

The following article is excerpted from the book *Over the Bones of the Dead—Evolutionary Science Past, Present & Future*. Noam Chomsky read the chapter and wrote to the author saying that he found the Malthus-Darwin connection “impressively ugly.”

The Malthusian Agenda—The Wolf In Darwinian Clothing

“The twentieth century would be incomprehensible without the Darwin revolution. The social and political currents which have swept the world in the past eighty years would not have been possible without its intellectual sanction....”

—Michael Denton

“Although it is developed in the crude English style, this is a book [Darwin’s Origin] which contains the basis of natural history of our views.”

—Karl Marx (1860)

“**S**ocial Darwinism” is the application of Darwinian biology and evolutionary theory to social theory. Darwin himself had little to say about the applicability of his theories to *Homo sapiens*. He didn’t really have to, because he had Huxley (“Darwin’s bulldog”) to do that for him. And he had Thomas Malthus, the influential political economist.

“Thomas Malthus? Didn’t he die in 1834?” Yes, but death took only his body, not his talking head. The head lived on, and indeed spoke loud and clear from the pages of the *Origin of Species*. Malthus became a kind of embedded social theorist in the great Darwinian revolution.

Malthus and Darwin

In 1798, Thomas Malthus, fresh from Cambridge University (where he had studied for the ministry), published anonymously a rather long treatise called *Essay on the Principle of Population*. In this essay, he advanced his famous Malthus doctrine, which asserts that populations tend to increase at a geometrical rate, whereas the means of subsistence increases at just an arithmetical rate.

Without the checks of disease, famine and war, Malthus argues, human populations would double their size every twenty-five years or so, creating a big problem for themselves and an even bigger problem for the government. The kindness of Providence, Malthus suggested, consists in the natural checks to population growth. “It followed that any interference with these checks through almsgiving, hospital care, or peace societies, was cruelty to the rest; while starvation, pestilence, and bloodshed were merciful gifts from on high.” (Barzun, 63)

Malthus, in his own words: “We should facilitate, instead of foolishly and vainly endeavoring to impede, the operation of nature in producing ... mortality; and if we dread the too frequent visitation of the horrid form of famine, we should sedulously encourage the other forms of destruction which we compel nature to use. Instead of recommending cleanliness to the poor, we should encourage contrary habits. In our towns we should make the streets narrower, crowd more people into the houses, and court the return of the plague. In the country we should build our villages near stagnant pools, and particularly encourage settlements in all marshy and unwholesome situations. But above all, we should reprobate [reject] specific remedies for ravaging diseases....” (Abbott, 235-36)

Circulation of the Malthus essay resulted in a “storm of abuse” (Asimov’s phrase) directed against its author. One of the *abusers* was the eminent philosopher-poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge: “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 ... as this abominable tenet.”

Malthusianism was despised by just about everyone, with the exception of those in the ruling elites and their social planners. Had not Darwin chanced to read the Malthus essay in 1832, “for amusement,” Malthusianism might not have survived for more than a few decades after the death of its originator.

Alas, Darwin not only read the essay, he made the Malthus doctrine the foundational premise of his evolutionary theory. Upon reading Malthus, Darwin says, it struck him that the “struggle for existence” (due to surplus population) Malthus spoke of was not just a prevailing condition of life, but the *necessary condition of evolution*.

Looking at nature anew, from the Malthusian perspective, Darwin saw a gladiatorial arena in which organisms battle incessantly for survival: “A struggle for existence inevitably follows from the high rate at which all organic beings tend to increase,” he writes. “Every being ...*must suffer destruction* [italics mine] ... otherwise, on the principle of geometrical increase, its numbers would become so inordinately great that no country could support the product. Hence, as more individuals are produced that can possibly survive, there must be in every case a struggle for existence ... It is the doctrine of Malthus applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdom....” (Darwin, 63)

What of evolution? Evolution arises out the endless mortal combat. Organisms with a bit of an advantage in the fight tend, naturally, to win—the prize being the opportunity to reproduce. Darwin’s evolution is, in crude contemporary terms, a sex and violence show.

“Scientific Socialism”

Among the notables strongly influenced by Darwin was Karl Marx, who self-styled himself “the Darwin of sociology.” (Barzun, 169) In Darwinism, Marx found strong support for his conviction that social evolution is the product of class conflict, not, as his opponents maintained, class co-operation.

In 1859, Marx, living in obscurity in London, learned of the Linnean Society’s famous meeting and explosive aftermath. He attended Huxley’s lectures on the Darwin-Wallace theory, and a friend later recalled that Marx “spoke of nothing else for months.” The new theory, Marx wrote Freidrich Engels, provided a basis in biology for class struggle. (Brackman, 274)

The triumph of Marx’s “scientific socialism” over what he called utopian socialism was owing, in good part, to the legitimization Darwinism provided.

The Germans cultivated their own brand of scientific socialism....

Germany was the first country to become thoroughly converted to Darwinism, thanks to the evangelical work of the prominent biologist-Social Darwinist Ernst Haeckel, father of German “race science.”

Race science was based on Haeckel’s pronouncement that the various human races are “separate species.” Following up on this pronouncement, German scientists set about the work of distinguishing between progressive and regressive races. The results of this work are well known.

A “classic” in race science is Alfred Jost’s *The Right To Death* (1895). The State, according to Jost, has a “natural right” and “sacred responsibility” to kill undesirable individuals in order to “keep the nation, the social organism, alive and healthy.” (Lifton, 46)

Race science achieved full political expression in Hitler’s Nazi Party. As early as the publication of *Mein Kampf* (1924), Hitler had declared that the sacred mission of the German people was the “assembly and preserving of the most valuable stocks of basic racial elements [and] ... slowly and severely raising them to a dominant position.” (Lifton, 24) The Third Reich was a powerful machine designed to do just that—to assure that the future was dominated by Germanic genes.

During the period of Hitler’s rule, the Kaiser Wilhelm Society—the Germans’ top scientific research institute—focused much of its attention on eugenics. This emphasis reflected the Fuhrer’s absolute commitment to eradicating “life unworthy of life.” He had no doubt he was fighting for the health of his race: “If the power to fight for one’s own health is no longer present,” Hitler wrote, “the right to live in this world of struggle ends.” (Lifton, 14)

And Into the Present ...

The defeat of Hitler and collapse of the Soviet empire did not mean the end of the Malthusian agenda. The agenda lived on and is still foundational to contemporary social planning. Indeed, even the archaic Malthus treatise on population is regarded as entirely valid in certain high academic and governmental circles. If you have any doubts about this, consult Julian Simon’s book *The Ultimate Resource*.

Why does Malthusianism still “have possession” of the leading men of the world? The answer is, in four words: “Elitists’ fear of population.”

The American and French revolutions had struck great fear in the hearts of the ruling powers of Europe. George III, our old adversary, went so far as to commission British Intelligence to find a way to destroy

independent republicanism in the United States and wherever else it might rear its ugly, anti-Old World Order head.

A principal philosopher of independent republicanism (the original New World Order) was Thomas Paine (“Pen of the American Revolution”), whose political theory was based on the simple premise that as individuals existed before governments, governments must have derived from individuals. Thus, Paine concluded, the only legitimate duty of government is to protect the rights of individuals. This political philosophy is termed “individualism.” The constitution of the United States was the first formal political expression of individualism.

Malthus was the Old World Order’s *responder* to Paine and his political theory. “The circulation of Paine’s *Rights of Man* is supposed to have done great mischief among the lower and middling classes of people in this country,” he writes (in the population essay). “This is probably true; but not because man is without rights or that these rights ought not to be known; but because Mr. Paine has fallen into some fundamental errors respecting the principles of government....” (Abbott, 242-43)

What are the *real* rights of man? Malthus: “Nothing would so effectively counteract the mischief occasioned by Mr. Paine’s *Rights of Man* as a general knowledge of the real rights of man. What these rights are it is not my business at present to explain; but there is one right which man has generally been thought to possess, which I am confident he neither does nor can possess—a right to subsistence when his labour will not fairly purchase it....” (Abbott, 243)

Malthus was a great success with the ruling elites of his and subsequent times because he made a case for the “Rights of Rulers.” His deprecating view of population served not science, but the will of his masters—to effectively counter the rise of “individualism,” which was called, by Malthus and his friends, “mobocracy” and “the demon democracy.”

Malthus’ “masters”? Malthus taught at Haileybury College, which was a prep school for future officials of the East India Company, a chartered trading company which went far beyond trading. “The Company” actually ruled India until 1857. In certain ways, it was the prototype of the C.I.A.

Thomas Malthus was one of the very first intelligence analysts. His specialty was, of course, population studies. Among his lesser known works is a treatise titled *On Ireland, Population, and Political Economy*. In this treatise, Malthus argues that because of very plentiful potato harvests, the Irish population is growing at a very fast rate. Unless something is done to reverse the trend, Malthus says, the Crown might find it difficult to control

Ireland in the future. Forty years after the publication of this treatise, Ireland was devastated by a potato blight.

In short, Thomas Malthus was, to use a phrase from Buckminster Fuller, a “slave scientist.” If science is telling your masters what they want to hear, then Malthus was, indeed, a very significant *scientist*.

In time, the inheritors of Malthus’ mission came up with an effective counter to the threatening philosophy of *individualism*: Scientific state socialism. And what is the primary duty of state socialism? *The control of population*.

Afternote

In the *Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin reveals himself as a card-carrying Malthusian: “With savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated; and those that survive commonly exhibit a vigorous state of health. We civilized men, on the other hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of everyone to the last moment. There is reason to believe that vaccination has preserved thousands, who from a weak constitution would formerly have succumbed to smallpox. Thus the weak members of civilized societies propagate their kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man....” (Greene, 87-88)