

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

WITHOUT regard to the natural order, or any reference to natural laws, among which economic laws are included, we may elect to try the Great Iniquity, by which term Tolstoy has characterized the denial of man's equal right to the use of the earth, by the moral law. It is the everlasting credit of Henry George as it is of Oscar Geiger, now linked inseparably with his great Mentor as the interpreter of our philosophy, that both these men stressed the need for the observance of the moral law in society. From this teaching the Henry George School under its eminent director, Frank Chodorov, will not depart.

THE identity of the moral law with the natural law is taken for granted. Society cannot do things that are forbidden to the individual. Society cannot transgress the right of property any more than the individual can, and expect to escape the penalty. It is preposterous to assume that there is one law for society and another for the individual. Its sanctions are as binding on both. No amount of tergiversation or excursions into the realm of metaphysics can obscure this truth. To abandon it is to sacrifice the mainstay of our argument. After all emphasis is laid upon the natural laws, the ethical imperative calls aloud for recognition.

THIS concept, an inseparable part of our philosophy, dates from no special period, now to be laid aside, and a so-called scientific interpretation substituted. "The School of 1897"—why this date?—is the School of Henry George and Oscar Geiger, and now of the rapidly growing institution founded by the latter. But it is unfortunate, besides being a trifle ridiculous, that a controversy should have arisen over this point. At a time when there is a more wide-spread knowledge of our philosophy than at any time since "Progress and Poverty" was written; and which still remains the invulnerable citadel of our teaching.

THE land is Mine and shall not be sold forever," and similar injunctions were the teachings of the School of 620 B. C., or thereabouts. It does not differ materially from the School of 1897 started by the followers of Henry

George on or before that date. Its teachings contain the moral injunctions for society of which this seems to be the supreme command. It comes to us from the highest authority that can be cited. It is a moral injunction of tremendous solemnity. Of this Henry George and Oscar Geiger were supremely conscious. It was an inseparable part of their preachment. The moral law in society and the natural law were one and the same.

WHAT consideration other than this did Tolstoy have in mind when he referred to "The Great Iniquity?" He was thinking of the moral law of which this was the supreme violation. What do we mean when we say a thing is wrong or wrung from the right? What do we have in mind when we say of some social arrangement or the law of man that it is wrong? Do we not at once conceive of some violation of an ethical principle. Is not this man's first reaction when we say it is not just. "Justice the end, Taxation the Means," was George's title to one of his most important lectures. It is mere juggling with words to protest that that what we propose is only the abolition of all taxation. We will, nevertheless, do what we set out to do through the machinery of taxation, the instrument with which the people are most familiar and which they are not likely to misunderstand. Mr. George has given us reasons for discarding other means, and these show him to have been a statesman as well as an economist.

A Supplementary Word

IT is in no spirit of controversy that we again consider our old friend, the moral law, as related to economic law, which was touched upon in a recent issue of LAND AND FREEDOM.

We are wont to consider the marked contrast between law and what is known as the common law, and the statutes. Basically law was recognized in early concepts as natural law only. All other so-called law was considered as man-made, viz., enactments or recorded precedents or customs. Law carried its own penalty if violated. All else required a specific penalty and human enforcement. Blackstone affirmed this in his chapter on the nature of law in his Commentaries, Vol. I, Chs., 2 and 3. Concerning the relation of law to human enactments we quote as follows: "This law of nature being coeval with mankind, and