

THOMAS GEORGE MALTHUS

His theories – controversial in his lifetime and more so today – form the basis of arguments over government social welfare programs/policies.

Biography

- Born 1766 in England
 - ↳ Dad was a physician to King George I and George III
 - ↳ He is born with a cleft lip which affected his speech
- 1804, married Harriett
 - ↳ Harriet's mother is a first cousin to Thomas Malthus, and only ten years older than he. So his wife is his first-cousin-once-removed
- 1826, his middle child died just before her 18th birthday
- Died suddenly of heart disease in 1834 in England, at his father-in-law's house

His life overlapped the Napoleonic Wars and the beginnings of the industrial revolution in England. He best described the forces underlying the economics and the population dynamics of the traditional societies (which were coming to an end in his day)

The questions Malthus pondered are still discussed today:

1. How seriously do welfare benefits modify an individual's will to work?
2. Have large-scale welfare schemes (LBJ's "Great Society", for instance) increased dependency?
3. Do such plans institutionalize poverty in the midst of prosperity?
4. Can the increases in agricultural productivity continue to keep up with the birth rate in the non-industrialized nations?



Philosophy (major ideas)

Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometric ratio, while subsistence increases only in arithmetic ratio.

↳ Accordingly, there is a strong and constantly operating check on population because of the difficulty of subsistence.

↳ The price of food will tend to increase, owing to the necessity of employing additional land of inferior quality to increase population – this is called the “Law of Diminishing Returns”

↳ The logical outcome:
continued population growth will outstrip all recourses, and all people will die.

Much of his work stemmed from his **opposition to the Utopianism** of two earlier political thinkers: Marquis de Condorcet and William Godwin

↳ both believed that social evils arise from imperfect political arrangements, and that scientific reason and equality will be more common in future societies.

↳ Godwin developed the idea even further, claiming a cohesive state will gradually yield to a regime of peace, sincerity and respect for individuality. Population growth was a good think to create farmers. teachers, etc.

Population growth will always tend to outrun the food supply and that betterment of humankind is impossible without strict limits on reproduction.

Opposed to “Say’s Law”

↪ Say’s Law: if capital and the resulting supply of goods increase, the level of demand will also increase; that is, goods will always find consumers

Proposes that high prices are necessary for prosperity

Malthus argued that there was never enough food to keep up with human population growth, so humans would always suffer from famine and misery. Evolution occurs, organisms change over time.

Encourage the poor to marry later and have fewer children, if any at all. By having children, they would be sentencing more people to live in poverty and starvation. The way to encourage the poor to adopt this solution would be to eliminate all types of aid