

The target is happiness!

Aristotle, the noted Macedonian philosopher, said "...happiness, above all else, we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else." In other words, in the last analysis, all of us seek to be happy.

Yet, what makes one person happy, may make another miserable. Our differing ideas as to what will give us the greatest pleasure means each of us must have the maximum possible degree of freedom to pursue our individual goals.

But the necessity for freedom rests on other equally important criteria. Each individual possesses unique talents. Just as no two individuals' fingerprints are the same, neither is the complex of abilities of any two people the same. To develop one's capacities, one must have the freedom to perfect them. He who has a broken leg, or is in jail, has his freedom of action so restricted that he cannot hope to be as happy as if he were not confronted with such impediments.

While it can never be proved, it appears that you tend to be happiest when you use those talents which you consider to be your best. If your artistic abilities are such as to make your heart bound with delight at the thought of an artistic career — but poverty forces you to become a bookkeeper — your life may be contented, but it is not likely to be filled with happiness.

To Georgists, it may seem that an abstraction, such as happiness, while interesting, is not particularly germane to the problems of society — especially the problem of involuntary poverty. But, after all, is not the eradication of such poverty merely a means to attain that end of all ends — happiness?

And is not the essence of Georgist philosophy the implementation of freedom so the individual can be happy?

And to be truly free, one must have not only those freedoms which all of us generally assume are basic — freedoms of speech, press and assembly — but economic freedom. Without liberty to make a decent living, history sadly proves that most people willingly give up their basic freedoms to some dictator who promises them the "crust of bread" they need.

While not generally perceived by most people, fundamental economic freedom implies that freedom of access to the land exists on equal terms for all. George proved that, in effect, this means the land must be divided on a just basis among the equal claimants to it. In a civilized society, this is accomplished by having the economic rent collected by the community.

Because the productivity of land varies, the rent from place to place is different. Those with the

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greatest abilities are able to pay the highest rent, so they will obtain the best land. Land represents opportunity, and superior opportunities require top notch talents for maximum performance. In employing their capacities to such exacting challenges, those gifted people capable of handling them will probably be happiest. But their efforts will also make others happy. When Beverly Sills sings, those unable even to hum a tune, cannot help but be thrilled.

And those graced with lesser abilities cannot afford the higher rents. This limits them to opportunities commensurate with their capacity. As they will be applying their energies in areas within their competence, they may well be as happy, or even happier, than those with superior ability, for they will not be frustrated trying to do what for them is impossible. A bush league player would suffer agonies of frustration in the big leagues.

So, although George's professed aim was the eradication of involuntary poverty, he builded better than probably he realized. He gave us a philosophy which, when implemented, would not only abolish destitution, but also provide the freedom necessary for each individual to develop those talents which would make him happiest.

What goal is greater than this?