

# MALTHUS'S WAR ON POVERTY AS MORAL REFORM

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## ABSTRACT

*The paper aims at finding a way out of deadlocks in Malthus scholarship concerning his relationship to utilitarianism. The main claim is that Malthus viewed his own population theory and political economy as *Hilfsdisziplinen* to moral and political philosophy, that is, empirical enquiries required in order to be able to pronounce justified value judgments on such matters as the Poor Laws. On the other hand, Malthus's population theory and political economy were no value-free science and his policy advice – far from being “utilitarian” – resulted from his overall system of ideas and was explicitly based on a set of traditional moral assumptions. These in turn were justified by a peculiar meta-ethical theory, which has been named in a somewhat improper way “theological utilitarianism” and which I propose to name instead “consequentialist voluntarism”. The theoretical item that has misled interpreters is mention of the “test of Utility” as a way of discovering whether a principle is a moral law or a “law of nature”. The point is that for Malthus, the test of utility is just a way for discovering the will of the Creator, and accordingly the laws of nature that he has ‘imposed’ to his creatures. The test is not – unlike Bentham and his followers – a standard for establishing what is right and wrong in itself. The issue of poverty and its remedies is the one where Malthus's peculiar approach, once applied to a real-world issue, displays its potentialities, yielding a kind of policy-advice that is softer and more flexible than the one that may be drawn from Benthamite utilitarianism. The reconstruction shows how, through subsequent approximations and under pressure of critics, Malthus yields finally a kind of Institutional approach to policies concerning poverty, making room for generalized basic education, free markets for labour and (from a certain date on) for corn, colonies, and allowing for a subsidiary role for private beneficence. The goal to be aimed at by such a mix of policies is bringing about “circumstances which tend to elevate the character of the lower classes of society”, so that they will no more accept to deprive “themselves and their children of the means of being respectable, virtuous and happy”.*

## MALTHUS AND UTILITARIANISM

The paper aims at finding a way out of deadlocks still surviving in Malthus scholarship concerning his relationship to utilitarianism. The main claim is that Malthus viewed his own population theory and political economy as *Hilfsdisziplinen* to moral and political philosophy, that is, empirical enquiries required in order to be able to pronounce justified value judgments on such matters as the Poor Laws. On the other hand, Malthus's population theory and political economy were no value-free science, his policy advice – far from being “utilitarian” – resulted from his overall system of ideas and was explicitly based on a set of familiar moral assumptions.

James Bonar created the myth of Malthus's “Utilitarianism” (Bonar, 1885), which carried in turn a pseudo-problem concerning Malthus's lack of consistency with his own alleged Utilitarianism; such misinterpretation was hard to die and still persists in Hollander's reading of Malthus's work. I contend that it is mistaken to claim that “Malthus's explanation of disharmony by reference to Divine Wisdom is extraneous to analysis and without influence on the theory of policy” (Hollander, 1989). It is true instead that ‘utilitarian’ – or better, consequentialist voluntarist – considerations of a sort were appealed to within the context of his moral epistemology in order to provide a justification for received moral rules, but such considerations were meant to justify a rather traditional normative ethics, quite far from Benthamite ‘new morality’ (Cremaschi, 2006).

Theological utilitarianism was an ad hoc category created toward the end of the nineteenth century in order to fit those eighteenth century Anglican philosophers and divines who were not of the same school as Bentham's intuitionist critic William Whewell. They were two Cambridge fellows, John Gay and Thomas Brown, who further elaborated on Cumberland's (and Malebranche's, as well as Leibniz's) attempts at finding a third way between intellectualist view and voluntarist view of the laws of nature (Schneewind, 1998: 101-117; Cremaschi, 2007: 73-76). The result was a kind of a

rational-choice account of the origins of natural laws, where a law-giver God chooses among a number of possible sets of laws on the basis of a maximizing criterion, and God's *maximandum* is happiness for his creatures. Such a solution aimed at solving at once the problem of evil and that of the foundation of moral obligation by proving how God's choice was justified as far as it was the only one minimising the amount of suffering in the world (Cremaschi, 2008). William Paley, the most known Anglican divine in Malthus's time, was precisely a follower of Gay and Brown. As such, he was no utilitarian, and his moral theory, although based on the abovementioned divine rational-choice procedure, as far as normative contents are involved, is of a rather traditional Ciceronian Christian kind (Paley, 1785).

Malthus was not a follower of Paley, indeed he attacked him vehemently on a few points, but he was rooted in same Cambridge consequentialist-voluntarist tradition and was convinced accordingly that, on the one hand, the will of God is the source of the moral law but, on the other, nature is the source of our knowledge of God's will. The function of the "test of Utility" is that of a way for discovering God's will, and accordingly the laws of nature, which God has imposed on his Creation, are its positive content. Our principal duties turn out to be, first, strict attention to the consequences carried by the satisfaction of our passions, second, regulation of our conduct conformably to such consequences. It may be useful to mention a number of peculiar claims by Malthus:

a) the Golden Rule, an idea taken from Butler and not easily compatible with utilitarianism, as a key-element of morality, useful as a practical criterion, and carrying as an implication (at least in principle) the ideal of equality (Malthus, 1997-2004, 2: 4);

b) the function of general rules; firstly, they are necessary to any kind of "moral government" (since two actions of the same kind need to be treated in the same way); secondly, they are required in order to define virtue and vice starting with consequentialist considerations but without making virtue and vice variable; vice is defined as "*that class of actions, the general tendency of which is to produce misery*" (Malthus, 1803, 1: 19); since "the gratification of all our passions in its immediate effect is happiness, not misery; and in individual instances even the remote consequences (at least *in this life*) come under the same denomination" (19), a number of "individual actions therefore cannot come under the head of misery; but they are still evidently vicious, because an action is so denominated, the general tendency of which is to produce misery, whatever may be its individual effects" (19);

c) the function of the test of Utility as a way of discovering the will of God, and accordingly the laws of nature, which he has imposed on this Creation, in their positive contents; and the circumstance that our principal duties turn out to be, first, strict attention to the consequences carried by the satisfaction of our passions, second, regulation of our conduct conformably to such consequences; it is worth stressing that the test of utility is a test for *detecting* whether a maxim is a law of nature, not a standard for *establishing* what is right and wrong or, in other words, that it is a *clue* for detecting the *will of God* (who has established in his full right – being omnipotent – but not arbitrarily – being benevolent and omniscient – what is right and what is wrong) (19).

## VIRTUE ETHICS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF CONSEQUENTIALIST VOLUNTARISM

While Malthus's metaethics was a kind of "consequentialist voluntarism", this does not imply that his normative ethics was utilitarian. It was instead a kind of virtue ethics. Malthus's normative ethics focuses on two main "natural" virtues, namely, *benevolence* and *chastity*. In a social, even though pre-political, state such as that of men living without government and law, there would be at

least a few, albeit rather loosely defined duties, those of helping one's neighbour and of forming a stable attachment to a person of the other sex. For men living in such a state, experience would be enough to teach that these are laws of nature, since men living in such conditions might easily notice the nefarious consequences of acting according to opposite lines. There is a second group of virtues: artificial virtues. These come into being as soon as the transition to the political state is accomplished. Virtues such as *love for equality* and *love for liberty* belong to this second kind. Special place is granted to a fifth virtue, Prudence, which governs both the individual quest for happiness and the collective quest for the public good. This special virtue also provides an invisible link between the private and the public domains, in so far as it contributes in combining self-love with promotion of "the general happiness" (2: 214). In fact, all "the greatest improvements" are effected thanks to an effort by each individual in pursuing his own "interest and happiness" (105).

Between 1804 and 1830, a friendly controversy developed between Malthus and Evangelical divines such as Thomas Gisborne, John Bird Sumner, and Thomas Chalmers (Unus, 1805; Sumner, 1816; Chalmers, 1833; 1821-1826; cf. Waterman, 1991). Controversies – as a promising research program launched by Marcelo Dascal has begun to highlight – have a number of recurrent noteworthy aspects (Dascal, 1998; Cremaschi and Dascal, 1998). Also the controversy between Malthus and the Evangelicals shares a number of interesting aspects with other controversies in science, philosophy, politics, and theology. One is a subdivision of conflicting parties into a multiform spectrum; another is a holistic, and sometimes opportunistic, use of arguments and reasons in order to favour one overall view, such as the Tory-humanitarian, the populist-evangelical, the middle-class Whig and, later on, the middle-class Reformer and Radical view; the third is that the "closure" of the controversy is marked by a step-by-step revision of Malthus's theory in following editions of the *Essay*, undertaken as a means of incorporating his opponents' reasons into his own argument. This amicable controversy with Evangelical fellow-travellers yielded several important changes in the 1806, 1807, 1817, and 1826 editions of the second *Essay*. These consist in a different formulation of Malthus's ethical theory, adoption of *moral improvement* instead of *happiness* as the variable to be maximised in theodicy, in the adoption of generalized education as the main weapon in the war on poverty.

A few unintended effects of the controversy were:

- a) elaboration by Sumner and Chalmers of a theological system incorporating the principle of population and making it compatible with both Anglican or Presbyterian orthodoxy and pro-Poor policies and adoption by Malthus himself of such developments;
- b) a shift by Malthus towards a more explicitly positive-theological view, marked by adoption of a more markedly voluntarist view of natural laws, which contradicts Hollander's claims of Malthus's evolution towards a more secular kind of utilitarianism;
- c) design of more detailed 'Institutional' approach to a reform of Poor Laws that would have possibly provided an alternative to the disastrous experiment in social engineering that was in fact carried out after Malthus's death.

## APPLIED ETHICS: SEXUAL MORALITY

The most *basic*, albeit not the most important, issue in applied ethics is the issue of sexuality. He points at chastity as an overarching virtue, describes the joys of "virtuous love" (90) as the prize for such virtue, defines marital fidelity as a specification of chastity in the given social conditions, and the duty of marrying only at a time when one is ready to carry the burden of six children as imposed

by prudence and enjoined by a “law of nature” which we can detect through observation of the order of creation.

How did sex turn out so important? The most urgent problem of Malthus’s time was, as illustrated above, poverty, and this was the central issue in the first *Essay*. The main difference between the 1798 and the 1803 outlook is the role that prudence may play in making a tolerable individual existence and a decent society possible. This implies that the problem of theodicy may be settled now not exclusively by taking an after-life into account but both in an inner-worldly and in an other-worldly perspective. Vice, Misery, and the Prudential Restraint were already mentioned on one occasion in the first *Essay* as the three factors contrasting the population principle. The third element, yet, was declared irrelevant in accounting for past history and was declared to be unviable on “technical” reasons in designing our future, and reduced eventually, on moral reasons, to the first of the three factors, that is, vice. Malthus at this stage seems to believe that, “among plants and animals” the effects of the “imperious and all-pervading law of nature of necessity” are “waste of seed, sickness, and premature death, among mankind, misery and vice” (Malthus, 1798: 9). The former, misery, is an absolutely necessary consequence of the law of nature. Vice is a highly probable consequence, and “we therefore see it abundantly prevail; but it ought not, perhaps, to be called an *absolutely necessary* consequence” (9; italics added). The prudential check to population growth “almost necessarily, though *not absolutely* so, produces vice” (14; italics added). This check consists in the action of reason, which interrupts the effects of a powerful instinct that would urge man to pursue the dictate of nature in an early attachment to one woman.

The clause “*not absolutely* so” seems to hint at the possibility of “moral restraint”, which accordingly would have been envisaged by Malthus as a possible, albeit remote, solution as soon as in 1798. And yet, this seems to be confined to pure speculation, since Malthus seems to believe that, in practice, checks to population are “resolved into misery and vice” (38).

I mentioned that the great change of 1803 was systematic introduction of the third element in the list of checks to population, now modified so as to include “moral restraint, vice, and misery” (Malthus, 1803, 1: 23). *Moral* restraint is expressly declared to be different from what had been previously defined as the *preventive* check. The latter in fact consists in postponement of marriage accompanied by “irregular gratification”, whereas the former means postponement of marriage while respecting chastity in the meanwhile, which does not exclude virtuous attachments, which are enjoyable per se without ceasing to be virtuous, where marriage comes at last as a desired prize.

Thus, by 1803 Malthus was convinced that there was a third element to include into the preventive check besides vice and misery. And yet he still declares in 1803 and after that “whatever hopes we may entertain of its prevalence in future, has undoubtedly in past ages operated with very inconsiderable force” (329-330). Note that Malthus is – as always – reticent about the fact that the first *Essay*, far from acknowledging only an “inconsiderable” influence to the action of this check in the past, did not make any room for it, apart from the cryptic clause “not absolutely so” about which I have commented above. In a footnote added in 1806 he specifies that this diagnosis about the past turns out clearly to be true if one recollects that by moral restraint he means “a restraint from marriage from prudential motives, which is not followed by irregular gratifications” (330 fn). Also in a footnote added in 1806, he admits that it is true that the *moral* restraint has been seldom practised in the past (18, fn. 4), and one should not be too naïvely hopeful also about future prospects. Yet, it is fair to add that Malthus is less naïve about human nature than the last sentence may seem to suggest, since he is explicit enough about the idea that sex outside marriage is not the worst sin and that it is not true that “the vices which relate to the sex are the only vices which are to be considered in a moral question; or that they are even the greatest and most degrading to the human character” (2: 156). In the 1806 Appendix he argues that a greater degree of sexual

promiscuity accompanied by the practice of contraception, an evil that may be carried as a side-effect by widespread “prudential check to marriage”, is still “better than premature mortality” (222). And thus, once we may prove that the world at large is not an evil place, at least on principle, since a decent society would be possible on the basis first of all of prudence and secondly of other virtues, and that a more humane world is a viable prospect, Malthus believes that we must dare to face also the unpalatable implication that we should point at the bigger evils first, that is, at misery and vice ensuing from an excessive birth-rate, and only after that at the lesser evil, that is, occasional sexual promiscuity.

Nonetheless, he has clear in mind that “if every man were to obey at all times the impulses of nature in the gratification of this passion, without regard to consequences, the principal part of these important objects [those fixed by nature as the ends promoted by sexual instinct] would not be attained, and even the continuation of the species might be defeated by a promiscuous intercourse” (156). As a consequence, he believes that sexual promiscuity “ought always strongly to be reprobated” since such sins “can rarely or never be committed without producing unhappiness somewhere or other” (1: 156), and have the effect “to weaken the best affections of the heart” (2: 97), as well as an obvious tendency “to degrade the female character” (1: 18) and to spread real distress and aggravated misery among “unfortunate females”. The opposite virtue to irregular gratification of the passion which unites both sexes is chastity, and “virtuous love” is the alternative to irregular gratification of the passion. Thus there is a “law of chastity”, which

cannot be violated without producing *evil*. The effect of anything like a promiscuous intercourse, which prevents the birth of children, is evidently *to weaken the best affections of the heart*, and in a very marked manner to degrade the female character. And any other intercourse would, without *improper arts*, bring as many children into the society as marriage, with a greater probability of their becoming a burden to it (97).

All this also implies, as a side-consequence, that contraception as such is vicious.

## APPLIED ETHICS: OUR DUTIES TO THE POOR

Malthus believed that the main issue for both a public and a private morality in modern times is poverty. Malthus found it necessary to insist in the 1817 Appendix that whether his work – be it read with alterations introduced in later editions or without those alterations – will appear to “every reader of candour” that “the practical design” in the mind of the writer is “to improve the condition and increase the happiness of the lower classes of society” (2: 251). Why a need to insist on the point was felt in 1817 is a part of the problem I want to settle, but it is worth recalling – in the face of a long tradition depicting Malthus as an ogre or a reactionary – that these are Malthus’s own words, declaring that his main concern had always been waging war on poverty. It is as well to add that the same line of argument with regard to poverty is what lies behind even the most infelicitous statements in both *Essays*, included the one on the “mighty feast of Nature” where not everybody has been invited, which Malthus withdrew in following editions as being – even as intended primarily as a reduction *ad absurdum* of his opponents’ claims – “not sufficiently indulgent to the weaknesses of human nature and the feelings of Christian charity” (250).

In the first *Essay* he writes that the inevitability of the existence of a class of landowners and one of labourers is proved, but also that we cannot by no means infer from such inevitability that

the present great inequality of property, is either necessary or useful to society. On the contrary, it must certainly be considered as an evil, and every institution that promotes it, is essentially wrong and impolitic (Malthus 1798: 102 fn.),

and that a better lot for the working classes is a necessary wish for “every friend of humanity” (49). In 1826, when he was – as always, not too brilliantly – retreating under his critics’ fire, he added:

If all could be completely relieved, and poverty banished from the country, even at the expense of three-fourths of the fortunes of the rich, I would be the last person to say a single syllable against relieving all, and making the degree of distress alone the measure of our bounty (Malthus, 1803, 2: 369).

That is, he is still insisting that the point he had been making through decades is not the legitimacy of property as contrasted with lack of legitimacy in the claims of the poor, but much less, namely the impossibility of totally eliminating poverty as such.

For Malthus there is one more reason why the condition of the poor should be the moral and political philosopher’s main concern, namely that his subject of inquiry is not just *the wealth* of a nation, but *the mass of happiness* that is allotted to the members of this society, which is, “after all, the legitimate end even of its wealth, power, and population” (Malthus, 1798: 116). Since the working classes make for the bulk of society it is their condition that should be our main concern. Thus – he repeats 22 years later – “it is most desirable that the labouring classes should be well paid, for a much more important reason than any that can relate to wealth; namely the happiness of the great mass of society” (Malthus, 1820, 1: 472). In this spirit, he declares once more that every friend of humanity would find that to allow the greatest part of society to live a better life is a desirable object, while noting that “unfortunately the working classes, though they share in the general prosperity, do not share in it so largely as in the general adversity” (1: 522).

The point on which Malthus insists is that the desired goals cannot be reached neither by the traditional means prompted by Tory-humanitarians nor by those advocated by radicals of the William Godwin kind, that is, by indiscriminate private charity or, even worse, public assistance, and, worse of all, abolition of private property and family. The reason is that such measures yield or would yield results opposite to the intended ones, for any attempt to reverse the laws of nature implies “not only that they should fail in their object, but that the poor who were intended to be benefited, should suffer most cruelly from this inhuman deceit” (Malthus, 1798: 127; cf. 33 and 1803, 2: 192).

Malthus’s moral is that, even if a society with *no inequality* is a visionary dream, yet a society with *less inequality* is a viable goal for sensible policies. In such a society the distance between the top and the bottom would be less and, besides, the positions at the bottom would be less crowded, while a greater number of individuals would be placed in middle positions. He adds:

The structure of society, in its great features, will probably remain unchanged. We have every reason to believe that it will always consist of a class of proprietors and a class of labourers; but the condition of each, and the proportion which they bear to each other, may be so altered as greatly to improve the harmony and beauty of the whole (203).

In other words, the “unhappy persons who in the great lottery of life have drawn a blank” (1: 325) will at least be fewer in number and “[1806: the lottery of] human society would appear to consist of fewer blanks and more prizes; and the sum of social happiness would be evidently augmented” (195), that is, the degree of inequality and the mass of unhappiness will thus be greatly reduced, even if some amount of both will remain unavoidable. The importance of this conclusion could hardly be overemphasised, since it contradicts the widespread idea of Malthus’s *unqualified* pessimism, and more specifically Hollander’s claim that moral restraint according to Malthus has not only played no relevant role in the past history of mankind (which is correct) but also will play no relevant role in the future (which is clearly mistaken since it contradicts Malthus’s main line of argument as reconstructed above).

Malthus's argument for gradual abolition of public relief is that a balance should be made between more dependence and relief on the one hand and more freedom and higher wages on the other. The magnitude to be measured for comparison seems to be provided by *comfort and happiness*. He writes:

if we weight on the one hand the great quantity of *subjection and dependence* which the poor laws create, together with the kind of *relief* which they afford, against the greater degree of *freedom* and the *higher wages* which would be necessary consequence of their abolition, it will be difficult to believe that the *mass of comfort and happiness* would not be greater on the latter supposition, although the few that were then in distress would have no their resource than voluntary charity (Malthus, 1807: 6-7; italics added).

Important features of Malthus's redefined agenda are that the Poor Laws should not only be abolished in a *gradual* manner, that some kind of support might be kept indefinitely for the disabled and victims of bad harvest, that education of the poor should be considered an important and, from a certain stage, even a preliminary task to carry out in order to make them able to rely on themselves. The example he has in mind is Scotland, and more in detail Chalmers's wide-scale experiments in enhancing the poor's capabilities and self-reliance. Besides, he may have discovered Adam Smith's argument on the role of education as investment in human capital. He writes that "the practical good effects of education have long been experienced in Scotland; and almost every person that has been placed in a situation to judge, has given his testimony that education appears to have a considerable effect in the prevention of crimes, and the promotion of industry, morality and regular conduct" (Malthus, 1803, 2: 200). He adds that the tool for making "the operation of the prudential check to marriage" effective among the poor as much as among the upper classes is a plan for general education similar to the one proposed by Adam Smith, consisting in

establishing in every parish or district a little school, where children may be taught for a reward so moderate, that even a common labourer may afford it; the master being partly, but not wholly paid by the publick [...] In Scotland the establishment of such parish schools has taught almost the whole common people to read, and a very great proportion of them to write and account. [...] If in these little schools the books, by which the children are taught to read, were a little more instructive than they commonly are, and if, instead of a little smattering of Latin [...] they were instructed in the elementary parts of geometry and mechanicks, the literary education of this rank of people would perhaps be as complete as it can be (Smith, 1776: 785).

General education would have a threefold effect: first, it would contribute in gentrifying the lower classes, by instilling not just habits of prudence and industry but also new tastes, for example for tea and sugar, that would raise the customary standard of living; secondly, it would contribute – he writes in 1803 – in "correcting the prevailing opinions respecting marriage, and explaining the real situation of the lower classes of society"(Malthus, 1803, 2: 154), or – as he more prudently writes in 1806 – in "explaining the real situation of the lower classes of society" (155, fn. 16) as depending "almost entirely" or "principally" upon themselves "for their happiness or misery" (155); thirdly, it would bring about an investment in human capital along the lines described by Adam Smith, understood as "a capital fixed and realized, as it were, in his person" (Smith, 1776: 282).

Education has accordingly a strategic role in Malthus's final version of his plan for a war on poverty. His final comment to his revised plan is the following:

though I think that the difficulties attending this state of things would be more than compensated by its advantages [...] till the poor themselves could *be made to understand* that they had purchased their right to a provision by law, by too great and extensive a sacrifice of their *liberty and happiness* (Malthus, 1807: 6-7; italics added).

Thus, Malthus has various reasons now to expect not only a growth in the mass of human happiness through reduction of the relative number of the poor, but also a growing chance for each poor of raising beyond the threshold of poverty. He suggests that we

might even venture to indulge a hope that at some future period the processes for abridging human labour, the progress of which has of late years been so rapid, might ultimately supply all wants of the most wealthy society with less personal labour than at present; and if they did not diminish the severity of individual exertion, might, at least, diminish the number of those employed in severe toil. If the lowest classes of society were thus diminished, and the middle classes increases, each labourer might indulge a more rational hope of rising by diligence and exertion into a better station; the rewards of industry and virtue would be increased in number (Malthus, 1803, 2: 194-195).

A policy which would foster independence, dignity, and responsibility would now include not just *gradual* abolition of public assistance granted under the Poor Laws, but also the establishment of a system of liberties and rights and generalized primary education, besides a number of lesser innovations such as saving banks, all of which would contribute in raising a sense of foresight and responsibility among the people. As Jensen aptly summarizes,

Malthus was now of the opinion that the gradual abolition of the poor laws was an ideal policy of the future which should not be implemented until education had implanted moral restraint so firmly in the personalities of the poor that the parish laws had become functionless and obsolete and, therefore, institutionally ripe for relegation to the dustbin of history. In other words, investment in human capital was Malthus's final solution of the population problem (Jensen, 1999: 463).

Most of all, it will be only under "the prevalence of habits of prudence" that "the whole of this vast mass might be nearly as happy as the individuals of the other two classes" (Malthus, 1820, 1: 423), and thus the key to the whole issue of poverty lies in promoting circumstances that would tend to elevate the character of the lower classes of society, that would make them approach the nearest to beings who "look before and after" and who consequently cannot acquiesce patiently in the thought of depriving themselves and their children of the means of being *respectable, virtuous and happy*" (251; italics added).

## CONCLUSIONS

My conclusions may be summarized as follows:

1. Malthus understood his own work in demography and economic theory as belonging to the wider field of moral and political philosophy. He had inherited the commonplace eighteenth-century view that human knowledge is divided into two fields, *natural* philosophy and *moral* philosophy. He believed, like almost everybody else at his time, that the former had recently made extraordinary advances, while the latter was just trying to keep pace. He believed also that this goal was highly desirable, since so much, in terms of human happiness, depended on progress in the moral and political science.

2. Malthus's moral philosophy was not utilitarianism, not even utilitarianism in disguise. Utilitarianism as such was Bentham's invention, and Malthus was never familiar with Bentham's ethical theory, which became popular, in fact, only after Malthus's death.

3. Malthus adhered to a different ethical theory, quite far from Bentham's philosophy. It was basically the theory worked out by Cumberland, Gay, and Paley. This theory strictly depended on a natural theology combining voluntarism with non-arbitrariness of the moral law.

4. Malthus's criteria for policy appraisal were, obviously enough, also non-utilitarian. The room made for *laws of nature* and innate *rights* make so that, not just the theoretical basis is different from Bentham's, but also the kind of policies supported diverge to a remarkable extent.



5. Hollander is right when he contends that there was indeed an evolution in Malthus's ideas, but he is wrong when he contends that change goes from Dogma to Utility. It was indeed a deep change in his social diagnosis, but one based as much on empirical discoveries as on a modified theological view, more precisely on a new theodicy making more room for morality as a road to comparative happiness in this world.

6. The strategic theoretical element making such changes possible is the claim introduced after 1798 that "moral restraint" is a *real* possibility for the future and vice and misery cease being *absolutely* necessary.

7. The decisive new element in Malthus's final version of his 'total' population theory and in his policy advice is that, even if an equalitarian society is a visionary dream, yet a society with less inequality is a viable goal; that is, even though society will always be composed of two classes, their respective conditions may be so altered as greatly to improve the "harmony and beauty" of society as a whole.

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