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### THE BASIS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Men have differed in the source to which they trace the sanctions for morality. Some postulate the existence of a Deity whose will is the moral law, the dictates of which are eternal, changeless, and absolutely binding. Others prefer to relate ethics to the "mores" or customs enforced by society, thereby accounting for regional differences in moral codes. Some see conscience as the direct voice of God, others see it as the human intellect applied in the moral sphere. There are, too, those who, questioned on the source of the binding force of moral behaviour, retort that the supreme virtue is "to do right because it is right, which is wisdom in the scorn of consequence," assuming that man recognizes what is right by immediate perception.

Henry George was not just another moralist in the accepted sense. He did not merely propound yet another system of ethics. Despite differences of ethical judgments, an underlying agreement exists on many fundamental issues regarding conduct, if not motives also. The scriptural injunction, "Love your neighbour as yourself," implies not only the obligation to love one's neighbour, but the right and duty to love oneself. The Golden Rule accepted by moralists of all schools, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," carries precisely the same implication. Applying this common concept in the field of political economy Henry George speaks of "reciprocity" as the basis of social justice. Quoting Bacon's *Novum Organon* on the need to refer things to natural philosophy and its laws, he implies that, just as there is a science of political economy, so there is a science of morals, call it ethics or what you will, whose principles derive from natural law, from the law governing man's own nature as an individual and as a member of society. Human legislation is just as it is based thereupon, unjust in the degree of its departure therefrom.

Without question, if all men at all times and places had observed the edicts of natural law, granted the prolific potentialities of the planet we live on, a reign of justice must have prevailed. If we find instead a world familiar with want, misery, greed, unemployment, poverty, violence, and all the sordid list of ills to which mankind seems heir, it can only be because men, or some men, have defied nature's laws and trampled upon the basic moral code which we all in our heart of hearts recognize. It is one of Henry George's great achievements that he forced men's minds back to this viewpoint and away from those confused explanations which seek to protect or conceal the

select interests of a guilty privileged class. What Jefferson said of Jesus might, in a lesser degree no doubt, have been said of him, "All the learned of his country, entrenched in its power and riches, were opposed to him, lest his labours should undermine their advantages."

It is not surprising, therefore, that for the classical economists, ethical considerations are necessarily right outside the province of their subject. Moral tenets are by definition beyond its scope. They may talk of "the iron law of wages" in terms of the wage fund theory, but such considerations as the rights of labour to the fruits it produces are given scant description. In a sense, of course, it is true that such conceptions are properly the concern of the moral philosopher. But subject divisions are man-made for his convenience, and in real life morality cannot be divorced from human behaviour in the economic field. Henry George never loses sight of the necessary relationship between a sound science of political economy and a sound science of morality in the elimination of grave social injustice. The "classicists," on the other hand, have tended to give the impression that the two are irreconcilable and that never the twain must meet.

The only ends with which political economy as such is strictly concerned are those of the production, exchange and distribution of wealth. Henry George stresses that these ends are not the sole aims in life. Many people believe that "we have not here a lasting city." Some believe in an after-life which is the goal of human endeavour; others again think happiness is to be attained here and now, if at all. But, whatever be its objects and motive forces, if the quality of life lived on earth is to be such as befits men endowed with reason and noble aspirations, a prime necessity is that man shall be able to wrest an adequate livelihood from the earth before he can turn his attention elsewhere. It is true that Jesus referred man to the lilies of the field and to the need to place moral considerations first in his scheme of things. It is also true that man cannot live by bread alone. But he certainly cannot live without it, and it is with this vital or basic side of man's activities that all who study political economy are rightly concerned. Just as political economy is the necessary complement of morality so is Henry George's economic teaching the necessary complement of his ethical teaching. To study them separately is to emasculate each.

In the natural order man's needs are adequately provided for by the natural resources of the globe which he has only to convert to his use. As Henry George remarks in effect, these resources have by no means yet been exhaustively exploited even with the aid of modern applied science and techniques of production, giving the lie to neo-Malthusian explanations of poverty. It is true that, given equal access to nature's workshop, some men of superior capacity would produce more and be entitled to more than others. But the enormous differences in individual wealth which everyone remarks are by no means proportional to differences in individual ability and diligence. Henry George shows that poverty is the correlative of riches. The Gospels relate of the rich young man who sought guidance from the Master that "he went away sad, for he had many possessions." We are not told in his case whether or not they were obtained justly. But wherever possessions very greatly exceed a man's capacity to earn them, to seek at all costs to retain them is, as Henry George does not hesitate to aver, to perpetuate robbery.

The fact that great wealth was concentrated in very few hands, at the time that poverty was very widely disseminated, argues that large scale robbery had taken place, perpetuated by man-made laws. Henry George saw this very clearly. Men willing and able to produce wealth, and able to secure their due share of it, would not voluntarily have embraced poverty. As population increased, the value of the earth's natural resources or command thereof increased in direct ratio, affording a constant storehouse for the satisfaction of man's necessities. If notwithstanding this men were poor there could be but one explanation. They were denied equal access to nature's workshop. The community was not appropriating the economic rent of land which is its natural and legitimate source of revenue, for "God gave

the earth to all men." Those able to monopolize natural resources in their own hands were enabled to control the distribution of wealth in their own interests, and the power conveyed by superior wealth enabled them to entrench themselves in that position.

Henry George was one, possibly the greatest, of the pioneers who attacked and really began to undermine that citadel of injustice. This was his claim to greatness. He is the master of this teaching. For a full and detailed exposition of his principles it would be invidious to look anywhere but to the source, and immodest of the writer to attempt to improve upon them. His was a life of "reciprocity"; he too was "all things to all men."

L. F. DESMOND.

## TYRANNY IN MANY GUISES—By James L. Busey

Tyranny, like Dracula, is a deadly monster of many forms. But whether it wears the mask of the Golden Horde of Ghenghis Khan, of the monarchy of George III, of the emotional, screaming banners and slogans of Hitler, or of the doctrinaire promises of Stalin and Malenkov, its substance remains the same.

During all the millennia of human struggle, mankind has been befuddled and beguiled by its inability to understand that under whatever mask, under whatever name or banner, the one single enemy is tyranny; tyranny in the name of the race, tyranny in the name of the collectivity, tyranny in the name of the masses, tyranny in the name of fear, tyranny in the name of the leader, of the monarch, of the vanguard of the proletariat, or of the ignorant civil demagogue of low repute.

The greatest tyranny of all is the tyranny of ignorance, of misunderstanding, of deceit, which has led men to believe that there is somehow a difference between one form of tyranny and another.

A basic characteristic of tyranny is its revolting contempt for the individual human being. The tyrant invades men's privacy—the privacy of the home, the privacy of conversation, even the privacy of belief. A necessary part of the tyrant's destruction of the individual is his fanatical insistence upon abolishing the power of the human mind. Like the Nazi Hans Jhost, who shouted, "When you mention culture, I reach for my gun!" the tyrant wrecks or subverts the schools; he subjects his victims to the brainwashing of a Soviet prison; sends his fanatics to disrupt the churches, the universities, the libraries, and every other centre where human beings may offer him a resistance through the power of their ideas, their knowledge, or their faith in the decency of God.

When it cannot entirely disregard or destroy all the cherished values of human dignity, tyranny perverts the remainder. Soviet children spy on parents and on their playmates. Nazis scream of the glory and beauty of war. Communists give to democracy a new and distorted definition. Peronistas scream, "Books, no! Shoes, yes!" The Big Lie overcomes all truth. Slander takes the place of respect for the rules of the game. Brutality and deceit are ennobled.

A second characteristic of tyranny is its elimination of the rule of law, and the substitution of rule by personality.

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The dungeon, the secret and unpredictable police, Siberia, and liquidation, have become the regular substitutes for a government by law. Trials turn into blood purges by Nazis, assassination by gasoline and castor oil by Italian Fascists, extra-legal expulsion to Tierra del Fuego by Peronistas, invention of grisly devices for securing confessions in Falange Spain, mass orgies by screaming as in Communist China, politically engineered ordeals by public opinion as in some of our own legislative committees. In the final, pitiful, grovelling chapter of tyranny, not only the opponents, but even the supporters of the totalitarian régime are reduced to snivelling, cringing, cowardly caricatures of human beings.

The first principle of the code of freedom places the precious importance of the individual as the No. 1 object of all economic, political, or social endeavor. This was the central theme of the Declaration of Independence, when it proclaimed:

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*

The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, 1789, spoke on the same subject:

*The aim of every political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.*

Importance of the individual includes many subsidiary conceptions, such as that government shall be directly answerable to the people; that there shall be a deep respect for each human being and for each minority of human beings; that there shall be wide and untrammelled opportunity in expression, in property ownership, in family, in Church, and in all other free institutions of men.

A second and equally fundamental, though closely associated principle of the code of liberty, is that men shall be ruled by law. The law shall be made by constituted bodies, enforced and interpreted by the regular organs of government. There shall be freely elected congresses and parliaments instead of rump Soviets and Reichstags. There shall be constitutionally determined courts with a regular and predictable order of procedure instead of wild, unhampered scandal, libel, mass trials, and secret police dungeons. The forms of arrest and the forms of trial shall be regulated by law and follow an orderly procedure. The rule of law requires that there be responsible enforcement agencies instead of loose and