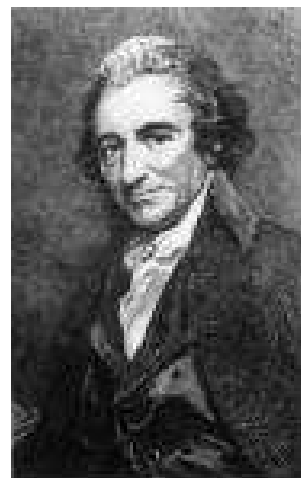


Thomas Paine, 1737-1809

Kort biografi

Britisk filosof og amerikanske revolutionær. I 1776 udgav han "Common Sense", der agiterede for amerikansk (de 13 koloniers) løsrivelse fra Storbritannien. Paine anses for en af borgerlønns-/basisindkomst-ideens fædre. I 1795-96 udgav han pjecen "Agrarian Justice", hvis væsentligste budskab var, at jorden er alle menneskers fælles arv, og at jorden ikke kan gøres til privat ejendom.



Dokumentation

Paine, Thomas (1795-96): Ligeretten til jorden. Oversat af Henrik Eismark efter *Agrarian Justice*. <http://www.grundskyld.dk/2ligeret.htm>

.. Det er forkert at sige, at Gud skabte rig og fattig. Han skabte kun mand og kvinde og han gav dem denne jord som deres fælles arv.

..... Frihed og Ejendom er ord, der udtrykker alt det vi besidder, som ikke er af intellektuel natur. Der er to slags ejendom. For det første naturarven eller det, som er os givet af universets Skaber så som jorden, luften og vandet. For det andet kunstig eller anskaffet ejendom, menneskets opfindelse. Hvad det sidstnævnte angår, er lighed umuliggjort. Skulle dette fordeles ligeligt, ville det betyde, at alle skulle have bidraget i samme forhold, hvilket aldrig kan blive tilfældet, og derfor vil hver enkelt holde fast i sin part som sin rette andel. Det er ligeligt ejerskab af naturens goder, som er temaet for dette lille essay. Ethvert individ i denne verden er født med retmæssige krav på en vis del jord eller en værdi svarende dertil.

.... Det er uimodsigeligt, at jorden i dens oprindelige, udyrkede tilstand var og fortsat ville have været menneskehedens fælles ejendom. Under de forhold ville hvert menneske være født til

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ejendom. Han ville have været livslang jordejer sammen med alle andre og medejer af alle dens naturlige frembringelser, planter og dyr.

Men jorden i dens naturlige tilstand er, som nævnt, kun i stand til at brødføde et lille antal indbyggere sammenlignet med, hvad den kan præstere i dyrket tilstand. Da det er umuligt at adskille de forbedringer, som agerbrug medfører, fra den jord forbedringen fandt sted på, opstod begrebet Jordejendom. Det er ikke desto mindre sandt, at det kun er værdien af det fremstillede, og ikke selve jorden, som er den enkeltes ejendom. Derfor skylder hver jordejer samfundet en jordrente (for jeg kender ikke noget bedre ord, der udtrykker denne idé) for den jord, han besidder og det er fra denne jordrente, fonden i dette forslag opstår.

.... Jeg har kaldt denne lille afhandling for *Ligeretten til jorden* for at adskille den fra retten til jord. Intet kunne være mere uretfærdigt end fælles ejendomsret til jorden i et land, som er blevet forbedret med agerbrug. For selvom ethvert menneske, som indbygger på denne jord, er medejer af dens oprindelighed, medfører det ikke, at han er medejer af den opdyrkede jord.

..... Når jeg således med disse få ord har redegjort for sagens indhold, skal jeg nu gå over til det system, jeg foreslår, som er: At skabe en national fond ud af hvilken der til hver person, der når 21 år, skal betales en sum på 15£ som en delvis erstatning for hans tab af den naturlige arv ved indførelsen af den private jordejendomsret. Dertil en livslang sum på 10£ om året til hver nulevende person, der har nået 50 år og til alle andre, når de når denne alder.

... Det er foreslået, at udbetalingerne, som allerede nævnt, skal gives til enhver, rig eller fattig. Det er bedst at gøre det således for at undgå individuelle forskelle. Det er også ret at gøre det sådan, da det er i stedet for den naturlige arv, som rettelig tilhører enhver udover den ejendom, som han selv har skabt eller har arvet fra dem, som skabte den. Personer, som vælger ikke at tage imod den, kan anbringe den i den almene fond.

.... Men det er retfærdighed, og ikke velgørenhed, som er det bærende element i denne plan. I alle store sager er det nødvendigt at have et bærende princip, som er vigtigere end velgørenhed, og hvad retfærdighed angår, burde det ikke være op til den enkeltes afgørelse, om retfærdigheden skal ske fyldest eller ej. Planen bør ud fra et retfærdighedssynspunkt være en helhedsplan, som spontant

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vokser frem af revolutionens principper og dens vurdering være national og ikke individuel.

En plan baseret på dette princip vil gavne revolutionen ved den energi, der udspringer af en retfærdig samvittighed. Det vil også mangedoble nationens ressourcer, for som planter vil velstand gro. Når et ungt par begynder tilværelsen sammen, er der overvældende stor forskel på, om de starter med ingenting eller med 15£ hver. Med den hjælp kunne de købe en ko og hjælpemidler til at dyrke nogle få hektar jord og i stedet for at blive en belastning for samfundet, som det altid er tilfældet, når børn avles hurtigere, end de kan brødfødes, vil parret blive sat i stand til at blive nyttige og profitable samfundsborgere. De statslige jordstykker vil også give en bedre pris, hvis der blev givet økonomisk hjælp til at opdyrke dem i små lodder.

.. Den her foreslåede plan vil gavne alle uden at skade nogen. Den vil forene republikkens interesser med individets. For den talrige klasse, som er berøvet sin naturlige arv af den private jordejendomsret, vil det være en national retfærdighedsgerning. For personer, der dør med moderate formuer, vil det fungere som en årlig rente til deres børn, og med større udbytte end det beløb, der er betalt ind i fonden og det vil give akkumuleringen af rigdom en sikkerhed, som ingen af de gamle europæiske regeringer, der nu vakler på deres fundamenter, kan give.

Paine, Thomas, (1795-96) Agrarian Justice. <http://www.grundskyld.dk/2-agrar.html>

It is wrong to say God made rich and poor; he made only male and female; and he gave them the earth for their inheritance.

..... Liberty and Property are words expressing all those of our possessions which are not of an intellectual nature. There are two kinds of property. Firstly, natural property, or that which comes to us from the Creator of the universe,--such as the earth, air, water. Secondly, artificial or acquired property,--the invention of men. In the latter equality is impossible; for to distribute it equally it would be necessary that all should have contributed in the same proportion, which can never be the case; and this being the case, every individual would hold on to his own property, as his right share. Equality of natural property is the subject of this little essay. Every individual in the world is born therein with legitimate claims on a certain kind of property, or its equivalent.

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...It is a position not to be controverted that the earth, in its natural uncultivated state was, and ever would have continued to be, the common property of the human race. In that state every man would have been born to property. He would have been a joint life proprietor with the rest in the property of the soil, and in all its natural productions, vegetable and animal.

But the earth in its natural state, as before said, is capable of supporting but a small number of inhabitants compared with what it is capable of doing in a cultivated state. And as it is impossible to separate the improvement made by cultivation from the earth itself, upon which that improvement is made, the idea of landed property arose from that inseparable connection; but it is nevertheless true, that it is the value of the improvement only, and not the earth itself, that is individual property. Every proprietor, therefore, of cultivated land, owes to the community a groundrent (for I know of no better term to express the idea) for the land which he holds; and it is from this groundrent that the fund proposed in this plan is to issue.

... I have entitled this tract *Agrarian Justice*, to distinguish it from *Agrarian Law*. Nothing could be more unjust than *Agrarian Law* in a country improved by cultivation; for though every man, as an inhabitant of the earth, is a joint proprietor of it in its natural state, it does not follow that he is a joint proprietor of cultivated earth. The additional value made by cultivation, after the system was admitted, became the property of those who did it, or who inherited it from them, or who purchased it. It had originally no owner. Whilst, therefore, I advocate the right, and interest myself in the hard case of all those who have been thrown out of their natural inheritance by the introduction of the system of landed property, I equally defend the right of the possessor to the part which is his.

... Having thus in a few words, opened the merits of the case, I shall now proceed to the plan I have to propose, which is,

To create a National Fund, out of which there shall be paid to every person, when arrived at the age of twenty-one years, the sum of fifteen pounds sterling, as a compensation in part, for the loss of his or her natural inheritance, by the introduction of the system of landed property:

And also, the sum of ten pounds per annum, during life, to every person now living, of the age of fifty years, and to all others as they shall arrive at that age.

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... It is proposed that the payments, as already stated, be made to every person, rich or poor. It is best to make it so, to prevent invidious distinctions. It is also right it should be so, because it is in lieu of the natural inheritance, which, as a right, belongs to every man, over and above the property he may have created, or inherited from those who did. Such persons as do not choose to receive it can throw it into the common fund.

... But it is justice, and not charity, that is the principle of the plan. In all great cases it is necessary to have a principle more universally active than charity; and, with respect to justice, it ought not to be left to the choice of detached individuals whether they will do justice or not. Considering then, the plan on the ground of justice, it ought to be the act of the whole, growing spontaneously out of the principles of the revolution, and the reputation of it ought to be national and not individual.

A plan upon this principle would benefit the revolution by the energy that springs from the consciousness of justice. It would multiply also the national resources; for property like vegetation, increases by offsets. When a young couple begin the world, the difference is exceedingly great whether they begin with nothing or with fifteen pounds a piece. With this aid they could buy a cow, and implements to cultivate a few acres of land; and instead of becoming burdens upon society, which is always the case where children are produced faster than they can be fed, would be put in the way of becoming useful and profitable citizens. The national domains also would sell the better if pecuniary aids were provided to cultivate them in small lots.

... The plan here proposed will benefit all, without injuring any. It will consolidate the interest of the Republic with that of the individual. To the numerous classes dispossessed of their natural inheritance by the system of landed property it will be an act of national justice. To persons dying possessed of moderate fortunes it will operate as a tontine to their children, more beneficial than the sum of money paid into the fund: and it will give to the accumulation of riches a degree of security that none of the old governments of Europe, now tottering on their foundations, can give.