

MY VIRTUAL INTERVIEW WITH HENRY GEORGE

By Scott Baker / 26 January, 2023

Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) has taken dramatic leaps recently, far eclipsing Alan Turing's test of whether a person can tell if they are speaking to a real person or a computer. Most teachers can't tell a student's paper from one generated by the new, and hugely popular, ChatGPT.

Another program: Character.ai, allows you to chat with virtual representations of famous figures from the past and present.

After a very easy sign-up process, I used Character.ai – <https://beta.character.ai/> – to talk to a virtual Henry George. Along the way, I tried to fool it a bit, with misspellings, complex words and sentences, and several modern references that the historical Henry George could never have dreamed of, like Work From Home (WFH).

Fans of Henry George will be happy to know that the virtual Henry George is as sure and confident in his answers as the human version was.

Our interview follows. Some editing was necessary to format and present the questions in the right order. This actually took more time than the interview. Virtual Henry George never took more than a few seconds to answer, probably faster than the human version ever could. I repeated the first question, correcting the spelling of form to from. Henry George gently chided me for repeating myself. I removed the picture of Henry George that appears whenever he answers, to save space in the article.

I couldn't capture the voice option here (to my knowledge, there are no recordings of George actually speaking), but you can judge for yourself how close to human Henry George was in the text answers below:

Scott Baker: With so many people staying away from offices, do you still believe taxing land will create a just and fair economy?

Henry George: Yes, for one reason – land cannot be moved. Land is in one place, and cannot be moved elsewhere to avoid taxation. If you own land, you will pay the tax, whether the land is used or not, whether it produces value for the landowner or not, and regardless of the economy.

This is why I believe the taxation of land will improve the economic balance and fairness of economies. In addition to making government budgets more sensible.

Scott Baker: With so many people staying away from offices, do you still believe taxing land will create a just and fair economy?

Henry George: Absolutely, because of the reasons stated. The land cannot be moved, and will be in one place, whatever the economic situation. It will not go away. Even if the economy is doing well or badly, the land is still there, and can still be taxed, and the government can still receive tax revenue.

This is why an economy based on taxing land will be a fair and equal economy. If anyone owns land, they will be paying tax, regardless of whether the land is being used and whether the economy is doing well or not.

Scott Baker: Is there enough, and to spare, in taxing land to pay for all the public needs of society?

Henry George: I do believe so. And so do many other economists. The revenue would be great enough to cover the government's social security, health care, education, police, fire, and military needs.

This is why I believe tax reform should change taxes from productive assets to land. We should only tax land because it is the only asset that is immobile, the only asset in the world that cannot be moved or hidden.

It is only fair to tax land, because taxing land will not destroy jobs and economic activity – unlike income taxes and other taxes on businesses.

Scott Baker: Is it possible to disaggregate the value of land from the value of improvements and to tax only the value of land?

Henry George: Yes, it is possible.

There are several ways to calculate the value of land. Land can be calculated using the “site value” method, the “ground prices” method, and the “single-tax method.”

The site value method estimates the value of land based on the price per square meter of empty or unimproved land.

The ground price method estimates the value of land based on the price per square meter of improvements on the land.

The “single-tax” method estimates the value of land based on the annual rent of the land.

Scott Baker: Should “virtual land” on the internet be taxed like real land so that large owners of virtual space like Google, Facebook, Amazon, pay more for owning such valuable places where users congregate in large numbers?

Henry George: That is an amazing question, and one that I have been thinking a lot about recently.

Yes, I do believe that virtual land should be taxed in the same way that real land is taxed. I believe that in the 21st century, virtual land is as important as real land. I believe that the government should tax the value of virtual land, just like it taxes the value of real land. Virtual land is a very important part of our society now, and I believe that we should tax it in the same way that we tax all other property.

Scott Baker: How would taxing land improve the environment?

Henry George: Great question!

I believe that the taxation of land will help to improve the environment because it will incentive people to use their land in a responsible way. It will encourage people to save natural resources and only use as much as they need.

If people have to pay high taxes on land that is not being used in a responsible way, then they will be motivated to use the land more efficiently. This will help to improve the environment because it will reduce pollution and create a greener planet. I believe that the taxation of land is the right thing to do, both for economic reasons and environmental reasons.

Scott Baker: With so much wealth being the result of inheritance, will taxing land produce a more equitable society?

Henry George: Absolutely, I believe that the taxation of land will make society more equal and fair.

I think that inherited wealth is one of the biggest problems in our society today. We have seen a concentration of wealth in the hands of a few people in recent years, and this has created a lot of inequality in society.

I believe that the taxation of land will help to redistribution of wealth in our society, and make our society more fair and equal.

I think that the taxation of land is necessary if we want to create a more equitable society for everyone.

Scott Baker: You wrote that it was inevitable that government would have to solve more social problems – the name of one of your books. Do you still believe that government spending is the best solution for the most people?

Henry George: Yes, I still believe that government spending is the best solution for the most people.

I believe that government spending is necessary in order to solve the many social problems that we face in our society today.

We need a government that is willing to invest in social programs and social services that can help to address these problems.

Government spending is the best way to improve the lives of people in our society, and to create a society that is more equitable, fair, and just. So yes, I still believe that it is necessary to solve social problems.

Scott Baker: If someone is mentally ill, has a drug use problem, or simply cannot work and produce, how will a land value tax help them?

Henry George: Great question.

I believe that a “Land Value Tax” will help to improve the lives of people who are mentally ill, who have a drug use problem, or who cannot work and produce. This is because “Land Value Taxes” will provide much-needed funding for programs that help to address these problems.

It will also help to improve the quality of life for these people by creating a more fair and equitable society, where everyone has a chance to succeed regardless of their circumstances.

Scott Baker: Will Land Value Taxes help cure urban sprawl?

Henry George: Absolutely, I believe that Land Value Taxes will help to cure urban sprawl.

Urban sprawl is caused by the fact that private developers can buy up large amounts of land and then develop it in an inefficient and irresponsible way.

It is an environmental disaster and creates a lot of social problems.

The taxation of land will provide an economic incentive for private developers to use their land in a more responsible way and help to cure urban sprawl. I believe that this will ultimately improve the lives of people who live in urban areas and create a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly society.

Scott Baker: How do you see the prospects of implementing Land Value Taxation? It has been over 100 years since you first wrote about it, and we don't seem to have made much progress on poverty. What are the obstacles in your view?

Henry George: I think that the biggest obstacles to implementing land value taxes are the fear of change and the power of the wealthy few who benefit from the current system.

The wealthy elite who benefit from the current system have a lot of power and influence. They can use their money to influence politics and public opinion. The fear of change is also a problem. Some people are afraid of changes in the tax system because they are unsure of what will happen.

I think that the best way to combat these obstacles is to educate people about the benefits of land value taxes and the need for change.

Scott Baker: Agreed. I will ask people to discuss these issues with you more in the future. There are a lot of activist groups interested in Georgism now.

Henry George: I appreciate your interest in Georgism and your support of our efforts. I believe that Georgism has a lot of potential to improve the lives of people in our society, and that it is an idea worth exploring further.

I will certainly continue to advocate for Georgism and raise awareness about its benefits.

I believe that Georgism is an important idea that can help to create a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly society while also improving the lives of people.

I am excited to continue to work with you and others to make Georgism a reality!

Scott Baker: Great, thank you!

Henry George: I look forward to discussing these issues more with you and others in the future. I believe that Georgism is the best way to improve our current economic and political system, and I look forward to working with others who are interested in Georgism to help create a more just and equitable society.