



Malthus and ‘Malthusianism’

His tenets:

- 1) continual tendency for population to outstrip resources (geometric progression vs. arithmetic progression)
- 2) man is not good / human nature is not good
- 3) giving money to the poor (poor relief) does not help in the long run: makes people dependent on poor relief and is a burden for the working population (taxpayers)

His advice:

- 1) check on population increase through ‘moral restraint’
- 2) no poor relief

→ Was Malthus right? – Yes, for up to the time he was writing (said historians E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield) → ‘It was not until the period 1811-71, after Malthus was writing, that the population grew while the price of consumables fell, breaking the traditional link between population growth and price rise.’ [Kenneth Morgan, *The Birth of Industrial Britain: economic change 1750-1850* (Harlow: Longman, 1999), p. 14]

The Agricultural Revolution (1750 – 1850)

General move:

- from organic agriculture to farming system with energy-intensive inputs
- from a peasant subsistence economy to a capitalist agricultural system

Changes:

- selective breeding of livestock
- removal of common property rights to land (such as the going ahead with enclosures)
- new systems of cropping (such as crop rotation – turnips and clover)
- intensification of agricultural production: from low-intensity fishing and fowling to high-intensity agriculture on arable land; low-yielding crops (rye) replaced by high-yielding crops (wheat and barley); use of (chemical) fertilisers
- land reclamation (draining of fenland); clearing of woodland
- increase in fodder supplies
- production of more food per worker: less workers needed in agriculture
- use of animal power and later of machines
- better farm management: landowners → tenant farmers → workers
- capitalist agriculture: based on investment and labour mobility (no serfs)



Results:

- British population fed by home production
- workers set free for work in mines and factories (→ industrial revolution)
- growth of cities (unemployed farm workers moved into the cities; cities could be supplied with enough agricultural products)
- capitalist management could be adapted also by other industries
- no rural peasant culture survived