

# In Defense of Georgeist Terminology

By MARION H. SMITH

TODAY more than ever, people are realizing the need for the study of semantics, the science which deals with the exact meanings of words. We are discovering that one man's definition of Nazism may vary considerably from some other man's; in fact, that all such abstract terms as patriotism, democracy, Communism, etc., have varying connotations with different people. It is fairly obvious that for a discussion among several people to be intelligent and intelligible, each must know what the others mean, precisely.

It has always seemed to me that Henry George's great quality of lucidity was indisputable. His clear and exact definitions form such a solid base for the logical development of his ideas, that nearly everyone who reads "Progress and Poverty" thoughtfully is convinced of the truth of those ideas.

I disagree with Mr. Kass' assumption (in his article, "Motivations of Human Exertion," LAND AND FREEDOM, September-October, 1941) that Georgeist terminology needs revising and supplementing. He speaks of "more exact and modern reasoning," but I would ask how fundamental principles and truth can become old-fashioned. I do not admit that any discovery or invention of the last sixty years need change by one iota the definitions and conclusions formed by Henry George. They are modern because they are timeless.

Mr. Kass implies that Desire, as used by George, refers to concrete, material objects. He considers "Desire" and "the profit motive" to be the same thing. I believe Henry George meant Desire to include not only the desire for actual wealth, but also the desire for friends, peace, respect, love, beauty and knowledge. Even a child's desire for knowledge, in the form of an answer to a specific question, may be quite as strong as his desire for a new toy. Mr. Kass states that "evidently the humans who had the first desires for that clock (the escapement) never had them satisfied," and goes on to say that knowledge was necessary to produce the clock. Of course it was, but is not knowledge the result of desire, rather than a co-motivation with desire for labor?

I agree that the "profit motive" is not the reason behind the work of research scientists who "labor for love of mankind," but I believe that Mr. Kass' phrase, "love of mankind," goes back to Desire. A man may just as truly desire the improvement of the condition of his fellow men as he may desire a new house. And even the labor of the missionary, which is non-productive, is surely motivated by his desire either to make people happier or to convert them to his own way of thinking.

I do not see why Mr. Kass must consider Desire to be negative. On the contrary, I believe it to be a most positive force, and I see no need whatsoever for his positive-negative concept. However, if one did wish to accept a two-phased motivation as a parallel with phenomena in nature, I think we might very well consider Desire as both positive and negative, just as we include within the terms electricity and energy the concepts of both positive and negative. Knowledge, which follows upon the heels of Desire, does not fit the situation at all.

Qualification is even a further step removed from Desire, for it is only after obtaining knowledge that we are qualified to perform labor. But does not George's definition of labor—"all human exertion directed toward the production of things having exchange value"—already include knowledge and qualification? It is a condition of civilization that every individual (except idiots) shall have sufficient knowledge to be qualified to put forth exertion to create something

which has exchange value. Greater knowledge and qualification merely mean that for the same exertion (physical) a man will create something of greater exchange value. Thus, as the world's knowledge increases, either the physical exertion may be lessened, or the wealth increased. Actually, a combination of both is the result, but in either case the knowledge, qualification or mental exertion (whichever you choose to call it) actually has a part in producing wealth.

There is no necessity for segregating mental and physical effort into qualification and labor if we accept George's definition of labor, which he defines in terms of result, a perfectly legitimate procedure. To give an example, both starch and sugar are considered carbohydrates, since they have the same result in the body. Similarly, mental and physical exertion must both be considered labor because they both result in the production of wealth.

Let us now look at the first part of Mr. Kass' "law": "Only such physical exertion as is directed by Qualification is economically effective as Labor." This is such an obvious fact that it becomes ridiculous when we realize that everyone in a civilized world has enough mental qualification to perform some form of physical labor which will be economically effective. The man digging a ditch is *assumed* to have enough qualification so that he will not put a shovelful back in for every one he takes out. Also, a man *may* accidentally achieve a result toward which his labor was *not directed* by his own or anyone else's qualification. In that case his mental qualification in recognizing the value of the result is an equal factor with his physical labor in producing the result.

The second part of Mr. Kass' "law" is as follows: "And only such Qualification as results in human physical exertion is economically effective." We have already agreed that some mental exertion must accompany physical effort to make it effective. And now Mr. Kass says that for the mental exertion to be effective, it must be accompanied by physical exertion. If neither can produce wealth without the other, how can they be separated? It seems to me that Mr. Kass' separation of the two is mere verbal juggling, and that Henry George's grouping of them together as Labor, motivated solely by Desire, still holds good. Further, although I admit that mental exertion must be *accompanied* by physical exertion, I think it is important to remember that mental exertion *lessens* physical exertion in producing an equal result. As an example of the interlocking relations between mental and physical exertions, it would be true that advertising (mental effort) would result in increased production of an article of wealth, thus involving more physical effort, but it would also be true that increased production would necessitate more bookkeeping, accounting, and other mental exertion, as well as advertising, while the amount of the mental exertion expended directly affects the exchange value of the wealth produced.

Finally Mr. Kass states that "the hidden answers to Money, Interest, and Credits lie in the fact that the accumulation of these gives 'authority' over the production, services and lives of humanity." If we accept Henry George's definitions and ideas, we know that no authority would be unjustly acquired under a system of free competition for Labor, either mental or physical. Thus I see no reason for the need of the term "Qualification" to distinguish mental exertion, since further inquiries into money, interest, credits and authority should, I believe, follow George's original and fundamental concepts of economic terminology.