

Malthus, Thomas Robert English Classical Economist and Clergyman (1766-1834) Encyclopedia Article

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Contents

Malthus, Thomas Robert English Classical Economist and Clergyman (1766-1834) Encyclopedia Article.....	1
Contents.....	2
Malthus, Thomas Robert English Classical Economist and Clergyman (1766–1834).....	3

Malthus, Thomas Robert English

Classical Economist and Clergyman

(1766–1834)

Thomas Robert Malthus is best remembered for his 1798 treatise titled *An Essay on the Principle of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society*.

Thomas Robert Malthus. (Corbis-Bettmann. Reproduced by permission.)

In that work, he argued that because food production increased **arithmetically** and human population increased in a more rapid **geometric** manner, society would ultimately face dire consequences because of decreasing **per capita** food availability. Because of this thesis, economics has been coined "the dismal science." Detractors note that it is only a hypothesis and not a proven theory. Furthermore, they argue that human conditions since Malthus have improved in many ways due to technological innovation. The Malthusian hypothesis today remains influential in environmental thought because of its warning about unrestrained population growth.

Internet Resource

The International Society of Malthus Web site, edited by Ronald Bleier. Available from <http://www.igc.org/desip/malthus>.