

most people, I seem to be subject, in some degree at least, to the influences of both vice and virtue, I (and I imagine most) may thus draw upon personal experience. I mark that when under the influence of a vice my feelings, thoughts, and behaviour tend to be directed towards myself whilst, when under the influence of a virtue, I tend to be more discriminating, generous and considerate of others. Could this be evidence of the operation of a natural law? This link between an action and a consequence does not appear to flow from any personal intent; social norm, custom, tradition, or man made law but rather be associated with an influence that is beyond the individual or society i.e. not 'artificial' but 'natural'. It is true that individuals may be under pressure from parents, teachers, preachers, and society at large to practice virtue and avoid vices but this does not account for the nature of the relationship between such a practice and the consequence. Such encouragements merely represent social adjustments that are made in harmony with the natural law. For human beings natural law does not prescribe the practise of virtue; humans are made free to choose, as George points out if humans were compelled by their nature to avoid error they would be less than human.

Here we may see how natural law does indeed relate to moral law just as it must relate to all matters that pertain to the manifest universe.

It may also be apparent why I so disagree with Dodson when he suggests that George was "to a degree" with others guilty of looking "no deeper than their faith in a conscious creator". My understanding of George's faith in a conscious creator is that it was not on account of any shallowness of looking. He tells us directly that his return to faith, following a period of agnosticism, followed very deep consideration and was directly linked to his appreciation of the universal application of the laws of nature. He saw how it was only possible for a person to express their will and make a new thing that was 'good' for a purpose e.g. to meet a human want, when they used their powers consciously. Having made such a thing for the first time and describing the processes that need to be

followed, further similar items could be made by 'following the process rules' and far less consciousness was called for. These rules (laws) could thus be said to express 'the will of the original maker'. Looking with all that any man is equipped to use, his own senses, mind, and spirit and aided by knowledge gleaned by past generations that satisfied his own critical faculty, it seems to me that George was able to reason that the 'all maker' must not just be conscious but must be consciousness itself – continuously manifesting through all creation and (as far as humans are concerned) especially through human kind. Thus in his final work he was able to say:- "Why is it that some things coexist with other things? and that some things always follow other things? The Mohammedan will answer: "it is the will of God." The man of our Western civilisation will answer: "it is a law of Nature." The phrase is different, but the answer one."



Natural Law

By
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Key to understanding the ideas of Henry George is an appreciation of the respect that he had for the natural world and the laws of nature or Natural Law. Henry George saw how the physical sciences sought to discover and describe those laws that govern the physical universe and that when men seek to modify the physical world, as they do when wealth is created, they need to acknowledge such laws and work in harmony with them. He does not however, as some modern thinkers do, limit his appreciation of these laws of nature to the **physical** sciences. Recognising that human beings and human societies are part of the natural world George is clear that there must be laws of nature that operate through them and that they need to be discovered, described and acknowledged if man is to realise all his natural potential. The essential characteristic of the natural law that Henry George refers to is that it always operates, whatever people will, think, or do – irrespective of whether it is acknowledged or ignored. Problems arise in the socio-economic sphere, just as they do in the physical process of making artefacts, if the relevant natural laws are ignored. Hence George says: "the evils arising from the unjust and unequal distribution of wealth...are not imposed by natural laws.... they spring solely from social maladjustments which ignore natural laws". He here identifies the source of "the social problem" as man-made - not natural.

Probably the most familiar example of the inviolable nature of a natural law is the one that we call 'the law

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of gravity’ – it operates irrespective of whether humans acknowledge or ignore it. Human well-being is however clearly affected by the extent to which such a law is understood, described, and taken into account in the adjustments human beings make. When humans fly neither human nature nor the law of gravity cease to operate, but conscious human adjustments have been made to accommodate them. When an infant loses a toy because it falls from its grasp he or she begins the learning process – it may take a Newton and then an Einstein to describe the law more fully and inspire more refined adjustments of human behaviour, but every baby child learns to acknowledge and work in harmony with the same law.

The singular term ‘natural law’ indicates a type or class of law and does not preclude the existence of the many laws that may fall under that same type or class e.g. statute law, Roman law, English law etc. As far as human comprehension is concerned there does however seem to be a difference between the singular natural law as ‘type’ and particular manifestations of natural laws. Which comes first? Do we first observe phenomena and then identify a commonality that indicates ‘type’ or, aware of the ‘type’, do we then recognise conforming examples. Here George comes to our aid when, in *The Science of Political Economy*, he indicates that both the ‘inductive’ and the ‘deductive’ modes of human reason are valid and necessary. The inductive or *a posteriori* method – based on accurate observation and “reasoning from particulars to generals in an ascending line, until we come at last to one of those invariable uniformities that we call laws of nature”, he says, comes first. He continues, having “reached what we feel sure is a law of nature, and as such true in all times and places then an easier and more powerful method of ascertaining the truth is open to us – the method of reasoning in the descending line from generals to particulars. This is the method we call the deductive, or *a priori* method. For knowing what is the general law, the invariable sequence that we call a law of nature, we have only to discover that a particular comes under it to know what is true in the case of that particular”. George provides further clarification when he says “So far as our reason is concerned, induction must give the facts on which

we may proceed to deduction. Deduction can safely be based only on what has been supplied to the reason by induction; and where the validity of this first step is called to question, must apply to induction for proof. Both methods are proper to the careful investigation that we speak of as scientific: induction in its preliminary stages, when it is groping for the law of nature; deduction when it has discovered that law, and is able to proceed by shortcut from the general to the particular, without any further need for the more laborious and, so to speak, uphill method of induction, except to verify its conclusions”. We might further note George’s recognition and use of a third ‘method of investigation’, which has been found to be effective in the discovery of truth in the physical sciences, i.e. where a ‘tentative deduction’ or hypothesis may be employed.

The quotations cited above show how Henry George saw the importance of natural law in connection with political economy and human behaviour and that it does not only operate in the material world. He goes on to show how it operates through the subtle worlds in which man wills, thinks, and desires and which are critical to the social aspects of human nature and the production and distribution of wealth throughout society.

Thus far we have not referred to the practices, customs, traditions or behaviours that societies follow and which they come to regard as ‘right’ or ‘good’ in contrast to any they consider to be ‘wrong’ or ‘bad’ and may make ‘illegal’. This is not to suggest that they do not matter to society or that there is not scope for variation in these between different societies but rather to note that natural law is of a different order. My feel for ‘laws of a different order’ is possibly helped by my experience as an engineer involved in water projects throughout the world. I easily recognise the differences between natural laws and man made laws, regulations, or requirements. The former operate through the materials and forces that engineers employ whilst the clients and/or governments in whose jurisdiction the project may be located impose the latter. The former are fixed, they do not vary and always apply, – the latter may proliferate or be cancelled, may vary, or be

exempted. Likewise it seems to me that where individual societies declare artificial ‘moral laws’ they may or may not be based upon natural law but they cannot be as universal in their application as are the natural laws themselves. It may well be that there are a class of laws that apply to all **human** societies but such laws could not override those imposed by nature on **all** societies. They would exhibit an accommodation with the natural law by adjusting their application in accordance with the peculiar nature of man and human society. To the extent that a human society observed these laws it might be expected to thrive. If humans and human society choose to ignore natural law and to observe only regulations that represent ‘maladjustments’, they might be expected to suffer – maybe to the point of extinction!

Here we come to a critical point in our enquiry and the need to take into account the nature of the human being. We need to recognise the unique degree of freedom that is available to human beings, A freedom that comes with the free will, highly developed brain, and versatile body that humans enjoy compared with all other creatures. We must recognise also the importance of our unique ability to adjust our actions to ends of our own devising. We need to acknowledge how this freedom, diversity, and a susceptibility to both individual and social influences characterises human existence and how the relationships between individuals and between individuals and society is affected. It is obvious that individuals vary in how they feel, think and behave and, whilst we may debate the relative importance of nature or nurture in shaping people’s character, it is clear that the influences to which an individual is exposed, especially, but not exclusively during childhood, affect these important characteristics. Personal experience shows us that our feelings, thoughts and behaviour affect our freedom to feel, think and behave as we would wish. For example, it is observable that repeated indulgence in a ‘vice’ can lead to an addiction that can seriously inhibit an individual’s freedom to choose. In contrast the practice of a virtue tends to not only increase the choices available to a person, but also to influence the likely direction of such choices. Since, as I imagine is true of