

Why are scholars so seldom attracted to Henry George's philosophy as an area for study? Karl Marx seems to command much more attention among them.

Some argue that Marx has had more impact upon world events than George. But again, why? Marx wrote an almost unreadable book, *Das Kapital*, and I doubt that more than a tiny fraction of those who call themselves "Marxists" have attempted to wade through it. The appeal of communists to the masses seldom makes use of any of the convolutions of Marxian theory, but is rather on a primitive level: "They have; you have not. We take from them and give to you." But the catch is, who is "we"? When they take over it's too late for second thoughts.

George formulated his theories not only from extensive reading but from wide-ranging practical experiences and he was always engaged in the affairs of the world. Marx ensconced himself in the British Museum library and spun his dialectics there. Maybe this more on the wavelength of scholars?

Marx has been wrong on almost everything - on the exploitation of labor by capital (neglecting to distinguish between land and capital) - on the disappearance of capitalism - on the appearance of communism in the most advanced countries (it has appeared in the least developed countries) - on the realities of life under communism, etc. This does not deter scholars from studying all phases of Marxism.

George, on the other hand, made an analysis that holds up - that improves living standards even when applied to a small extent - that coordinates with the longing of mankind for liberty - that has inferences and aspects that point to a fruitful philosophy of society and of life - that is based on love rather than hate.

Why do all these treasures remain untouched? One consideration not to be overlooked is that scholars, like others, seldom break new ground but usually "follow the leader". Scholarly papers have been written on such-and-such a theme, so more will be forthcoming.

Happily, there are exceptions. Charles and Mary Beard, in their monumental work *The American Spirit*, wrote a considerable appreciation of George's conception of civilization as expounded in his last work, *The Science of Political Economy*. When more scholars eventually decide to dig into the Georgist philosophy, they will find "wonderful things."

Perhaps the bitterness in the ongoing world-wide quarrel over Karl Marx and the things he talked about, lies in the inability of both (or more) sides to distinguish between a beneficial economic function and an exploitive one. Marx himself suffered from that shortcoming.

Each factor looks at only part of the picture. One side sees obviously beneficial functions becoming more and more illegal and hates to see the baby thrown out. The other side sees evidence of exploitation and is weary of keeping bath water.

One side insists that both baby and bath water ought to be kept. The other insists that both should be thrown out. If either side had an argument worthy to be called scientific, it would seem that argument ought to be characterized by at least some attempt to distinguish between baby and bath water.

No one need be surprised that such a controversy could persist. Virtually every important addition to human knowledge has come by a similar painful process. It took more than a hundred years for a mass belief in a stationary earth to give way to general acceptance of a moving earth. The great established professors did not bring about that revolution of thinking. The decisive blows against the old accepted views had to be delivered from outside the "respectable" academic fold.

In economics, we really need to be thinking of a thought revolution as fundamental as that. The necessary change in belief is just as simple, and just as hard to believe because of its very simplicity. That revolution will eventually be forced upon our institutions of higher learning; it will probably not come from them.

Right now, it is not only possible, it is virtually universal, for a student of economics to go clear through to a doctor's degree and never once encounter the suggestion of a tax formula which favors beneficial functions over exploitation. At that rate, only some kind of a freak event, or hard work on the part of outsiders, can forestall our collapse.