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The Loser Letters
A Comic Tale of Life, Death, and
Atheism | BY MARY EBERSTADT



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Champagne Malthusians and Their God

Friday, June 18, 2010, 12:56 PM
David Mills

In **The Rise and Fall of Champagne Malthusians**, Spiked's editor Brendan O'Neill describes a modern "Malthusian Ball" he bravely attended, given his views:

It was in the luxurious crypt of St Pancras Church in Euston [London]. . . [W]e were invited to drink 'luxury Belgian beer from champagne flutes' and to peruse £1,500 paintings depicting 'teeming crowds' as we debated the 'population problem'. . . .

Sponsored by Deus, 'the luxury Belgian beer', and supported by the Optimum Population Trust (OPT), the posh population-control lobby, the Malthusian knees-up kicked off with a 'debate' inside St Pancras Church itself. It felt entirely fitting to be plonked in a pew surrounded by Christian paraphernalia while listening to angry men say things like 'we're doomed' (Roger Martin of the OPT) and 'I am disgusted and sickened' (Aubrey Manning OBE).

He finds the fault in their understanding of the way the world works. They

can only understand humanity's problems in biological terms. Lacking any grasp of how society works – or more to the point how it *doesn't* work sometimes – they instead see all crises as the fault of individual licentiousness and breeding. And possessed of such a deep pessimism that they can only conceive of mankind as pillager of the Earth rather than creator of things and ideas, they have a childlike view of the planet as a larder of limited resources that we are greedily hoovering up.

He finds it also, provocatively, in the god they choose to worship.

David Goldman has written about this a great deal, in **Demographics and Depression** in this magazine and his **Spengler columns** (search "demographics" and "population").

Comments (3)

3 Comments

Mike Melendez
June 18th, 2010 | 1:59 pm

'I am disgusted and sickened' (Aubrey Manning OBE)

Was she talking about the beer?

Probably not. No doubt, they want other people to disappear so they won't be "doomed". Nothing new there.

Mark
June 18th, 2010 | 11:56 pm

There are lots of things wrong with modern Malthusians. One thing they are not wrong about is promoting birth control in the developing world. People can have as many kids as they want in the U.S., U.K. or Japan. These are rich countries filled with opportunity. But countries like India, the Philippines, or most of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa are a different story.

He writes, "It's not because society has skewed priorities that some people around the world go hungry – it's because very poor African women have too many kids (five-ish, compared to 1.9 in the UK) and these little black babies' demand for food outstrips how much food exists."

Except for the "demand for food outstrips how much food exists" part, that's all true. If this passage is written in sincerity, this part about society having "skewed priorities" can only mean he is calling for massive increases in

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foreign aid to the developing world.

But if you are going to spend massive amounts of resources in poor countries, why not first ask where those resources will do the most good? It seems clear that spending resources to reduce the population growth rate would be far cheaper than trying to feed, clothe, house and give medical care to at least 10% of an extremely poor country where there is little prospect of rapid economic growth.

Simple arithmetic dictates families in many poor countries should have fewer children. Parents have to pay for food, education, routine medical care and all the other expenses of raising a child who is to have a fair chance. The more children a family has, the fewer resources they have to devote to any one child. As a result, children wind up poorly educated and are often afflicted with malnutrition and other serious medical problems. They get put to work at very young ages or spend a lifetime of doing menial labor earning maybe \$5 per day if they are lucky. Girls are sometimes sent to the capital city to work as prostitutes to bring money in for the family, so desperate is the family's situation.

[kurtq](#)

June 20th, 2010 | 3:37 pm

You can reject the Malthusian worldview only if you believe in unlimited economic growth and the eventual human settlement of space. If you do not believe in these things then you are stuck with the Malthusian worldview.

The silly people are those who reject free-market economic growth and technological innovation and, yet at the same time, do not believe in limiting population growth. Such are truly silly people.

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