

**THE LAW OF HUMAN
INCREASE: OR POPULATION
BASED ON PHYSIOLOGY
AND PSYCHOLOGY**

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The Law of Human Increase: Or Population Based on Physiology and Psychology by Nathan Allen

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Population based on Physiology and Psychology.

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THE LAW OF HUMAN INCREASE;

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THE celebrated play of Hamlet has sometimes been quoted with the character of Hamlet left out, to illustrate more forcibly certain acts or scenes in life. Such a quotation seems most appropriate in its application to the existing works upon the laws of human increase. It is a singular fact, that among all the writers on Population, there is scarcely one who has been thoroughly educated in the science of physiology, or in the practical application of medicine to the laws of life. The organs of the human body, with their various functions—which must certainly have something to do with the increase of population—have received from these writers but little attention. That common sense, and the judgment which we apply to the numerous facts in science, as well as to the practical duties of life, would surely incline us to the belief that the body, its

health and various conditions, must constitute a prominent, if not the leading feature in all the discussions upon such a subject.

The method adopted by these writers, resembles very much the course which metaphysicians formerly pursued in discussing the faculties of the mind, as though they had no fixed connection whatever with the body, or particular dependence upon the brain. On this account that most important study, the science of mind, or mental philosophy, has, within the last fifty years, been passing through many changes, or a kind of transition state; so that, at the present time, those treatises recognizing an intimate connection of mind with body are more generally accepted, and regarded as presenting truths founded upon a natural basis.

To establish a general law which is to have the greatest possible agency in developing the nature of a body and controlling its very existence, the presumption is that such a law must be evolved, in some way, from the designs had in the creation of that body. Such has been found by experience and observation to be the fact in reference to the great laws that pervade the animal and vegetable kingdoms. Though there may be objects and agencies extraneous to the body itself, that may have a powerful influence over its development, yet the most important law of all, the law that shapes its life, character, and destiny, it would seem, must have its seat somewhere in the body itself. Such we should naturally suppose would be the fact in the case of man, the highest and noblest

work of the Creator, and where human agency and accountability have more to do than anywhere else in the world. An examination of the views and theories of writers upon population shows, that the laws which they lay down for its increase have been controlled generally by agents or objects entirely external to the body, and some of them hold only remote or indirect relations to it.

There are two or three other considerations which certainly afford some evidence, that the theories advocated by these writers do not present the *true basis* upon which the laws of human increase rest. No two of the leading writers upon the subject agree in the general principles which they advocate. And, on the other hand, the very doctrines they have endeavored to promulgate have encountered the most decided opposition from the ablest writers to be found. Some slight disagreement among writers upon such a subject, or even bitter opposition to their views by those who have not carefully considered the matter, should have but little influence against their truthfulness or correctness. But great general laws or principles founded in nature, and open to the inspection of all inquiring minds, after having been examined and discussed for more than half a century by the ablest thinkers, should have become well established and generally admitted, which is not the case on this most important subject.

Again, many of the sentiments advanced by leading writers on the subject of population are not in harmony with the law of propagation found in the

vegetable, as well as in the animal kingdom; neither are these sentiments consistent with the evident designs of God in the creation of man, with reference to some of the most essential conditions on which his character, happiness, and future prospects depend. The truth and force of these statements will be clearly manifest upon a careful examination of some of the doctrines of Malthus and others, especially when compared with the law of population based upon physiology. We will here present the opinions, mostly in their own language, of the principal writers on this subject.

The earliest and most popular writer on population was the Rev. T. R. Malthus, commencing with an essay, in 1798, which afterward was enlarged into two volumes, and passed through several editions. His leading principle is, "that population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio, while subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio." Assuming this as a settled fact, without attempting to present proof in respect to the actual power of increase in man, or the relative supply of food, he proceeds at once to show what have been the checks to the increase of population throughout the various countries of the world. He held, that "population is necessarily limited by the means of subsistence," and "invariably increases where those means increase, unless prevented by some very powerful and obvious check." These checks he divides into the positive and the preventive. The former "include every cause, whether arising from vice or misery, which in any degree contributes to shorten

the natural duration of human life," among which may be enumerated "unwholesome occupations, severe labor, exposure to the seasons, extreme poverty, bad nursing of children, great towns, excesses of all kinds, the whole train of common diseases and epidemics, wars, plagues, and famine." The preventive checks include "abstinence from marriage and sexual intercourse from considerations of prudence, and all vice and immorality tending to render women unprolific." Few books have been the theme of greater discussion and controversy than this; and in the opinion of good judges it would be difficult to decide, whether a majority of the public at the present day accept or reject his doctrines.

In 1830, M. T. Saddler, M.P., published in two large volumes an elaborate work, exposing and refuting Malthus's theory, and bringing before the public the following new doctrine of population. "The prolificness of human beings," he says, "otherwise similarly circumstanced, varies inversely as their numbers;" and he presents a mass of evidence to prove that nature has not "invested man with a fixed and unvarying measure of prolificness," but that the Creator has "regulated the prolificness of his creatures in reference to the circumstances in which Providence shall place them, instead of leaving that regulation to the busy, selfish, and ignorant interference of man."

In 1841, Thomas Doubleday published in London a work with this title, "The True Law of Population Shown to be Connected with the Food of the People;"

in which he undertook to demonstrate that, "wherever a species or genus is endangered, a corresponding effort is invariably made by nature for its preservation and continuance, by an increase of fecundity or fertility; and that this especially takes place whenever such danger arises from a diminution of proper nourishment," and that consequently the "deplethoric state is favorable to fertility, but, on the other hand, the plethoric is unfavorable to fertility." Thus, "there is in all societies a constant increase going on among that portion of it which is the worst supplied with food, in short, among the poorest."

The Westminster Review, for April, 1852, contained a most elaborate article by Herbert Spencer, introducing a "New Theory of Population," deduced from the general law of animal fertility. It argues that an antagonism exists between individualism and reproduction; that matter in its lower forms, that of vegetables, for instance, possesses a stronger power of increase than in all higher forms; that the capacity of reproduction in animals is in an inverse ratio to their individuation; that the ability to maintain individual life and that of multiplication vary in the same manner also. He further demonstrates, "that the ability to maintain is in all cases measured by the development of the nervous system."

The latest theory is found in a work on population, published in London, 1854, by G. R. Richards, consisting of some lectures delivered before the University of