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Author(s): John Pullen

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An Essay on Distributive Justice and the Equal Ownership of Natural Resources

By JOHN PULLEN*†

ABSTRACT. The article argues that, in seeking to establish criteria for distributive justice, consideration should be given to the manner in which Earth's natural resources are owned. The views of seven notable authorities on this issue are presented, ranging from an unrestricted right of private ownership to some form of public or collective ownership. The possibility of a system of ownership that is private but equal is discussed.

Many reformers have argued, for economic and/or ethical reasons, that ownership of the natural resources of Earth should be wider and fairer, but relatively few have had the temerity to propose that it should be equal, and that unless it is equal it will not be equitable. Many have insisted on the right of every human being to a share of natural resources sufficient for a survival subsistence, but few have declared that a mere survival share is not good enough, and that the demands of distributive justice will not be met until everyone has an equal share of natural resources.

History has shown, and continues to show every day, how enormous wealth can accrue to individuals or companies that obtain control of a significant portion of Earth's valuable natural resources, such as land, coal, iron ore, and gold. The unequal distribution of the value of natural resources is also regarded (by those who obtain less than an equal share) as a grave social injustice and as a denial of democratic rights. They also argue that the poverty suffered by masses of people is mainly due to an unjust distribution of the value of natural resources.

In this article the arguments for and against an equal sharing of the value of natural resources are presented by comparison and contrast with the views expressed on this issue by the following seven

*I gratefully acknowledge the advice of Donald Winch, Fred Lee and four referees.

†University of New England, Australia, jpullen2@une.edu.au.

writers—John Locke, Thomas Paine, John Stuart Mill, Henry George, Friedrich Hayek, John Rawls, and Robert Nozick—selected because their views provide an adequate spread between individualist and collectivist extremes, and thus open up for discussion the possibility of a middle position in which equality of ownership of the value of natural resources can co-exist within the framework of a democratic system based on private property.

Those who assert equal rights to natural resources usually interpret “equal” to mean “common,” and proceed to advocate land nationalization or some form of community or cooperative ownership, and to reject private ownership of land. Some who have recognized the justice of an *equal* sharing of natural resources have drawn back from an explicit avowal of that principle because they perceive it as a utopian ideal, incapable of realization in practice.

This article has three aims: (1) to investigate the argument that distributive justice requires an equal sharing of the value of natural resources; (2) to ask whether such a policy could be effected within a nonsocialist political framework, and without rejection of the principle of private ownership of land and other natural resources; and (3) to consider whether it is a practical possibility.

Definition of “Nature” and “Natural Resources”

In this article the terms “nature” and “natural resources” are used synonymously and refer to those things that exist independently of human beings and are external to human beings; for example, land in its unimproved condition, excluding any improvements made by humans; sunlight; air; the sea; rain water, excluding the value due to storage and purification; resources such as oil, coal, gas, gold, diamonds, silver, iron ore, excluding their value due to exploration, extraction, and transport; all forms of plant and animal life, excluding the value due to cultivation, husbanding; in short, everything provided independently of human agency. The terms “Earth,” “Earth’s resources,” and “world’s resources” are also used in this sense.

In defining “nature” and “natural resources” in this way, those elements that make up the genetic endowment and the internal, received constitution of human beings are excluded. The term “natural

resources" thus refers to natural resources that are external to human beings, as distinct from the natural resources internal to human beings. It is recognized, however, that received human talents are part of "nature" and part of Earth's "natural resources" if those terms were to be used in a wider sense. The question of the ownership of internal natural resources and human talents has been explored by, for example, John Rawls (1971), who argued that talents should be regarded as a common pool, and that anyone who has more than an average share should compensate those who have less. Such a principle provides a theoretical basis in moral philosophy for a social welfare system that assists the genetically less-privileged members of society. The issue is too large, and perhaps already too well canvassed, to be considered here. This article therefore distinguishes between nature's gifts that are external to human beings and nature's gifts that are internal, and applies the principle of equal rights only to the former.¹

Natural Rights: Equal Rights and Equal Shares

The case for an equal ownership, or even a wider and fairer ownership, of Earth's resources, is often presented in terms of natural rights. Advocates see the right of each individual to an equal portion of Earth's resources as a right inherent in the nature of each and every human being. They see it as fundamental, self-evident, and inalienable, like the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They argue that every person born into the world has a right to life, and a right to own and use the resources of the world; and that the right of one person to natural resources is equal to the right of every other person to natural resources. It is a powerful argument that appeals especially to the elemental hopes, aspirations, and instincts of all who currently enjoy less than an equal portion of Earth's resources. It is frequently supported by the theological argument that the Creator would not have intended that the ownership of the material resources of the universe should be restricted to a relatively small number of human creatures.

The fact that a right to an equal and private share of the value of Earth's resources has rarely been discussed, let alone accepted,

throughout history does not negate or diminish its validity in the minds of advocates. They distinguish between the existence of a natural right on the one hand, and its popular acceptance and implementation on the other. They point to other rights that are now widely accepted as natural rights even though in earlier times they were not accepted, such as the right not to be a slave, the right to vote, the right of free speech, and the right of married women to own property. The general acceptance of human rights in these areas has been a slow evolutionary movement in human consciousness. Will the evolution of consciousness one day lead to the recognition and realization of the right of all to an equal share of the value of natural resources?

The natural rights argument for an equal sharing of the value of natural resources has many detractors. Some say there is no such thing as a natural right; that the only justifiable basis for laws and rights is the power of the state; and that the only valid laws are positive laws, not natural laws. They reject the principle that we have equal natural rights to Earth because they deny the existence of natural rights of any kind. Others accept that there are certain principles or rules that can be deemed to be natural laws and natural rights, but deny that an equal sharing of Earth's resources is one of them. Much of the controversy would be avoided if the question of equal access to Earth's resources were discussed in terms of equal "shares" rather than equal "rights." The arguments might then become less moralistic, less metaphysical, and less adversarial, and could be focused on pragmatic and utilitarian considerations.

Equal or Common: Private or Public

The principle of equal rights to natural resources is open to more than one interpretation. In the first place, the expression "equal rights" could be interpreted to refer to a situation where each member of society (however "member" and "society" are defined) has the right of individual private ownership of an equal share of the value of the natural resources of the society, with ownership implying the right to use or dispose of the share. In this sense, the equal right could be described as a distributive and private right rather than a common or

collective right. An alternative interpretation of “equal rights” is one that refers to a situation where natural resources are owned collectively or communally by the state or government. It could be described as “public property” or “state ownership”² or “common rights.” Under a system of equal private rights, natural resources would be shared equally, with each share being the private property of its owner; whereas under a system of common rights, the natural resource would be the property of the society as a whole, and used for purposes determined by the government. The latter system would mean a negation of the right of private ownership of land and other natural resources; the former system would be consistent with the right of private ownership of land and other natural resources. The argument under discussion in this article refers to equal rights in the former, distributive, private sense.

Equal Physical Shares or Equal Shares of Value

The calculation of each person’s equal share of land would have to take into consideration not merely the quantity of land, but also factors affecting its quality and its economic potential—such as soil fertility, climate, water supply, proximity to towns, transport facilities, aesthetic aspect, and its prospects for increased value in the future. Also, each person’s share would need to be periodically adjusted in response to changes in population, thus reducing security of tenure and weakening the motives for efficient cultivation and long-term improvements of the soil. Equal physical apportionment would be even more difficult in the case of natural resources other than agricultural land—for example, oil, coal, minerals, air waves, and the ocean. To introduce equality in the ownership of the actual natural resources themselves would therefore be hopelessly impractical, however desirable in theory.

But some writers have argued that distributive justice does not require an impossible physical equalization of natural resources. In their view, the demands of distributive justice can be adequately satisfied by an equal sharing of the *value* of the resources, a process that would obviate the need to divide the physical resources into equal portions, and would not abolish or diminish security of tenure.

Those who lack the desire, or the opportunity, or the ability to own an identifiable portion of the physical resources need not be deprived of an equal share of their value.³

Taxation and Self-Ownership

An equal distribution of the value of natural resources presupposes that their value is capable of being assessed and amalgamated. The method of amalgamation usually proposed is taxation. But amalgamation by means of taxation cannot be justified if taxation itself is ethically unjustifiable.

An ethical argument against the taxation of private income and wealth is that it involves a violation of the right of self-ownership. The principle of self-ownership has been used by some commentators as a decisive obstacle to redistributive taxation in general; and could therefore be used as an argument against an equal redistribution of the value of Earth's resources in particular.

However, this anti-taxation and anti-transfer argument seems to depend on a restricted vision of the nature of the self, and of the nature of the production process. There seems to be an assumption that when an individual engages in the production of a commodity or service, the product is produced by the individual alone, and that therefore, using a labor theory of property, it belongs absolutely and entirely to that individual, with the consequence that the state cannot legitimately claim by taxation any part of the product. This argument overlooks the role played in the production process by society and by external natural processes, acting in combination with the individual. It involves an overindividualistic interpretation of the nature of the production process.

Thomas Paine on the Taxation and Redistribution of the Value of Natural Resources, and on the Ethical Justification of Taxation

An early recognition of the role of society in the production process can be found in Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791–1792) written in response to the ultra-conservative and anti-interventionist views of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

(1790). Paine argued that society contributes to the productive efforts of the individual laborer or capitalist, and that an individual's income is not produced by the individual alone. Personal property, he said, is "the effect of society." For the individual who is separated from society the amount of personal property that can be acquired is limited, even if you "give him an island or a continent to possess . . . All accumulation, therefore, of personal property, beyond what a man's hands can produce, is derived to him by living in society." And society's participation in production provides an ethical justification for taxation: "on every principle of justice, of gratitude, and of civilisation." The individual who accumulates personal property owes part of it "back again to society from whence the whole came" (Paine [1791–1792] 1948: I. 620).⁴

A neglect of the essential role of society in the production process, and an overemphasis on the productivity of the individual seems to stem from a narrow and disputable concept of self. But if we admit, with Paine, that a causative role in production is performed by social forces and institutions beyond the individual, then the individual's ethical claim to the product can only be partial or limited, not absolute. Ownership of self may or may not be an absolute right,⁵ but even if it is absolute, it cannot logically be a basis for claiming an individual's absolute right to the products of production, simply because the individual is only part of the production process. The product is always a joint product, not a sole product. It may be difficult or impossible to distinguish the respective contributions of the individual and society, but the joint nature of the production is undeniable.

In speaking of self—as in yourself, myself, himself, herself, oneself—we tend to think of a body-mind entity, distinct and separate from other entities. Our customary notion of self is that of a self-centered self. We tend egocentrically to forget that, although we use resources internal to ourselves in the furtherance of our development—physically, mentally, economically—and are to some extent therefore self-made, we are also aided and influenced by forces and inputs received from outside ourselves—by genetic endowments, by external natural resources (such as air, sunlight, water, and the fertility of the soil), and by the society in which we live (its customs,

culture, institutions, and infrastructures). Without these inputs from outside the self we would be either incapable of existing or far less developed and far less productive. The “self” being a multi-causal amalgam of the influences emanating from within and from outside the individual person, the concept of “self-made man” is, strictly speaking, a self-contradiction and an absurdity.

The problem of distinguishing the relative contributions of the individual and society is similar to the problem underlying the controversy in economics over the validity of the marginal productivity theory of distribution, namely, the problem of separating and rewarding the contributions of the marginal products of the factors of production. It is arguable that the traditional four-fold classification of the factors of products—land, labor, capital, and enterprise—should be expanded to include a fifth factor—society.

The argument for absolute individual ownership of products and against taxation is often treated as an automatic logical inference from the argument for self-ownership. Conflation of the two arguments creates an emotional bias in favor of private ownership and against state taxation and ownership. To deny ownership of self is regarded as support for slavery or servitude, and as an affront to personal freedom and dignity. By treating ownership of self and ownership of products as two aspects of the same problem, a denial of absolute ownership of the products to which one has made a productive contribution is therefore emotively seen as akin to denial of the right to ownership of self and of the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

If we accept as a principle of private property rights that things belong to those who have produced them, or that their ownership should be in proportion to the various productive contributions in the case of joint or multi-causal products, and if we accept that society has played a role in the production of the things that the *self-centered self* normally and erroneously thinks are produced entirely by itself, then society and its agent, the state, must have a legitimate right to at least some portion of that production. For the *self-centered self* to claim an *absolute* right to the products and income in the production of which it has contributed is therefore logically unfounded. An individual’s right of ownership of a joint product can only be partial or limited, and

the political and ideological arguments over the property rights of the individual and the state become a question of proportion or degree rather than confrontational denial. There is an indisputable logic in favor of the right of society (or its agent, the state) to take by taxation some portion of the products in whose production individual members of society have participated. This right is even stronger if the external natural resources are regarded as assets to be shared equally by all members of the society.

If the role of society as a causal contributor to the productivity and income of the individual were to be described as that of a sleeping partner, that would be an example of how words can govern thought, or of how the choice of a word to describe an event can generate a misapprehension of the nature of the event. The use of the expression "sleeping partner" would demean and downgrade the physical, social, and cultural functions of society in human affairs; and tend to interpret society's role as merely inert, passive, or minor.

Paine also justified a tax-and-transfer policy on the grounds that the landless poor had been wrongfully deprived of their natural right to property in land when common lands became exclusive private property. He recognized that the land then became more productive, but argued that those who no longer had access to land had been forced into poverty, and that there should be compensation for "all those who have been thrown out of their natural inheritance." He proposed that this compensation be paid "by subtracting from property a portion equal in value to the natural inheritance it has absorbed" (Paine [1791–1792] 1948: I. 612–613). The mechanics of this compensation proposal were left rather vague, but as Philp (1989:88) suggests, it seems to imply that proprietors of land should pay a ground-rent to the state. We are not told how the ground-rent is to be calculated—whether on the quantity of land, or its fertility, or its market value—but it has similarities to the policy of land-value taxation later proposed by John Stuart Mill, Henry George, and others.

Paine's ground-rent proposal has some similarities with the argument for equal ownership of natural resources, but differs in several respects. It was applied by Paine only to agricultural land, not to urban land, and not to other natural resources such as coal, water, and precious metals. Paine's redistributionist policies were conceived as

welfare payments or social assistance for the underprivileged and the deserving poor—such as child benefits, education benefits, income supplements and pensions for the aged, maternity benefits, and funeral benefits—not as payments that all citizens were to receive as their rightful share of the value of the nation's natural resources. Moreover, as they were conceived as remedies for temporary distress, they would cease if individual circumstances improved; and the implication is that they would be pitched merely at a subsistence or basic-necessities level.⁶ Paine's revolutionary tendencies did not extend to advocating *equal* rights to external natural resources.

It is true that the principle of equal rights to Earth's resources is implicit in the writings of those who argue that *all* the means of production, both those provided by nature and those made by humans, should belong to the state. But the converse is not true. All communists are believers in equal rights to Earth's resources, but not all believers in equal rights to Earth's resources are communists. Paine, although not explicitly enunciating the principle of *equal* rights to nature's gifts, sought a fairer distribution of nature's gifts while maintaining a nonsocialistic belief in free enterprise and *laissez-faire* as a general economic principle. He did not see any contradiction between *laissez-faire* and a fairer distribution of natural resources.

Locke's Proviso: Equal Shares or Subsistence Shares?

In the property theory enunciated by or associated with John Locke, the right to private ownership of anything is established by the labor of the claimant, whether it be the labor of collecting food, the labor of growing food, or the labor of constructing a dwelling. Locke recognized that labor does not act alone, but requires access to external natural resources, such as air, water, soil, or produced materials. Private property in the products of labor therefore cannot be justified unless the laborer has a legitimate claim to private property in the required resources and materials. Locke based the right to own and use external natural resources on the fact of human existence. By the very fact of their existence on the earth, humans have the right to use the resources provided by nature. However, he modified this latter right by adding a condition—often called Locke's "proviso." We have a right to use

external natural resources provided there is “enough and as good left in common for others” (Locke [1764] 1952: 17).

This limiting condition could be interpreted in different ways. An egalitarian interpretation is that all should have an equal share of natural resources. An alternative interpretation is that Locke merely intended that the demands of distributive justice will be met as long as the natural resources available to everyone are at least sufficient for subsistence, even though some might have a greater share than others.

This nonegalitarian interpretation dilutes the more radical implications of the actual words. In its support, one could argue that Locke was a paid advocate for the upper or landed class of English society in their defense against monarchical absolutism, and that he would never have conceived or intended that *all* the members of a nation should have an equal share of its natural resources.

However, several difficulties confront a nonegalitarian interpretation of Locke’s intentions. A nonegalitarian interpretation involves a falsification of the actual words of the text. The words “enough and as good” taken literally, at their face value, are an unequivocal statement of equality of distribution. Irrespective of Locke’s motivations or intentions, the fact remains that his words enunciate a portentously radical principle of property rights, and carry an inescapable egalitarian message.

The use of the term “proviso” to describe Locke’s words serves to weaken or even negate their egalitarianism. It suggests that Locke was enunciating a mere limiting condition of minor or secondary significance, and one that does not seriously impair the validity of a labor-only theory of property that would justify the partitioning of Earth’s resources on the basis of the labor expended by the first claimants, even if that labor involved force, conquest, imperialistic aggression, hereditary succession, or chance discovery. Describing those words as a “proviso” relegates them to the inferior status of an exception to a principle rather than acknowledging it as a second principle of equal status with the labor principle, even though the two principles are in conflict. If “as long as there is enough and as good left in common for others” is regarded as a separate principle, rather than a mere limitation or exception to another principle, it cannot be blithely dismissed as a minor quibble, and ceases to be overshadowed

by the labor-only principle. Neither principle then enjoys a dominant role, and the egalitarian implications of the so-called proviso remain unmistakable.

The question of what Locke really meant or intended by his “proviso” is of course important from an historical perspective, but the “proviso” remains important if removed from its historical context, and considered independently of Locke, as a proposition in social ethics or political philosophy. The principle that ownership and use of natural resources should be organized in such a way that there will be “enough and as good left in common for others,” that is, in a way that gives everyone an equal share, is a principle that demands reasoned consideration, and either reasoned justification or reasoned refutation. It cannot be dismissed simply by arguing that Locke did not intend it to have egalitarian consequences. Its validity (or invalidity) as a principle applicable to society today is not dependent on what Locke meant, or indeed on whether Locke said it.

Locke’s “spoilage” limitation, which permits private use of natural resources only on the condition that they are not spoiled or wasted by nonuse or misuse, provides an *upper limit* to private rights but does not ensure *equal rights*. As commentators have observed, the spoilage limitation is easily avoided by employing others to extend one’s own labor power, and by financial control of a more-than-equal share of the physical resources.

The linguistic distinction between a principle and a proviso can be compared with the artificiality of the distinction between “yes . . . if” statements and “no . . . unless” statements. The anti-egalitarian attitude to natural resources states: individual ownership of natural resources *is* permissible, *if* there is enough and as good left in common for others. The egalitarian attitude states: individual ownership of natural resources *is not* permissible, *unless* there is enough and as good left in common for others. Anti-egalitarian interpreters prefer the former statement because it reduces the restriction to the status of an exception. Egalitarian interpreters prefer the latter statement because it elevates the restriction to the status of a principle.

Locke’s argument that those in extreme want have the right to take the underutilized property rights of others provides another limitation to the uninhibited private ownership of natural resources, but while

endorsing a fundamental right to subsistence, it is not an argument for equal rights. It also leaves unanswered the question of what constitutes subsistence. Does it mean a basic level of food, health, and housing, sufficient for the survival of the individual worker and for the procreation of the next generation of workers? Or is “subsistence” to be understood in a culture-specific sense that would vary according to the living standards acceptable in different times and places, and that therefore might demand for all a considerable level of conveniences and comforts, and even luxuries?

John Stuart Mill and the Unearned Increment

The principle of equal rights to the value of natural resources was not explicitly formulated by John Stuart Mill, but his concept of the unearned increment of land has been interpreted as a powerful argument for a *wider* distribution or socialization of the increments in land value, and might plausibly be interpreted as an argument for their *equal* distribution.

In Mill’s view, landowners receive an income without being producers and without deserving it.

Landed proprietors are the only class, of any number or importance, who have a claim to a share in the distribution of the produce, through their ownership of something which neither they nor any one else have produced. (Mill [1848] 1909: 422)

The following passages clearly and forcefully indicate that in Mill’s view the acquisition by a relatively small number of landowners of the value of a nation’s land is undeserved, unwarranted, unfair, and a grave social injustice.

The ordinary progress of a society which increases in wealth, is at all times tending to augment the incomes of landlords, to give them both a greater amount and a greater proportion of the wealth of the community, independently of any trouble or outlay incurred by themselves. They grow richer, as it were in their sleep, without working risk or economising. What right have they, on the general principle of social justice, to this accession of riches? (Mill [1848] 1909: 818)

He continued this indictment of current land ownership, arguing that “a few families, from the mere accident of their possessing certain

tracts of land” acquire enormous riches “without their having themselves aided in the acquisition by the smallest exertion, outlay, or risk.” This increase in the value of land, or at least part of it, should be appropriated by the state, and applied to “the benefit of society, instead of allowing it to become an unearned appendage to the riches of a particular class” (Mill [1848] 1909: 834).

The concept of the unearned increment of land, as developed by John Stuart Mill and others, can be seen as one step towards an equalization of the value of external natural resources—for two reasons: (1) by taxing increases in the value of land it gave fiscal recognition to the principle that increases in land value that occur independently of the individual landowner should be shared by all members of society; and (2) it showed that an equal sharing of land can be brought about by equal sharing of the *value* of the land, without attempting the impossible task of dividing the land into equal physical portions.

However, Mill’s use of the concept of unearned increment, and its subsequent promotion by land reformers such as Henry George, has had some unforeseen counterproductive effects. His use of the term “unearned” had a powerful emotional and ethical appeal, but has given rise to the persuasive counterargument that increments in land value are not the only increments that can be called unearned. If the increments in land value are to be taken by taxation and used for the equal benefit of all, simply because they are unearned, then the argument should lead to the taxation of *all* unearned increments, whether of land or labor or capital. Life itself is an “unearned” benefit for the child, as are the child’s genetic endowments. To impose a special tax on land increments simply because they are unearned would logically justify similar taxes on the products of all genetically-endowed talents. The term “unearned increment” thus opens up a ready avenue of criticism of land-value taxation and distracts attention from the fundamental principle of an equal sharing of the value of nature’s gifts.

Henry George: Private and Equal Rights to Land

Perhaps the most ardent nonsocialist advocate of equal rights to nature’s gifts has been Henry George. The principle of equal rights to land appeared frequently in his writings and lectures; for example:

The equal right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, does it not necessarily involve the equal right to land, without which neither life, liberty, nor the freedom to pursue happiness is possible? (Field and George [1885] 1936: 14)

The equal right of all men to the use of land is as clear as their equal right to breathe the air—it is a right proclaimed by the fact of their existence . . . If we are all here by the equal permission of the Creator, we are all here . . . with an equal right to the use of all that nature so impartially offers. (George [1879] 1956: 338)

George's position amounted to an assertion that the Lockean proviso cannot be satisfied unless there is *equal* access to natural resources, and that distributive justice requires that those who own natural resources should compensate those who do not. He maintained that the economic system would then be more productive and more equitable.⁷

Henry George is sometimes accused of being a socialist or communist because of his often-quoted statement “we must make land common property” (George [1879] 1956: 328), but as argued elsewhere (Pullen 2001) his policy on private property in land was not as clear as that quoted statement suggests. He concocted an unnecessary, idiosyncratic, and confusing distinction between private property in land and private possession of land. He seems to have believed that the *essence* of private ownership consists of ownership of the increments in the value of the land, so that when these increments are taxed and become the property of the state, he believed *private* property is transformed into *common* property. A title holder would retain security of possession and the right to sell, lease, or bequeath, but George chose to describe the title holder's resulting situation as private possession rather than private property. However, there would seem to be no legal or ethical reason for the title not to be called “private property,” or at least “conditional private property,” even though the increments in land value are reserved to the state. This interpretation of George's concept of private property is vindicated by the fact that on more than one occasion he was reported as saying that, under his scheme of land-value taxation, the title holder would retain a fee simple title to the land.

Karl Marx welcomed George's land tax proposal as a movement towards a communist ideal, though criticizing it for not going far

enough in that direction, and for distracting Georgists from the communist ideal.⁸ George categorically denied that he was a socialist or that his principle of land-value taxation embodied socialist tendencies. Whereas Marx wanted to abolish private property rights in the means of production, George wanted to abolish inequality of private property rights in the value of natural resources. Marx disliked capitalism and wanted to replace it with socialism; George wanted to reform and improve capitalism. In a most non-Marxist manner, he asserted that he saw no conflict between the interests of capital and labor.

Critics who interpret George as a socialist point to his support for state ownership of railroads and the telegraph, and it is conceivable that, were he alive today, he might be advocating state ownership of other means of transport, such as airlines and motorways, and of other forms of communication, such as telephone and internet. But against this evidence of pro-government tendencies, he was critical of individuals who rely too heavily on government, and do not do enough for themselves. If government involvement is necessary, he indicated a preference for local rather than state or national government. However, he recognized a legitimate role for government, and he recognized the legitimacy of taxation. But the only tax he was prepared to condone was a tax on land values. He believed that the individual producer has exclusive property rights to his product, and that income tax and all other taxes are an unjust infringement by the state of the private property right of individuals. Although George commendably emphasized the role played by society in the formation of land values, he recognized but gave far less emphasis to the role played by society in assisting the productivity and the income of the individual.

A significant contribution by George to the debate on the ownership of natural resources was his distinction between physical ownership and fiscal ownership. Equality of ownership in the physical resources themselves would be a practical impossibility, but equality of ownership of the value of the resources, he argued, would be feasible.

A similar idea, using different terminology, has been presented more recently by distinguishing between “control rights” and “income rights” in property. The right to own, use, and transfer assets can be retained even though the right to income from the assets is subject

to redistributive taxation: "the essence of self-ownership can be preserved while instituting mechanisms designed to maintain equality of condition" (Christman 1991: 28).

Friedrich Hayek on Distributive Justice

Friedrich Hayek regarded the concept of social justice (and its synonym, distributive justice) as "intellectually disreputable," "as nothing more than an empty formula," and as having "no meaning whatever." He argued that justice is meaningful "only as a rule of human conduct," and that "there can be no distributive justice where no one distributes" (Hayek 1979: 3–4). His view of distributive justice reflects his view that society is no more than a collection of individuals, not an entity distinct from its members, and certainly not a person capable of performing, or being morally responsible for, just or unjust distributive actions. He regarded concepts of justice and injustice as meaningful only when they are judgments about the behavior of individual persons; they are therefore not relevant to society as a whole, which is not a human person.

According to Hayek, if governments do not intervene to redistribute income and wealth, the distribution will be determined by the market process, which is "a game of skill as well as a game of chance" and in which some players will prove to be more successful than others. The less successful might resent the outcome, and might wish it to be corrected "by some authoritarian act of re-distribution" but there would be no reason for saying that it is either just or unjust. On the contrary, according to Hayek, the game of the market unimpeded by governmental redistributionist measures brings great benefits. It has been responsible for the relatively high incomes now enjoyed by many people; and the introduction of redistributive measures based on a mistaken concept of social justice would result in reduced saving, investment, and productivity (Hayek 1979: 7, 11, 12, 14).

Hayek believed that the free market system has come about, not because it was conceived and introduced by individuals or by governments, but because of "an evolving process of cultural selection," by "cultural evolution through learning," and by "the competitive selection of cultural institutions." The free market system has prevailed

not because humans thought it would be the most successful system but simply because it “turned out to be so.” It is an institution that has been shaped by “a process of trial and error,” and that has also shaped our intelligence in understanding its merits, although there remains in our midst some “non-domesticated barbarians” who refuse to accept it “although they still claim all its benefits” (Hayek 1979: 15).

Needless to say, having denied the very concept of distributive justice, Hayek did not put forward a normative case for reform in the existing distribution of the value of external natural resources.

There are some possible counterarguments to Hayek’s position. His concept of cultural institutions, developed by trial and error, not by individual human thought, comes close to an admission of the existence of an entity other than a collection of individual persons. In other words, his concept of cultural institutions seems to be an alternative for the concept of society. He rejected the concept of society but seems to reinstate it under the name “cultural institutions,” and thereby reinstates the possibility of social justice and social injustice.

His assertion that there is no such thing as society, and no such thing as social justice, verges on a denial of the possibility of collective action and collective responsibility. If one person commits rape and murder, Hayek would say there has been an act of injustice. If two persons commit rape and murder, he would say there have been two acts of injustice. If 100,000 people acting together commit rape and murder, he would say there have been 100,000 acts of injustice, but would refuse to describe it as a collective act of injustice or a social injustice. When expressed in those terms, the issue seems to become merely semantic, and would cease to be an issue if the word “society” were expunged from the dictionary, and replaced by one such as “collection,” “crowd,” or “mob.” If people as individuals are capable of acting unjustly and can be held responsible for their actions, surely they can also do so collectively, whether they are called a “collection” or a “society.”

Hayek’s view that the free market system is the culmination of the competitive selection of cultural institutions seems to imply that the evolution of cultural institutions has reached eschatological fulfillment in the free market; that any attempt to guide its future development by consciously planned redistributive reforms—such as an equal sharing

of the value of external natural resources—would be both anti-social and anti-evolutionary. It precludes any further improvement of our social institutions, or any changes in the existing pattern of wealth distribution, other than those affected by the skill and luck of the players in the game of the market. Hayek seems to have taken over Marx's role as a discoverer of the law of motion of the history of cultural institutions. It is a millenarian belief that, with respect to the distribution of ownership of nature's gifts, whatever is now, is best.

John Rawls on Equal Basic Rights

The publication of *A Theory of Justice* ([1971] 1972) by John Rawls stimulated debate about the meaning of justice in general and of distributive justice in particular. Rawls repeatedly referred to equal rights, enunciating as "a first principle" that all persons should have "equal basic rights and liberties" (Rawls 1999: 62), but did not refer, even as a topic for discussion or rebuttal, to equal rights to nature's gifts as one of the basic rights. He neither asserted nor denied that distributive justice requires an equal partition of the value of natural resources; he simply did not address the question.

Rawls's silence on the question of proprietary rights to natural resources was a consequence of the unusual and unsubstantiated assumptions on which he chose to develop his theory of justice. He began by asserting that the initial distribution of property rights in the means of production is irrelevant to both distributive justice and the economy's production potential because whatever the initial distribution, impersonal market forces will lead to a comparability of outcomes. The specification of basic property rights can therefore, according to Rawls, be ignored.

Rawls's faith in the power of the market to produce comparable outcomes irrespective of the initial pattern of property rights leads him to some surprising positions with regard to natural resources. He maintained ([1971] 1972: 61) that the distribution of wealth must be consistent with both equality of citizenship and equality of opportunity; but in discussing equality of citizenship, he seems to have been oblivious to the argument that, without equal rights to the value of natural resources, there will always be two classes of

citizens—first-class citizens who have more than an equal share of the value of Earth's resources and second-class citizens who have less than an equal share.

In discussing equality of opportunity he omitted any reference to an equal sharing of the value of natural resources, but advocated equal sharing of the products of human talents. He claimed that human talents should be regarded as a common pool, and proposed that anyone who has more than an equal share should compensate those who have less (Rawls [1971] 1972: 338). There seems to be an anomaly or contradiction in this position. Human talents, inasmuch as they are genetic endowments, are internal natural resources. Rawls declared that the initial distribution of property rights in external natural resources—such as land, oil, and coal.—is not relevant to distributive justice because the market will ensure a comparable result even though the initial distribution is unequal; but he was not prepared to rely on the market to ensure comparability when the natural resources internal to the human person are initially distributed unequally.

It is surprising that Rawls, in his search for the bases of equality of opportunity, did not recognize that equality of opportunity would be greatly enhanced by equal access to the value of the nation's natural resources. One might even argue that an equal sharing of the value of natural resources is an absolutely essential precondition for equality of opportunity. Though by no means a sufficient condition, it must surely be a necessary condition.

Rawls claimed that “the great evils of human history . . . follow from political injustice” and that “the gravest forms of political injustice are eliminated by following just (or at least decent) social policies and establishing just (or at least decent) basic institutions” (Rawls 1999: 6–7). It would be difficult to deny the large element of truth in these statements, but it would also be difficult to accept that Rawls had provided a convincing or satisfactory analysis of the social policies and institutions necessary for the establishment of political justice. The argument being canvassed here is that there can be no lasting peace and prosperity within a nation or between nations without at least a substantial degree of equality in the distribution of the value of nature's gifts.

Rawls enunciated, as one of the “important requirements” for political stability, that there should be a “decent distribution of income and wealth” (Rawls 1999: 50):

all citizens must be assured the all-purpose means necessary for them to take intelligent and effective advantage of their basic freedoms . . . and to lead reasonable and worthwhile lives. (Rawls 1999: 50, 114)

He also stressed the political consequences if this decent distribution did not prevail:

In the absence of this condition, those with wealth and income tend to dominate those with less and increasingly to control political power in their own favor. (Rawls 1999: 50)

There will obviously be a wide variety of views on what constitutes “intelligent and effective advantage,” on what is understood by “reasonable and worthwhile lives,” and on the criteria for determining a decent distribution. Some will interpret a decent distribution as a basic standard of working-class comfort—enough food to maintain health, adequate housing, a modicum of conveniences and comforts, a reasonable time for rest and recuperation, and sufficient education and training to perform productive work—in short, a standard of living that will enable workers to maintain their health and strength, and to procreate the next generation of workers. Others, however, might interpret a decent distribution of income and wealth in a more liberal manner that would make available a significantly higher standard for all. A key element in this debate must surely be the question of whether *all* persons are to have an *equal* share of the value of nature’s resources, or whether nature’s resources, and the financial benefits derived from them, are to be restricted to relatively few.

In discussing the degree of inequality that would be morally acceptable, Rawls held that when the least advantaged have sufficient means to make intelligent and effective use of their freedoms and to lead reasonable and worthwhile lives, “there is no further need to narrow the gap” (Rawls 1999: 114). Some critics could interpret this in a way that lends moral justification to a degree of inequality that is quite indecent, and that even if there is equality in all other determinants of prosperity—talents, work effort, financial prudence, etc.—significant inequalities in the sharing of the value of natural resources will

inevitably lead to a situation where the landed few enjoy far more worthwhile lives than the landless many.

The following was one of a number of principles of justice formulated by Rawls: "All social values—liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect—are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these values is to everyone's advantage" (Rawls [1971] 1972: 62). It has never been empirically proved, as far as I am aware, and it is difficult to imagine how it ever could be empirically proved, that an *unequal* distribution of the value of a nation's natural resources could be to everyone's advantage. Those who attempt to justify unequal distribution of the value of natural resources appeal, for example, to the economies of scale that can be achieved on larger agricultural holdings, or to the massive capital expenditure in machinery and transport required for the efficient extraction and processing of large mineral holdings. The argument has some validity in the context of equal physical shares, but loses validity in the context of equal shares of the *value* of natural resources.

Robert Nozick on Distributive Justice

The redistributionist tendencies of John Rawls did not find favor with Robert Nozick. In his *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974), he argued for laissez-faire, against the welfare state, and against any attempts by government to achieve a more equal sharing of income and wealth. For Nozick, the state's role should be restricted to providing its citizens with protection against theft and violence (internal and external), and to enforcing contracts. For the state to do more, he argued, would be to violate individual rights. A more than minimal state is immoral: "The minimal state is the most extensive state that can be justified. Any state more extensive violates people's rights" (Nozick 1974: 149).

Nozick's principle of distributive justice is based on his "entitlement theory," as summed up in the statement:

The complete principle of distributive justice would say simply that a distribution is just if everyone is entitled to the holdings they possess under the distribution. (Nozick 1974: 151)

This of course leads to the question: How is entitlement to a person's holdings determined? Nozick's answer invokes two principles: the

principle of justice in acquisition, and the principle of justice in transfer.

The principle of justice in transfer is defined (negatively) by excluding the commonly accepted elements of unjust transfer—such as fraud, misrepresentation, and undue coercion. The definition is largely uncontroversial, but leaves open the question of whether or to what extent inequality of bargaining power in the transfer process constitutes unjust exploitation. Nozick's definition of justice in acquisition is more controversial. He appears to believe that there are no rules of distributive justice that apply to unheld things: "You may find an unheld thing now and appropriate it" (Nozick 1974: 151n). He believes that the first arrival or the first comer has the right to claim private ownership of the natural resources of a newly discovered and uninhabited area, but that this right is unlimited only if the object is available in unlimited quantities—"It will be implausible to view improving an object as giving full ownership of it, if the stock of unowned objects that might be improved is limited" (Nozick 1974: 175). His use of the term "implausible" is significant. Why is the situation said to be merely implausible, rather than unjust? If he had used the term "unjust," he would have had to acknowledge that there is an ethical principle of acquisition that differs from and is additional to the "first arrival" principle, or the "labor embodied" principle, or the "first improver" principle. He acknowledges that the "crucial point is whether appropriation of an unowned object worsens the situation of others" (Nozick 1974: 175). This leads him to a discussion of Locke's proviso, which he interprets as the right to a share of natural resources that is sufficient for subsistence, but not the right to an equal share. He does not give serious consideration to either the justice or the expediency of a policy of equal sharing of the value of natural resources, and gives only a brief and dismissive mention of writers such as Henry George who have advocated an equal sharing of nature's gifts.

No workable or coherent value-added property scheme has yet been devised, and any such scheme presumably would fall to objections (similar to those) that fell the theory of Henry George. (Nozick 1974: 175)

In dismissing George so summarily, Nozick seems to have been unaware of the central role in George's thought of the principle of an equal distribution of the value of natural resources. In omitting

any consideration of this fundamental aspect of George's thought, Nozick was following the pattern of commentaries on George prevalent in most of the secondary literature, where the emphasis is on other aspects of George's systems, such as the Single Tax, anti-protectionism, decentralization of government, and racial restrictions on immigration. From a philosophical perspective, these aspects are far less significant than the principle of the equal distribution of the value of natural resources. Without this principle, George's system could still be judged on merely pragmatic and economic grounds, but would lose a major philosophical or moral rationale.

Thus, Nozick's principle of acquisition does not give adequate consideration to the claim that distributive justice requires *equal* sharing of the value of natural resources; does not refute the principle of *equal* sharing either on philosophical grounds or on the utilitarian grounds of the greatest good of the greatest number; and does not recognize that the principle of equal rights to nature's gifts needs to be given due weight, along with the principle of first arrival and the principle of justice in transfer, in a comprehensive theory of distributive justice.

Objections to the Principle of an Equal Sharing of the Value of Natural Resources, as a Prerequisite of Distributive Justice

Having outlined the principle of an equal sharing of the value of natural resources, and having seen how some well-known theorists have or have not treated this principle, consideration is now given to some possible objections either to the principle itself or to its practical application.

The A Priori Objection

If the principle of equal shares of the value of natural resources is presented exclusively or mainly as an *a priori* statement, then an obvious objection would be that it is no more valid than its contrary; it cannot be proved or disproved by reasoning, and is a moral judgment that will appeal to some but not to others, depending on each individual's moral sense or moral instincts or

moral predisposition. Irrespective of whether or not there is such a thing as the equal right of all to natural resources, and despite the prevalence of *a priori* judgments amongst advocates, the case for an equal sharing of nature's gifts is not entirely dependent on or restricted to *a priori* judgments, but is arguable on empirical or consequentialist grounds, which may not be conclusive, but are at least probable and persuasive. It could be argued that equal sharing of the value of land and other natural resources will create a wider distribution of wealth and income, and that this will mean, following a Keynesian logic, more effective demand in the hands of those with a higher propensity to consume, with a consequence of increased production, employment, and general well-being. A supplementary economic and amoral argument is that an equal sharing of the value of natural resources will reduce the monopoly power of those individuals and companies that have a controlling ownership of the world's resources, and thus lead to higher production and lower prices. These are therefore not unreasonable empirical reasons for thinking that the opportunity for all citizens to lead worthwhile lives will be greater in a society where the value of nature's resources is shared equally and from which all benefit equally, than in one where there is gross inequality in the ownership of the value of nature's resources.

A totally convincing utilitarian or consequentialist argument in favor of the principle of equal shares of land would require an impossible social experiment under strict laboratory controls, comparing the progress of (at least) two societies similar in all respects except that one adopted equal shares and the other did not. But it would be illogical to reject the principle of equal shares to the value of land simply because it lacks strict empirical justification. Many other *a priori* principles have come to be accepted not only as natural rights (as noted above), but also as *equal* natural rights, even though they have never been empirically or consequentially tested by controlled experiments, and even though their consequentialist basis is only probable. It should be remembered that the case for the existing *unequal* ownership of nature's resources has also never been subjected to strict empirical testing.

The Political Objection: Socialist or Capitalist?

The principle of an equal distribution of the value of natural resources is seen by some as a dictate of natural law and as a prerequisite of distributive justice; but others see and fear it as distributive injustice and as a step towards a socialist, Marxist, or communist regime. The question therefore is, can the principle of an equal division of the value of natural resources be reconciled with free enterprise capitalism? Is it a rejection of capitalism, or a nonsocialist modification of capitalism—a modification that, according to its advocates, would improve the capitalist system by removing the restrictive, or anti-competitive effects of monopolization or oligopolization of natural resources?

The implementation of a policy of equal sharing of the value of natural resources would involve a radical change from the typical current situation of unequal sharing. The legislative processes required to effect the change might be seen as a major intervention by government in the free market. But it should not be forgotten that the existence of the institution of *unequal* sharing of the value of natural resources, despite being long accepted as the norm, is itself the result of government legislation and intervention. The change from unequal sharing to equal sharing is a substitution of one form of government intervention for another.

A system of equal sharing of the value of natural resources could be achieved by the nationalization of natural resources and the abolition of their private ownership. But it could also be achieved, without abolishing private ownership, by requiring private owners to pay to the state a rent, or fee, or tax, based on the value of the resource, and by the state using the revenue for the equal benefit of all. Such a reallocation of funds from private to public purposes would alter the public/private balance, and would not appeal to those who have an ideological preference for private enterprise, or who suffer from a morbid fear of government. They would judge it as an attempt to convert capitalism to socialism. Some socialistic element is undoubtedly involved; at the moment of being transferred by rent, fee, or tax, the funds are obviously being socialized or nationalized. But the ultimate impact will depend on the manner in which the funds are

subsequently dispersed. If they are spent on public works or public services that over time provide approximately equal benefits for all private individuals in the society, then the socialistic stage will be only a temporary means to an end in which benefits will be effectively privatized. This privatization will be even more directly and more obviously achieved if the funds accruing in the first instance to the government were dispersed in the form of direct *per capita* equal grants to private individuals, in recognition of their individual private ownership of the value of the society's natural resources.⁹

The thesis under examination in this article is that distributive justice requires equality in the ownership of the value of natural resources, and that this equality might be achievable by the individualization, rather than the collectivization, of the value of the resources.

The Feasibility Objection

Even if the philosophical, ethical, and economic arguments for an equal sharing of the value of natural resources are deemed to be persuasive or compelling, they will remain as ineffectual speculations if the practical implementation of an equal sharing policy is not feasible. Serious consideration would have to be given to devising appropriate methods for the distribution of the value of natural resources.

Reformers such as John Stuart Mill and Henry George have proposed that an equitable division of the value of natural resources can be achieved by means of taxation. The feasibility of that method must depend on whether it is economically possible to distinguish between the value of the natural resources and the value of the human labor and capital engaged in their utilization, given that commodities and services are produced by the joint contribution of labor, capital, and natural resources. If the value of the human contributions cannot be separated with a reasonable degree of accuracy from the value of the nonhuman resources, then an equal division of the value of natural resources must remain an impossible dream. Its impossibility is gladly asserted by those who currently benefit from unequal sharing, and is reluctantly admitted by many who dearly wish it were not so. Certainly, disentanglement of the value of resources and the value of

human input would depend on the existence of an appropriate degree of development in valuation procedures and statistical information, as well as a willingness to implement the procedures and to change the taxation system. Some countries currently claim that the value of land and other natural resources can be successfully separated from the value of the improvements and developments built on the land or sunk into it, and proceed to make use of the separated valuations in their taxation system. Other countries are currently adamant that it cannot be done.

Other important administrative questions also need to be addressed. Would the taxation authority be the central government or local government? If local governments are each free to set the percentage for the tax, there could be wide differences in the percentages and hence in the proportion of value collected, with the result that the goal of an equal sharing would not be realized. The political willingness of a democratic electorate to accept the principle of equal sharing of the value of land and other natural resources will depend on satisfactory decisions being made to such questions of collection and dispersal.

A possible objection to any government-sponsored equal redistribution of the value of land and other natural resources is that some of the recipients might squander their newly acquired wealth in orgies of dissipation or unwise investments.¹⁰ This could be a serious objection if the redistribution took the form of a once-for-all grant. The inequalities of wealth that existed before the redistribution would soon reappear. But it would be a less serious problem and less likely to occur if the redistribution took the form of ongoing, periodical (say, monthly or yearly) grants.

Conclusion: Ownership of Nature and the Evolution of Democracy

Some nations today are perceived to be democratic, and others undemocratic. Inhabitants of the democracies generally have a complacent, self-assured vision of their own political maturity, coupled with a condescending attitude towards those they regard as undemocratic and unenlightened. In the minds of the democratic, a stark either-or antithesis exists between the democratic and the

undemocratic peoples of the world. The former are confident they have attained their full democratic goal.

From the perspective of equal rights to Earth, the self-indulgent hubris of the democratic nations is premature. Admittedly, they have progressed along the way to democracy, but the rights proclaimed in their constitutions make no mention of a right to own an equal share of the nation's natural resources. Insofar as this right remains unrecognized and unrealized, it could be argued that the democratic evolutionary process is seriously incomplete. The failure of society to take this further step toward democratization is evidence of the retentive power and persistence of the institution of unequal rights to Earth's resources, and to the power—whether political, economic, or cultural—of those who continue to benefit from a more than equal share and who continue to enjoy the opportunity of exploiting those who have less than an equal share.

Central to this inertia in the evolutionary democratic process is the view that democracy is a fixed set of concepts, and a set that is already fully displayed in the so-called democratic countries of today. An alternative view is that democracy is a fluid concept, in a state of continual transition, and currently lacking at least one essential ingredient of true democracy—the equal right to Earth's resources.

There is no doubt that acceptance of the principle of equal rights to the value of natural resources would require a radical, and one might say revolutionary, transformation of the institution of property as it is currently practiced. It would amount to a redefinition of our proprietary relationship with Earth.

Notes

1. This distinction between a restricted and a fuller meaning of natural resources, or the distinction between "humans and "nature," or between "made by humans" and "provided by nature" is discussed more fully in Pullen (2005: 179–180).

2. The distinction between equal and common rights is discussed in Pullen (2004). As a referee notes, it is possible that some form of communal or collective ownership of natural resources could exist independently of a formal government. However, communal systems do not necessarily ensure equal shares for all members. Mechanisms would be required to prevent the more powerful members from controlling more-than-equal shares. The

regular rotation of sections of arable land, as practiced in medieval commons and elsewhere, gave some rough-and-ready measure of equality, but diminished the efficiency incentives associated with long-term private ownership.

3. An interesting example of equal distribution of the value of a nation's resources was recently suggested by Paul Bremer, the U.S.-appointed administrator of Iraq. He was quoted as saying that "Iraq's resources cannot be restricted to a lucky or powerful few . . . Iraq's natural resources should be shared by all Iraqis"; and he proposed that "some of the oil revenue be shared with Iraqis through a system of dividends, or a national trust fund to finance public pensions" (*Washington Post*, Reuters; quoted in *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 24, 2003). Mr. Bremer did not recommend that a similar annual distribution of the value of land and other natural resources should be applied to the United States, although a similar allocation of oil revenue already occurs in Alaska.

4. Quoted in Philp (1989: 89). As Philp notes, Paine sees private wealth "as the outcome of social co-operation, rather than something generated wholly by the natural right to the fruits of one's labour," and provides a reasoned defense of the state's right to redistribute private wealth by taxation (Philp 1989: 87, 91).

5. It is arguable that in wartime or other emergencies when the life of society is threatened, society's survival supersedes the right of the individual to self-ownership.

6. In *The Rights of Man* (1791–1792) Paine's redistribution program was to be financed by a progressive tax on property, but his tax did not distinguish between land and developments on the land, and therefore could not be described as a tax specifically on natural resources. But in *Agrarian Justice* (1797) the focus of his reform proposals shifted to land.

7. See Dwyer (2005: 197, 199). Dwyer has also shown how George's views on equal rights to natural resources are relevant to modern debates about the regulation of natural monopolies.

8. "We ourselves . . . adopted this appropriation of land rent by the state among numerous other *transitional measures*" (K. Marx, letter to F. A. Sorge, June 20, 1881. In Marx and Engels [1955] 1965: 342, original emphasis).

9. The distribution of the value of natural resources by means of equal grants to individuals would bear some similarity, in its effects if not in its theoretical basis, to the concepts of "citizen's dividend," or "national dividend," or "basic income," or "guaranteed income," or "public grants." Terms such as "citizen's dividend" did not appear in George's writings and lectures, but the concepts are clearly there—as discussed in Pullen (2004: 130–131).

10. G. A. Cohen: "left-wing libertarians are themselves frequently unaware of how unstable the initial equality they favour would be" (Cohen and Graham 1990: 31).

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