

LAND&LIBERTY

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PO Box 6408, London, W1A 3GY
+44 (0) 800 048 8537
editor@landandliberty.net

Editor
Joseph Milne

Managing Editor
Jesper Raundall Christensen a-m-m

Graphics and Production
Jesper Raundall Christensen a-m-m

Publisher *Henry George Foundation*

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letter from the publisher

My recent attendance at the United Nation's Habitat III conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in Quito, Ecuador led me to look at what George had to say about "Habitat" - i.e. the natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism. He addresses the subject in his book *Social Problems* where he refers to a law of nature that governs organic life. Here he marks how every creature depends upon a subtle ability to acquire and apply knowledge of their habitat. Further, that the more complex the creature - the more different and connected parts it has - the more refined this ability becomes and that in man, compared with other creatures, this ability is:

"so superior, that the difference seems of kind rather than degree. In him, that narrow and seemingly unconscious intelligence that we call instinct becomes conscious reason, and the godlike power of adaptation and invention makes feeble man nature's king. But with man the ascending line stops. Animal life assumes no higher form: nor can we affirm that in all his generations, man, as an animal, has whit improved. But progression in another line begins. Where the development of species ends, social development commences..."

He goes on to point out how, with every advance of society that we call civilisation human powers increase and:

"In this progression that begins with man, as in that which leads up to him the same law holds. Each advance makes a demand for higher and higher intelligence. With the beginnings of society arises the need for social intelligence - for that consensus of individual intelligence which forms public opinion, a public conscience, a public will, and is manifested in law, institutions and administration."

George's call is for higher rather than more intelligence and his reference to conscience and will in addition to opinion points us to those aspects of human intelligence that are experienced in our heart and soul rather than in our heads or bodies - aspects that manifest in human creativity and love. His reference to the way in which man's ability to make and care for things resembles that of the absolute power that is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the universe reminds us of his recognition that every particle or aspect of the universe depends upon the whole of which it is but a part.

In October 2016 some thirty thousand good people from every country gathered in Quito to consider issues concerning man and his habitat and what was clear to Henry George towards the end of the nineteenth century was, for many even clearer today following the massive advances in technology and substantially increased interdependence that are a feature of modern civilised life. The need for higher social intelligence is now more than ever urgent if the social, economic and environmental catastrophes that so many fear are to be avoided, and George's emphasis on the Golden Rule - to "do unto others as you would be done by" is now more important than ever.

David Triggs
Chairman

Henry George Foundation

[henrygeorgefoundation@
googlemail.com](mailto:henrygeorgefoundation@googlemail.com)



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