

Revised: 28 December 2006

Eco. 301Y1: Economic History of Later Medieval and Early Modern Europe

Topic No. 6 [13]: The Population Problem and Economic Development in Early Modern Europe: Was There a 'Malthusian Trap'?

Textbooks and General Studies:

- * 1. Jan de Vries, 'Population', in Thomas A. Brady, jr., Heiko O. Oberman, and James D. Tracy, eds., Handbook of European History, 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation, Vol. I: Structures and Assertions (Leiden/New York/Cologne: E.J. Brill, 1994), pp. 1 - 50.
- * 2. Jan De Vries, The Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis, 1600 - 1750 (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 1-29.
- * 3. Karl Helleiner, 'The Population of Europe, from the Black Death to the Eve of the Vital Revolution', in E.E. Rich and Charles Wilson, eds., Cambridge Economic History, Vol. IV: The Economy of Expanding Europe in the 16th and 17th Centuries (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 58-95.
- * 4. Carlo M. Cipolla, Before the Industrial Revolution: European Society and Economy, 1000 - 1700, 3rd edition (London and New York: Norton, 1994), chapters 5, 10 (pp. 234-37).
- * 5. Ralph Davis, The Rise of the Atlantic Economies (London, 1973), chapter 6: '16th and 17th Centuries: Population, Prices, Incomes', pp. 88-107. Provides a good overview.
- * 6. R. A. Houston, The Population History of Britain and Ireland, 1500 - 1750 (London, 1991).
- 7. C.G.A. Clay, Economic Expansion and Social Change: England, 1500-1700, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1984), Vol. I: People, Land, and Towns, Chapter I, 'Population', pp. 1-28.
- 8. David Grigg, Population Growth and Agrarian Change (London, 1980), pp. 83 - 101.

The Debate in Journal Articles

- **1. John Hatcher, 'Understanding the Population History of England, 1450 - 1750', Past & Present, no. 180 (August 2003), 83-130. A serious critique of Wrigley-Schofield, in no. 12 below (which includes another critique, by David Levine).
- * 2. D. M. Palliser, 'Tawney's Century: Brave New World or Malthusian Trap?', Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 35:3 (Aug. 1982), 339-53.
- * 3. Peter Lindert, 'English Living Standards, Population Growth, and Wrigley-Schofield', Explorations in Economic History, 20:2 (April 1983), 131-55. Ignore the econometrics.
- * 4. Peter Lindert, 'English Population, Wages, and Prices: 1541-1913', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 15 (Spring 1985), 609-34.

- * 5. Donald Woodward, 'Wage Rates and Living Standards in Pre-Industrial England', Past and Present, no. 91 (1981), 28-46.
- * 6. E.H. Phelps Brown and Sheila Hopkins, 'Wage Rates and Prices: Evidence of Population Pressure in the Sixteenth Century', Economica, 24:97 (Nov. 1957), 289-305; and 'Builders' Wage-Rates, Prices and Population: Some Further Evidence', Economica, 26:101 (Feb. 1959), both reprinted in Phelps Brown and Hopkins, A Perspective of Wages and Prices (London, 1981), pp. 60-77, 78-98.
- * 7. Herman Van der Wee, 'Prices and Wages as Development Variables: A Comparison Between England and the Southern Netherlands, 1400-1700', Acta Historiae Neerlandicae, 10 (1978), 58-78.
- * 8. Gregory Clark and Gillian Hamilton, 'Survival of the Richest: The Malthusian Mechanism in Pre-Industrial England', Journal of Economic History, 66:3 (September 2006), 707 - 736.
- * 9. Robert C. Allen, 'The Great Divergence in European Wages and Prices from the Middle Ages to the First World War', Explorations in Economic History, 38:4 (October 2001), 411-47.
- * 10. Robert C. Allen, 'Progress and Poverty in Early Modern Europe', The Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 56:3 (August 2002), 403-33.
- * 11. Maw Lin Lee and David Loschky, 'Interdependency between Fertility and Real Wages in England, 1541 - 1871', The Journal of European Economic History, 27:1 (Spring 1998), 107-31.
- * 12. David Loschky, 'New Perspectives on Seven Centuries of Real Wages', Journal of European Economic History, 21:1 (Spring 1992), 169 - 82.
- * 13. E.A. Wrigley, R.S. Davies, J.E. Oeppen, and R.S. Schofield, English Population History from Family Reconstruction, 1580 - 1837 (Cambridge, 1997); and E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction, 2nd edn. (London and New York, 1989). See the very critical review article: David Levine, 'Sampling History: The English Population', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 28:4 (Spring 1998), 605-32.
- 14. E. A. Wrigley, 'Mortality and the European Marriage Pattern System', in Catherine Geissler and Derek Oddy, eds., Food, Diet, and Economic Change, Past and Present (Leicester, 1993), pp. 35-49.
- 15. E.A. Wrigley, 'Family Limitation in Pre-Industrial England', Economic History Review, 2nd ser. 19 (1966), 82-109; in Michael Drake, ed., Population in Industrialization (London, 1969), pp. 157-92.
- 16. R. D. Lee, 'Inverse Projection and Back Projection: A Critical Appraisal, and Comparative Results for England, 1539 to 1871', Population Studies, 39 (1985), 233-248.
- 17. David R. Weir, 'Rather Never than Late: Celibacy and Age at Marriage', Journal of Family History, 9:4 (Winter 1984), 340-54.
- 18. Roger Schofield, 'English Marriage Patterns Revisited', Journal of Family History, 10:1 (Spring 1985), 2-20.
- 19. Robert Stavins, 'A Model of English Demographic Change, 1573 - 1873', Explorations in Economic

History, 25 (Jan. 1988), 98 - 116.

20. L. R. Poos, 'The Historical Demography of Renaissance Europe: Recent Research and Current Issues', Renaissance Quarterly, 42 (1989), 749-811.
21. Nicholas J. Mayhew, 'Population, Money Supply, and the Velocity of Circulation in England, 1300 - 1700', Economic History Review, 2nd ser., 48:2 (May 1995), 238-57.

QUESTIONS:

1. Did population growth in England and western Europe during the 16th century produce a 'Malthusian crisis' by or sometime after ca. 1600? What did Malthus (and Ricardo) say about population growth? Were 'diminishing returns' the inevitable result of population growth in this era? Were technological changes sufficient to counteract the 'law of diminishing returns'?
2. Whether or not England experienced a 'Malthusian trap', what happened to real incomes and living standards during this era of population growth: for urban and rural labourers; peasants; artisans; landlords? Who gained and who lost in this era? What *other* factors, besides demographic ones, determined changes in real incomes during this period?
3. Explain when, why, and how Europe's population grew during the 16th and 17th centuries, and then why it ceased to grow. If there was no 'Malthusian trap', why did that population growth not continue into the modern era? What role did famine, disease, warfare, and the 'European marriage pattern' etc. play in European demography before 1750?
4. Discuss the positive and negative effects of population growth in England from 1500-1750: on technological change and investment in agriculture, industry, trade and overseas expansion.