

of sociological knowledge and the need for additional and/or new job outlets for sociologists, but also because other clinicians do not seem to adequately understand the social nature of individuals, groups, organizations and their problems. Moreover, most clinicians have come to accept the inadequacy of applying purely psychological and psychiatric knowledge to problems lodged primarily in a social context.

NOTES

1. Clinical sociology is applied sociological knowledge and thinking for purposes of investigation, diagnosis of problems, and suggestion of strategies for coping with such problems, and achieving change in social situations and interactional patterns.
2. A sociotherapist is one trained in sociology who is capable of making diagnosis and formal assessments of interactional patterns and social situations to arrive at clinical judgments, and to offer techniques, schemes, and strategies for intervention to facilitate change.
3. Sociotherapy is a process aimed at achieving constructive social and behavioral changes in social situations and in the interactional patterns among individuals, group, organizations and communities.

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BOOK REVIEW

William Petersen, *Malthus*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979, 302pp.

Petersen's new book on Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) attempts to present Malthus's work, the historical setting that influenced him, and many of the different responses to his writings. The historical framework that Petersen presents is valuable in understanding how Malthus and his work fit into the development of social thought, economics, demography, political movements, and laws.

The opening chapter places Malthus in the time of the French and Industrial Revolutions. Science, technology and religious beliefs were undergoing a metamorphosis. Scholarly concern was moving from moral philosophy to political economy. Malthus, who taught in a mercantilist college sponsored by the East India Company, and who later became the first professor of political economy, was understandably caught up in these changes.

Having presented the historical framework, Petersen proceeds to a portrait of Malthus and his work. No one could hate the Malthus Petersen portrays: a bird watcher, chess player, hunter, and humanitarian. This should give the reader a hint of Petersen's point of view; he defends Malthus in most respects, acknowledging only minor shortcomings in Malthus's work, most of which were corrected (at least from Petersen's perspective) in later works and editions.

The defense begins immediately in the second chapter, in which Petersen points out that Malthus was a professor, not just a reverend, as many critics have presented him. Petersen paints Malthus as a religious moderate, attacked by "fanatics from both extremes." Malthus is said to have been maligned by Marx, Cobbett, Godwin, Condorcet, and many others, all of whom were guilty of factual errors concerning the work and thought of Malthus. While Petersen does list the critics' errors, he does not show the effect of the errors on the substance of their arguments.

The errors concern such matters as the day Malthus was born (does it really matter whether it was Valentine's Day), that he did not go by Thomas Malthus but T.R. or T. Robt. Malthus, or that Malthus was not a celibate, but fathered three or maybe eleven girls (one cannot tell even from Petersen's book which is correct).

If it is true that Malthus sired eleven girls, then his concern with overpopulation was not just academic. However, it was his scholarly concern with population that led to notoriety. Malthus's (1798) *An Essay on the Principle of Population* was a polemical work, published anonymously. It was directed against Godwin and Condorcet, each of whom produced a particular brand of utopianism. These men and many others of the time were not concerned with overpopulation, but with underpopulation and declining populations. This concern had some real basis, since France and some other western European countries were then experiencing declining fertility (Spengler, 1968:103-120). Malthus was concerned not with this seemingly temporary aberration, but with the more long-term danger that he foresaw in the first edition of the *Essay*, in which he postulates two axioms: Population increases in a geometric ratio, food production at most arithmetically. This results in an imbalance.

Petersen feels this first edition, in which the checks on population were *positive*, (famine, disease, and war), too greatly emphasized a biologicistic determinism. The second edition of the essay introduced the idea of *preventive* checks, or moral restraint, which consisted of such things as postponing marriage and refraining from premarital intercourse, and vices, such as birth control, abortion, and other "deviant sexual acts." This shows a shift from biological determinism to a more social orientation. The second and subsequent editions greatly expanded the first, and included many empirical references.

Petersen argues that Malthus was a true scientist, not just a deductive theoretician. Malthus travelled widely during his life, and often used examples from his travels to illustrate the different editions of the *Essay*. Yet when the critics of Malthus point out the errors of observation and analysis, Petersen counters that these journeys were merely casual vacations, not scientific research. One is left to wonder which way Malthus really worked: haphazardly or rigorously.

A number of Malthus's critics have accused him of plagiarism. It has been pointed out that his ideas were not new, but that he did not attribute them to previous writers (Mayer, 1962). Petersen's defense takes the form not of disputing the argument so much as trying to show that some of these writers also took foolish positions in their own work. This is an interesting display of misdirection, but it does not speak to the point.

Most of *Malthus* follows a similar pattern. It deals little with Malthus the man and scholar; instead, it attempts to correct many misconceptions about Malthus and his work, and show how he might be correct. Petersen uses Ireland as an example to defend Malthus's ideas of how a good food supply can support the growth toward a large population, which then is controlled initially by positive checks (potato famines), and subsequently by moral restraint (late marriage). Petersen argues that Malthus was a sophisticated demographer, yet it is demographers that presently take such exception to Malthus and his ideas (Mayer, 1962; Robinson, 1964; Notestein, 1952). Petersen claims that Malthus made strong use of empirical data (a questionable suggestion, as previously mentioned), and that his concern was with analysis of the past. But if one looks at Malthus's concern for overpopulation, and at his two axioms of food and population growth, one must question Petersen's suggestion that Malthus paid little attention to future projections or predictions. Petersen takes this seemingly unfounded position for ideological reasons, because he obviously dislikes the projective work done by such people as the Club of Rome, a group he labels as private individuals, rather than more accurately as some of the more noted scientists and scholars at MIT. Petersen tries to dissociate any and everything that might be called Malthusian from Malthus. He justifies this distinction by dividing the study of population into two categories: formal demography, which is concerned with births, deaths, migration, age, and sex; and population studies, which introduces social variables in addition to demographic ones. Petersen has already disavowed this distinction in an earlier part of the book, and it is really not appropriate here, since Malthus definitely did not do formal demography in any of the different editions of the *Essay*.

Petersen's defense of Malthus against the rest of the world takes other strange twists. He suggests that the cholera epidemic of 1831-2 may actually have been a blessing, since it helped physicians establish minimum criteria for public health. At some points, one can only with difficulty distinguish whose thoughts are being spoken, Petersen's or Malthus's. Petersen suggests that the real reason for decreasing mortality is increasing food supplies. Great faith is placed in science and technology's ability to increase that food supply indefinitely, clearly not a position Malthus would support. Petersen also suggests that the reason for famine in China and its absence in Europe was not Europeans' agricultural superiority, but their institutional controls over fertility. This he attempts to neatly fit into a, dare I say, Malthusian position of moral restraint in which one refrains from premarital intercourse and postpones marriage until one can afford children, thereby avoiding dependence on public welfare.

Petersen defends Malthus's opposition to the Poor Laws with the empirically unsubstantiated position that welfare laws increase social inequality and encourage the poor to have more children. Petersen's main support for this stance is the continued increase in the number of people on welfare. Petersen even agrees with Malthus that birth control is an undesirable alternative, and that we should emphasize abstinence, which can help stimulate men to work harder in order to be able to afford marriage and thus release their sexual tension. (Note the blatant sexism of this position. Women are portrayed as only sex objects, mothers, and housewives.) The connection of Malthus's views to his religious affiliations is a point Petersen continually plays down, yet it is one that many have chosen to emphasize (Marx, 1973; Ausubel, 1952).

Petersen staunchly defends Malthus's laissez-faire liberalism throughout the book. Unfortunately, Petersen's defense does not rest on an explication of Malthus's work and its historical setting, but more probably on Petersen's personal prejudices. A whole chapter is devoted to the importance of Malthus's contributions to economics. This is fine, but when Petersen goes on to contrast Malthus's proposed society to "oppressive totalitarian" regimes

one is reminded of his textbook *Population*, wherein the demography and population studies are excellent, but the ideological comments are offensive. This is particularly evident in Petersen's last chapter, where he attempts to show the influence of Malthus's thought on those who came after him. He points out the influence the *Essay* had on Darwin and Wallace, and then turns to the social Darwinists. The latter receive a severe lambasting not so much for changing Malthus's ideas, but for their personal and political positions, such as atheism and favoring birth control. Malthus is not discussed in any detail in this section. Petersen then quickly jumps to a discussion of education and supports Malthus's favoring free universal education. Education is to be used as a tool of embourgeoisement and is tied directly to the principle of population. Malthus wanted education to provide the means by which the lower classes could increase their "self-control and social responsibility," which are negatively correlated with social class and the number of children in the family.

What Petersen has done with *Malthus* is to give the reader a portrait rather than a photograph of the man. One can learn a great deal about the historical setting and many of the factors that influenced Malthus to write and think as he did, and for this one should be appreciative of Petersen's book. However, as a word of caution, I suggest that anyone who is truly interested in understanding Malthus and his impact should read Malthus with a critical eye, and supplement it with some of the articles cited in this review.

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