

LET'S GET IT TOGETHER WITH MODERN SCIENCE

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The reason why our movement towards Henry George's style of economic thought has taken root in only a very small proportion of the general public's mind is two-fold. Clearly, with our limited resources we cannot publicize the ideas in a popular form that will appeal to the masses. But there is a more fundamental reason related to the nature of our subject, which should also be examined. The fact is that since George's day, man's approach to the systematic study of phenomena in nature has undergone some radical changes.

Up to the end of the Victorian era (i.e., till the early 1900's), this science consisted largely of collection and classification of facts or specimens. Experimental evidence was difficult to obtain and had the dual disadvantages of inaccurate measurement technique and of the unknown influence of the experimenter's touch (however well meaning). To a degree that depended on the subject, theories were proposed and occasionally mathematical models were constructed which enabled the facts to be fitted into a consistent frame. (The beauty of this being that the theory could then be extended to forecast additional events without having to reproduce them.) Not all sciences responded to this treatment; it was typical of that age to classify the more successful ones as "exact science" and the rest as "inexact". I need hardly point out that economics fell into the latter category.

Today these classifications of science have much less meaning. Experimental techniques have become more reliable and the use of two new mathematical tools have freed a lot of the "inexact" sciences from the lethargy of the study hall and thrown them into the heady corridors of commerce and industry. The two kinds of mathematics to which I am referring are statistics and simulation.

Statistics is largely concerned with the probability and distribution of the occurrence of an event. By its nature statistics modifies the "cold" theory into a more "human" form and it also gives us the important advantage of enabling scanty experimental results to be better interpreted and understood. Simulation, on the other hand, is a way of reproducing the phenomena for purposes of study without having to provide the full analytical solutions (which in many cases have become too complex to handle anyway). Simulation is a sort of half-way house between theory and experiment where only the problems need to be expressed in the notation of the theory being tested. Simulation problems are frequently solved today by using the electronic digital computer. Home computers are big business and they are providing simulations giving us experience through TV games in a wide variety of exciting subjects.

Henry George was not very adept at the study of economic science by statistics or various simulation models to reproduce the rise and fall of the economic tides. Nevertheless, even in his day the beginnings of these techniques were present. Today with our advanced technology they are well on the way to omnipotence. It is therefore surprising that Georgist organizations do not put emphasis on developing these methods for obtaining a modern proof and demonstration of the original word-argued theories and ideas.

The two necessary approaches to the aspects of our science are: a) collection of computing methods (programs) dealing with simulation of national and international economic systems; and b) development of the science of economics by more distinctive simulation mathematics and writing of such programs ourselves. We will then be able to express the ideas in a better form, more suited to the academic circles that have indeed eclipsed us with similar techniques.

May I suggest that we tune in to the current wave of scientific study style by organization along the lines of a) and b) above?