

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

PHILOSOPHY needs no definition. It may be taken to mean whatever is called up in the mind by the word itself. Yet there may be a need to examine the type of material that should be admitted to the "ivory tower." Philosophers themselves have never been averse to extending their dominion over all branches of human speculation; they have been the synthesizers of thought, and their work that of intellectual unification. Too often, however, that synthesis has not been a completely catholic one, but has instead been confined to a select group of disciplines, to mathematics, logic, metaphysics, and a mythological psychology. It is true that much more recently biology, and now physics, that charmer of contemporary philosophy, have gained recognition, but sciences as dismal as economics or as worldly as sociology have not yet found a complete welcome in that philosophic melting-pot. Perhaps social and economic problems, unlike those of metaphysics and epistemology, have been too workaday and crass for the refinement that characterizes much of the technique of philosophy.

Such problems have been too earthy even for moral theorists, and so ethical systems have sailed gaily on their way to some goal of good without any overnice concern with the very conditions that have given birth to social and moral problems. The riddles that have attracted the ethical theorist have been so often only the product of metaphysical workshops, while those infinitely more direct and immediate

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ethical problems that are the consequences of a basically mal-adjusted social order here and now have been carefully put aside. Of course, if we translate such problems into the language of a more abstract vocabulary and call them the "problem of evil," then moral philosophy has concerned itself with such affairs—but how? Chiefly by attempting to explain away, to deny, even to justify, this "evil" by designating it as some form of good in disguise, by making it the shadows in the great cosmic landscape, or the discords which go to consummate the eternal harmony of things. That is hardly an efficient procedure for handling any problem of evil. Something more operative than stoic resignation, or metaphysical explanation, or any other philosophic anodyne, is required if the direct, recurring, practical problems of poverty, vice, crime, misery—which make up what we mean by social evil—are to be solved. Philosophy traditionally has discussed evil; perhaps there should be an attempt to do something about it.

Is it not possible that philosophy's synthesizing function, at least so far as moral philosophy is concerned, has failed to include the very material that would be instrumental in making intelligible the background of moral difficulties? Certainly there has been no lack of concern over the traditional ethical questions throughout the history of philosophy, but just as certainly has there been a lack of anything approaching a clear-cut realization of the social ills that underlie moral problems, and of the social conditions that underlie moral theories. There is no intention here, however, of suggesting that philosophy must in any unseemly fashion attempt to cope hand-to-hand with social problems; that perhaps would be demanding too much of a discipline whose traditions point in another direction. And neither is there any intention here to transform philosophy into economics or sociology. In fact, it is clearly recognized that these problems

of economic and social maladjustment must first be phrased in moral terms if they are to be handled by professional philosophy. But that is the all-important step, for such a rephrasing will necessarily suggest that, in a complementary fashion, moral problems must be translated into the vocabulary of the social sciences. The two must function, as shall be noted later, in the rôles of ends and means, the ends relating to the characteristic moral goals and goods, and the means to those methods, largely social and economic in nature, through which moral ends may be approached. And the statement that ethical theory and social theory must cooperate if moral philosophy is to become operative and significant, is nothing else than the statement that ends and means can never function as discontinuous entities, but must always act as a unit. There can be no divorce, as has been customary in moral theory, between ends which are intrinsic (moral) and those which are merely instrumental (social and economic).

But what has this brief mention of social instrumentalism¹ to do with the work of Henry George? Just this. If a new conception of moral philosophy is beginning to alter the very province and function of ethical theory, and if philosophy is to be not only permitted but indeed obligated to busy itself with political and social and economic matters, then no serious and carefully elaborated contribution to social ethics can be disregarded. If the riddles of poverty,

¹It is well realized, of course, that these expressions are perhaps trite repetitions of what may be very familiar material, but still it is felt that the pragmatic approach to ethics is of such significance that repetition may not be too much out of place; these pages do not constitute an exposition but are merely sketchy outlines of an exposition. The classic statement of the thoughts that are inadequately expressed here is undoubtedly Professor Dewey's *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, particularly Chapters V and VII, and more specifically those challenging passages of pages 123-126. For this relation between ethics and economics, see also his recent essay in *Living Philosophies* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1931), pp. 29-31.

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and the human wretchedness and despair born of poverty, are to be answered (and has philosophy a nobler task?) then no earnest proposal can be slighted. In the war against misery there is a need for every weapon. Perhaps the concepts of Henry George will suggest a new technique to be employed in economic pathology, new, that is, in respect to its use (or lack of use) by those who should be directing the consideration of social problems. Perhaps his work may offer a sane and realistic approach to the traditional moral problems and suggest a fusion of ethics and economics. Whether or not his proposals are of value in such a reorganization and restatement is a matter of polemics, but a knowledge of his work must be an essential part—essential, it is insisted, for those interested in the problems of social philosophy as well as for those more directly concerned with economics—of the equipment of any one who approaches this type of material with sincerity and acuteness. As Professor Dewey writes: “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.”²

²“An Appreciation of Henry George,” the Introduction to *Significant Paragraphs from Progress and Poverty*, edited by Professor Harry Gunnison Brown (New York, Doubleday, Doran, 1928), p. 2. Professor Dewey continues:

“The fact that Henry George has an ardent group of disciples who have a practical program for reform of taxation has tended to obscure from the recognition of students of social theory that 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. Were he a native of some European country, it is safe to assert that he would long ago have taken the place upon the roll of the world’s thinkers which belongs to him, irrespective, moreover, of adherence to his practical plan. But for some reason we Americans are slow to perceive and celebrate intellectual claims in comparison with the merits of inventors, political leaders and great industrialists. In the case of the author of ‘Progress and Poverty’ the failure has doubtless been accentuated in academic circles by the fact that Henry George thought, wrote, and worked outside of them. And in the world at large, in spite of the fact that no works on political economy have had the circulation and reading obtained by his writings, discussion of the practical merits of his plan of reform of taxation has actually

The "theoretical contribution" of George which Professor Dewey suggests, it may be anticipated here, was first of all an insistent attempt to clarify the relation between ethics and economics. Was it possible, George asked, to construct or realize a sane and rational system of ethics in an economically unbalanced society such as that in which man finds himself? Were not moral theories doomed to sterility because of their persistent refusal to recognize that moral problems were real, not philosophical, that instead of being "absolute" they were symptomatic of a social environment? George's demand for economic and social reform was a demand for a new approach to the foundations of ethical concepts, and it was his moral purpose that gave life and richness to the fiscal details of his economics. For him, the superstructure of moral philosophy required a groundwork of political economy. That is to say, George assumed that there was no distinct dualism between the realms of morals and of economics, that there was no insulation which prevented the one from coming into contact with the other. Such a cleavage has been one of the characteristic distinctions made by traditional philosophy; the moral order has been not only divorced from the problems of economics—that is, the problems involved in man's efforts to satisfy his material wants—it has been made superior to such affairs, and has often been given authority over what was regarded as the less exalted and abstract business of a cruder and more "impure" realm.³

tended to blur his outstanding position as a thinker. This has been the case because the enormous inertia of social habit and the force of tremendous vested interests have depreciated his intellectual claims in order to strengthen opposition to his practical measures. . . ."

This is a serious indictment of the usual academic neglect of George's work, and suggests that such neglect may indeed be dependent upon something entirely extrinsic to his work.

³ Yet even Plato, despite his fierce insistence upon an ideal realm of eternal essences, opens the discussion of his perfect city with those most material demands for "food," "a dwelling," and "clothing." (*Republic*, II, 369.)

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Such a separation of a moral order from a discipline that treats of the satisfying of human wants must be, of course, subject to all the dialectical difficulties that arise from any discontinuity between ends and means. An end detached from the means by which it may be approached must necessarily remain meaningless, and the attempt to make a discrete end sovereign over an equally discrete means can be nothing else than futile. Ends and means cannot function independently; if they are to operate at all they must do so as functions of each other. To be of service a system of final moral ends cannot be set out in some great aloof void beyond or above "economic" life; it cannot hope to function, as did the Aristotelian Unmoved Mover, merely by the force of a subtle and compelling magnetism. It is clear that such a suggestion in no way invalidates the utility of ends in any system of ethics, but it does hold that the end is valuable only as it remains in contact with the means. The ideals of the Good, Duty, or Right, inasmuch as they are postulated as the *ends* of ethical life, cannot hope to command the *means* of life, which are fundamentally economic in character, without having some earthy and "impure" commerce with them. In plainer words, before men can live well or nobly, they must just live. Before ideals can be realized, there are wants that must be satisfied.

Between "ideals" and "wants," moreover, there still must be no sharp distinction. The two may be qualitatively different, but only to the degree in which wants among themselves qualitatively differ. Wants are not, as were the pleasures and pains of early Utilitarianism, completely homogeneous, and neither do they vary only quantitatively; they are "higher" and "lower," "intellectual" and "material." Therefore it is easy to see how those yearnings and desires that are created by man's unsatisfied "higher" life will readily come to be dignified and perhaps hypostasized as lofty ideals and

final ends, while his more material wants will be relegated to the status of animal necessities. There can be no quarrel with such an æsthetic division,⁴ provided, however, that this distinction does not develop into a cleavage that will prevent the one order of wants from having any intercourse with the other, or into an aristocratic moral domination that will attempt to subjugate and chasten the common herd of "lower" wants without any real understanding of their function, or their potential capacity for "upward" redirection.

This last suggestion as to the possibility of a readjustment of wants (wants in this particular discussion are understood to be those that have been socially developed and modified rather than the cruder and less articulated biologic wants) brings us again to George's attempted fusion of economics and ethics, and, more particularly, to the problem that always haunted him—the riddle of poverty. George's reaction to poverty was not simply the sentimental revolt against misery and injustice that motivates every social reformer. It was rather the realization of what might be termed the pathological function of want and the fear of want. Poverty for him was much more than the squalid, unæsthetic sight that greets the social worker; it was, in addition, a conditioning element of much of our social life, the background against which were formed so many of man's habits. It was poverty that elevated man's material wants to their dominant position, and it was poverty that laughed at the higher wants, at those social ideals of man, for they were ludicrously remote from the problems of earning one's daily bread. It was in this directive power of poverty and the dread of poverty that George found what he felt to be the dis-

⁴ This suggested "æsthetic" emphasis may recall Croce's division of the Practical into the Economic and the Ethic, the former concerning immediate, utilitarian ends, and the latter universal and transcendental ones. Yet notwithstanding his interest in political economy, he does not appear to have realized sufficiently the effect of the more common matters of "economic" upon such ethical and transcendental ideals.

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tortion in man's outlook upon the social order. Poverty—or, if it is preferred, the precarious conditions of economic life—played a major part in the normal fixation of wants, and it was thus a conditioning factor, not merely economically but ethically.

Economic precariousness accounted for the emphasis upon material wants that ethical systems have always deplored. The exaggerated stressing of those capacities for ruthless self-advancement, which has seemed so remote from the pure standards of moral conduct, must be traced in part to the fact that the social order, as it is at present constituted, places a premium upon the power to satisfy certain wants, and penalizes whatever attention is paid to other wants. It can hardly be taken for granted, for example, that all the artificial energies that go into business are merely the result of man's natural interest in making a living. The insecurity of economic life, the fact that there are countless thousands who are living on the bare margin of subsistence—and this marginal existence is not confined only to the lowest classes in the economic order—must suggest possible causes for such a direction of energies to the service of the material wants. And that a change in the condition of economic precariousness, were that possible, might effect some shifting of this habitual emphasis is an implication that cannot very well be disregarded.

Thus, George offered the assumption that social wants and social ideals do not occupy separate universes of discourse, that economics and ethics are not divided one from the other by an unbridgeable chasm. A dualism that excluded the problem of poverty from moral philosophy was an anomaly, for poverty has been an ever-present condition of man's life, of that strange life which has created all ethical theory. *George was certain that it was the determining influence of poverty that had warped man's realization of*

*what constituted the real "goods" of life, and he was just as certain that only the removal of poverty could clear the channel through which human energies might finally reach those vague ideals which had not yet been obscured by the economic struggle. There was then, for him, a direct and obvious relation between economic conditions and the moral life of man, a relationship that was certain, immediate, and clearly understandable.*⁵

⁵ George's approach is illustrated by many eloquent passages in his work. For example:

"It is not without reason that the wise crow in the Ramayana, the crow Bushanda, 'who has lived in every part of the universe, and knows all events from the beginnings of time,' declares that, though contempt of worldly advantages is necessary to supreme felicity, yet the keenest pain possible is inflicted by extreme poverty. The poverty to which in advancing civilization great masses of men are condemned, is not the freedom from distraction and temptation which sages have sought and philosophers have praised; it is a degrading and embruting slavery, that cramps the higher nature, and dulls the finer feelings, and drives men by its pain to acts which the brutes would refuse. It is into this helpless, hopeless poverty, that crushes manhood and destroys womanhood, that robs even childhood of its innocence and joy, that the working classes are being driven by a force which acts upon them like a resistless and un pitying machine. . . .

"Carlyle somewhere says that poverty is the hell of which the modern Englishman is most afraid. And he is right. Poverty is the open-mouthed, relentless hell which yawns beneath civilized society. And it is hell enough. . . . For poverty is not merely deprivation; it means shame, degradation; the searing of the most sensitive parts of our moral and mental nature as with hot irons; the denial of the strongest impulses and the sweetest affections; the wrenching of the most vital nerves. . . . And thus the sting of want and the fear of want make men admire above all things the possession of riches, and to become wealthy is to become respected, and admired, and influential. Get money—honestly, if you can, but at any rate get money! This is the lesson that society is daily and hourly dinning in the ears of its members. . . . And so in society, as at present constituted, men are greedy for wealth because the conditions of distribution are so unjust that instead of each being sure of enough, many are certain to be condemned to want. It is the 'devil catch the hindmost' of present social adjustments that causes the race and scramble for wealth, in which all considerations of justice, mercy, religion, and sentiment are trampled under foot; in which men forget their own souls, and struggle to the very verge of the grave for what they cannot take beyond." *Progress and Poverty*, pp. 354, 455-463. (The edition is Vol. I of the ten-volume set of George's complete works, the Fels Fund Library Edition, published by Doubleday, Page & Co., Garden City, N. Y., 1906-1911. This edition will be used throughout, and, unless otherwise noted, the quotations from George's works will be from it.)

"The fact is, that the qualities that raise man above the animal are superimposed on those which he shares with the animal, and that it is only

Throughout this brief discussion it may have been noticed that the fact that our economic system is in so sadly a muddled state that any permanent and worth-while adjustment of moral values under present conditions is almost impossible has confidently been taken for granted. And there will be no attempt made in this essay to justify that assumption. Social maladjustment is so apparent that any elaborate attempt either to prove or disprove its existence would seem almost ludicrous. This does not refer to the phenomenon of recurring depressions. The social maladjustment that is being taken for granted as obvious here is a chronic rather than an acute condition. It is, for example, even more glaringly apparent during the sway of prosperity myths. In other words, it is being accepted as patent that poverty (if the correct relative rather than absolute criteria are em-

as he is relieved from the wants of his animal nature that his intellectual and moral nature can grow. Compel a man to drudgery for the necessities of animal existence, and he will lose the incentive to industry—the progenitor of skill—and will do only what he is forced to do. Make his condition such that it cannot be much worse, while there is little hope that anything he can do will make it much better, and he will cease to look beyond the day. Deny him leisure—and leisure does not mean the want of employment, but the absence of the need which forces to uncongenial employment—and you cannot, even by running the child through a common school and supplying the man with a newspaper, make him intelligent. . . . Poverty is the Slough of Despond which Bunyan saw in his dream, and into which good books may be tossed forever without result. To make people industrious, prudent, skillful, and intelligent, they must be relieved from want. If you would have the slave show the virtues of the freeman, you must first make him free. . . .

“No sooner are his (man’s) wants satisfied than new wants arise. Food he wants first, as does the beast; shelter next, as does the beast; and these given, his reproductive instincts assert their sway, as do those of the beast. But here man and beast part company. The beast never goes further; the man has but set his feet on the first step of an infinite progression . . . away from and above the beast. The demand for quantity once satisfied, he seeks quality.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 307-308; 135.) And it was upon that “infinite progression,” upon those restless attempts of man to satisfy the wants of “quality,” that George founded his Utopia.

In another connection George states: “I speak of this for the purpose of showing how nearly the field of material desires and satisfactions, within which the sphere of political economy lies, comes to including all human desires and satisfactions.” *The Science of Political Economy*, p. 84. (This work comprises Vols. VI and VII, consecutively paged, of the edition mentioned above.)

ployed) is nowhere permanently and significantly on the decrease; that crime, both in quantity and quality—i. e., in degree of viciousness—is decidedly on the uptrend; that the stupendous triumphs in medicine are persistently and relentlessly opposed by the negative forces originating in the lack of social hygiene (technological being opposed by economic forces); that monopoly and “big business,” the whole “merger” technique of modern industry is slowly concentrating wealth and power, and ever widening the gap between the two extremes in the distribution of the product of economic enterprise. The solutions of the problems arising in the field of economic production have not been met by like advances in solving the infinitely more urgent and menacing problems presented to us by an archaic and vicious system of economic distribution—again that sad contrast between “technical” and “social” progress.

Is there any need of figures and reports to demonstrate that poverty and crime and vice exist, and all the despair and degradation that flow from want? Do we require statistics to realize that we are no nearer a solution of fundamental moral and social problems than we ever were? Can it be anything but obvious that “scientific” and “technical” advances have nowhere been paralleled by progress in advancing human welfare? “Where is the moral progress that corresponds to our economic accomplishments? . . . How undeveloped are our politics, how crude and primitive our education, how passive and inert our morals . . .”⁶ It is surely a serious indictment that the problem of social misery is still unsolved, and it is an indictment not only of economics but one that must be answered by philosophy as well, for it can be only a short-sighted view that sees in the phenomenon of poverty⁷ simply the need for a more efficient adjustment

⁶ Professor Dewey in *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, pp. 125-126.

⁷ “Poverty” in this discussion is intended to bear a heavy burden. It should connote the misery and wretchedness and injustice that fester in a

of economic operations. Moral philosophy as well as economic philosophy must share the burden, for an instrumentalist ethics cannot hope to function, as did perhaps rational or absolutistic ethics, in a "passive" and "inert" dimension.

The problem, therefore, that George faced was the problem of changing the economic background against which man's life was lived, so that man himself might be changed. It was an attempt to approach morals by way of economics. It was a conviction that there could be no dualistic severance of ethical ideals and ends from material means. George's purpose, his goal, was the same as that of every social reformer, the introduction of an order of society in which some of man's ethical visions might be realized. His method of reaching such a goal was a unique and essentially an original contribution to the history of reform programs, but in this preliminary approach to George, it is his fusion of moral ends and economic means that is being emphasized. His work contained, on the one hand, a scathing, passionate indictment of existing conditions, and a vision of a new order of things; and, on the other, a penetrating and profound economic treatise that analyzed the causes of those conditions and pointed the way to a solution which would realize that vision. Indictments and visions, however, are so often mere pious protestations and vague dreams; and economic treatises, in their scientific pretensions, are sometimes unwittingly and many times almost deliberately shortsighted. But in George ethical visions and schemes of economics functioned together. He recognized that moral hopes and Utopian prophecies must be related to things fundamentally tangible. There was no divorce between "higher" and "lower" as applied to ideals and wants, but rather a

society that is economically unbalanced. It is the very symbol of social evil. Furthermore, it is being assumed here that poverty is something to be remedied and not merely accepted, and so those attitudes of complacent acceptance or of bored resignation or of æsthetic distaste will be disregarded.

synthesis of the two. They were not separate realms, but different levels or different points of view of one process, just as is the case with all ends and means. His ultimate concerns were dominantly ethical; his immediate attention was with economics; but between "ultimate" and "immediate" there was no chasm.

There must be the insistence, then, that the problem of poverty with which George was contending is essentially, despite its economic phrasing, an ethical and philosophical problem. In fact, this entire approach to George's work may be characterized either as an economic interpretation of ethics ("economic," in this discussion, applying to questions of means, of programs, of "environmental" changes, and "ethics" to that group of ends and ideals and goals that stand out before every social reformer as his guide and vision) or as an ethical approach to economics. George must be appreciated not as just the "single taxer," as is so often the case, not as an economist concerned primarily with the technical details of a practical scheme of taxation, but as a moral and social philosopher who has attempted to secure an inseparable union of economics and ethics. His particular program of means was, of course, vital, but back of his fiscal proposals and back of his detailed and elaborate analysis of economics, lay a zealous endeavor to contribute to a solution of the age-old moral problems. It is unnecessary to mention that this insistence upon the ultimate moral destination and purpose of an economic program must not in any sense be interpreted as a disparagement or belittling of such a program. That would be not only a stupid slighting of what is really George's distinct contribution to economic theory, but also a contradiction of what has just been stressed as the important functional relationship between ends and means. It would be of a piece with the traditional, abortive failure on the part of so many

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moral theorists to become sufficiently concerned with the specific methods through which alone goals can be reached. It is always a question of means with which one deals directly and immediately. Ends are present, to be sure, but only as the last step in a progression of means, and not as something which lies across the hill or at the end of a rainbow. Ends can never function without means, whereas means, to some extent, can generate their own ends. Thus, once more, the major problem of George—that of poverty and its effects—was a problem of economics *and* morals, and its solution demanded the fusion of means (economic) with ends (moral).

As a corollary of that more fundamental problem, or rather as the background against which it appeared in relief, was the paradox that alliterated through George's work, the paradox of "progress and poverty," of "wealth and want." Poverty itself was indeed a problem, but it was doubly a puzzle when it appeared in connection with a set of social conditions in which wealth and private property were constantly on the increase. Why did advance in material civilization mean a direct and corresponding advance in those vicious by-products of crime, want, misery? Was there a necessary connection between them, or was that connection pathological rather than normal? Was there a wedge being inserted into the very structure of society, which, as wealth increased, pried apart the two ends of the system of economic distribution?

It was this paradox that provided the stimulus that launched George upon his career of social reform, and it was with such a question that he opened his work. The introductory chapter to *Progress and Poverty* asked the challenging question: Why, in spite of the fact that "the utilization of steam and electricity, the introduction of improved

processes and labor-saving machinery, the greater subdivision and grander scale of production, the wonderful facilitation of exchanges, have multiplied enormously the effectiveness of labor," has there been no corresponding advance in the technique of economic adjustment? Production of wealth had increased, but the distribution of wealth had increased only the disparity between those who had and those who had not. The methods of dividing the product of economic enterprise could show no progress parallel to that achieved in the methods of its creation. This was an amazing problem for George, and one that demanded solution. It seemed to him that the very forces of knowledge as they were applied to industry had produced only downright misery on the one hand and swollen luxury on the other. Certainly such an effect was a perversion and not a legitimate concomitant of economic science.

Had one in the eighteenth century been endowed with the gift of prescience and had he been permitted to look forward into the age of the Industrial Revolution, what would have been the logical inference from the sight of labor-saving machinery, of increased wealth, of vast production—what would have been the logical inference, that is, had his foresight been limited to industrial rather than to social conditions and had his economic philosophy been still naive and free from cynical realism? Would he not have visioned, George asks, "these new forces elevating society from its very foundations, lifting the very poorest above the possibility of want, exempting the very lowest from anxiety for the material needs of life?" Would he not have seen "these slaves of the lamp of knowledge taking on themselves the traditional curse, these muscles of iron and sinews of steel making the poorest laborer's life a holiday, in which every high quality and noble impulse could have scope to grow?"⁸

⁸ *Progress and Poverty*, p. 4.

But had he looked more carefully into that supposedly wondrous future he would have seen something far different.

And do not we, in the twentieth century, hearing of the untold energies that science is just beginning to tap, learning of attempts to disintegrate the atom and release its power, or to employ directly the heat of the earth and of the sun, or the power of wind and water; seeing the development of synthetic foods and fuels, of mechanical men; and realizing that there is approaching an industrial age which will need but little or no human labor, a literal machine age—looking forward into that infinitely more important industrial revolution of the twenty-first century—do not we sometimes romantically, hopefully, even scientifically, predict a period in which labor problems will be solved and poverty and deprivation will have vanished? Do we not sometimes, forgetting economics realism in the face of the romance of technology (or of “technocracy”), forgetting problems of distribution in the glare of the solutions in the field of production, also look forward to a day in which the “slaves of the lamp of knowledge” will take on themselves “the traditional curse”?

The prophet of the eighteenth century, had his pre-science been omniscient, would have seen that now “some get an infinitely better and easier living, but others find it hard to get a living at all. The ‘tramp’ comes with the locomotive, and almshouses and prisons are as surely the marks of ‘material progress’ as are costly dwellings, rich warehouses, and magnificent churches. Upon streets lighted with gas and patrolled by uniformed policemen, beggars wait for the passer-by, and in the shadow of college, and library, and museum, are gathering the more hideous Huns and fiercer Vandals of whom Macaulay prophesied.”⁹ And is it not a fairly certain inference that the next industrial revolution

⁹ *Progress and Poverty*, p. 7.

will bring a picture painted, not by Haldane, but by Bertrand Russell?

“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.”¹⁰

These, then, were the problems that Henry George attempted to solve. First, the riddle involved in that economic dichotomy, the separation of the product of industry into two unequal shares—one, enriching the few; the other, impoverishing the many—a separation which, for him, was fundamental; it underlay the entire structure of economic enterprise. It was a principle of division that was demonstrated by every increase in the productivity of economic forces, and its cause was the wedge that was driving into the social order and widening the gap between wealth and want. This was the paradox of progress and poverty.

As a direct product of that economic maladjustment was the ethical distortion that followed. Given a social order in which some had too much and others not enough, given an economic arrangement that placed a premium upon the predatory elements in the human organism and penalized, at the same time, those attempts to satisfy qualitatively different wants, there could be no sane and permanent adjustment in the realm of morals. Given this background of a fundamental economic cleavage, the necessary effect upon ethical concepts was either to remove them from affairs here below and place them as inhabitants of some

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

other intellectual world of ends and goals or to transform them into an elaborate system of apologetics. It might be added that even the traditional dualism in moral theory could possibly be linked up with that more existential dualism in the economic realm. Perhaps the characteristic severance of means from ends in ethics may be correlated with a refusal on the part of the moral theorist to concern himself with the possible causes of problem situations in social ethics. May we not, in fact, say of moral philosophy what William James said of God: That in this world of sweat and dirt, God cannot be a gentleman. He cannot refuse to get His hands soiled.

Further discussion of this ethical emphasis must be postponed until the second part of the work; first there must be presented an exposition of George's solution of that economic maladjustment. But there may be kept in mind the basic ethical problem that George sought to handle. His economic solution was not an *ad hoc* one; it passed beyond the horizons of economics to the land of ethics. Man must live before he can live well or nobly, and wants must be satisfied before ideals can be reached. Moral problems cannot be divorced from the economic and social situations which give rise to those problems; moral ends cannot be divorced from the economic and social means through which alone they can be approached. Therefore, George directed his immediate attention to economics, to means, but there was always before him that vision of ultimate moral ends.