

## The Story of Stuff: Dumbing Down Thomas Malthus' Principles of Population

Apart from being boring and wrong, *The Story of Stuff* is nothing more than a dumbed down version of Thomas Malthus' *Principles of Population*. Now, I was a weird kid growing up. I was the nerd interested in politics and more comfortable around adults than kids. While it definitely retarded my social skills, it had the wonderful side-effect of teaching me a good deal about business and economics. My Dad owned a small variety store and answered all of my questions about the business, sharing details ranging from mark-up, to profits and more.

Later, in high school, I enrolled in our Humanities Class where they taught us the Classics and reviewed works such as Malthus' *Principles of Population*. While my teachers were largely biased towards Humanism, Liberalism and Democratic politics, I was always a Conservative skeptic. Which leads me to the point: I would have never swallowed the BS spewed out in this video. Malthus believed that population would outstrip agriculture's ability to feed everyone. He advocated limited resources, which amazingly, 200 years later, *The Story of Stuff* repeats. Interestingly, technological innovation (and in my opinion God and the human spirit), trumped limited thinking.

The [Wikipedia](#) article about Thomas Malthus concludes:

However, the world generally has not developed in accordance with Malthus's expectations. During the late 19th and early 20th century, the population (and wages) increased as the industrial revolution gathered pace. However, birth rates in highly-developed nations have dropped to near bare replacement-levels, such that many Western nations like the US and Canada only grow due to immigration, and Japan faces a declining population when the post-World War II generation dies off. But due to an inequitable distribution of wealth throughout the world, most people live in relative poverty and continue to produce more children in order to increase their economic assets. Also, in the absence of social welfare systems, larger families favour the survival of more children to take care of old and infirm members of the family. One analysis postulates that poverty remains, not because of overpopulation or some innate human nature, but because workers do not get the true value of their labour, and because wealth depends on poverty. This differs from the Malthusian explanation of population dynamics.

Malthus assumed a constant labor-demand in his assessment of England[citation needed], and in doing so he ignored the effects of industrialization. As the world became more industrialized, the level of technology and production grew, causing an increase in labor-demand. Thus, even though labor-supply increased, so did the demand for labor. In fact, the labor-demand arguably increased more than the supply, as measured by the historically observed increase in real wages globally with population growth.

Simply put, Malthus was wrong. Human ingenuity, the human spirit, and the divine spark won. Humanism, which displaces God with man and his will, ironically underestimated humanities' ability to adapt. I didn't believe or agree with Malthus when I read his *Principles of Population*, and I don't agree with the regurgitated, dumbed down Malthus knock-off *The Story of Stuff*.

Posted by Terry Kinder in Blog at 23:13