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# Malthus and George on the Irish Question

## *The Single Tax, Empiricism and Other Positions Shared by the 19th Century Economists*

By MICHAEL A. MACDOWELL \*

ABSTRACT. Historians of economic thought have painstakingly traced predecessors of *Henry George's* "single tax" theories. Despite this professional attention, a prime advocate of the single tax on *land* has been neglected: *Thomas R. Malthus*, in his early writings in the *Edinburgh Review*. This exclusion is even more interesting in that Malthus suggested the single land tax for *Ireland*, a region George covered extensively in his writings. Despite their distance in years Malthus and George showed a number of concerns on issues which faced both their generations. They had similar opinions on general *land and tax reform*. They expressed a common bent toward *empiricism* in their research. And they shared an understanding of the stifling effect of *religious animosity in Ireland*. These common concerns and interests led both men to take controversial positions outside the classical tradition of the period. This led to their partial rejection by fellow economists who supported the status quo.

### I

#### INTRODUCTION

HISTORIANS OF ECONOMIC THOUGHT and proponents of Henry George's single tax philosophy have attempted to ascertain George's forerunners—those who have preceded him in proposing the single tax. Arthur Young, in his *Single Tax Movement in the United States*, devotes the opening chapters to anticipators of George, examining individuals like Spencer, Ogilvie, Racine and others; individuals who in Young's estimation preceded George in proposing the single tax as a remedy for existing social ills. In a far more detailed investigation, Samuel Milliken, in his "Forerunners of Henry George," traces anticipators of George's single tax as far back as Dio Chrysostom (50–117 A.D.), and painstakingly delineates single-tax advocates through history (1). It is surprising therefore that two of Thomas Malthus' earliest treatises in applied economics should have gone unnoticed, for Malthus' early writings in the *Edinburgh Review* (henceforth referred to as the *Review*) plainly suggest that the single tax on land values was a remedy for Irish poverty.

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In 1808 and 1809 Malthus published anonymously two articles in the *Review*. Both articles were lengthy reviews of Thomas Newenham's works, *A Statistical and Historical Inquiry into the Progress and Magnitude of the Population of Ireland* (1808) and *A View of the Natural, Political and Commercial Circumstances of Ireland* (1809) (2). Newenham was a reputed Irish scholar whose economic philosophy emulated Adam Smith's. A major point Malthus was to make was that the books being reviewed were neither historical nor statistical. The young clergyman was to go further in his denunciation of Newenham's work by suggesting that only through "indirect" legislation could the vast inequities which plagued Ireland be remedied. Malthus suggested that prescriptive remedies rather than descriptive economics would solve Ireland's problems. "Indirect" legislation included a single tax on land values, for according to Malthus:

The very great proportion of the whole produce possessed by the Irish landlord, contrasted with the very scanty proportion possessed by his tenants, presents, we conceive, the natural remedy to this evil. And if he were obliged to take the burden of all permanent taxes on the land, upon their first imposition, we are convinced that he [King George] would be amply remunerated, not only by the happiness of his tenants, but by the superior state of his farms when they came to be relet, and the consequent greater advance of his rents (3).

Some seventy years later Henry George was to refer to Ireland in his almost evangelical quest for the single tax. He would then suggest legislative methods for dealing with rampant and abject poverty of this unique country—methods which closely resembled Malthus'. The bonds which these two 19th century economists share in regard to Ireland are deeper than the simple advocacy of the single tax, indeed, deeper than their insistence upon direct legislative action. The economics and the social concerns which these two men expressed, so similar in nature, were probably the prime reasons for their relegation to the background of economic thought. The attitudes they shared concerning reform, their quest for empiricism, their concern for Ireland and their "economics" were unpopular at the time, but proved later to be prophetic.

## II

### *MALTHUS AND THE EDINBURGH REVIEW*

THE FOUNT of Ricardian orthodoxy, the *Review*, seems to be an unusual place for two articles which might challenge the very essence of the master's teaching. The *Review*, until 1815, was warmly receptive

to Malthus' ideas. Semmel points out, "Malthus' opinions remained substantially the same both before and after 1815; it was those of the *Review* which had altered, or to be more exact, the climate of opinion in which the *Review* operated had decisively changed" (4). It was important for Malthus to gain a hearing in the *Review* in these early years for it was the great reviews of the time which spread the popularity of the burgeoning field of political economics.

Jeffrey, the *Review's* first editor and close personal friend of Malthus, warmly embraced the young clergyman's ideas. By 1815, however, McCulloch was the new chief editor of the *Review*. The magazine's growing support for abandonment of the Corn Laws and perhaps more importantly, McCulloch's denunciation of Malthus' writings, led to a rift between the *Review* and the young author, and a close subsequent alliance between the *Edinburgh* and Ricardo. A letter from McCulloch to Ricardo in 1821 personified this growing animosity. McCulloch writes, "I consider Mr. Malthus' reputation as an economist to be very overrated" (5). This resounding difference was further exaggerated with Malthus' adoption of a "general glut" theory. There is little doubt that Malthus is the author of the two articles. Semmel says: "Both Copinger, in his sometimes inaccurate listing, and Fetter in his splendid article upon the authors of economic articles in the *Review*, are in agreement . . ." (6). But these articles mark the end of Malthus' contributions to the *Edinburgh Review*, and somewhat surprisingly marked the end of Malthus' comments on Ireland in general. Nowhere in his *Principles* is Ireland mentioned again, and only in a few instances does he ever refer to Ireland in any of his subsequent writings.

George finished *Progress and Poverty* in 1879, the same year that Irish discontent had erupted into revolt. By 1881, he had gained some fame not only as an author but also as a lecturer, particularly in the western part of the United States. His success prompted requests for more of his work and in 1881 he published *The Irish Land Question*. Throughout this short work he saw Ireland as an extension of an overriding moral dilemma that faced the civilized world—namely, the proliferation of "progress and poverty" due to the private ownership of land. Thus, the "Irish question" was actually a much broader global issue. "The Irish land system, which is so much talked of as though it were some peculiarly atrocious system, is essentially the same land system which prevails in all civilized countries. . . . The truth is that the Irish land system is simply the general system of modern civilization" (7).

George's denunciation of Irish tyranny attracted the attention of Patrick Ford, editor of the *Irish World*, a New York-based Irish weekly. Ford had decided to send a special correspondent to Ireland to write regular dispatches on the progress of the Irish, and George was a likely candidate. George sailed for Ireland in October, 1881. His writings from that point reflected serious moral concern for the Irish situation. No longer would he so easily dismiss the "Irish question" as representative. What he saw in Ireland was unique, prompting him to write of the moral indignation and outrage there. Ireland would become the basis for one of George's most poignant arguments for social rehabilitation.

### III

#### *SOME BASIC SIMILARITIES*

MORE THAN ANY OTHER ECONOMISTS of their time, Malthus and George shared a concern for factual analysis. Malthus' concern for empirical justification was perhaps best expressed in his two works on the Irish question, particularly in the 1809 article. "What we want with regard to Ireland, is a collection of well authenticated facts," states Malthus, "and the author who professes to give us this, will always have a strong claim to our attention" (8). Malthus laments the lack of empirical evidence about Ireland on which to base sound legislation. He indicates repeatedly that it is only through an understanding of contemporary fact that sound laws can be made. Again, in regard to Ireland, he states that "authentic information extending to the whole Kingdom is much wanted; and it is a great fault of Mr. Newenham's work, that he has not endeavoured more fully to supply it" (9). George, too, expressed an abiding concern for facts for policy formation. "Inference cannot proceed from the unknown to the known," he suggests. "It is only from facts of which we are cognizant that we can infer what has preceded cognizance" (10). George's thrust for empiricism also led him into situations which were far from justifiable in classical doctrine—hence his advocacy of the single tax, the reallocation of land and the abolishment of rent. Both economists sought to find factual grounds and information on which to base their theory, and their respective writings on Ireland exemplify this quest.

More than exercises in rhetorical agility, the writings of Malthus and George express strong moral obligations to Ireland. Malthus' two articles are laced with anecdotal descriptions of the abject poverty of Ireland; they are replete with condemnation of the English system of

governance which proliferated such indigence. Like George, he hastened to suggest remedies saying, for instance in his 1808 article, "Relief from the harassing system of tithes and the increasing pressure of exorbitant rent is the real emancipation on which the hearts of the Irish people are principally fixed" (11). His suggestions for Irish salvation are built on his moral attitudes. The separation from his classical brethren is demonstrated when the young author feels compelled to act on moral commitment rather than predetermined methodological patterns. Moral commitments to the Irish populace outweigh compromise with Smithian *laissez faire* doctrine.

Unlike many economists of their periods Malthus and George placed a majority of the blame for Irish misery upon the land tax system. George's comments about the system saturate his works. While more subtle, Malthus, too, shared this concern; hence his advocacy of a single tax. In his 1808 writing, Malthus stated emphatically "that every effort should be used to relieve the people from the pressure of tithes, we are most ready to allow. It is not the sum collected, but the mode of its collection, that is the grievance; and this grievance on many accounts, produces infinitely worse consequences in Ireland than in England. Such an evil is the proper subject of legislative interference; and we earnestly hope, that no difficulties, however great they may at first appear, will be allowed to stand in the way of its removal" (12). And in 1809 he asserted:

as a general truth, that the taxes which fall on the tenantry of a country, are, of all others, the most prejudicial to the individual, and the most disadvantageous to the public; because the tenant of land has rarely the power, like other traders, of raising the price of the produce in which he deals, in proportion to the tax. . . . But this truth, which is not sufficiently attended to in general, applies with peculiar force to the state of Ireland, on account of the extreme poverty of a large portion of the tenants (13).

George—perhaps most famous for his dissertations on abject poverty in Ireland—did not disappoint his readers. His vivid descriptions of the Irish peasantry likewise show a strong commitment toward moral concern and moral legislation. Though classical in parts of his doctrine, he did not fully support a "hands off" policy for Ireland. In his most famous work, *Progress and Poverty*, he states, "I know of nothing better calculated to make the blood boil than the cold accounts of the grasping, grinding tyranny to which the Irish people have been subjected" (14). Further accounts throughout his numerous works demon-

strate an abiding concern for the state of the Irish peasantry and a positive economic policy aimed decisively at alleviating the Irish problem. Both men realized that mere description would not remove the basic social cause of Irish poverty—specifically the injustices borne by the Irish Catholics.

Malthus and George likewise shared a common concern for the religious degradation of the Irish Catholics. Of prime importance to Malthus was the ending of the Catholic Code, a set of legislative mandates which banned Irish Catholics from holding office; from primogeniture; and from financial undertakings (15). Malthus remarks quite pointedly in 1808 that

The Catholic poor readily see, that a marked line of distinction is drawn between them and the Protestants: they see that they are regarded with fear and suspicion, and do not partake the full benefits of the British constitution; and, with these obvious causes of depression before their eyes, it can require little art to direct all their discontents [against] . . . the government" (16).

Malthus' moral concern for Ireland precipitated his call for Catholic "emancipation." This was a rather extraordinary suggestion coming from an established Anglican clergyman, but much in keeping with his commitment to the Irish peasantry.

The situation had changed but little when George wrote of Irish tyranny in 1881. He denounced the British rule as generally arbitrary and despotic. To George, the British rule of Ireland was "the most damnable government that existed outside of Russia" (17). Similar denunciations of English home rule led to his arrest in Ireland in September, 1882. As George later recalled, his arrest only proved to strengthen his own and his followers' condemnation of English despotism. In terms of their quest for empiricism, their denunciation of English home rule, their moral commitment to reform, their advocacy of the single tax for Ireland, as well as their distrust of Smithian doctrine, George and Malthus shared many similarities. An inclusive examination of these two men reveals even more profound similarities.

#### IV

##### *MALTHUS AND GEORGE ON IRISH POVERTY*

BOTH MALTHUS AND GEORGE came to similar conclusions about the causes of Irish poverty. These decisions most certainly were individually deduced, for George prided himself on never reading the "Whiggish" *Edinburgh Review*. In their most rudimentary sense, the causes were first the potato, and second, the large Irish population



(large relative to the institutional limitations imposed by land use). The cheap source of food, the potato, had upset older demographic patterns in Ireland, pushing population beyond normal limitations. Malthus pointed out that

The introduction of the POTATOE [sic] into Ireland, and its becoming the general food of the common people, seems to have formed this particular case. . . . The way in which the means of subsistence practically regulate the increase of population into civilized societies, is, by limiting and determining the real wages of the labourer, or the number of persons which the labour of one man will support . . . (18).

George remarks in *Progress and Poverty* that the potato had become the staple of the Irish because it was the lowest of all forms of food easily cultivated and well suited to exploitation (19). He relates further in *Social Problems* that the potato is both the staple of Irish livelihood and a source for their disdain.

In bad times, when a blight strikes their potatoes, they must eat seaweed, or beg relief from the poor-rates, or from the charitable contributions of the world. When so rich as to have a few chickens or a pig, they no more think of eating them than Vanderbilt thinks of eating his \$50,000 trotters (20).

While agreeing on the potato as a prime source of Irish poverty, the authors, at first reading, seem to disagree on the population issue (21). Much has been made of George's denunciation of Malthusian population theory. He states quite clearly in *Social Problems* that "Europe to-day is not over-populated. In Ireland, whence we have received such an immense immigration, not one-sixth of the soil is under cultivation, and grass grows and beasts feed where once were populous villages" (22). And in *Progress and Poverty*, George calls upon the facts which seem to nullify Malthusian population theory. "For when her population was at its highest, Ireland was a food exporting country. Even during the famine, grain and meat and butter and cheese were carted for exportation along roads lined with the starving and past trenches into which the dead were piled . . ." (23).

George's suspicion of Malthusian population theory was, however, most profoundly based on the valid conclusion that the theory was being used as an excuse for lack of social concern—for lack of social legislation. Arguing with contemporary social Darwinists, George saw Malthus' population theory put forth continually as an "excuse" for lack of interference in the human prospect. In later writing Malthus too became discouraged with his own population theory. Ricardo's



partial disenchantment with his friend's theory of the general glut was based on his inability to grasp Malthus' abandonment of his own population theory. As Malthus' own biographer, James Bonar, points out, it seemed incomprehensible to Ricardo "that the author of the *Essay on Population* [could] consistently believe in the possibility of a great abundance of product together with a stationary number of parsimonious consumers" (24). Thus, both George, and later in his life Malthus, were to question this basic tenet of the "dismal science." Population in Ireland was a problem but the problem stemmed from inequities in land and income distribution, not from a population driven to subsistence levels by the continual tugs of birth and starvation.

This similarity in the arguments regarding population can best be pointed out by George's and Malthus' harsh reprimand of the Irish landlord, for it is the landlord, and not overpopulation, who was responsible for the abject state of the Irish peasant. Semmel, paraphrasing Malthus, points out that due to "the small portion of land and capital necessary, upon the potato system, to support the labour employed in cultivation', the 'large portion of the gross produce consequently falls to the share of the landlord'" (25). Malthus—staunch defender of the English landlord during the Corn Law Debate—was not advocating the abolition of private property. Rather he sought to relieve the Irish peasantry from the intolerable burden of that rent. This could be accomplished by taxing all rent to its full value.

There was no institution which George despised more than the landlord. The landlord reaped where he had not sown. By owning land and nothing more, he became the sole beneficiary of the charge for the use of that land—the land value or rent. And nowhere did George find a more fitting illustration of his theories than in Ireland. In *Progress and Poverty* he states:

No matter how sparse the population, no matter what the natural resources, are not pauperism and starvation necessary consequences in a land where the producers of wealth are compelled to work under conditions which deprive them of hope, of self-respect, of energy, of thrift; where absentee landlords drain away without return at least a fourth of the net produce of the soil, and when, besides them, a starving industry must support resident landlords, . . . (26).

Land is a natural phenomenon and because landlords did nothing to insure its productivity, it was indeed unnatural to collect rent. Rent should belong to the public. Hence, George's advocacy of the single tax. This was not to be confiscation of the land *per se*, but a sharing

of its value through a tax on its value (27). He assures his readers in *The Land Question* that “the denial of the right of individual property in land does not involve any menace to legitimate property rights, but that the maintenance of private property in land necessarily involves a denial of the right to all other property, and that the recognition of the claims of the landlords means a continuous robbery of capital as well as of labor” (28). In the case of Ireland, Malthus was to agree. As mentioned, in the 1809 article he advocates the single tax on land rents (29). He says,

We are no advocates for the territorial tax of the Economists [Physiocrats]; but we certainly think, that the peculiar state of Ireland calls upon the Legislature, by every principle of justice and policy, to remove the burden of the partial and oppressive country rates, and the still heavier and more oppressive burden of tithes, from the poor tenantry, to the rich landlords (30).

And like George later suggested, what was taken in taxes from the landlord would be more than remunerated in the wealth and well-being of the Irish citizen. Malthus, too, recognized this principle that the burden

. . . which would scarcely be felt by a man of property, is sometimes sufficient, in Ireland, to ruin both the farmer and the farm, and to spread dissatisfaction and irritation far and wide over the country (31).

Malthus could therefore only offer one overriding fiscal suggestion. In Ireland where the abject poverty and repressive land taxes take from the peasantry what was rightfully theirs, the single tax was indeed a most satisfactory answer.

## V

### MALTHUS AND GEORGE ON SOCIAL REFORM

MALTHUS' SUGGESTION of a single land tax on landlords to alleviate Irish poverty sprang from essentially the same economic underpinnings which fostered George's. Both men were classicists, sharing a common concern for individual rights, and a proclivity toward reform. These classical similarities are readily apparent. For instance, George borrowed heavily from the classical wage fund theory. His analysis is rather simplistic, demonstrating allegiance to early classical thought. In *Progress and Poverty*, he outlines his theory in “algebraic form”:

AS PRODUCE = RENT + INTEREST + WAGES

THEREFORE: PRODUCE - RENT = WAGES + INTEREST.

"Thus," he summarized, "wages and interest do not depend upon the produce of labor and capital, but upon what is left after rent is taken out; or, upon the produce which they could obtain without paying rent—that is, from the poorest land in use" (32). The nexus, according to George, was thus established, for there were no mechanisms, natural or legislative, which would stabilize rent. "Thus it is clear that no change in methods or improvements in the processes of industry lessens the landlord's power of claiming the lion's share" (33). It was this same inequity in land distribution which fascinated Malthus. "We have been informed," Malthus relates, "that their [Irishmen's] general condition has been unquestionably deteriorated, by an advance of rents and prices greater than the advance in their wages" (34).

Malthus and George were likewise in accord when explaining the reasons which gave rise to rent. George gives full credit to "Ricardo's law of rent," saying, "the rent of land is determined by the excess of its produce over that which the same application can secure from the least productive land in use" (35). Because rent springs from natural causes, it was not for an individual to own, according to George. Land monopolization should be prohibited, and in its place, society should initiate a confiscatory tax on land values. In "the peculiar state of Ireland" Malthus recommended the same policy. In his understanding of what was to become the basic precepts of "Ricardo's law of rent," he saw no other alternative than to place the entire burden of rent upon the landlords themselves. As he suggested, "such a measure would be an effective and permanent encouragement to agriculture; and would go further in allaying the discontents of Ireland, than any thing short of complete emancipation,—which, at all events it ought to accompany" (36).

Both authors shared a common disagreement with their contemporaries: they stressed a more positive role for government in economic matters. The marked differences between Malthusian thought as expressed in these articles, and the *laissez faire* orientation that was rapidly gaining popularity in England at the time, can best be seen in Malthus' comments on Newenham. One of the major contentions of Newenham's work had been that legislation could not remedy the economic ills of Ireland. Growth in population and the potato had carved out an economic circumstance for Ireland that was far removed from the control of any governance. Malthus, however, concluded that while the legislature could not directly control the price of land, and thus positively affect the declining economic situation, it could control

the disparity by which land and income had been distributed. This would be assured "indirectly" by guaranteeing Irish civil rights. In his 1808 articles he states quite clearly that:

In the peculiar circumstances of Ireland, with its poor labouring under the pressure of increasing rents and decreasing wages, what an incalculable advantage it would be to the British government to have no line of separation in civil rights capable of giving the colour of truth and justice to the most unfounded accusations (37).

Malthus saw the British legislature directly responsible for insuring a system of equality, one that would alleviate many of the causes of Irish poverty. Later in his 1808 article, Malthus outlined a priority scheme for actively dealing further with the Irish poverty question. He lambastes Newenham for placing incorrect priorities on the problems. "But we by no means agree with him in the relative importance which he appears to attach to each, nor in the order in which he proposes to remove them. We should without hesitation say, that these five causes of Irish misery, that the Catholic Code, and the provinciality of the government, had produced the political debasement of the inferior orders . . ." (38). While shunning "direct" interference in the economy, Malthus suggests:

"*indirectly,*" Government has great influence on the causes of distress here particularly alluded to. . . . The establishment of an universal despotism, and the exclusion of the lower and middle classes of society from all share in the government, by annihilating in a great degree individual importance and dignity, would have a strong tendency to make the poor submit to the lowest and cheapest kind of sustenance. . . . On the other hand, if the present convulsions of the civilized world should leave behind them improved forms of government, it is probable, that the decent pride occasioned by a superior political condition, will make the lower classes of society look forward to something besides mere support (39).

Malthus' pleas for reform of the land system represent more than an effort to change a legal system. Rather they represent a sincere desire on the part of the young parson to return Ireland to its people. Malthus believed that this could best be accomplished through a series of policies which included an end of *restrictive legislation*, through a single tax on land values, and through a recognition and then repudiation of religious animosities. Malthus states unconditionally in his 1809 article:

Hateful as religious animosities are, their connexion [sic] with the greater passions renders them perhaps less uniformly disgusting, than that mean and pitiful jealousy of trade which is thus allowed to crush

the industry, and repress the wealth, of those who ought to be considered as friends and brothers; and there is nothing that the great interests of society more imperiously call for, than the appointment of governors, who have knowledge to detect, and vigour to resist, those mercantile clamours, the uniform object of which is sacrifice the whole to a part (40).

While differing in degree, George was likewise adamant in his denunciation of those restrictive religious and commercial influences which had unavoidably led to Irish poverty (41). His emphasis was on the land, "Our fundamental mistake is in treating land as private property" (42). There was, according to George, enough food in Ireland to feed its entire population easily. The problem was that there was no money to buy it, caused in no small part by the institution of private property. Land belonged to the people by natural right and should be returned to them (43).

But George's mandate for reform was deeper than his singular preoccupation with the single tax. The concern in the *Irish Land Question* was the total degradation of the Irish people, a situation which he felt could become all too apparent in other areas. Irish degradation was infinitely more important than the local Irish question; it was nothing less than a situation of transcendental importance to all countries, a question as to whether ". . . the masses of mankind are to remain mere hewers of wood and drawers of water for the benefit of a fortunate few?" (44)

An extremely religious man, George also saw a role for organized religion in his reform campaign. Where Malthus had denounced religious separatism, George held that organized religion had responsibility for forwarding the cause of the Irish poor. In *The Condition of Labor: An Open Letter to Pope Leo XIII*, George called on the Pontiff to make fully known the conditions of the poor throughout the world. With particular reference to Ireland, George suggested that religious differences are minute when compared to the problems of world-wide poverty. He heartily favored an ecumenical assault on the conditions which have simultaneously brought poverty with progress, and openly lamented the religious sectarianism which debilitated the vigorousness of this attack.

## VI CONCLUSION

THE SIMILARITIES between Malthus and George on Irish land and tax reform, their shared condemnation of restrictive commercial legislation

and their condemnation of religious animosities are remarkable. Though writing some 70 years apart, each man used much the same economics to arrive at like conclusions. This similarity was only strengthened by their respective proclivities towards empiricism, their sincere desire to promote positive social legislation, and by the prophetic nature of their writings. Both men foresaw continued "disturbance" in Ireland unless decisive action be taken to eradicate the inequalities and poverty that existed there. As Malthus so aptly warned in 1808, Every year that elapses under the present system, tends to aggravate all the causes of discontent in Ireland, and to accumulate materials of insurrection and rebellion. . . . Every year the proportion of the Catholics to the Protestants is rapidly augmenting. . . . Every year fifty thousand youth rise to military age in Ireland (45).

and he further suggests,

Every principle that is known to influence human conduct, seems to assure us, that if the Irish Catholics were raised from their present political degradation, and admitted to all the rights and privileges of British subjects; if the career of honours and distinctions of every kind were fully and fairly open to them . . . they would soon be found among the most loyal, willing, and powerful supporters of the Crown and the empire (46).

George also embraced similar warnings of continued and warranted Irish rebellion. His first trip to Ireland in 1882 was on the heels of one of the most violent, yet by that time, routine Irish insurrections. He, more than his peers, realized that Irish revolution was a strong and pending possibility. He charged Irishmen to take a more direct stance and push for the abolition of rent. As Lawrence pointed out, "In *The Irish Land Question* he urged the Irish Nationalists to abandon the idea of peasant proprietorship and to adopt the more radical program of restoring the land to the people" (47).

Despite his emphasis on radical land reform and accompanying changes in discriminatory institutions, George never advocated open revolt. Like Malthus, he suggested that enlightened legislation encompassing positive economic action from informed law makers would remedy the situation. His theories, like Malthus', were prescriptive rather than descriptive. And he believed that it was only through popular demand via legislative action that effective reform could occur. In *Progress and Poverty* he continually makes note of the fact that by informing people of alternatives, all poverty could be eradicated.

One other note of similarity is shared by these two 19th century economists: namely, the lack of acceptance by most of their peers.



It was John Maynard Keynes, perhaps one of the greatest advocates of Malthus, who lamented "the almost total obliteration of Malthus' line of approach and the complete domination of Ricardo's for a period of a hundred years" as "a disaster to the progress of economics" (48). Perhaps as Keynes was to suggest, it was Malthus' belief in the existence of the "general glut" which led to his being cast out by the establishment. But it was also Malthus' push toward empiricism, his social concern, his inductive economics, his condemnation of religious animosity and finally his willingness to hold to his beliefs despite the odds which led to his descent from grace. George, too, suffered from chastisement by his peers. Denied an economic chair by Berkeley for inflammatory statements, George found it hard to gain the respect of most of his fellow economists. Perhaps, as many historians of economic thought have suggested, it was his continual adherence to the single tax doctrine which led to his downfall. Yet the single tax was, as seen in the case of Ireland, an important, but only one component of his thought. He, too, was interested in empiricism, shared a deep moral concern for the Irish people, abhorred religious animosity and pursued his belief toward positive economics relentlessly. These were also reasons for his dismissal by those of his own profession who were wedded to other convictions.

Perhaps these two men share similarities not uncommon to many "radical" economic thinkers today, and in the case of Ireland, their thoughts were prophetic.

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1. Samuel Milliken, "Forerunners of Henry George," in *The Single Tax Year Book*, ed. Joseph Dana Miller (New York: Single Tax Review Publishing, 1917), p. 331.

2. Both W. A. Copinger's "On The Authorship of the First Hundred Numbers of the *Edinburgh Review*", sometimes inaccurate listing, and Frank W. Fetter's splendid article "The Authorship of the Economic Articles in the *Edinburgh Review*, 1802-47," *Journal of Political Economy* 61 (June, 1953), pp. 232-259, agreed that Malthus was the author of these two anonymous articles. Correspondence from Francis Horner, *Edinburgh* editor, to Malthus is the "authority of assignment of authorship for the 1808 article" and an April 21, 1809 congratulatory letter from Jeffrey to Malthus is cited as authorship authenticity for the 1809 article (see Fetter, pp. 246-7). (Until 1912 all articles appearing in the *Edinburgh Review* were anonymous).

3. (Thomas Robert Malthus), *A Review of the Natural, Political and Commercial Circumstances of Ireland* by Thomas Newenham, in the *Edinburgh Review*, April, 1809, p. 167. (Hereafter referred to as Malthus, 1809). The "advance in rents" which Malthus refers to in this citation would not have interested George. George never advocated land taxation as a way of increasing rents but



was only interested in spreading the natural blessing of land to all. A careful reading of the following paragraph in Malthus' 1809 article reveals that he too shared George's later concern and that the "greater advance in rents" was a tertiary concern probably only intimated to gain landlord support for his proposal. Malthus states, "The sacrifice, it is evident, would only be temporary, as it is universally acknowledged, that all taxes upon tenants fall upon the landlord at the renewal of a lease; but the misfortune is, that a pressure during a few years, which would scarcely be felt by a man of property, is sometimes sufficient, in Ireland, to ruin both the farmer and the farm, and to spread dissatisfaction and irritation far and wide over the country." (Malthus, 1809, p. 167).

4. Bernard Semmel, ed., *Occasional Papers of T. R. Malthus* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963), p. 8.

5. David Ricardo, *Letters of David Ricardo, 1819-1821*, Vol. VI of *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, ed. Piero Sraffa, 10 vols. (Cambridge, 1951), p. 366.

6. Semmel, p. 14.

7. Henry George, *The Land Question* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1953), p. 8-10.

8. Malthus, 1809, p. 152.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

10. Henry George, *The Law of Human Progress* (New York: Joseph Fels International Commission, 1917), p. 4.

11. (Thomas Robert Malthus), "A Sketch of the State of Ireland, Past and Present," review of *A Statistical and Historical Inquiry into the Progress and Magnitude of the Population of Ireland* by Thomas Newenham, in the *Edinburgh Review*, July 1808, p. 346. (Hereafter referred to as Malthus, 1808.)

12. Malthus, 1808, p. 346.

13. Malthus, 1809, pp. 166-7.

14. Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1958), p. 127.

15. Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-1849* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 27 described the various laws which made up "the Catholic Code." "In broad outline, they barred Catholics from the army and navy, the law, commerce, and from every civic activity. No Catholic could vote, hold an office under the Crown, or purchase land, and Catholic estates were dismembered by an enactment directing that at the death of a Catholic owner his land was to be divided among all his sons, unless the eldest became a Protestant, when he would inherit the whole. Education was made almost impossible, since Catholics might not attend schools, nor keep schools, nor send their children to be educated abroad. The practice of the Catholic faith was proscribed; informing was encouraged as 'an honourable service' and priest-hunting treated as a sport!"

16. Malthus, 1808, p. 348.

17. Elwood P. Lawrence, *Henry George in the British Isles* (East Lansing: The Michigan State University Press, 1957), p. 15.

18. Malthus, 1808, p. 339.

19. George, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 126.

20. Henry George, *Social Problems* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1953), p. 109.

21. In *Progress and Poverty* George states quite clearly that "The Malthusian doctrine does not deny that an advance in the productive arts would permit a greater population to find subsistence. But the Malthusian theory affirms—and this it its essence—that, whatever be the capacity for production, the natural tendency of population is to come up with it, and, in the endeavor to press beyond it, to produce, to use the phrase of Malthus, that degree of vice and misery which is necessary to prevent further increase; so that as productive power is increased, population will correspondingly increase, and in a little time produce the same results as before. What I say is this: that nowhere is there any instance which will support this theory; that nowhere can want be properly attributed to the pressure of population against the power to procure subsistence in the then exist-

ing degree of human knowledge; that everywhere the vice and misery attributed to overpopulation can be traced to the warfare, tyranny, and oppression which prevent knowledge . . ." (p. 123).

22. George, *Social Problems*, p. 23.

23. George, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 125.

24. James Bonar, *Malthus and His Works* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1924), p. 294.

25. Semmel, p. 17.

26. George, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 128.

27. George reiterates this point continually. It is not land that will be confiscated, only its value. He states in *Justice the Object*: "We do not propose a tax upon land, as people who misapprehend us constantly say. We do not propose a tax upon land; we propose a tax upon *land values*, or what in the terminology of political economy is termed rent; that is to say, the value which attaches to land irrespective of any improvements in or on it; that value which attaches to land, not by reason of anything that the user or improver of land does—not by reason of any individual exertion of labour, but by reason of the growth and improvement of the community." Henry George, *Justice the Object: Taxation the Means* (London: The United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, 1890), p. 6.

28. George, *The Land Question*, p. 66.

29. Malthus, 1809, p. 167.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.* (The quotation as given more fully in fn. 3, above.)

32. George, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 171.

33. George, *The Land Question*, p. 26.

34. Malthus, 1809, p. 165.

35. George, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 168.

36. Malthus, 1809, p. 167.

37. Malthus, 1808, p. 348.

38. Semmel, p. 353.

39. Malthus, 1808, p. 352.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

41. Throughout his work *Protection or Free Trade* George makes continual reference to restrictive commercial legislation lambasting governments which pursue such arbitrary policies.

42. George, *Social Problems*, p. 195. Malthus never came close to advocating an end to private property. His prime concern rested in the wellbeing of the Irish citizen, and his single tax was a means to that end. Private property would not be confiscated but the benefit that derived from holding property would be diminished as landlords bore a much greater, if not the entire, share of the tax burdens.

43. Lawrence, pp. 8–9. Lawrence, summarizing George's ideas in *The Land Question*, says "The Irish famine was not a true famine arising from scarcity of food. It was what an English writer styled the Indian famine—a 'financial famine,' arising not from scarcity of food but from the poverty of the people" (p. 17).

44. George, *The Land Question*, p. 21.

45. Malthus, 1808, pp. 349–50.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 351.

47. Lawrence, p. 18.

48. J. M. Keynes, "Robert Malthus," in *Essays in Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1933), p. 104.

*Political Economics enables us to demonstrate, for any one macro-goal or any consistent set of macro-goals, the conditions—structural, behavioral, and motivational—which assure goal attainment.*

ADOLPH LOWE