
Land, Nature and the State: Wallace, Spencer and Huxley on the Land Question

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Land of hope and gloria
Land of my Victoria
The Kinks, "Victoria"*

1. Introduction

In 1869, Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913), recognised as a co-founder of the theory of natural selection, published a report on his research in Southeast Asia titled *The Malay Archipelago*. In the conclusion, he suggested that uncivilised societies bore some characteristics of the "perfect social state," the goal of the progressive civilising process (455-56). In terms of morality and social justice, he praised "savage" communities and denounced his own "civilized" society (456-57), which, he argued, remained "in a state of barbarism" (457). He added:

We should now clearly recognize the fact, that the wealth and knowledge and culture of *the few* do not constitute civilization, and do not of themselves advance us towards the "perfect social state." (457)

This presents a sharp contrast to the idea of the racial superiority of Europeans and to the usual optimism about the future of civilisation, which he expressed in his essay on the origin of human races published in 1864 ("Origin").

The idea of the "perfect social state," the goal of the civilising process, where humanity would become perfect, had been presented in *Social Statics* (1851), the first book of Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). This work, as well as other aspects of his philosophy, had had an enormous influence on Wallace (Fichman, *Elusive Victorian* 134-137). It was praised in Wallace's autobiography as "a work for which I had a great admiration, and which seemed to me so important in relation to political and social reform" (*My Life* 2: 253). In addition, he ascribed his commitment to the land reform movement to reading the work, especially the chapter on "The Right to the Use of the Earth" (*My Life* 2: 253; "How to" 293). In the conclusion of his 1864 essay, Wallace depicted a Spencerian ideal society with a single superior race as a goal of progress through racial struggle, citing *Social Statics* ("Origin" clxviii-clxx). In terms of his acceptance of Spencer's early thought, the conclusion of *The Malay Archipelago* marks the turning point of Wallace's social thought, in the sense that he explicitly stated that European civilisation was not directed towards any ideal condition. In the latter half of his life, he criticised many aspects of British society and called for social reform.

In a note concerning his evaluation "a state of barbarism," he pointed out the problems

of land ownership based on absolute private property rights:

We permit absolute possession of the soil of our country, with no legal rights of existence on the soil to the vast majority who do not possess it. A great landholder may legally convert his whole property into a forest or a hunting-ground, and expel every human being who has hitherto lived upon it. In a thickly-populated country like England, where every acre has its owner and its occupier, this is a power of legally destroying his fellow-creatures; and that such a power should exist, and be exercised by individuals, in however small a degree indicates that, as regards true social science, we are still in a state of barbarism. (Wallace, *Malay Archipelago* 458)

John Stuart Mill, who read the concluding parts of *The Malay Archipelago*, invited him to join the land reform movement. After an intermission caused by Mill's death, he published his first essay on land nationalisation in 1880, when the Irish land reform movement was at its height.¹ In the next year, he became president of the newly formed Land Nationalisation Society, and published *Land Nationalisation* in 1882. In his later life then, he continued to support not only land nationalisation, but also social reform in many other aspects.²

The political argument in the late-Victorian and Edwardian period has often been formulated as the opposition between Individualism and Collectivism or sometimes Socialism.³ In the 1880s, there was a rising tendency to promote social welfare by state agency, called Collectivism. On the other hand, there was a current against such a collectivistic tendency, called Individualism. The core of the latter was the idea that state action would be essentially at variance with individual liberty, that is to say, that the expansion of the role and activities of the state would necessarily lead to the infringement of the sphere of individual liberty. Based on this idea, Individualists criticised state intervention, and often presented the ideal of the minimal state, arguing that the role of the state should be restricted to such activities as the enforcement of justice and the maintenance of internal and external security. A leading proponent of Individualism was Spencer, whose work *The Man Versus the State* (1884) has been regarded as a kind of Individualist manifesto. Spencer's political ideas can be situated at the opposite pole to Wallace's lifelong plea for social reform. Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895) condemned both extreme poles, which he called "Anarchic Individualism" and "Regimental Socialism," and supported a middle-of-the-road political position which would promote moderate reform (Preface; "Government"). The political arguments of the evolutionary theorists, including their arguments on the land problem, should be understood and evaluated in this context of the formulation of Individualism versus Collectivism.⁴

Recent studies have underlined the complex relations between evolutionary theories and political ideologies. Firstly, there was no single theory of evolution but a wide variety of evolutionary theories in the Victorian period. Secondly, it is an oversimplified formulation to suppose that a specific evolutionary theory necessarily supports a specific political ideology. Unlike a typical formulation of so-called Social Darwinism, Darwinism itself was not necessarily connected with laissez-faire individualism. Its opponents often used evolutionary

theory to support their own political arguments (Jones; Stack). In this sense, there could be a variety of connections between evolutionary theories and political ideologies. In any serious study, it is necessary to analyse this complexity.⁵

The aim of this study is to evaluate several aspects of the complex connections mentioned above by analysing the three evolutionary thinkers' arguments on the Land Question. Wallace and Spencer agreed on the public role of scientists and philosophers, that is to say, their engagement in public controversies concerning social and political problems (Fichman, *Elusive Victorian* 212-13). Huxley, in his later years, published several political essays on social problems based on the authority of natural science, though he was a chief proponent of scientific naturalism, which stressed the independence and neutrality of natural science (Fichman, "Biology and Politics" 100-05). They all developed their political arguments based on their respective evolutionary theories. More specifically, their arguments on the land problem were intertwined with their ideas of the role of the state and their views of nature. In this study, I will evaluate their synthesis of evolutionary theory and political ideology in terms of their arguments about the land problem by focusing on their views of nature and of Malthusian population theory.

2. Repudiation of Private Property in Land:

Wallace, the early Spencer and George

Wallace's argument for land nationalisation was centred on the following two ideas: firstly, that the present situation of economic inequality in British society, with all the bad effects of poverty, was caused by landlordism, the monopoly of land by large-scale landowners; secondly, that the remedy for inequality and poverty was the replacement of landlordism by "occupying ownership," which could be realised only by the abolition of private property in land, that is, land nationalisation. It could be argued that his argument was based on two kinds of justification, by economic theory and by natural laws. Both seem to have been appreciably influenced by Spencer and Henry George.⁶

In the seventh chapter of *Land Nationalisation*, Wallace tried to demonstrate that the cause of poverty and low wages was absolute private property in land by appealing to George's economic theory presented in *Progress and Poverty*. It presented the formula that land-owning interests would be necessarily antagonistic to those of capital and labour. This formula implies that interests and wages would be kept lower as land value and rent became higher. Therefore, where land was so monopolised that land value and rent were maximised, wages would be restrained at the subsistence level.⁷ Wallace, on the basis of George's economic theory, concluded that poverty and economic inequality in late-Victorian Britain, caused by the monopoly ownership of land, could be alleviated only by the abolition of private property in land through land nationalisation (*Land Nationalisation* 165-74).

Another basic idea of Wallace's land nationalisation scheme was that labour would be the only entitlement to private property (Wallace, "'Why' and 'How'" 299). This idea was also presented in the seventh book of George's *Progress and Poverty*. It means that land, which

should be regarded as a natural resource, should not be an object of private property. In Wallace's scheme for land nationalisation, the value attached to land by human labour, for example, by cultivation and improvement, was separated from the land itself, which would be owned by the state. That value would be included in the "tenant-right," which could be owned as private property and traded freely. In his scheme, subletting would be absolutely prohibited and mortgaging would be strictly limited. Consequently, a tenant who got a "tenant-right" and paid "quit-rent" to the state, would virtually become a freeholder under state ownership.⁸ Thus, Wallace's scheme would distribute the land to be cultivated among poorer people and bring "Occupying Ownership under the State" to secure the stability of tenancy (Wallace, *Land Nationalisation* 232). In this system, tenants could enjoy the value which they would add to the land by improvement and could sell it. As a result, according to Wallace, land nationalisation would increase the productivity of land and alleviate poverty.

These ideas of land nationalisation seem to have been justified by appealing to nature, where norms were supposed to exist in the form of natural laws and rights. In the two works which had the greatest influence on Wallace, Spencer's *Social Statics* and George's *Progress and Poverty*, the criticism of private property in land was based on an explicit appeal to natural laws and rights.⁹ Spencer's criticism was derived from the first principle of his system of ethics in ideal conditions, the "law of equal freedom": "Every man has freedom to do all that he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man" (Spencer, *Social Statics* 121). "Equity," Spencer argued, "does not permit property in land," because "it is manifest, that an exclusive possession of the soil necessitates an infringement of the law of equal freedom" (132).

we see that the right of each man to the use of the earth, limited only by the like rights of his fellow-men, is immediately deducible from the law of equal freedom. We see that the maintenance of this right necessarily forbids private property in land. (143)

This repudiation of private property in land should be considered to be based on nature, to which ethical meanings were attached in his system, in the sense that "the right of the use of the earth" was presented as a natural right derived from the law of equal freedom, the first principle of the "ethical" law of nature.

George and Wallace seem to have agreed on this. In *Land Nationalisation* Wallace quoted a Spencerian argument against private property in land from George's *Progress and Poverty*:

The recognition of individual proprietorship of land is the denial of the natural rights of other individuals--it is a wrong which *must* show itself in the inequitable division of wealth. For, as labour cannot produce without the use of land, the denial of the equal right to the use of land is necessarily the denial of the right of labour to its own produce. If one man can command the land upon which others must labour, he can appropriate the produce of their labour as the price of his permission to labour. The fundamental law of nature, that her enjoyment by man shall be consequent upon his exertion, is thus violated. The one receives without producing;

the others produce without receiving. The one is unjustly enriched; the others are robbed. To this fundamental wrong we have traced the unjust distribution of wealth which is separating modern society into the very rich and the very poor. (George 242, qtd. in Wallace, *Land Nationalisation* 170-71)

The important point here is that George explicitly appealed to “the natural rights” founded on “the fundamental law of nature.” Wallace also presented a similar argument in his essay:

man cannot live without access to the natural products which are essential to life--to air, to water, to food, to clothing, to fire. If the means of getting these are monopolized by some, then the rest are denied their most elementary right--the right to support themselves by their own labour. But neither pure air, nor water, neither food, clothing, nor fire, can be obtained without land. A free use of land is, therefore, the absolute first condition of freedom to live; and it follows that the monopoly of land by some must be wrong, because it necessarily implies the right of some to prevent others from obtaining the necessaries of life. (“Why’ and ‘How’” 300)

Wallace, as well as Spencer in *Social Statics* and George in *Progress and Poverty*, appealed to natural laws and rights by presenting the argument that the monopoly ownership of land derived from private property in land necessarily would violate the natural rights of the landless. This kind of justification, as will be seen below, became a target of Huxley’s attack.

Another important context of their discussion of the land problem was Malthusian population theory. The chief target of George’s *Progress and Poverty* was Malthusian political economy, which stressed the inevitability of poverty based upon population and wage-fund theories. In *Land Nationalisation*, Wallace denied the argument that equal distribution of land under “occupying ownership” would lead to over-population, which would exacerbate poverty:

It has also been objected that peasant-proprietorship leads to too rapid increase of the population, and must thus soon produce over-crowding and pauperism. But here again the facts are all the other way. (160)

Malthus’s population theory was often utilised to undermine radicalism, for example, by Malthus himself in criticising Godwin’s and Condorcet’s theory of human perfectibility in *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. It is no accident that the early Spencer, who presented an ideal society with perfect humanity as the goal of inevitable progress in *Social Statics*, tried in the early 1850s to demonstrate the diminution of population pressure through the progressive civilising process and its ultimate annihilation in his ideal society (“Theory of Population”). In later years, as will be seen below, Wallace cited this population theory of the early Spencer in presenting the socialistic ideal of an egalitarian society, while Huxley stressed Malthusian population pressure to undermine such a radical measure of social reform as land nationalisation. The important point is that Malthusian population theory could be presented as a “scientific” natural law and that the question was its credibility as a scientific principle. In this sense, this problem is intertwined with the issue concerning the idea of the law of nature, to which ethical and scientific meanings can be attributed.

In Wallace's argument for land nationalisation, as in its two main sources Spencer's *Social Statics* and George's *Progress and Poverty*, the argument about the land problem was intertwined with the idea of nature in the sense of being based on the law of nature as an "ethical" principle and on doubts about the authority of Malthusian theory as a "scientific" natural law. Their idea of nature, as will be seen below, was criticised by Huxley. Their arguments on the land problem can be better understood by seeing the link to problems concerning the idea of nature.

3. *The Man versus the State and the Land Question*

Spencer, who had condemned landlordism and private property in land in *Social Statics*, vindicated the liberty and property of landlords and denounced any state intervention which infringed on them in the context of the land problem in the 1880s. He started to be regarded as a leading philosopher of Individualism, who supported the limited state to protect individual liberty and property. His individualistic political ideas were presented most clearly in *The Man versus the State*, a collection of four essays published in *The Contemporary Review* in 1884.

The first essay "The New Toryism" presented his theory of history as a basis of his political ideas: from "compulsory coöperation" to "voluntary coöperation," from "the *régime* of status" to "the *régime* of contract," and from "militancy" to "industrialism." In these three binary oppositions in his theory, the former three principles were those of Toryism and the latter those of Liberalism. According to Spencer, the true role of Liberalism would be to follow these lines of history by reducing the compulsion of the state and enhancing individual liberty. In this theory he denounces the "New Toryism," which was said to be typically seen in the second Gladstone administration.

The second essay "The Coming Slavery" presented the thesis that "All socialism involves slavery," in which what "fundamentally distinguishes the slave is that he labours under coercion to satisfy another's desires"(34). On the ground that "State-socialism" required people to become slaves subordinate to society, Spencer denounced land nationalisation:

There is the movement for land-nationalization which, aiming at a system of land-tenure equitable in the abstract, is, as all the world knows, pressed by Mr. George and his friends with avowed disregard for the just claims of existing owners, and as the basis of a scheme going more than half-way to State-socialism. (32)

Despite making no reference to Wallace, it could be considered that Spencer indirectly attacked Wallace, the president of the Land Nationalisation Society, regarded as a champion of land reform like George, who made lecture tours in Britain in the 1880s.¹⁰

In the conclusion of "The Coming Slavery" Spencer presented the most important principle in terms of his individualism and evolutionary social theory:

There seems no getting people to accept the truth, which nevertheless is conspicuous enough, that the welfare of a society and the justice of its arrangements are at bottom dependent on the characters of its members; and that improvement in neither can

take place without that improvement in character which results from carrying on peaceful industry under the restraints imposed by an orderly social life. The belief, not only of the socialists but also of those so-called Liberals who are diligently preparing the way for them, is that by due skill an ill-working humanity may be framed into well-working institutions. It is a delusion. The defective natures of citizens will show themselves in the bad acting of whatever social structure they are arranged into. (43)

In this theory, social well-being could not be promoted through any kind of social policy, without the simultaneous improvement of human nature. Spencer presented, as it were, the principle of “character determinism” in the context of his assault on land nationalisation and “State-socialism.” Since, in his evolutionary social theory, what would develop character was the gradual evolutionary process, his conclusion was that radical social reform would necessarily bring evil results due to the imperfections of human nature.¹¹

In addition to this criticism based on his evolutionary social theory, Spencer, who had repudiated private property in land by appealing to natural rights in *Social Statics*, vindicated private property in the same way in *The Man versus the State*. In the fourth essay “The Great Political Superstition,” in which he claimed to limit the sovereign authority of Parliament, he criticised the legal theory which repudiated the idea of the law of nature, that government, or its legislative authority, would create and authorise rights through positive law. Against its corollary that property was “the creation of law,” Spencer justified the system of private property on the ground that property rights were natural in the sense that their authority was antecedent to civil government and its law(87-95).

In Spencer’s *Man versus the State*, a work vindicating Individualism against Collectivism, the problems concerning the idea of nature were presented in relation to the land problem. He supported his political position by utilising his evolutionary social theory according to “scientific” laws of nature and by grounding his defence of property rights on “ethical” laws of nature. Both of these two aspects were attacked by Huxley.

4. Huxley against Land Nationalisation

On 5 November 1889, *The Times* reported a meeting on the previous day between a Liberal MP John Morley and members of a labour political union in his constituency Newcastle upon Tyne. According to this report, a bricklayer John Laidler asked Morley his position on land nationalisation. Against his negative response, Laidler argued for the justification of land nationalisation by appealing to Spencer’s argument against private property in land in *Social Statics* (“Mr. Morley”).

In *The Times* on 7 November 1889, Spencer stated his position on this matter that he did not endorse land nationalisation supported by the doctrine of “Communism and Socialism,” which would bring disastrous effects. In support, he presented his distinction in *Data of Ethics* between “absolute ethics,” ethics in ideal conditions, and “relative ethics,” practical ethics in consideration to contemporary conditions:

The work referred to--“Social Statics”--was intended to be a system of political ethics--absolute political ethics, or that which ought to be, as distinguished from relative political ethics, or that which is at present the nearest practicable approach to it. (“Mr. Herbert Spencer”)

Spencer’s position was that land nationalisation by state coercion given imperfect humanity would bring evil results, while *Social Statics* was a work of “absolute ethics” concerning an ideal society with perfect humanity. However, Spencer, though he opposed coercive land nationalisation, did not abandon his earlier view of the “absolute” injustice of private property in land, quoting his theory in *The Principles of Sociology* that the land system would be transformed from private ownership to communal ownership through the evolution of the industrial type of society (“Mr. Herbert Spencer”).

In response to this letter from Spencer, some commentators sent letters to the editor and a debate involving several issues ensued. One of the correspondents was Huxley, a biologist and Spencer’s life-long friend.¹² He attacked “absolute political ethics,” or “*a priori* politics,” by arguing that it could make a weapon for a radical political movement in the sense that it could call for radical reform based on an evaluation of an existing society from its absolute principles (“Mr. Spencer”). Huxley linked this method with Rousseau when he condemned Laidler’s letter including the citation of Spencer’s early denunciation of private property in land (Huxley, “Political Ethics”; Laidler)

he adopts the method of Rousseau and his followers, which consists in making certain assumptions about matters of ethics in the first place, and certain assumptions about matters of history in the second place, and then drawing the obvious conclusion that the assumed facts are in sad discordance with the assumed ethical rules. It is a delightfully easy method, and saves all the trouble of going deeply and thoroughly into the foundations of ethics and the truth of history, which the scientific plodders give themselves. (Huxley, “Ownership”)

In the following year 1890, Huxley published in *The Nineteenth Century* four political essays to criticise the “*a priori* method,” that is, according to him, “the method of Rousseau.” It was George, as well as Spencer, whom Huxley explicitly attacked through the criticism of that method.

In the first essay “On the Natural Inequality of Man,” Huxley attacked the “*à priori* method” of “Rousseauism,” the plea for refashioning an existing society based on the idea of the state of nature that humans were free and equal by nature.¹³ He stressed the fictionality of Rousseau’s idea of the state of nature, and the natural inequality of human beings as a scientific fact. His point is that political theory should not be based on abstract ideals but on scientific knowledge:

Certainly, I am the last person to question this, or to doubt that politics is as susceptible of treatment by scientific method as any other field of natural knowledge. (6)

From this perspective he criticised the political ideal of social equality as an illusion, on the ground that inequality in political society was a necessary consequence of natural inequality (8-

13). In addition, he repudiated the supposition that land, originally under the ownership of the community, had been appropriated by violence. According to him, common land became private property for the sound economic reason that land under private ownership would become more productive and profitable through improvement. His conclusion was that inequality in the ownership of land was a result of free industrial competition, a necessary consequence of the natural inequality of humans(13-22).

In the second essay “Natural Rights and Political Rights” Huxley denounced George and his idea of natural rights as “Rousseauism” with the “*a priori* method” again:

Mr. George’s political philosophy is, in principle, though by no means in all its details, identical with Rousseauism. It exhibits, in perfection, the same *a priori* method, starting from highly questionable axioms which are assumed to represent absolute truth, and asking us to upset the existing arrangements of society on the faith of deductions from those axioms. (174)

In addition, Huxley criticised the individualist justification of the equal freedom principle as a law of nature(176-84). Nevertheless, his main target was George’s repudiation of private property in land(184-95), which Huxley attacked quoting an extract from *Progress and Poverty*, George’s argument from the natural laws that all have “the equal right. . . to the use and enjoyment of nature” and that “the exertion of labour in production is the only title to exclusive possession”(George 238, qtd. in Huxley, “Natural Rights” 185). Moreover, Huxley presented his idea of nature that it would concern not norms but facts.¹⁴ In other words, according to Huxley, there would be no “ethical” law of nature, so that only “scientific” natural laws would exist. He argued that the laws and rights of political society were not derived from but renounced and replaced the principles existing in natural conditions. In his view, justification by natural laws and rights was an error of confounding natural with political principles(“Natural Rights” 182-83).

In Huxley’s theory the distinction between natural and moral principles, or between nature and society, was stressed. In the “Natural Inequality of Man,” however, he stressed the continuity between nature and society by arguing that inequality in political society was derived from natural inequality. This was an ambiguity in his idea of nature in his later years, but he was consistent in his belief that natural science should be a basis of social and political thought. The reason why he attacked the “*a priori* method” of justification by the “ethical” law of nature was that it was a self-deluded method which was not based on real scientific knowledge of nature. Huxley stressed Malthusian population pressure as a scientific law of nature. In the “Natural Inequality of Man” he presented a problem which human society would face due to population pressure:

The difficulty paraded by the opponents of individual ownership, that, by the extension of the private appropriation of the means of subsistence, the time would arrive when men would come into the world for whom there was no place, must needs make its appearance under any system, unless mankind are prevented from multiplying indefinitely. For, even if the habitable land is the property of the whole

human race, the multiplication of that race must, as we have seen, sooner or later, bring its numbers up to the maximum which the produce can support; and then the interesting problem in casuistry, which even absolute political ethics may find puzzling, will arise: Are we, who can just exist, bound to admit the new-comers who will simply starve themselves and us? If the rule that any one may exercise his freedom only so far as he does not interfere with the freedom of others is all-sufficient, it is clear that the new-comers will have no rights to exist at all, inasmuch as they will interfere most seriously with the freedom of their predecessors. The population question is the real riddle of the sphinx, to which no political Œdipus has as yet found the answer. In view of the ravages of the terrible monster over-multiplication, all other riddles sink into insignificance. (19-20)

An egalitarian society created by social reform, in Huxley's theory, would tend to sink into inequality due to population pressure, which would force human society into the struggle for existence.¹⁵ Huxley suggested that this problem could not be solved by "absolute political ethics," an issue of the *Times* debate, which Huxley ascribed to Spencer and George, and possibly to Wallace. It is no accident that the early Spencer, George and Wallace, who stressed the injustice of private property in land, tried to undermine Malthusian population theory.¹⁶ Huxley stressed the destructive power of population pressure in the context of his vindication of private property in land. In addition, he argued that the natural evolutionary process through the struggle for existence would not necessarily bring beneficial results.¹⁷ His emphasis on population pressure and his criticism of natural laws and rights were two weapons of his assault on both Individualism and Socialism, leading to his middle-of-the-road political position in favour of moderate reform.

5. Land Nationalisation and Wallace's evolutionary socialism

In 1890 Wallace published in *The Fortnightly Review* an essay "Human Selection," in which he called himself a socialist under the influence of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888). He connected his plea for social reform with "the improvement of race," a common watchword with eugenicists. Wallace's observation was that such unfair conditions in civilised society as the monopoly of land by large-scale landlords impeded the natural progressive process. Only after social reform brought about an egalitarian society, would the natural selective process function to develop humanity:

It is my firm conviction, for reasons which I shall state presently, that, when we have cleansed the Augean stable of our existing social organization, and have made such arrangements that *all* shall contribute their share of either physical or mental labour, and that all workers shall reap the *full* reward of their work, the future of the race will be ensured by those laws of human development that have led to the slow but continuous advance in the higher qualities of human nature. When men and women are alike free to follow their best impulses; when idleness and vicious or useless luxury on the one hand, oppressive labour and starvation on the other, are

alike unknown; when all receive the best and most thorough education that the state of civilisation and knowledge at the time will admit; when the standard of public opinion is set by the wisest and the best, and that standard is systematically inculcated on the young; then we shall find that a system of selection will come spontaneously into action which will steadily tend to eliminate the lower and more degraded types of man, and thus continuously raise the average standard of the race. (330-31)

According to Wallace, the selective process which would function in an egalitarian society was not only natural selection but also a kind of sexual selection through women's choice of their partners.¹⁸ In "Human Selection," Wallace presented his social and biological idea of human progress by connecting his evolutionary theory with his socialism in his argument that social reform was essential to the evolutionary development of humanity.¹⁹

An ideal egalitarian society, as Huxley stressed,²⁰ would be threatened by population pressure, because over-population would restore a competition for the means of subsistence, pushing losers into poverty. In "Human Selection," Wallace stated his recognition of this difficulty(333), but he argued that population pressure would gradually diminish, ultimately reaching equilibrium, in the reformed society, due to the following two checks. The first was "the comparatively late average period of marriage" brought about by the changing view of marriage through the spread of education and the influence of public opinion(333). The second check based on the population theory of the early Spencer was the gradual diminution in fertility as a result of the development of the nervous system through the cultivation of higher human faculties.²¹ Thus, according to Wallace, the process of natural progress, that is, the steady development of human intellectual and moral faculties with the gradual diminution of population pressure, required social reform towards the ideal egalitarian society as an essential precondition.

It is reasonable to consider that the core of Wallace's proposal for social reform was land nationalisation, as was suggested in the conclusion of "Human Selection":

When we allow ourselves to be guided by reason, justice, and public spirit in our dealings with our fellow-men, and determine to abolish poverty by recognising the equal rights of all the citizens of our common land to an equal share of the wealth which all combine to produce,--when we have thus solved the lesser problem of a rational social organisation adapted to secure the equal well-being of all, then we may safely leave the far greater and deeper problem of the improvement of the race to the cultivated minds and pure instincts of the Women of the Future. (337)

In addition to presenting land nationalisation as the core of social reform, Wallace connected land nationalisation with the idea of equality of opportunity, which he regarded as a logical corollary of Spencer's principle of social justice, in his lecture in 1892.²² According to Wallace, Spencer's idea of social justice, which meant receiving results according to one's "own nature and actions" in free competition, could not be realised "under a system of landlordism and unlimited bequest." Wallace argued that social justice would be "a fair start

in life,” that is to say, equality of opportunity as a precondition of fair competition, which would be realised as a result of land nationalisation and the limitation of bequest(Wallace, “Herbert Spencer” 342-43).

Wallace stressed this point more clearly in his essay “True Individualism,” which meant fair competition with equality of opportunity, regarded as “The Essential Preliminary of a Real Social Advance,” this essay’s subtitle. This principle should be linked with his evolutionary socialism, the evolutionary progress of humanity after social reform, in the sense that “Equality of Opportunity is absolute fair play as between man and man in the struggle for existence”(516). Wallace presented “Equality of Opportunity,” which would be brought about by land nationalisation and the limitation of gift and bequest, as a principle of his version of socialism with full individual liberty, a synthesis of individualism and socialism(517-520).

6. Conclusion

In late-Victorian Britain, when the Land Question came to the fore, three evolutionary thinkers became involved in the debate on the land problem by linking it with their ideas of nature and evolution within the wider debate on the role of the state, Individualism versus Collectivism. From the perspective of this opposition, it seems that Wallace, a socialist, was at the opposite pole to Spencer, an Individualist, with Huxley in the middle between the two. However, this formulation is insufficient in the following two points.

The first is that it seems difficult to place Wallace in the political spectrum concerning the role of the state in the sense that Wallace’s socialism requires fair competition with equality of opportunity, which is compatible with individual liberty. He called this principle “true individualism,” which should be regarded as a synthesis of individualism and socialism. On the other hand, Spencer, who denounced land nationalisation in *The Man versus the State*, did not completely abandon his earlier position of the injustice of private property in land, at least in ideal conditions. Huxley regarded Individualism and Socialism as two extremes, and situated his moderate reform policy in the middle between the two. From the perspective of this study, however, it seems to be oversimplified to place Wallace at the opposite pole to Spencer in the political formulation, Individualism versus Collectivism.

The second point is the importance of seeing another kind of opposition between their ideas of nature, in addition to that political opposition. Spencer and Wallace, no allies on land nationalisation and socialism, had a common basis in the sense that they ascribed ethical meanings to nature. Firstly, both thinkers appealed to natural laws and rights to justify their respective political arguments. Secondly, they both supposed that the natural evolutionary process would bring beneficent results for morality and society, which means that evolution and progress would be identical. Huxley criticised this type of argument by stressing the distinction between the principles of nature and society and by presenting the idea of nature without purpose or ethical meaning. In his theory, there is no “ethical” law of nature, and evolution does not necessary mean progress.²³ In this opposition concerning the idea of nature, Huxley can be placed at the opposite pole from Wallace and Spencer, whose idea of nature

was the target of Huxley's assault.

Huxley stressed that it was important to search for the principles of nature using scientific methods, that is, to discover not "ethical" but "scientific" natural laws, even in considering social and political problems. For him, the most important natural principle related to social problems was Malthusian population pressure, which would force human society into the struggle for existence. On the other hand, the authority of the Malthusian population principle was challenged by the early Spencer, George and Wallace. Here, a parallel opposition to the second formulation about the idea of nature can be seen.

The Land Question in late-Victorian Britain could be easily understood simply as the opposition between the defenders of landed property and land reformers, which could be parallel to that political opposition, Individualism versus Collectivism. However, by analysing these three evolutionary thinkers' arguments about the land problem, my study has stressed different perspectives. Firstly, the political spectrum concerning the role of the state was not necessarily linear, seen in the complexity of Wallace's evolutionary socialism, which required equality of opportunity for individual liberty and fair competition. Secondly, the idea of nature could be regarded as an important issue not only in the debate on the land problem but also in the wider debate on the role of the state, at least in regard to evolutionary social theory. The link between the role of the state and the idea of nature in their arguments on the land problem should be seen as an important aspect of the intellectual history of late-Victorian Britain.

* Ray Davies, "Victoria," The Kinks, *Arthur or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire*, Pye, 1969.

- 1 In Harris's overview of late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, the late Victorian period was marked by the agricultural depression and the decline of landed interests(100-06).
- 2 For Wallace's commitment to the land nationalisation movement and, more generally, social reform, see Wallace, *My Life 2*: 253-92; Fichman, *Elusive Victorian* 211-82.
- 3 This formulation has been presented since the late-Victorian period, and is also utilised in such recent studies as Freedren; Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology*; Jones. A brief sketch of the controversy between the two is Taylor, Introduction.
- 4 The best example of this approach is Taylor, *Men versus the State*.
- 5 One of the leading scholars who stresses this complexity is Peter J. Bowler. See his *Biology; Evolution; Non-Darwinian Revolution*. See also Jones.
- 6 Smith stresses Wallace's originality, though he has often been, as Smith admits, as a follower of George's theory(925). From my perspective, the most remarkable difference lies in their approaches. George's theory was presented in the context of political economy, while Wallace was basically a social critic based upon evolutionary theory.
- 7 For George's theory of the cause of economic inequality, see George 1-211.
- 8 Wallace, *Land Nationalisation* 175-233. Spencer presented a similar idea in *Social Statics* that land would be under "the joint-stock ownership of the public" and tenants would lease land "from the nation" by paying rent to "an agent or deputy-agent of the community"(141).
- 9 See, chapter 9 of part 2 of *Social Statics* "The Right of the Use of the Earth"; book 7 of *Progress and Poverty* "Justice of the Remedy," especially its first chapter "The Injustice of Private Property in Land."
- 10 For Wallace's relationship with George, see Fichman, *Elusive Victorian* 211-34.
- 11 In evolutionary social theory, human nature, which had often been considered universally uniform, would

- change through the evolutionary process. In that context, Spencer seems to have used “nature” and “character” almost identically. For the discourses of character in the Victorian period, see Collini, “Idea of ‘Character.’” Collini cited Spencer as an example of political thinkers’ reliance on the ideal of “character” in that period(31).
- 12 For Huxley’s involvement in this debate and its significance, see White 142-148.
- 13 Helfand points out that Huxley’s assault “on the philosophy of Rousseau” in this essay “was most likely a veiled attack on Wallace”(171), and implies that a main target of all political essays by Huxley in the last part of his life was Wallace, despite the absence of overt references to his name.
- 14 Huxley, “Natural Rights” 176-81. Huxley stated in “The Struggle for Existence” that nature would mean “the sum of the phenomenal world, of that which has been, and is, and will be”(202).
- 15 This point was best illustrated in the episode of Atlantis in “The Struggle for Existence”(206-09) and the supposition of an ideal colony in “Prolegomena”(16-21).
- 16 Spencer, “Theory of Population”; George; Wallace, “Human Selection.”
- 17 Huxley, “Struggle for Existence” 198-99; “Prolegomena” 43-45; “*Romanes Lecture*” 79-86.
- 18 This was an idea which Bellamy had presented in his novel *Looking Backward* (218-20).
- 19 The study which stresses this point most clearly is Durant. The best account of Wallace’s social and political thought from the perspective of his evolutionary cosmology is Fichman, *Elusive Victorian*.
- 20 See note 15 above.
- 21 Wallace, “Human Selection” 333-35. See also Spencer, “Theory of Population.”
- 22 In this lecture Wallace criticised Spencer’s position on the land problem presented in *Justice*, a part of *Principles of Ethics*. For Spencer’s theory on justice and property in his later years, see Taylor, *Men versus the State* 232-61.
- 23 Huxley “Struggle for Existence”; “Prolegomena”; “Romanes Lecture.”

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土地、自然、国家——「土地問題」とウォレス、スペンサー、ハクスリー

藤田祐

少数の地主による大土地所有制度が以前から問題視されていたイギリスでは、1870年代末からアイルランドにおける土地制度改革運動が盛り上がり、土地問題はますます関心を集めるようになっていった。そのようななかで、A・R・ウォレス (Alfred Russel Wallace, 1823-1913)、ハーバート・スペンサー (Herbert Spencer, 1820-1903)、T・H・ハクスリー (Thomas Henry Huxley, 1825-1895) という三人の進化思想家が「土地問題」をめぐる論争に関わることになる。中でもウォレスは、土地国有化協会会長として土地制度改革運動の中心的な役割を担った。そもそも、ウォレスが大土地所有制度のもとでの地主支配の不正に関心を向けるきっかけになったのが、スペンサーの最初の著作『社会静学』(1851)を読んだことであった。しかしながら、1880年代の土地問題をめぐる議論では、スペンサーは国家の力による社会主義につながる土地国有化論を批判した。ウォレスに大きな影響を与えた『進歩と貧困』(1879)の著者であるヘンリー・ジョージを厳しく批判したハクスリーも含めて、三人の思想家は自らの進化理論を基盤にして土地問題を含む政治論争に関わっていった。その論争は、土地制度、自然観、国家の役割という問題が絡み合って展開された。

1880年代から20世紀初頭にかけての政治論争は、国家の役割をめぐる「個人主義」と「集団主義」の対立という枠組みでしばしば捉えられてきた。国家の力による社会福祉の増進を志向する「集団主義」に対して、個人の自由を確保するために国家の活動領域を制限すべきだと主張した思想潮流が「個人主義」と呼ばれた。『人間対国家』(1884)で国家介入による社会改革を批判したスペンサーは、「個人主義」を代表する思想家とみなされることになった。また、社会改革を求め続けたウォレスは1890年以降社会主義者と自称するようになり、ハクスリーも晩年に極端な個人主義と社会主義の両方を非難した。ゆえに、三人の進化思想家の土地問題についての議論もこの枠組みと関連づけて考察されるべきである。しかしながら、土地国有化賛成派ウォレス対批判派スペンサーとハクスリー、あるいは、個人主義者スペンサー対社会主義者ウォレス、個人主義と社会主義の両極端を批判した中道派ハクスリーというように捉えるとすれば単純化のしすぎだろう。本論文の目的は、彼らの土地問題についての議論を、彼らの自然観、より具体的には、自然法・自然権についての考え方、そして、マルサスの人口理論という観点から分析することによって、ヴィクトリア時代後期の思想を見る上での独自の観点を提示することにある。

まず第一に、ウォレスの社会主義は、国家の社会改革による平等の実現を主張するとともに、個人の自由を重視したものであり、「真の個人主義」と自ら位置づけたように、個人主義と社会主義の総合をはかったものと解釈すべきである。ウォレス理論において土地国有化論は、機会の平等の下での公正な自由競争を実現するのに不可欠な社会改革だと位置づけられている。ウォレスの社会進化論では、そのような社会改

革によって平等な社会が実現して初めて、人間性を発展させる自然進化のメカニズムが働き、社会と道徳が進歩していくとされているのである。また、ヴィクトリア時代後期に土地国有化論と社会主義を厳しく批判したスペンサーも、理想状態における「絶対的倫理」という観点においては、土地私有の不正という『社会静学』における議論を完全に否定したわけではなかった。

第二に、「個人主義」対「集団主義」という政治的な対立軸とともに、進化思想家の土地問題についての議論を見ることによって、自然をめぐる対立軸が浮上する。それは、自然法・自然権に基づく議論と、マルサスの人口理論をめぐる対立軸である。ウォレスが大きな影響を受けた二つの著作、スペンサーの『社会静学』とジョージの『進歩と貧困』では、あからさまに自然法と自然権に訴えることによって、土地私有の不正が主張されている。ウォレスも基本的にこの路線に沿っていたと言える。スペンサーは、土地国有化論を批判した『人間対国家』では、『社会静学』で土地私有の不正を示したのと同じく自然権という概念を用いながらも、私有財産権の擁護という逆の結論を提示している。このような自然権・自然法による正当化を、ハクスリーは「ア・プリオリの方法」と呼んで厳しく批判した。絶対的な原理に社会の現状を合わせようとする急進的な社会変革につながるからである。また、個人の自由を絶対視する個人主義も批判されることになる。ハクスリーによれば、自然は規範に関わるものではなく事実に関わる。つまり、倫理的な自然法というものは存在せず、科学的な自然法則のみが存在するのである。自然に規範的な意味を見いだすスペンサーとウォレスと、目的をもたず道徳の意味もない自然を強調するハクスリーは、対照的な自然観を打ち出しているのである。

ハクスリーは社会思想・政治思想も自然法則について科学的な知識に基づくべきであると論じ、科学的な自然法則としての進化理論を自らの政治理論の基盤に据える。特に、人間社会を生存競争へと促すマルサスの人口圧を強調することによって、平等社会の不可能性を主張した。土地国有化を含む社会改革により平等社会が実現したとしても、急激な人口増加によって食糧をめぐる競争が再開し、すぐに貧困層が生み出されるからである。このような議論に反駁するために、ウォレスは初期スペンサーの人口理論を引きながら、社会改革によって平等が実現すれば人口圧は徐々に低減し平衡に至ると論じた。ここにも、自然と関わるもう一つの対立が見られるのである。

ウォレス、スペンサー、ハクスリーという三人の進化思想家の土地問題をめぐる議論は、個人主義対集団主義という国家の役割をめぐる議論、そして、自然法・自然権とマルサスの人口圧という自然をめぐる議論と密接に絡み合いながら展開したのである。