

## With Manifold Force—*Darwin's Application of the Malthus "Abominable Theory" to All Life*

"In an endeavor to raise the proportion of the quantity of provisions to the number of consumers in any country, our attention would naturally be first directed to the increasing of the absolute quantity of provisions; but finding that as fast as we did this, the number of consumers more than kept pace with it, and that with all our exertions we were still as far as ever behind, we should be convinced that our efforts directed only in this way would never succeed. It would appear to be setting the tortoise to catch the hare. Finding, therefore, that from the laws of nature, we could not proportion the food to the population, our next attempt should naturally be to proportion the population to the food. If we can persuade the hare to go to sleep, the tortoise may have some chance of overtaking her....

--the Rev. Thomas R. Malthus

According to those who knew him at Haileybury College, where he taught political economy, Thomas Malthus was an affable and witty man. One of his admirers recalls that Malthus always had a bit of a twinkle in his eye, except when engaged in literary combat with his detractors.

This same admiring acquaintance expressed utter astonishment when none other than the great poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge attacked Malthus and Malthusianism in these words: "Malthusianism. Is it not lamentable ... that the monstrous practical sophism of Malthus should now have gotten complete possession of the leading men of the kingdom! Such an essential lie in morals ... I solemnly declare that I do not believe that all the heresies and sects, and factions, which the ignorance, and the weakness, and the wickedness of man have ever given birth to, were altogether so disgraceful to man as a Christian, a philosopher, a statesman, or citizen, as this abominable tenet." These were very strong words, especially coming from the man who had penned the following lines in his closing of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner": "He prayeth best, who loveth best/ All things both great and small;/ For the dear God who loveth us,/ He made and loveth all."

What was it in the work of the affable Thomas Malthus that occasioned such a strong attack from Coleridge? What is the "abominable tenet"?

## **The abominable tenet**

The abominable tenet to which Coleridge refers is remembered in the history of thought as the "Malthus doctrine." This doctrine maintains that human populations tend to grow at a geometrical rate, whereas the means of subsistence replenish themselves at only an arithmetical rate. "It may safely be pronounced," Malthus writes, "that population, when unchecked, goes on doubling itself every twenty-five years, or increases in a geometrical ratio." [1]

To give his hypothesis graphic dimension, Professor Malthus provides the following projection: "Taking the whole earth ... and supposing that the present population equal to a thousand millions, the human species would increase as the numbers, 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256; and subsistence as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. In two centuries the population would be to the means of subsistence as 256 to 9; in three centuries as 4096 to 13, and in two thousand years the difference would be almost incalculable." [2]

To give additional darkness to his projection, Malthus cites the opinion of a man whose name is familiar to us in the annals of British intelligence: "Sir William Petty," he writes, "supposes a doubling [of population] possible in so short a time as ten years." [3]

## **Birth of the "population problem"**

The obvious and necessary implication of the Malthus doctrine is that unless checked, populations pose a serious threat to the viability of nations and perhaps the planet itself. "There is a constant tendency in all animated life to increase beyond the nourishment prepared for it," Malthus writes. "The increase of the human species can only be kept down to the level of the means of subsistence by the constant operation of the strong law of necessity, acting as a check upon the greater power." [4] What is this "law of necessity"?

The law of necessity refers generally to any severe condition that works to inhibit population growth--especially famine, disease and war. Before Malthus and his "Principle of Population," famine, disease and war were looked upon as evils. After Malthus, they are regarded as necessary evils, or not evils at all, but important regulators of population. In an address at the University of Aberdeen, circa 1934, a Malthusian rector spoke these edifying words: "War is the pruning hook of nature, and by it she keeps her human orchard healthy." At the time, this metaphor was a simple biological platitude--a truism. [5]

Professor Malthus is the inventor of the modern "population problem" that we hear so much about. Prior to this invention, the rulers of Europe looked upon large populations as assets. After the "*Principle of Population*," they began to view large populations as liabilities. Behind their readiness to embrace the dark

vision of Malthus was the terrible French Revolution, which had made it very clear that large masses of people can be lethal to ruling classes. In 1789, first year of the French Revolution, the European country with the largest population was .... France.

### **Malthus on mobs**

Indeed, the theme of the "mob" underlies the entire Malthus treatise and frequently comes to the surface: "A mob, which is generally the growth of a redundant population goaded by resentment for real sufferings, but totally ignorant of the quarter from which they originate, is of all monsters the most fatal to freedom. It fosters a prevailing tyranny, and engenders one where it was not; and though in its dreadful fits of resentment it appears occasionally to devour its unsightly offspring, yet no sooner is the horrid deed committed than, however unwilling it may be to propagate such a breed, it immediately groans with a new birth." [6] The common people, when in dire circumstances, can turn into a horrid monster. What could be done, if anything, to protect the better classes from the threat of the mob?

"If we can persuade the hare to go to sleep," Malthus writes, "the tortoise may have some chance of overtaking her." [7] Colleagues of Malthus no doubt smiled knowingly at the phrase "go to sleep." Haileybury College was an institution established for the education of officials and future officials of the East India Company, which was in the last century notorious in the opium trade. First chartered by Elizabeth I, and then re-chartered by James I, the company became an imperialistic arm of the Crown. It actually ruled India until 1857, when it proved unable to handle the Sepoy Rebellion. The Crown assumed the rule.

### **Malthus sees danger to Britain in lowly "potatoe"**

Malthus belonged to "The Company" of the last century. The East India company and British intelligence were very much interrelated. If he was alive and working today, Mr. Malthus would be considered by many an "intelligence analyst" with a specialization in population studies. Among his lesser known works is a treatise on the Irish population rate, which was at the time very high. Malthus identified the culprit behind the high rate as the lowly "potatoe." Further, he warned that if the rate was not adjusted downward, the Crown might find it very difficult to maintain its control of Ireland after the turn of the century. Some forty years after this analysis, Ireland was devastated by a potato famine. [8]

## Revolution and Reaction

In support of his doctrine, Malthus cites the case of eighteenth century North America: "The English North American colonies, now the powerful people of the United States of America, far outstripped all the others in the progress of their population.... Throughout all the northern provinces the population was found to double in 25 years. The original number of persons which had settled in ... New England in 1643 was 21,200. In the year 1760 they were increased to half a million. They had therefore all along doubled their number in 25 years...." [9] Malthus fails to observe that much of the population increase was due to immigration. In 1643, the settlement of America by Europeans was just beginning.

### Sir Edmund & Sir Thomas fight the dragon "Democracy"

In 1798, when the "Principle of Population" was first published, both America and France were symbols to the English of mob rule. "Democracy," rule by the common class, had emerged to challenge the old order, and the old order was not terribly willing to relinquish its power. Against the likes of the rabble-rousers Rousseau and Paine, the English fielded a number of knights of the *ancien regime*, including Edmund Burke and Thomas Malthus.

England's initial response to the revolution in France was one of mild enthusiasm. Troubles in the house of an old enemy make interesting news. However, when inflammatory pamphlets started circulating in England, the voices of reaction began to make themselves heard. The most articulate of those voices belonged to Edmund Burke. In his younger days, Burke had pleaded the cause of the American colonies before Parliament. In 1790, however, Burke was no longer sympathetic to firebrands. He was an old man with a large estate to support. Further, in 1790, insurrection of the masses was not something occurring far across the Atlantic; it was occurring across the Channel.

On February 9, 1790, Edmund Burke rose in the House of Commons and began his critique of the new "democracy": "Our present danger is ... from anarchy, a danger of being led, through an admiration of successful fraud and violence, to an imitation of the excess of an irrational, unprincipled, proscribing, confiscatory, plundering, ferocious, bloody, and tyrannical democracy. On the side of religion, the danger is no longer from intolerance but from atheism--a foul, uncanny vice, a foe to all the dignity and consolation of mankind--which seems in France, for a long time, to have been embodied into a faction, accredited, and almost avowed." [10]

In November of the same year, Burke published his famous *Reflections on the French Revolution*, which represented the conservative position in most convincing terms. Indeed, Burke's *Reflections* provided the ideological basis for

the forces of reaction in Europe. "The book," the Durants write, "became the bible of the courts and aristocracies." [11]

The subsequent excesses of the French Revolution appeared to many to prove Burke's argument. When news that Louis XVI had been beheaded reached London, George III and most of his subjects were absolutely shocked. On January 24, 1793, the British government ordered the French minister to leave the kingdom. On February 1, France declared war on both England and Holland. Burke rejoiced. [12]

### **Terror in France, panic in England**

As the Revolution turned into the Terror, the upper classes in England became more and more distraught. In the words of Will and Ariel Durant, "panic struck the upper classes of Britain when they found themselves faced by another revolution so soon after the costly revolt of the American colonies. The thousand-year-old world of kings and aristocracies seemed to be collapsing, besieged by peasants burning feudal chateaux and title deeds, and by city mobs imprisoning the royal family and cutting off hundreds of noble heads....." [13]

All this madness, many Britons felt, was the result of atheistic French philosophers (especially Rousseau) and their English counterparts, people like William Godwin (the "Foolish Philosopher") and Thomas Paine, the "Pen of the American Revolution."

After the Treaty with Britain ending the Revolutionary War, Paine had made his home in England. "Where liberty is there is my home," Franklin once said. Paine replied, "Where liberty is not, there is my home." Paine did not stay in England very long, however. As his writings began to have more and more influence in England, officialdom took notice. "Philosophy is all right," said William Pitt, "but it should be taught to philosophical people. If this thing is kept up London will re-enact the scenes of Paris." [14]

It was against this background that Malthus committed to paper his pessimistic appraisal of the condition of man, including critique of mobism. It all began as something of an academic exercise. Thomas' father Daniel was an admirer of Rousseau. Wouldn't be interesting to challenge Father with a view completely different from his own? Daniel was so impressed by the ingenuity of his son, he encouraged Thomas to publish the piece. The first edition of "Essay on the Principle of Population" was published in 1798--anonymously.

### **Commoners blamed for insurrection**

The essay provided the upper classes of England--and of Europe--with a rationale for mass insurrection--mobism--that placed all the blame on the common class. Naturally, young Malthus found himself much in demand as an authority on the population problem. No longer would he require a little curacy

somewhere. (After receiving his holy orders at Cambridge University when nineteen years of age, Malthus held a curacy at Albury, Surrey, for all of three months. That was the extent of the Reverend Malthus' career in religion.) The world of aristocrats was at his feet. Indeed, the Company was so anxious to hear more of Malthus' views, it created for him a special chair at Haileybury.

### **British begin counter-offensive against "independent republicanism"**

An important mentor in Malthus' life at this time was Sir William Petty, whom he cites in the "Principle of Population" (see above). In a book titled *Treason in America*, Anton Chaitkin has this to say about Britain's reaction to republicanism and Petty's role therein: "Facing bankruptcy as the result of the losing, worldwide conflict with America, and threatened with a global emulation of the American republican experiment, the British Empire responded by organizing a campaign to subvert enemy governments. The U.S.A. must be reconquered, the oligarches vowed. France must be destroyed, and Spanish America must be captured before being lost to independent republicanism.... The campaign was directed by William Petty, Earl of Shelburne, whose new British Secret Intelligence Service represented an alliance of 'noble' families of Switzerland, Scotland and England. The eyes and ears of this apparatus were provided by the British East India Company. Shelburne ... used the Company to employ a legion of 'theorists,' including Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, and Thomas Malthus...." [15]

At Haileybury, Professor Malthus established himself rapidly as expert on the subjects of populations and economics. In short order, his conjectures regarding "population pressure" and his conclusion that populations per se represent a serious danger entered into the mass consciousness as truisms. So influential were these untrue truisms, they are widely regarded even today as valid.

### **The Simon critique**

An excellent critique and refutation of of the Malthus theory is to be found in *The Ultimate Resource*, by University of Illinois professor Julian L. Simon. The key tenets of modern orthodox population theory, which have "hardly changed since Malthus," are effectively contradicted by Simon on the basis of empirical evidence. Dr. Simon confesses that before his in-depth research, his opinions regarding the "population explosion" were aligned with those of the orthodoxy. After developing his unorthodox but scientifically valid position, he found himself in difficulty professionally: "I have been trying--mostly unsuccessfully--to get a hearing for [my view] since 1969, and though times have changed somewhat, the difficulties of espousing this unpopular point of view do get to me; until recently they were near the point of shutting me up and shutting me down." [16]

Dr. Simon is a real scientist, and like many real scientists, he is disturbed and confounded by the lack of scientific professionalism that he finds in many colleagues in his field. Demographic science is as politicized as biology. Time and again, he finds himself confronting latter-day Malthusian pseudo-science. In one case, for instance, he begins by quoting a newspaper article titled "Population Control of Third World Planned, Sterilization Storm in U.S.": "In what must be this year's prize-winning entry for reckless candour in public places, a senior State Department official has said the U.S. is seeking to provide the means to sterilize a quarter of all Third World women, in part to protect the interests of American business overseas. The official is Dr. R.T. Ravenholt, Director of the U.S. Office of Population...."

Simon responds: "I am mystified as to the true meaning of Ravenholt's remarks, or of similar views that I often hear in private conversation about population. But as an economist I am sure that this 'self-interest' motivation makes no economic sense in this case. Of course Ravenholt is a physician and not an economist--but he is also the fellow who controls those big bucks at AID [U.S. Agency for International Development]." [17] What Simon fails to understand is that Malthusianism exists today as an important component of the "world vision" of the Scientismic establishment.

### **Scientist baffled by Scientism**

Time and again, Simon refers, with bafflement, to the polemics of Paul Ehrlich and other neo-Malthusians. He finds it difficult to understand why the population of Malthusian academics and opinion leaders appears to be so numerous. He writes: "In the words of environmentalist William Vogt, whose book *Road to Survival* sold millions of copies, population growth in Asia is due to 'untrammled copulation' by Moslems, Sikhs, Hindus, and the rest of 'the backward billion.' Biologist Karl Sax asserted that 'nearly two-thirds of the world's people still reply upon positive checks [Malthusian term] to control excessive growth of populations.' Or as Robert C. Cook, the long-time [anti-] population activist and editor of *Population Bulletin*, put it more politely, 'Over a billion adults in less developed countries live outside the realm of decision-making in this matter' of family size. And in the words of a well-known physician in the official Journal of the American Medical Association, 'If we breed like rabbits, in the long run we have to live and die like rabbits.' This idea goes hand in hand with the view that population growth will increase geometrically until starvation or famines halt it." [18]

The "long-run view of demographic history," Professor Simon indicates, "suggests that, contrary to Malthus, constant geometrical growth does not correctly characterize the human population." Rather, he continues, "a major improvement of economic and health conditions produces a sudden increase in population, which gradually moderates as the major productive advances and concomitant health improvements are assimilated. Then, after the initial surge, the rate of growth slows down until the next big surge...." [19]

### **Malthus was political polemicist (attack dog)**

Malthus had no adequate demographic statistics with which to work, nor did he have a valid methodology. William Petty suggested that a doubling of a population could occur in ten years. Malthus opted for a less extreme time figure. Census statistics from North America suggested to him that over the course of a hundred years, a population doubling had occurred every twenty-five years. Without considering the role of immigration in the case of the American population increase record, Malthus presumed this increase typical of cases where populations have abundant resources and few checks. For Malthus' aristocratic readers, it was readily apparent that geometrical population growth spells insurrection.

Thomas Malthus was not a scientist. He was a political polemicist. His assignment was to attack and neutralize the philosophers of republicanism. He did his job well. He did it so well, there are today numerous academics who credit him with having been a legitimate scientist and with having developed a tenable (if somewhat reductive) theory of populations.

### **1859: Malthusianism "born again"**

Had Malthusianism been the sole "scientific" basis of nineteenth century ruling class reaction against American- and French-style republicanism, it would not have lasted much beyond the mid-century point. Whatever its literary merits, its high style and circumlocutionary brilliance, it has no scientific merit. It would have been exposed as a fraud. Fortunately for its adherents (and unfortunately for the rest of us), Malthusianism was "re-born" in 1859.

### **With Manifold Force**

"There is no exception to the rule," writes Charles Darwin in the *Origin*, "that every organic being naturally increases at so high a rate, that if not destroyed, the earth would soon be covered by the progeny of a single pair. Even slow-breeding man has doubled in twenty-five years, and at this rate, in a few thousand years, there would literally not be standing room for his progeny...." Darwin embraced the Malthus doctrine as scientifically valid. Not only did he embrace it, he utilized it as a foundation of his own theory.

"In October 1838," Darwin writes in his autobiography, "I happened to read for amusement Malthus on Population, and being well prepared to appreciate the struggle for existence which everywhere goes on, from long continued observation of the habits of animals and plants, it at once struck me that under these circumstances favourable variations would tend to be preserved and unfavourable ones to be destroyed." [20]

## **Darwin applies Malthus doctrine to animal and vegetable kingdoms (life)**

The limitless fecundity of nature produces multitudinous organisms, and these invariably wind up struggling for the wherewithal to survive. "As more individuals are produced than can possibly survive," Darwin writes, "there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life. It is the doctrine of Malthus applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdom..." [21]

Life is a battle for survival. What organisms survive? The "favourable variations," the organisms with advantages. Variations existing now are the winners of past and present struggles for existence. Future variations will be those that survive future tests of struggle and selection.

### **Battlelines are drawn**

Significantly, the sub-title of Darwin's *Origin is The Preservation of the Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. The Social Darwinists, those who applied Darwinism to social theory, drew lines of battle not only between races, but between classes and between humans at different stages of development. The "natural man" of Rousseau was a child of light. In the reactionary, Malthusian model, natural man becomes a child of darkness-- a violence and sex machine.

Malthus himself outgrew the Malthusian model. As Simon indicates, "explicit in Malthus' first edition and in the writings of many writers today, is the assumption that people--or at least poor people--breed 'naturally' and 'without limit,' due to 'untrammeled copulation.' But as Malthus came to accept in his subsequent editions ... people everywhere give much thought to marriage, sex, and procreation. The notion of 'untrammeled copulation' represents either ignorance or arrogant untruth." [22] Or ... it represents a distortion that serves certain special interests.

### **Malthus and Darwin give ruling elite new lease on power**

Ever since the French Revolution, the fate of the traditional ruling classes had been in question. Was the old elite losing ground? Was the elite obsolete? Malthusianism comforted the ruling classes by representing the revolutionary cause as a simple matter of excessive population. So admired was this reductive conjecture, it became "doctrine"--the Malthus doctrine.

Not to be outdone in service to the elite, Darwin applied the Malthus doctrine to all biological life. "There is no exception to the rule," Darwin writes with totally unwarranted certainty, "that every organic being naturally increases at so high a rate, that if not destroyed, the earth would soon be covered by the progeny

of a single pair." What about humans? "Even slow-breeding man," Darwin states, "has doubled in twenty-five years, and this rate, in a few thousand years, there would literally not be standing room for his progeny...." [23]

One implication of the application was that the powers-that-be, far from being obsolete, represent the pinnacle of human evolution. Elite status is prima facie evidence of evolutionary superiority. Another implication is that if the "favoured" classes intend to remain favoured, they must find a solution to population problem.

### **Darwin's "Bulldog" barks**

What must the elite do to maintain superiority? Taking the lead of T.H. Huxley, a chorus of Social Darwinists answered: "Acceptance of the first and foremost responsibility of the elite--to regulate unprincipled natural man." In other words ... population control.

The Malthus-Darwin position regarding natural man was, as suggested above, the direct opposite of the Deistic position of those in the line of Rousseau and Lamarck. For the Deists, natural man was divine, close to the Creator. "Civilization" is corruption. For those in the Darwin camp, the opposite is true. Natural man is vicious, and society represents the efforts of the ethical few to contain the violence and the destructiveness inherent in natural man.

"Among primitive men," wrote T.H. Huxley, "the weakest and stupidest went to the wall, while the toughest and shrewdest, those who were best fitted to cope with their circumstances, survived. Life was a continual free fight, and beyond the limited and temporary relations of the family, the Hobbesian war of each against all was the normal state of existence. The human species, like others, plashed and floundered amid the general stream of evolution, keeping its head above water as it best might, and thinking neither of whence nor whither." Note: For the Darwinists, the Hobbesian war of each against all is the natural state of existence.

"One of the most essential conditions, if not the chief cause, of the struggle for existence," Huxley continues, "is the tendency to multiply without limit, which [tendency] man shares with all living things..." This is the familiar Malthus hypothesis, which Darwin incorporated into his theory.

Further, Huxley writes, "The effort of ethical man to work towards a moral end by no means abolished ... the deep-seated organic impulses which impel the natural man to follow his non-moral course...." Ethical man is the product of "moral" (as opposed to natural) evolution. Society is an expression of moral evolution. "Society not only has a moral end, but in its perfection, social life, is embodied morality."

Huxley concludes that the primary and absolutely necessary function of ethical man, and society is to regulate non-moral man. Ethical man "founds his life on a more or less complete self-restraint, which is the negation of the unlimited struggle for existence...." [24] Thus it was that Darwinism (and Social Darwinism) gave the ruling classes of the nineteenth century a new justification for existence, and a new lease on power. They become the regulators of the sex-crazed, violent beast--the amoral masses of mankind.

### **Modern science built on abomination**

The long and short of it is: Darwin took a perverse, elitist, unscientific philosophy (Malthusianism) and made it one of the foundations of modern biology and evolution. Without the legitimization that Darwin provided, Malthusianism, the "abominable tenet," would not have survived into our century, to serve as it has served--as the "scientific" rationale underlying all population control programs, from relatively benign projects to the "race purification" programs of Hitler and his Third Reich, to programs that are even more sinister. [25]

Did Darwin knowingly conspire to insinuate into science an abhorrent view of life?--conspire with reactionaries to establish an evolution theory that justified the rulers of the last century and our own in committing numberless crimes against the common people, all in the name of science. Darwin was not an original thinker; he was collector and synthesizer of information. Where social theory is concerned, Malthusianism had achieved among Darwin's associates in the Royal Society an orthodox status. All the important people believed in it. It was not in the character of Charles Darwin to believe differently.

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