloquence of his literary style and the luminous nobility of his intentions, and some have credited him with calling needed attention to abuses, with awakening their interest in economic problems, and with performing yeoman service in exposing certain hoary fallacies.⁵ Joseph Schumpeter, to mention but one recent economist of great distinction, spoke appreciatively of George in no uncertain terms in his last book, *History of Economic Analysis*, posthumously published.*

My purpose here, however, is not to rehearse encomia; that task may be left to the various periodicals of the Georgist movement without fear that they will be in the least delinquent in fulfilling it. Rather, on this centenary of George's magnum opus, I am convinced that the highest tribute we can pay his memory, and the one that he himself would cherish most, is to present as fairly as possible the arguments of his most significant critics, and to weigh them in the scales both of abstract reason and of empirical evidence.

Heretofore this has not been done in any comprehensive way. During

*It may be instructive to quote Schumpeter's remarks, especially insofar as they relate to the question of George's technical competence:

He was a self-taught economist, but he *was* an economist. In the course of his life, he acquired most of the knowledge and of the ability to handle an economic argument that he could have acquired by academic training as it then was. In this he differed to his advantage from most men who proffered panaceas. Barring his panacea (the Single Tax) and the phraseology connected with it, he was a very orthodox economist and extremely conservative as to methods. They were those of the English "classics," A. Smith being his particular favorite. Marshall and Bohm-Bawerk he failed to understand. But up to and including Mill's treatise, he was thoroughly at home in scientific economics; and he shared none of the current misunderstandings or prejudices concerning it. Even the panacea—nationalization not of land but of the rent of land by a confiscatory tax—benefited by his competence as an economist, for he was careful to frame his "remedy" in such a manner as to cause the minimum injury to the efficiency of the private-enterprise economy. Professional economists who focused attention on the single-tax proposal and condemned Henry George's teaching, root and branch, were hardly just to him. The proposal itself, one of the many descendents of Quesnay's *impot unique*, though vitiated by association with the untenable theory that the phenomenon of poverty is entirely due to the absorption of all surpluses by the rent of land, is not *economically* unsound, except that it involves an unwarranted optimism concerning the yield of such a tax. In any case, it should not be put down as nonsense. If Ricardo's vision of economic evolution had been correct, it would even have been obvious wisdom. And obvious wisdom is in fact what George said in *Progress and Poverty* (ch. 1, Book ix) about the economic effects to be expected from a removal of fiscal burdens—if such a removal were possible. [Joseph A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, ed. Elizabeth Boody Schumpeter (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 865.]

George's lifetime he published rejoinders to a few of his critics, notably Herbert Spencer, the Duke of Argyll, and Edward Atkinson;⁶ and Thomas Shearman attempted to refute several animadversions in a brief article, and later in the last part of his *Natural Taxation*.⁷ Max Hirsch's *Democracy and Socialism* contains chapters that deal with the objections of Atkinson and Francis A. Walker, and shorter discussions that address those of Lord Bramwell, J. C. Spence, W. E. H. Lecky, Thomas H. Huxley, H. M. Hyndman, John A. Hobson, and an anonymous Fabian pamphleteer.⁸ As far as the number of critics covered is concerned, by far the most ambitious effort along these lines is Steven B. Cord's *Henry George: Dreamer or Realist?*, but it is more of an evaluative survey than an analysis in depth, and is limited to the treatment of George by American economists and historians. Otherwise, to my knowledge, examination and appraisal of George's critics have been confined to incidental passages and to articles occasioned by individual attacks.

This book does not, of course, purport to be exhaustive. In view of the vast bulk of the literature on George, such would be neither feasible nor desirable. It does strive, however, to cover all of the most significant critiques, except for those by Spencer and Argyll. To these latter, George's replies, both of them substantial, are still in print and readily available.⁹ Although I have attempted to research the entire literature in English and the other major European tongues except for Russian, some works were not available to me, while others may well have escaped my notice.

II

I have used an editor's discretion in deciding what constitutes a "significant" critique, and my judgments in this respect may to some students appear arbitrary in various instances. They have been guided by such criteria as originality, subtlety, influence, brilliance of organization and expression, and, in at least one case (Alcázar), sheer length. Of necessity there will be a certain amount of overlapping, because many of the same arguments, or approximations thereof, have been employed by more than one critic. When an argument was first advanced in germinal form by a writer who did not essay a sustained critique of George, I have tried to see to it that it is presented and evaluated in its most developed manifestation, with indication given as to its original source.

There are a number of critiques that might, for one reason or another, have arguably justified consideration in these pages, but that I have not included. Let me mention some of these, together with my reasons for their omission:

In 1881 and 1882 *Progress and Poverty* was the subject of review in three learned German periodicals by Adolf Wagner (*Zeitschrift für die Gesamte Staatswissenschaft* [Tübingen] 37 [1881]: 619-24), E. Heitz (*Jahrbucher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik* [Jena] 4 [1882]: 120-26), and Gustav Schmoller (*Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft* [Leipzig] 6 [1882]: 354-59), respectively. Wagner and Schmoller, in particular, were famous and influential scholars, but each review is but six pages in length—substantial enough as an expression of the medium but too brief to be classed as a critique for purposes of this study.

Viewed solely from the standpoint of their author's eminence, the essays by

William Graham Sumner that appeared in *Harper's Weekly* during the early months of 1883, and that were gathered and reprinted under the title *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other*, would surely warrant treatment. Yet it is only in the loosest sense that they may be considered a critique of George, for although a few passages suggest that Sumner bore *Progress and Poverty* in mind, the essays deal sweepingly with broad social issues, touching in only the most general way upon some elementary premises of George's system without ever naming him or any of his writings. (Two years earlier Sumner had specifically reviewed *Progress and Poverty* in an unsigned editorial in *Scribner's Monthly*, but it was only a page in length and consisted wholly of unsupported ridicule.) Although this series gave rise to a rival one by George in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (collected and republished with additional material as *Social Problems*), it was, as Barker puts it, "a competitive venture, not a controversy."¹⁰

The pamphlet review of *Progress and Poverty* by that "fine old crusted Tory" Lord Bramwell¹¹ went into seven editions from 1883 through 1895, hence one may assume that the Liberty and Property Defense League, under whose imprint it appeared, must have considered it an unusually effective attack. But, although vigorously written, it is a relatively trivial piece of work; its fifteen pages focus mainly upon a small number of passages in isolation from their context, and demonstrate a decidedly less than perfect understanding of George's argument.

Altogether different in tone is the thirty-page scholarly discussion devoted chiefly to George's theory by the distinguished French economist Charles Gide.¹² So fairly and even persuasively does he elucidate the strengths of George's thesis that one almost expects him to conclude with an unequivocal endorsement. Yet he rejects it, for reasons that he states in a surprisingly cursory, almost offhand fashion, recommending instead a trial of the scheme of land reform advocated by the Belgian socialist Baron de Colins. Gide concedes on the one hand that land is an especially appropriate subject for taxation, yet claims on the other that the problem of separating land values from improvement values is insoluble—a contention denied by many experts, Kenneth Back being a recent example.¹³ To Gide probably belongs the dubious honor of having been the first to argue that if the state were to confiscate through taxation the unearned increment of land, it would be unjust if it did not also indemnify landowners when land decreased in value. Commenting on the same objection as put by other critics, Charles F. Collier remarks that under the existing system, although the tax liability of one who suffers financial reverses may decrease, "there is no tax which *reimburses* people for loss of income. . . . It is surely misleading, if not unfair, to single out one tax for criticism based on a property shared by all alternative taxes."¹⁴

The two lectures on George given in 1883 at St. Andrews Hall, London, by Arnold Toynbee, Oxford economist and eponymous uncle of the noted historian, represented Toynbee's last intellectual effort. In the words of one who heard them, they betrayed "unmistakeable signs of nervous exhaustion and physical collapse";¹⁵ a few weeks after their delivery the speaker died at the early age of thirty-one, without having had an opportunity to check or revise the shorthand transcript of them. Their criticisms, which are complicated and difficult to follow, center upon alleged inconsistencies in George's

wage theory. According to Philip Wicksteed, who was also present, Toynbee's concessions were "large and significant."¹⁶ His objections are subjected to friendly but unfavorable analysis by H. Llewelyn Davies in an article¹⁷ that appeared soon after the republication (as an appendix to the 1894 edition of Toynbee's famous *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution*) of the transcript.

Arthur Crump, in a thirty-two page onslaught ominously entitled *An Exposure of the Pretensions of Mr. Henry George*,¹⁸ upon examining the first three books of *Progress and Poverty*, finds them such a "confused mass of inconsistencies, contradictions, fallacies, and absurdities" that he concludes that it would be a waste of time to bother with the other seven. This effusion is utterly splenetic, and the reliability of its interpretation of George may be judged by the fact that it upbraids him for "preaching against capitalists," which, of course, he never did.

In 1884, the same year as Crump's attack, Isaac B. Cooke published *Progress and Poverty: A Reply to Mr. George*.¹⁹ This twenty-two page pamphlet is characterized by a courteous, dignified tenor that contrasts pleasantly with Crump's shrillness. Cooke begins by accepting George's contention that poverty has accompanied progress, and calls the problem "one of surpassing importance, worthy of our deepest study." Yet, the last half of his work is almost wholly devoted to denying the existence of the problem that he had earlier declared to be so vital. Some of his arguments are complacent in the highest degree. For example, he holds that "the simple difference between those who habitually spend less than and those who habitually spend all that they earn, will account for most of the discrepancy between luxury and squalor"; that insofar as the increase of wealth in Britain did not diminish pauperism, it was because of the free choice of the people, who, though they "had the opportunity of improvement, . . . preferred the increase of numbers to improvement in condition"; and that laborers need only "raise themselves to the rank of capitalists" in order to be "enabled to form eligible terms of co-partnership in the undertakings in which they obtain employment. . . ." He also holds that even if the entire yield of all production came to landlords in the form of rent, most of it, being perishable, could not be stored indefinitely and would have to be distributed in exchange for labor, and that, in fact, "in ordinary circumstances, the shares appropriated to rent and interest are eventually distributed almost wholly as wages." He misconceives George as defining wages only as the share of production received by the agricultural laborer, so that "the mechanics and artisan classes are left without provision"—a notion that has no basis in any of George's writings. Cooke does venture two more promising lines of criticism: The first is that human labor can create nothing, but can only modify natural materials. Hence George's doctrine, strictly interpreted, cannot justify the ownership of *anything*. (Curiously, Murray Rothbard uses essentially the same argument to justify the ownership of *everything* to which labor has been applied, including land.²⁰) The second is that land ownership is not properly stigmatized as monopolistic so long as land is available for purchase in the open market. These ideas, however, are merely thrown out in passing. Had they been adequately developed, Cooke's critique might have been of genuine importance.

More worthy of consideration, if for no other reason than that its author eventually came to occupy the highest office in the British government, is a

little-known paper by Arthur J. Balfour, then a mere M.P., presented at the London Industrial Remuneration Conference of 1885, and carried in the report of its proceedings published the same year. Entitled "Land, Land Reformers, and the Nation," this work includes nine pages of scathing attack on George's reasoning, some important subtleties of which, however, Balfour appears to have overlooked (perhaps deliberately for forensic reasons). Thus he scores George for inconsistency in holding that the return given by nature to capital over and above that which accrues to the labor expended in its use or exchange, may be with justice privately appropriated, while that given to land may not—a reproach that ignores the key points: (a) that capital, unlike land, is produced by labor; (b) that the private appropriation of its yield does not represent a toll upon access to natural opportunity; and (c) that, according to George, the added return arising from the active powers of nature in certain modes of production is equalized to capital in all modes. One of Balfour's most sarcastic arguments is that the full application of George's principles would extinguish any right to property acquired by the sale of land. "The receiver of stolen goods clearly should not be allowed to retain the wealth which he enjoys only through having passed on those goods to somebody else." He evidently did not know that four years previously George had anticipated and rebutted this attempt at *reductio ad absurdum* in "The Great-Great Grandson of Captain Kidd," a chapter of *The Irish Land Question*.

Also included in the annals of the conference is "Social Remedies," a paper by Frederic Harrison,* a prolific litterateur and leader of the London Society of Positivists. In 1908 it was reprinted by Macmillan of New York in *National and Social Problems*, a collection of Harrison's essays. While expressing strong appreciation of George's powers as a critic of the status quo, and while sympathetic to the idea of taxing land values more heavily, the author rejects George's "pretended panacea" as "chimerical and futile." As with Balfour's argument just cited, much of his gravamen was anticipated and dealt with in "The Great-Great Grandson of Captain Kidd." Otherwise his main objection seems to be either that George contemplated the confiscation of improved and not just "prairie" land values, or that the prairie value of land, at least in Britain, would be seriously inadequate as a basis for taxation. His illustrations are limited to farms, and he evidently assumes that all improvements that "merge with the soil" are attributable to landowners' outlays.

In 1884 George's own British publisher, Kegan Paul, brought out *The Nationalisation of Land*, an expanded version of a twenty-three-page article in the *Contemporary Review* the previous year by Samuel Smith. Because of the misconception signaled by the title, much of Smith's criticism has little bearing on what George actually proposed. Somewhat incongruously, after roundly condemning what he takes to be George's program, this Liberal M.P. concedes that "property in land ought not to be as absolute as property in chattels," and deplores the granting away of vast tracts to speculators in the New World, and the garnering of unearned increments by suburban landowners in the Old.

Next to be noted is *Progress and Robbery*,²¹ an elaborate (seventy-page) but superficial assault by J. Bleeker Miller, consisting largely of three speeches

*Not to be confused with Fred Harrison, the contributor to this volume.

delivered on behalf of the Tammany opposition during George's New York mayoralty campaign of 1886. It accuses George of having borrowed, without attribution, his ideas from *Considérant* and his phraseology from Proudhon, and labels him a "demi-communist," while (one observes with amazement) paying respectful compliments to Lassalle and Marx. Small wonder that of this work Barker remarks that "there is little, indeed, to be said about quality."²²

In 1887 Charles H. Kerr & Company, the Chicago firm that has since come to be identified with Marxist publications, brought out *Progress from Poverty: Review and Criticism of Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" and "Protection or Free Trade"*, a work that, far from being Marxist, was not even reformist in character. The author was one Giles Badger Stebbins, and it ran to sixty-four pages, but they were of less than duodecimo size. This book contains numerous misrepresentations, holding, for example, that George advocated land nationalization, denied property rights in improvements, excluded brainwork from his definition of labor, apologized for chattel slavery, and sought "to make the laborer the master and monarch over the capitalist." It also advances the erroneous idea that taxes on land are shifted to the tenant. For the rest, it consists mainly of paraphrases and extracts from other critics, especially George Basil Dixwell.

The same year saw the publication by Hill and Harvey, a Baltimore firm, of a rambling indictment of the "socialism" of Henry George and Herbert Spencer(!)—*Ownership and Natural Right*, by R. P. I. Holaind, S.J., a professor at Woodstock College. This feeble work of 176 pages, prefaced by an effusive letter of commendation from Archbishop Corrigan of New York (George's adversary in the McGlynn affair) amounts to little more than a pastiche of extracts from Roman and canon law as well as from more modern sources—in some cases (e.g., Locke) selected in such a way as to give a distorted impression. It is worth mentioning here only because it was, for some reason I cannot fathom, regarded as sufficiently important to warrant a French edition, *Le Socialisme américain. La Propriété et le droit naturel* (Paris and Brussels, 1900), which is the only edition listed in most catalogues. Interestingly, although French was Holaind's native tongue, the translation was done by one Edmond J. P. Buron.

Alluring Absurdities: Fallacies of Henry George was the work of M. W. Meagher, published by the American News Company, New York, in 1889. One hundred and ninety-three pages in length, this book is devoted largely to a minute critical analysis of selected passages by George, and manages to score a number of debater's points against him, which is scarcely surprising since its author was founder of the National Debating Association, with offices at Cooper Union. These points are, however, for the most part fairly trivial, and some even puerile in their superficiality. Meagher delights in exposing petty contradictions and imperfect analogies (often taken out of context), but nowhere does he really come to grips with George's central arguments. The book exhibits some of the more unpleasant characteristics of the forensic approach: captious logic-chopping and a tone of arrogant pomposity.

The March 1892 issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* carried "The Basis of Interest: A Criticism of the Solution Offered by Mr. Henry George." It was the product of Dwight M. Lowrey,

who found George's doctrine of interest "little more than a tissue of fallacies," while acclaiming George as "*facile princeps* among all American economists" in almost every other area of economic analysis. Were it not for the restricted nature of its topic and for the fact that it undertakes to overthrow a theory that few have ventured to defend, this keenly argued paper would warrant more than a mere notice here.

An unlikely parallel is drawn by Arthur Kitson in his "Criticism of Henry George's Single Tax Theory" (*American Journal of Politics*, October 1894) between George and the arch-protectionist, William McKinley, on the grounds that both advocated the use of taxation (quite apart from the revenue produced therefrom) to effect "socialistic" remedies for economic ills. Like R. C. Rutherford (to whose more sizable attack Collier has devoted chapter 15 in the present work), Kitson cites chapter and verse of *Progress and Poverty* to try to show that it is self-refuting. His chief argument is that if a man has, as George contends, a right to the full product of his labor, it is just as unjust for him to have to pay rent to the community for the use of land as to a private owner. Kitson was answered by three writers in the course of the following year. The first, Isaac Feinberg, admitted inconsistencies in George, but claimed that they did not invalidate the merits of the single-tax idea. The second, R. W. Joslyn, agreed with many of Kitson's criticisms, but applauded the single tax (perhaps with tongue in cheek) because he imagined that it would do away with all sale and rental of lands. The last, George Bernard, defended George against Kitson's charge of inconsistency, citing a passage in *Progress and Poverty*²³ to demonstrate that George had anticipated and disposed of the principal chain of reasoning on which the charge was based.²⁴

Fred Harrison, in a note to his chapter 14 on Marxist critics of George in the present book, expresses chagrin that he was unable to examine and discuss Algie M. Simons's *Single Tax vs. Socialism* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1899), for it is considered by Geiger to be among the most effective presentations of the Marxist position on the subject. (Simons was editor of the *International Socialist Review*.) After protracted searching, I finally located (at the Walter Reuther Library at Wayne State University) a copy of this scarce work sturdy enough to allow duplication. Perusal of it left me mystified as to the basis for Geiger's evaluation, and convinced that Harrison need have wasted no regrets over the book's unavailability to him. Save for its plain language and clear organization, this twenty-nine-page screed has little to commend it, for almost its whole argument rests upon such Marxist dogmas as the dialectic and the class struggle, which are simply asserted without so much as an attempt at proof. Simons ridicules the Georgist "landophobia," as he calls it, holding that inasmuch as land has been long since surpassed by capital as the dominant factor in production, "to insist on again raising it to prominence is to advocate the relapse to barbarism." The coming fundamental social change, he pronounces, will be the seizure of capital by the workers when, in the fullness of time, the capitalist system has ripened to the point of rottenness. Unfortunately for the cogency of this thesis, Marxism has never yet come to power in an advanced capitalist society, but only in places where the paramount feature of the economy was the concentration of land ownership in the hands of a small segment of the population.

In 1900 there appeared *Taxation of Land Values and the Single Tax*

(Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1900), a slim book by that British popularizer of the Austrian school of economics, William Smart, professor of political economy at the University of Glasgow. As admitted in the preface, this work "does not profess to be a contribution to economic science," and only the last twenty-seven pages of it deal specifically with George's doctrine. The rest is primarily taken up with the hostile evaluation of two concrete proposals for legislation (the London County Council Resolutions, and the Glasgow Land Value Assessment Bill), Smart's analyses of which have to do largely with complicated peculiarities of English and Scottish land tenure. The author speaks from the standpoint of the "equal sacrifice" theory of taxation and condemns George's proposal as confiscatory.

"The Economics of Henry George's 'Progress and Poverty,'" by Edgar H. Johnson, was published in the *Journal of Political Economy*, November 1910. After twenty pages of highly technical analysis accusing George of inconsistency, special pleading, and inattention to empirical facts, this critic concludes by acknowledging the truth of three of the most salient Georgist principles: that land is the gift of nature rather than the product of human toil; that its value is owing to the activities of the community rather than of the owner; and that a tax upon it is not, generally speaking, a burden on industry.

In 1912 one E. B. Silvers brought out in Kansas City a 105-page broadside, *Single Tax A Fallacy: a Refutation of the Theory of Single Taxation as Announced by Henry George*. It was evidently published by himself. Most of its criticisms are the standard ones, but it deserves a reference because of its ingenious argument that since, according to George, wages and interest are determined at the margin, the single tax, by leaving the landowner only that portion of his product classifiable as wages and interest, would condemn him to a marginal existence. Thus he would have no inducement to make his land produce more than a bare living. For all his recurrent emphasis upon the margin, Silvers does not seem to understand its functional role in George's system, nor to take account of any of the qualifications or subtleties in George's treatment of it. He simply introduces it mechanically, oblivious to context, whenever he feels inclined to deal a particularly devastating blow.

A ripple of attention was attracted by Alvin S. Johnson's "The Case Against the Single Tax," which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* of January 1914 as one in a series of three articles on the subject of the Henry George plan. Johnson contended that the lure of unearned increment is essential to development (a notion readily susceptible of empirical refutation), and that the main burden of the plan would fall upon the middle class (as if, even if this were so, the same is not notoriously true of our existing system). Although ably formulated and thus not without surface plausibility, the piece is far too slight (ten pages) to constitute a very thoroughgoing critique. Several pages are devoted to the refutation of Johnson's article by Charles B. Fillebrown in *The Principles of Natural Taxation*.²⁵

The first decade and a half of this century witnessed a series of unsuccessful campaigns in Washington and Oregon to introduce by ballot various approaches to the single tax. A Seattle newspaper editor, Charles H. Shields, rose to the fore as leader of the opposition. By 1914 his *Single Tax Exposed* (published by The Trade Register, Inc., Seattle) had gone into seven editions and reached 190 pages. Forcefully written but surprisingly free of ad

hominems, this polemic had great impact in bringing about the defeat of Georgist measures in 1912 and 1914. However, its argument rests to a large extent upon the false assumptions that the single tax would destroy *all*, not merely speculative, land values; that George anticipated that under his system land titles would revert to the government; and that land monopoly is a problem peculiar only to agrarian society. The latter part of the book is devoted to showing that the spectacular development of Western Canada immediately after 1910, which Georgist propaganda had attributed to the exemption of improvements from taxation, was really owing to other causes, and had, in any case, come to a halt. While Shields was correct in faulting single taxers for having used the Western Canadian boom to illustrate the efficacy of their program, by the same token, the recession that followed it cannot be cited to demonstrate the program's failure. For, as he himself observes, although improvements were indeed exempted, land-value taxes were kept even lower than in most cities below the border.

The Fallacies of Henry George, reprinted from *The Malthusian* by the Malthusian League, London, around 1922, and written by its president, Dr. C. V. Drysdale, represents the sort of tendentious approach that one might expect from such a source. Drysdale seeks not only to refute George's attack upon Malthusianism, but also to resuscitate, long after its abandonment by John Stuart Mill, the theory of the wages-fund, erroneously assuming that George, because of his opposition to this theory, regarded the capitalist as an exploiter of labor. Drysdale's argument (which runs to forty-two pages) is persuasively expressed, but contains little that had not been said before.

The year 1922 also saw Mario de Tezanos Pinto issue his 351-page volume *El impuesto unico y la exención de impuesto a las mejoras: Exposición y crítica del georgismo y de las doctrinas que lo fundamentan*, brought out by Pedro García of Buenos Aires. This massive work is sympathetic to several aspects of Georgism, especially the untaxing of improvements, and advocates a substantially higher tax on land values. But the author (who held a doctorate in law and social sciences) takes issue with many of George's arguments. Most of his criticisms, however, are secondhand. Part of the book is devoted to problems of applicability in Argentina, and particularly in Buenos Aires Province, where a Georgist political party was then campaigning with considerable temporary success.

Hugh Wheeler Sanford, a Knoxville ironworks owner, devoted part of the first volume of his book *The Business of Life: Economics for Business Men* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1924) to an unfavorable examination of George's theory of rent. Because Sanford used nonstandard terminology, his critique gives the appearance of being more original than it actually was; one of his main arguments goes back at least as far as Isaac Cooke.

Influential economists such as Henry Fawcett, Frank Fetter, M. Slade Kendrick, Henry Rogers Seager, Frank Taussig, and many others gave brief critical attention to George, often in textbooks; their comments are succinctly reviewed in Steven Cord's useful *Henry George: Dreamer or Realist?*

There are numerous other works that could be included in this catalogue if space permitted. But before moving on to another topic, I do wish to indicate my personal regret that it was not deemed advisable to devote a chapter to *Progress and Poverty Reviewed, and Its Fallacies Exposed*, by my late friend

Spencer Heath,²⁶ whom I remember with esteem, and who would have welcomed even a harsh examination of his views. Since Heath's ideas have achieved currency only to the extent that they are reflected in the work of Murray Rothbard, I felt that they could more appropriately be considered briefly in the context of chapter 25 below, primarily devoted to Rothbard.

III

In the eighteen years of life remaining to George after the completion of *Progress and Poverty*, he delivered himself of seven other substantial literary efforts: *The Irish Land Question* (1881), *Social Problems* (1883), "The 'Reduction to Iniquity'" (which first appeared as an article in *The Nineteenth Century* in 1884), *Protection or Free Trade* (1886), *The Condition of Labor, an Open Letter to Pope Leo XIII* (1891), *A Perplexed Philosopher* (1892), and the unfinished *Science of Political Economy* (posthumously published in 1898). In these other works the ideas of *Progress and Poverty* are supplemented, approached from somewhat different angles, and accorded varying emphases, but never appreciably altered.²⁷ It remains his chief d'oeuvre. In it, Geiger remarks, his economic thoughts "reached their highest development,"²⁸ and in it his philosophy finds its most complete and systematic expression. According to Jacob Oser it "probably had the greatest circulation of any non-fiction book in the English language before 1900 except for the Bible."²⁹ Understandably, therefore, it is upon this work that most of the critiques of George's doctrine are focused, the more so inasmuch as it was through it that the doctrine first gained worldwide notice and attracted critical comment. That a like emphasis should be exhibited by the present volume is thus not to be explained merely by a wish to commemorate the centenary.

Few, if any, of George's ideas had not been advanced by earlier thinkers, although he arrived at his fundamental thesis independently.³⁰ He disclaimed novelty for his beliefs, averring that "social truth never is, never can be new. . . ."³¹ Never before, however, had these beliefs been brought together in such a powerful synthesis nor stated so impressively. In the words of one of his more enlightened critics, "The sublimity his transformations impart to the commonest doctrines remind one that the accusation of plagiarism was brought against Handel,"³² a comment endorsed by Geiger as "probably the best statement of this whole matter of the precise degree of George's originality."³³

Without being dogmatic "true believers," the authors of the ensuing chapters are all sympathetic, more or less, to George's contribution. No apology need be made for this; since his most ardent current antagonist has acknowledged "great respect for many aspects of Henry George,"³⁴ it would be today a singularly narrow and ignorant commentator who could not find something to appreciate in the sweep and richness of his thought. No attempt has been made to impose uniformity of viewpoint upon the contributors to this volume, and the attentive reader will descry some points of disagreement among them. They have approached their topics in the spirit that George himself commended when, at the outset of his great essay, he declared: "I propose to beg no question, to shrink from no conclusion, but to follow truth

wherever it may lead.”³⁵ Neither has there been any effort to impose uniformity of style. For example, the method of subdividing chapters has been left up to each individual contributor, and the British spellings (e.g. “Georgeist”) of Douglas and Harrison have been retained.

A few words in defense of the format of this volume may be in order. Had the study been intended simply as a typological analysis of the various possible arguments against George, it would have lent itself to topical arrangement. But since it was meant to be an evaluative review of arguments that have, in fact, been historically advanced by specific critics, a topical arrangement would have had the disadvantage of failing to convey the structural pattern of each man’s overall critique. Feeling that understanding often suffers when an argument is lifted from its matrix in a person’s thought, I decided to eschew the topical approach as prone, in this context, to be artificial and misleading. Attempts to organize the chapters under ideological headings fell foul of the fact that some critics overlap ideological categories while others argue on technical grounds that do not admit of ideological classification. It therefore seemed advisable to adopt the chronological-geographical format revealed in the table of contents. If the reader is disconcerted to find Hyndman, Marx, and Engels discussed in a chapter listed under the heading of “American Critics,” the answer is that it was logical to treat them in connection with Gronlund, whose two tracts against George represent the most considerable Marxist effort to refute him. (Although Danish-born, Gronlund was a naturalized citizen of the United States, and his attack was deliberately geared to distinctively American considerations.) As for authors such as Seligman, whose criticisms of George continued well into the twentieth century, and Ely and Davenport, whose began in the nineteenth, their placement has been determined by the dates of their most extensive writings on the subject.

The concluding chapter is not meant to be a summary, but is rather an expression of my own views as to the necessary modifications, current relevance, and future prospects of the doctrine that is the subject of this work. Although it in some measure reflects the judgments of my contributors, it does not presume to speak for them, and any faults it contains are my responsibility alone.

Notes

1. Count Leo Tolstoy, “A Great Iniquity,” *The Public* (Chicago), 19 August 1905, p. 18. Reprinted from the *London Times*, 1 August 1905.

2. This assertion is documented in a painstaking survey by Steven B. Cord, *Henry George: Dreamer or Realist?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965). See especially pp. 171-80 and 186-91.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 243.

4. For Tolstoy, see above, n. 1. For Sun Yat-sen, see his interview with American journalists as reported in *The Public* (Chicago), 12 April 1912, p. 349, in which he is quoted as saying: “The teachings of your single-taxer, Henry George, will be the basis of our program of reform.” For Nicholas Murray Butler, see his 1931 commencement address at Columbia University, printed under the auspices of the office of the secretary of the university (New York, 1931). For John Dewey, see the following statement from his “An Appreciation of Henry George,” the introduction to *Significant Paragraphs from Progress and Poverty*, edited by Harry Gunnison Brown (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1929): “His is one of the great names among the world’s

social philosophers. It would require less than the fingers of the two hands to enumerate those who from Plato down rank with him. . . . No man, no graduate of a higher educational institution, has a right to regard himself as an educated man in social thought unless he has some first-hand acquaintance with the theoretical contribution of this great American thinker."

5. The word *almost* should be noted. J. Bleeker Miller and Arthur Crump (whose works are briefly characterized later in this introduction) make George out to be a plagiarist and a charlatan, respectively. The charge of plagiarism is also brought by George's disgruntled associate, James L. Sullivan, in "Ideo-Kleptomania, the Case of Henry George," *Twentieth Century*, 10 October 1889, and by Alexander del Mar in his *Science of Money* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1885), pp. 98-99 n.

For tributes from four of George's unequivocal opponents, see Edward Atkinson, "A Single Tax on Land," *Nineteenth Century*, July 1890, p. 394; John Bates Clark, *Distribution of Wealth* (New York: Macmillan, 1899), p. viii; Richard T. Ely, *The Labor Movement in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1886), p. 126; and Francis A. Walker, "The Tide of Economic Thought," *Publications of the American Economic Association* 6 (1891): 20.

6. George's work on Spencer, *A Perplexed Philosopher*, first published in 1892, runs to 276 pages in the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation edition of 1946. His reply to the Duke of Argyll, "The Reduction to Iniquity," originally appeared in *Nineteenth Century*, July 1884. It is included, together with the Duke's arraignment and two other essays by George, in *The Land Question [and Other Essays]* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1953). His reply to Atkinson was carried, along with Atkinson's fullest critique, in *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 40 (July 1890): 385-403.

7. Thomas Shearman's article, "Henry George's Mistakes," *Forum* 8 (1889): 40-52, dealt with criticisms advanced by the Duke of Argyll, W. H. Mallock, Abram Hewitt, Edward Atkinson and W. T. Harris. The objections of E. R. A. Seligman are among those treated in Shearman's *Natural Taxation* (New York: Doubleday and McClure, 1888).

8. Max Hirsch, *Democracy versus Socialism*, 4th ed. (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1948). The chapters on Atkinson and Walker are pt. 5, chaps. 6 and 7, respectively. The shorter discussions are found in pt. 5, chaps. 2, 4, and 5. *Democracy versus Socialism* first appeared in 1901.

9. See n. 6.

10. Charles Albro Barker, *Henry George* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 426.

11. George William Wilshere, 1st Baron Bromwell, *Nationalisation of Land: A Review of Mr. Henry George's "Progress & Poverty"* (London).

12. Charles Gide, "De quelques nouvelles doctrines sur la propriété foncière," *Journal des Économistes*, 4th ser., 22 (1883):169-99.

13. Kenneth Back, "Land Value Taxation in Light of Current Assessment Theory and Practice," in D. M. Holland, ed., *The Assessment of Land Value* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970).

14. Charles F. Collier, "Henry George's System of Economics: Analysis and Criticism," Ph. D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1976, p. 215. Collier is here directly addressing a statement by Thames Williamson, but he mentions it as typical of a line of argument also set forth by Francis A. Walker, Henry Fawcett, Robert Flint, Arthur T. Hadley, Roland R. Renne, and Richard T. Ely (with George R. Wicker).

15. H. Llewelyn Davies, "Arnold Toynbee and Henry George," *Free Review* (London) 4 (1895): 34. The lectures of George were first published by K. Paul, Trench & Co., 1883.

16. Philip Wicksteed in a letter to Henry George, 4 February 1883. Cited by Barker, *Henry George*, p. 392.

17. See n. 15.

18. Arthur Crump, *An Exposure of the Pretensions of Mr. Henry George, as Set Forth in his Book "Progress and Poverty"* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1884).

19. Isaac B. Cooke, *Progress and Poverty: A Reply to Mr. George* (Liverpool: Young, 1884).

20. See Murray Rothbard, *For a New Liberty* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 34.

21. J. Bleeker Miller, *Progress and Robbery and Progress and Justice. An Answer to Henry George the Demi-Communist* (New York: Baker & Taylor, 1887).

22. Barker, *Henry George*, p. 554.
23. Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, 75th anniversary ed. (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1954), p. 343.
24. The replies by Feinberg, Joslyn, and Bernard appeared in 6: 1-12 and 312-16, and 7: 425-39, respectively, of the *American Magazine of Civics*, successor to the *American Journal of Politics*.
25. Charles B. Fillebrown, *The Principles of Natural Taxation* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1917), pp. 201-7.
26. Spencer Heath, *Progress and Poverty Reviewed, and Its Fallacies Exposed* (Baltimore, Md.: Science of Society Foundation, 1952).
27. See Henry George, *The Science of Political Economy* (1897; reprint ed. New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1962), p. 203.
28. George Raymond Geiger, *The Philosophy of Henry George* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), p. 81 n.
29. Jacob Oser, *Henry George* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974), p. 68.
30. See Samuel Milliken, "Forerunners of Henry George," *Single Tax Year Book*, Joseph Dana Miller, ed. (New York: Single Tax Review Publishing Co., 1917), pp. 306-43; Arthur Nichols Young, *The Single Tax Movement in the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1916), chap. 1; and Geiger, *The Philosophy of Henry George*, chap. 4.
31. In his reply to an oral criticism at Oxford by Alfred Marshall. See Anna George de Mille, *Henry George: Citizen of the World*, Don C. Shoemaker, ed. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1950), p. 130.
32. Robert Scott Moffat, *Mr. Henry George the "Orthodox"* (London: Remington & Co., 1885), p. 5.
33. Geiger, *The Philosophy of Henry George*, p. 213 n.
34. Murray N. Rothbard, *A Reply to Georgist Criticisms* (Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y.: Foundation for Economic Education, July 1957), p. 3.
35. George, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 13.