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Author(s): Morris D. Forkosch

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Henry George: The Economist as Moralist*

By MORRIS D. FORKOSCH

ABSTRACT. *Henry George* derived his *economic theory* from his personal experience. He had the good fortune to be living in California during his formative years; there the economic events which transpired during the settlement of the North American continent—the passing of the *frontier* and its consequences—occurred within a time span of a few years and the telescoping of history gave him the framework for an original economic system, as well as a *utopian* vision of a *free society*. Much attention has properly been paid to George's economic ideas but he was also a *moralist*, one accepted by some philosophers as among the greatest. This aspect of his work, and particularly his value theory, have been neglected.

I

THE PANIC of 1837 was still in the air when Henry George was born on September 2, 1839, in Philadelphia, near the historic State House (1). His family for several generations had followed the sea and his father had given up the idea only because of his religious affiliations. The second child, and oldest son, of ten children, George would undoubtedly have entered the ministry except that the family's finances were inadequate; “. . . certainly there was no lack of pious sincerity or of clerical respect” (2).

George's schooling never got beyond the then-elementary stage and at 14 he began work as an errand boy and clerk. The incompleteness of his formal education—he was never trained in mathematics, languages, or the sciences except at popular lectures—but adds greater stature to this man's amazing self-acquired knowledge. “Whether a formal education would have broadened George's ‘one-idea’ philosophy to a degree that would have made it unimportant, or whether it would have buttressed his concepts with additional knowledge, must remain an idle although interesting question” (3).

An omnivorous reader, George early started his habit of reading anything at any time and place. His writings disclose a catholicity of knowledge that marks the mind of a highly-educated man. His

* This essay (and others I plan to elaborate my report on George's value theory) are presented in commemoration of the centenary of the publication of Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*. They are based on the thesis I presented over 40 years ago to the Graduate School of New York University. I thank my teachers for encouraging and aiding my investigation.

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early readings were, quite naturally, primarily of a religious flavor, although “. . . he also concentrated upon the study of history and was particularly influenced by Buckle, with his emphasis upon the power of law in historical development and upon the correlation of physical conditions and mental developments” (4). George’s diary reveals his penchant for attending lectures almost every evening and, although bereft of a “formal” education, the youngster undoubtedly received a fine “informal” one (5).

The call of the sea found an echoing response and, at 16, young George shipped as a foremast boy, going off with a copy of the Bible and *James’ Anxious Enquirer* as his reading companions. From New York to Melbourne to Calcutta and thence to India and home, the 14 months’ voyage made it difficult for George to return to his former life of restrictions and piety. A short sea voyage from Philadelphia to Boston was his next and final trip, for his parents, alarmed at the changes wrought by his sea-life, persuaded him to enter a printing establishment (6). At about this time the Lawrence Literary Society, “patterned undoubtedly upon [Benjamin] Franklin’s “Junta,” was organized by a group consisting of George and some friends. George’s contributions, so far as we know, were a flowery piece of boyish rhetoric and a devastating attack upon “Mormon Polygamy” (7).

In December, 1857, at the invitation of some of the family’s neighbors who had emigrated westward, Henry George sailed as a steward, bound from Philadelphia for San Francisco. In May, 1858, he found himself in a strange city in a strange country; except for occasional visits, he was not to return home again. A gold strike in Canada provided the impetus for shipping before the mast again but by the time he arrived the gold had given out and he shortly returned to California. He secured a position as printer and lodged in a hotel that was provided with a copy of Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*.

“Here George again began to cultivate his reading, although there is no evidence that in these early days he became acquainted with the work of Smith” (8). A planned effort at self-education went awry when the mines called again and, before his next return to San Francisco, George suffered greatly, at times sleeping in barns. The sea was definitely put from mind by a printing offer that probably determined his career (9). He had purchased a small interest in the *Evening Journal* by the time the Civil War broke out although there

was no direct awareness of the conflict; the bloody election of 1859 had settled the status of slaves in California. Letters from home brought news of the struggle but “. . . at this time his thoughts were far more concerned with a growing personal realization of the depressing results of poverty” (10). In a letter to his sister he wrote:

. . . How I long for the Golden Age, for the promised Millenium, when each one will be free to follow his best and noblest impulses, unfettered by the restrictions and necessities which our present state of society imposes upon him; when the poorest and the meanest will have a chance to use all his God-given faculties and not be forced to drudge away the best part of his time in order to supply wants but little above those of the animal (11).

November, 1861, found George's *Journal* unable to compete with the other papers so that the inevitable closing took place. Despite the blow, and left with but a single coin, he proposed to the lady of his choice and was accepted. George was 22, she 18, when the elopement and marriage occurred, the bride's parents not relishing the financial condition of the young groom. In Sacramento George secured some printing work on the daily morning paper but the next few years were bleak ones. Irregular work caused his savings to vanish; peddling clothes-wringers did not prove successful; and the Georges returned to San Francisco, Henry George, Jr., being born November 3, 1862, and Richard Fox on January 27, 1865. His diary discloses the following pathetic notes:

I came near starving to death, and at one time I was so close to it that I think I should have done so but for the job of printing a few cards which enabled us to buy a little corn meal. In this darkest time in my life my second child was born (12).

With four mouths now to feed instead of three, George's Gethsemane was at hand. In this crisis the following excerpt from a letter written 16 years later is revealing:

I walked along the street and made up my mind to get money from the first man whose appearance might indicate that he had it to give. I stopped a man—a stranger—and told him I wanted \$5.00. He asked what I wanted it for. I told him that my wife was confined and that I had nothing to give her to eat. He gave me the money. If he had not, I think I was desperate enough to have killed him (13).

II

THE DEPTHS OF DESPOND having been plumbed, although George was never completely free of unwelcome poverty, his fortunes took a slight

turn for the better. Eventually he became a reporter on the *Alta California*, then free-lanced, obtained steady employment on the *San Francisco Times*, and was advanced successively to editorial writer and then to managing editor (14). He transferred in 1868 to the Democratic *Herald* and was sent to New York to secure a press association franchise which was refused. Before returning West he wrote an article on "What the Railroad Will Bring Us" and here, for the first time, we begin to note the definite formation of his principles.

Amid all our rejoicing and all our gratulation let us see clearly whither we are tending. Increase in population and wealth past a certain point means simply an approximation to the conditions of older countries . . .

. . . the tendency of . . . more dense population . . . will be to a reduction both of the rate of interest and the rate of wages. . . .

. . . let us not forget . . . that the distribution of wealth is even a more important matter than its production (15).

New York opened George's eyes to the sharp contrast between wealth and poverty; on every side could be seen misery contrasted with riches, poverty with power. His silent pledge to do what he could to right these wrongs came to him as if from Heaven; after his return to California the reason for poverty amidst advancing civilization likewise came to him intuitively.

. . . Like a flash it came upon me that there was the reason of advancing poverty with advancing wealth. With the growth of population land grows in value, and the men who work it must pay more for the privilege. I turned back, amidst quiet thought, to the perception that then came to me and has been with me ever since (16).

The "inspiration" and the "call" were not to be denied and in 1871 his first economic venture took form in a 48-page pamphlet entitled *Our Land and Land Policy, National and State* (17). Here his proposal was first set forth although eight years later the more thorough and polished *Progress and Poverty* presented it comprehensively. In the interim George and two partners founded the *San Francisco Daily Evening Post* which provided George with a platform from which he delivered continual barrages directed against land monopoly.

In 1869 George had written a short article on Chinese immigration and had adopted John Stuart Mill's economics without a too thorough analysis. Forwarding a copy to Mill, he had received a very gracious letter in reply. Now, in his paper, Mill's opinions on land were considered and when news arrived of Mill's death in 1873 the *Post* paid warm tribute.

The paper was sold in 1875 and George took the stump for Tilden in the election of the following year. His success as an orator was phenomenal and his fame spread throughout the state. He wrote his mother that

. . . I do not propose to mix in lower politics, nor do I propose to chase after nominations. I will wait until they seek me. I propose to read and study; to write some things which will extend my reputation, and perhaps to deliver some lectures with the same view. And if I live I will make myself known, even in Philadelphia. I aim high . . . not as a matter of vanity, or for the mere pleasure of the thing, but to increase my power and usefulness (18).

In March of 1877 he was asked to deliver an address on political economy at the University of California. There was talk of having George fill the chair of political economy and consequently this was an important opportunity. His lack of formal education might well have been forgotten but the speech he delivered could not easily be overlooked (19). The advanced tenor of the address ended all hope of a professorial chair, but the following Fourth of July he was chosen as the orator of the San Francisco celebration. His oration was the now-famous "Ode to Liberty" (20), but at that time it did not create much discussion. The following September George began his immortal *Progress and Poverty* and, with several interruptions (21), completed this 'holy task' in March, 1879 (22).

The difficulties encountered in obtaining a publisher are of no moment here (23). Ill-fortune descended upon him again and it was not until he returned to New York in search of employment that fortune smiled. Up to his arrival his book had few sales; overnight it leaped into the "best seller" class so that edition after edition was exhausted and translations appeared in several languages (24). From publisher and author George now entered the lecturing field and travelled extensively throughout the world. Several tracts appeared from his pen, notably *The Land Question* (25), *Social Problems* (26), *Property in Land* (27), *A Perplexed Philosopher* (28), and his famous *Protection or Free Trade* (29).

His lectures and trips are unimportant here save that they cast the spotlight of publicity upon him and involved him in political campaigns that ultimately proved his undoing (30). At the age of 51 George was stricken with aphasia but recovered after some months' convalescence.

George first began intensive work on what he thought was to be a primer of political economy, but which broadened under his hand until

it assumed the scope of a complete treatise on economics, a treatise that was to relate the science to all human activity. It was a more ambitious undertaking than anything he had hitherto written, more ambitious in intention, indeed, than even the classics of Smith and Ricardo and Mill, for George was to attempt not only to weld all the material that could be grouped under the shadowy classification of political economy into a unified and comprehensive system of thought, but, of more significance, also to form this refashioned science into a foundation for still another synthetic scheme of a universal philosophy (31).

This work was again interrupted by his love of controversy and in his second campaign for Mayor of New York City, George succumbed to a stroke five days before election (32). His projected masterpiece, *The Science of Political Economy*, was left uncompleted, though not incomplete, and was edited posthumously. It is in this volume, as indicated above, that George's theory of value is logically set forth and with which a succeeding paper will principally deal. The background of his life forms a canvas upon which to paint this theory in the most attractive and understandable colors.

II

THE QUESTION IS OFTEN ASKED, was George primarily an economist, an historian, a sociologist, a philosopher, a politician, or what? (33). Was his interest special or general? Did he have a "single-idea" mind or was his outlook all-embracing? Was he a "forer" or an "ag'in-er"? Was he "bitten" upon his subject or was it one aspect of his philosophy? The answers to these questions are important, for thereby his *magnum opus* is placed in its proper setting.

George's *Progress and Poverty* was his first major work and, although his theory of value was already formulated, the analysis of value as such was not required for that work (34). The book ". . . was necessarily in large measure of a controversial rather than a constructive nature" (35) and to George it seemed as if nothing further would be required to recast political economy. He soon discovered that this view was a mistake and the goal required other works. He eventually realized the need for a primer. The *Science* was to be this elementary text. In the *Science* George definitely cast himself in the role of an economist; was he such prior to it?

The "Introductory" to *Progress and Poverty* presents "The Problem" that George had set himself to solve. Was this one of science or of art? Was it economic or fiction? His opening words leave no

doubt that George considers poverty the greatest scourge of mankind and its eradication the prime problem of all men. Science and knowledge advance ostensibly to wipe it out. Greater and more impressive improvements are brought forth from the armory of science to defeat its ravaging hand. Distress is universal, is confined to no one nation or community, transcends physical lines, and disregards the size of armies, tariffs, institutions, paper money, etc. Greater far than any Black Death is its yearly toll and its ravages are discernible in future years in impeded health or physical deformities. Why? Why should this scourge be visited on the face of the earth to make feast of its inhabitants?

. . . Evidently, beneath all such things as these, we must infer a common cause.

That there is a common cause, and that it is either what we call material progress or something closely connected with material progress, becomes more than an inference when it is noted that the phenomena we class together and speak of as industrial depression are but intensifications of phenomena which always accompany material progress, and which show themselves more clearly and strongly as material progress goes on. Where the conditions to which material progress everywhere tends are most fully realized—that is to say, where population is densest, wealth greatest, and the machinery of production and exchange most highly developed—we find the deepest poverty, the sharpest struggle for existence, and the most of enforced idleness (36).

There is a cause, then, for the squalor and filth in which so many millions of people live, one underlying reason, the solution of which should shake the foundations of our present institutions (37). But to the present day no answer has been given to the masses of people save as opinions or esoteric dogmas. Political economy can, however, give an explanation that is based upon truths and facts recognized by all and tracing its causal relations simply and logically (38). George thus proposes to utilize this science as a means toward the first end, the solution of this paradox, to the ultimate end that recurring depressions be eliminated and poverty eradicated by adherence to the natural laws (39). He thus proposes to beg no question and to shrink from no conclusion but to follow truth to the end (40). And when that truth is found,

To adjust our institutions to growing needs and changing conditions is the task which devolves upon us. Prudence, patriotism, human sympathy, and religious sentiment, alike call upon us to undertake it. There is danger in reckless change; but greater danger in blind con-

servatism. The problems beginning to confront us are grave—so grave that there is fear they may not be solved in time to prevent great catastrophies (41).

George sought the ideal social state, wherein all should have equality of opportunity plus the opportunity itself and in which each should receive in proportion to his contribution (42). This ideal was within the reach of man if but certain principles were followed: "The 'science' of political economy was to him a body of principles to provide the basis of policies to be executed . . ." (43). The world was his laboratory and each nation his testing-ground. Into the crucible of public debate he threw himself, not for the purpose of mortal glory, but because his duty to mankind called (44). In order to understand ". . . one of the world's great social philosophers, certainly the greatest which this country has produced" (45), his sympathetic and deeply religious nature, amounting almost to religious fervor, must be taken into account (46). George was a "theological-sociologist" (47), interested in man's welfare and well-being (48). Whatever tools could aid him in forging the weapons with which to attack the House of Have were his (49); whatever the consequences, he welcomed them (50). He believed that man should take a woman to wife and that it was ordained so to be (51). His sincere conviction in his divine mission is best exemplified in his adoption of Christ's words (52):

THINK NOT THAT I AM COME TO SEND
PEACE ON EARTH. I COME NOT
TO SEND PEACE, BUT A SWORD.

*Mid-Valley College of Law
Van Nuys, Calif. 91401*

1. The "authoritative" biography of Henry George is that by Henry George, Jr., his son, published as Vols. IX and X of the ten-volume set of George's complete works, the publishers being Doubleday & McClure Co., New York, 1898, and also Doubleday, Page & Co., Garden City, N.Y., 1906-1911. Numerous others appear in many works or essays but, for our purposes, reference will be had to the most comprehensive study of George's thought yet written, *The Philosophy of Henry George*, by George R. Geiger (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1933). George attracted many brilliant scholars to the study of his ideas; see, for example, Charles A. Barker, *Henry George* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1955).

2. Geiger, *Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

5. Elbert Hubbard's *Little Journeys to the Homes of Great Reformers* (East Aurora, N.Y.: The Roycrafters, 1907), Vol. XX, no. 2, states, at page 46f.: ". . . Henry George moused nights at the Quaker Apprentice's Library, and he also read Franklin's 'Autobiography'; his mind was full of Poor Richard maxims

which he sprinkled through his diary; but best of all, with seven other printers he formed another 'Junta', and they met twice a week to discuss 'poetry, economics and Mormonism.' It was very sophomoric, of course, but boys of eighteen who study anything and defend it in essays and orations are right out on the highway which leads to superiority."

6. Geiger, *Philosophy*, p. 25ff.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

9. During all this time his letters home show that his interest in the religious life had not waned, although he had rejected formal religion. *Ibid.*, p. 30ff.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

11. Letter to his sister Jennie, September 15, 1861.

12. Quoted from *Life* by Geiger, *Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

13. *Ibid.*

14. For a most interesting account of George's work on the *Alta* and the *Times*, his anonymous contributions and his "capture," leading to his advancement, see the biographical pamphlet sketch under the title *Henry George*, by Henry Rose, published in London by William Reeves in 1884, at pages 19 to 20. The New York Public Library has this pamphlet in its bound pamphlet collection under "Biography," ap. v. 203, #8. See also Barker, *op. cit.*

15. *Overland Monthly*, October, 1868; Geiger, *Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 42f.

17. Whether true or not, Edward Robeson Taylor, in his article "Henry George, The Man," *Twentieth Century Magazine*, Boston, Vol. 6, No. 6 (October, 1912), pp. 13-18, tells the story of being invited by George to listen to a manuscript ". . . on the cause of industrial depression and of increase of want with increase of wealth, and was to indicate a remedy." At its conclusion he suggested expansion and elaboration beyond the scope of a magazine article into a book. "What I said had such immediate impression upon him that he resolved to cast aside the article and to do as I had suggested."

18. *Ibid.*, p. 46 note.

19. This speech is indeed one of the gems which brighten the thought of Henry George. In its chronological order it is doubly important for, besides setting forth his rapid advance in bringing his ideas to fruition, it serves best to indicate the method he intended to employ in investigating the great enigma of the times.

20. Reprinted with practically no changes in the tenth book of *Progress and Poverty*.

21. For a lecture "Why Work is Scarce, Wages Low and Labor Restless" in March, 1878; "Moses," in the same year before the Young Men's Hebrew Association of San Francisco; a political race for delegate to the State constitutional convention, 1878 (he was defeated); service as secretary of Board of Trustees for the first Free Public Library of San Francisco and the birth of his fourth child Anna Angela. (Geiger, *Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 49ff.)

22. The words, 'holy task,' are used deliberately. George's entire background, his "flash" and "inspiration," and the following excerpts, disclose sufficient reason therefor; "When I had finished the last page, in the dead of the night, when I was entirely alone, I flung myself on my knees and wept like a child. The rest was in the Master's hands. That is a feeling that has never left; that is constantly with me. And it has led me up and up. It has made me a better and a purer man. It has been to me a religion, strong and deep though vague—a religion of which I never like to speak, or to make my outward manifestation, but yet that I try to follow." Reprinted in Geiger, *Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 51. Also see there his letter to his father; "It is with a feeling of gratitude to Our Father in Heaven that I send you a printed copy of this book. I am grateful that I have been enabled to live to write it, and that you have been enabled to live and see it. It represents a great deal of work and a good deal of sacrifice, but now it is done. It will not be recognized at first—maybe not for some time—but it will ultimately be considered a great

book—will be published in both hemispheres and be translated into different languages. This I know, though neither of us may ever see it here. But the belief I have expressed in this book, the belief that there is yet another life for us, makes that of little moment."

23. Appleton in New York, then Harper and Scribner rejected it; Appleton reconsidered at the exhortation of friends and consented on condition the plates were supplied it. George himself set type and an Author's Edition was struck in 1879, the Appleton edition appearing January of the following year.

24. Geiger, *Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 55ff. Geiger lays the success of the book to the depression years of 1873-1877 which resulted in numerous labor uprisings and clashes and a "labor" consciousness.

25. Originally *The Irish Land Question*.

26. These were originally a series of articles in *Frank Leslie's Weekly* under the title, "Problems of the Times," and were intended as a counter-attraction to Professor William Graham Sumner's (Yale) articles appearing in *Harper's Weekly*. See Geiger, *Philosophy*, p. 63.

27. Geiger, *Philosophy*, p. 65.

28. A polemic against Herbert Spencer's apostasy on land reform.

29. This entire volume was reprinted in the *Congressional Record* and franked throughout the country. Its sales and circulation have been exceeded, among economic works, only by *Progress and Poverty* itself. George also wrote his *Condition of Labor*, his reply to the encyclical letters of Pope Leo XIII.

30. This biographical account is intended to furnish a background for George's theory of value. Numerous items, important in any biography, however sketchy, are accordingly omitted. The reader is referred to his *Life* or to Geiger's and Barker's excellent works, especially, for more detailed accounts of the campaigns and lectures.

31. Geiger, *Philosophy*, p. 72.

32. "The election was almost forgotten in the city's grief, and as the body lay in state all of Sunday in the Grand Central Palace the world paid its homage to the power of sincerity. One hundred thousand mourners, unable to gain admittance, prayed in the street outside, and the vast funeral cortege that followed the body down to City Hall and across the Brooklyn Bridge proved to be one of the deepest tributes ever paid to a private citizen." Geiger, *Philosophy*, p. 78.

33. Because of his contributions in each of these fields, all have claimed him. This is a pleasant fate reserved for social philosophers, for example Plato, Karl Marx, John Dewey, etc.

34. "It is quite possible, I think, to fix the meaning of the term wealth without first fixing the meaning of the term value. This I did in *Progress and Poverty*, where my purpose in defining the meaning of wealth was to fix the meaning of its sub-term, capital, in order to see whether or not it is true that wages are drawn from capital." *The Science of Political Economy* (New York: Doubleday & McClure edition, 1898), p. 211. This volume will be hereafter referred to as *Science* unless otherwise noted; page numberings are taken from this edition.

35. *Ibid.*, "Preface," p. vii.

36. *Progress and Poverty* (New York, Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition, 1933), p. 6. This edition will hereafter be used unless otherwise noted.

37. "This association of poverty with progress is the great enigma of our times. It is the central fact from which spring industrial, social, and political difficulties that perplex the world, and with which statesmanship and philanthropy and education grapple in vain. From it come the clouds that overhang the future of the most progressive and self-reliant nations. It is the riddle which the Sphinx of Fate puts to our civilization, and which not to answer is to be destroyed. So long as all the increased wealth which modern progress brings goes but to build up great fortunes, to increase luxury and make sharper the contrast between the House of Have and the House of Want, progress is not

real and cannot be permanent. The reaction must come." *Progress and Poverty*, p. 108.

38. "It must be within the province of political economy to give such an answer. For political economy is not a set of dogmas. It is the explanation of a certain set of facts. It is the science which, in the sequence of certain phenomena, seeks to trace mutual relations and to identify cause and effects, just as the physical sciences seek to do in other sets of phenomena. It lays its foundations upon firm ground. The premises from which it makes its deductions are truths which have the highest sanction; axioms which we all recognize; upon which we safely base the reasoning and actions of every-day life, and which may be reduced to the metaphysical expression of the physical law that motion seeks the line of least resistance—*viz.*, that men seek to gratify their desires with the least exertion." *Progress and Poverty*, p. 12.

39. "I propose in the following pages to attempt to solve by the methods of political economy the great problem I have outlined. I propose to seek the law which associates poverty with progress, and increases want with advancing wealth; and I believe that in the explanation of this paradox we shall find the explanation of those recurring seasons of industrial and commercial paralysis which, viewed independently of the relations to more general phenomena, seem so inexplicable." *Progress and Poverty*, p. 12.

40. "I propose to beg no question, to shrink from no conclusion, but to follow truth wherever it may lead. Upon us is the responsibility of seeking the law, for in the very heart of our civilization to-day women faint and little children moan. But what that law may prove to be is not our affair. If the conclusions that we reach run counter to our prejudices, let us not flinch; if they challenge institutions that have long been deemed wise and natural, let us not turn back." *Progress and Poverty*, p. 13.

41. *Social Problems* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1936), p. 7. This edition will be used throughout.

42. "There are deep wrongs in the present constitution of society, but they are not wrongs inherent in the constitution of man nor in those social laws which are as truly the laws of the Creator as are the laws of the physical universe. They are wrongs resulting from bad adjustments which it is within our power to amend. The ideal social state is not that in which each gets an equal amount of wealth, but in which each gets in proportion to his contribution to the general stock. And in such a social state there would not be less incentive to exertion than now; there would be far more incentive. Men will be more industrious and more moral, better workmen and better citizens, if each takes his earnings and carries them home to his family, than where they put their earnings in a 'pot' and gamble for them until some have far more than they could have earned, and others have little or nothing." *Social Problems*, p. 57.

43. John Dewey in his foreword to Geiger's *Philosophy*, p. x.

44. See Letter of George partially reprinted in Geiger, *Philosophy, op. cit.*, p. 76.

45. Dewey, foreword to Geiger's *Philosophy*, p. xiii.

46. See, for an excellent illustration of the manner in which George begets his conclusions from purely theological premises, his "The Condition of Labor," his open letter to Pope Leo XIII, in *The Land Question* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1935), pp. 3-6. They are so pertinent and to the point that they are set forth at length:

"Our posulates are all stated or implied in your Encyclical. They are the primary perceptions of human reason, the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith:

"We hold: That—

"This world is the creation of God.

"The men brought into it for the brief period of their earthly lives are the equal creatures of his bounty, the equal subjects of his provident care.

"By his constitution man is beset by physical wants, on the satisfaction of

which depend not only the maintenance of his physical life but also the development of his intellectual and spiritual life.

"God has made the satisfaction of these wants dependent on man's own exertions, giving him the power and laying on him the injunction to labor—a power that of itself raises him far above the brute, since we may reverently say that it enables him to become as it were a helper in the creative work.

"God has not put on man the task of making bricks without straw. With the need for labor and the power to labor he has also given to man the material for labor. This material is land—man physically being a land animal, who can live only on and from land, and can use other elements, such as air, sunshine, and water, only by the use of land.

"Being the equal creatures of the Creator, equally entitled under his providence to live their lives and satisfy their needs, men are equally entitled to the use of land, and any adjustment that denies this equal use of land is morally wrong.

"As to the right of ownership, we hold: That—

"Being created individuals, with individual wants and powers, men are individually entitled (subject of course to the moral obligations that arise from such relations as that of the family) to the use of their own powers and the enjoyment of the results.

"There thus arises, anterior to human law, and deriving its validity from the law of God, a right of private ownership in things produced by labor—a right that the possessor may transfer, but of which to deprive him without his will is theft.

"This right of property, originating in the right of the individual to himself, is the only full and complete right of property. It attaches to things produced by labor, but cannot attach to things created by God.

"Thus, if a man take a fish from the ocean he acquires a right of property in that fish, which exclusive right he may transfer by sale or gift. But he cannot obtain a similar right of property in the ocean, so that he may sell *it* or give *it* or forbid others to use *it*.

"Or, if he set up a windmill he acquires a right of property in the things such use of wind enables him to produce. But he cannot claim a right of property in the wind itself, so that he may sell *it* or forbid others to use *it*.

"Or, if he cultivate grain he acquires a right of property in the grain his labor brings forth. But he cannot obtain a similar right of property in the sun which ripened it or the soil on which it grew. For these things are of the continuing gifts of God to all generations of men, which all may use, but none may claim as his alone.

"To attach to things created by God the same right of private ownership that justly attaches to things produced by labor is to impair and deny the true rights of property. For a man who out of the proceeds of his labor is obliged to pay another man for the use of ocean or air or sunshine or soil, all of which are to men involved in the single term land, is in this deprived of his rightful property and thus robbed.

"As to the use of land, we hold: That—

"While the right of ownership that justly attaches to things produced by labor cannot attach to land, there may attach to land a right of possession. As your Holiness says, 'God has not granted the earth to mankind in general in the sense that all without distinction can deal with it as they please,' and regulations necessary for its best use may be fixed by human laws. But such regulations must conform to the moral law—must secure to all equal participation in the advantages of God's general bounty."

47. *Ibid.*, p. 67; "Believing that the social question is at bottom a religious question, we deem it of happy augury to the world that in your Encyclical the most influential of all religious teachers has directed attention to the condition of labor."

48. It may not be amiss to incorporate a bit of George's sarcastic wit, especially as it bears upon the point in question. In "Property in Land," a set-to

between the Duke of Argyll and George, incorporated in *The Land Question*, *op. cit.*, p. 73, George relates the following incident:

"I met accidentally in Scotland, recently, a lady of the small landlord class, and the conversation turned upon the poverty of the Highland people. 'Yes, they are poor,' she said, 'But they deserve to be poor; they are so dirty. I have no sympathy with women who won't keep their houses neat and their children tidy.'

"I suggested that neatness could hardly be expected from women who every day had to trudge for miles with creels of peat and seaweed on their backs.

"'Yes,' she said, 'they do have to work hard. But that is not so sad as the hard lives of the horses. Did you ever think of the horses? They have to work all their lives—till they can't work any longer. It makes me sad to think of it. There ought to be big farms where horses should be turned out after they had worked some years, so that they might have time to enjoy themselves before they died.'

"'But the people?' I interposed. 'They, too, have to work till they can't work longer.'

"'Oh, yes!' she replied. 'But the people have souls, and even if they do have a hard time of it here, they will, if they are good, go to heaven when they die, and be happy hereafter. But the poor beasts have no souls, and if they don't enjoy themselves here, they have no chance of enjoying themselves at all. It is too bad!'"

49. In *Protection or Free Trade* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1935), p. 4*ff.*, George uses the tariff debate as a springboard for his inquiries into the condition of labor. "My aim in this inquiry is to ascertain beyond peradventure whether protection or free trade best accords with the interests of those who live by their labor. I differ with those who say that with the rate of wages the State has no concern. I hold with those who deem the increase of wages a legitimate purpose of public policy. To raise and maintain wages is the great object that all who live by wages ought to seek, and workmen are right in supporting any measure that will attain that object. Nor in this way are they acting selfishly, for, while the question of wages is the most important of questions to laborers, it is also the most important of questions to society at large. Whatever improves the condition of the lowest and broadest social stratum must promote the true interests of all."

50. After receiving the advice of his physician that a second mayoralty campaign in New York might be fatal, George penned the following words to his wife:

"Annie, remember what you declared Michael Davitt should do at the time of the Phoenix Park murders in 1882—go to Dublin and be with his people, even though it should cost him his life. I told you then that I might some day ask you to remember those words. I ask you now. Will you fail to tell me to go into this campaign? The people want me; they say they have no one else upon whom they can unite. It is more than a question of good government. If I enter the field it will be a question of natural rights, even though as Mayor I might not directly be able to do a great deal for natural rights. New York will become the theatre of the world and my success will plunge our cause into world politics.

Mrs. George answered, "You should do your duty at whatever cost." Geiger, *Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

51. ". . . for the purpose of raising revenue (we) should resort to some system which will not tax the mechanic as heavily as the millionaire, and will not call on the man who rears a family to pay on that account more than the man who shirks his natural obligation, and leaves some woman whom in the scheme of nature it was intended that he should support, to take care of herself as best she can." *Protection of Free Trade*, p. 79.

52. *Science*, p. xxxii.