

Group 1-

Questions for Tuesday's Reading:

"An Essay on the Principle of Population", Thomas Malthus in response to Condorcet's Essay "The Tenth Stage".

1. Who do you think has a more accurate view of the future: Malthus or Condorcet? Why?
2. What is Malthus' main argument? Why does he think Condorcet is completely far fetched in his ideas?
3. What problems does Malthus see in the history of mankind?
4. Looking at the last paragraph before chapter 1 on page 16, do you really think Malthus would "rejoice" at being proven wrong? What does that say about how he feels about the conclusions he draws in his work?
5. P.18, What is meant by his two postulates? And what did Condorcet have to say about the 2nd postulate in particular?
6. Are Malthus' postulates about food and sex sufficient, or is it incomplete?
7. Do you believe that the human population will exceed its food supply? Has it already happened?
8. Define Malthus' version of 'perfectibility'.
9. Is Malthus putting human and animal on the same level or is he in fact separating humans from animals (p.21)?
10. Is Malthus' understanding of population versus subsistence stay true to nature?
11. Is Malthus a man of perfection or a man of truth?
12. What does Malthus have to say about our history for the most part?
13. Do you think that Malthus' critique of Condorcet was partially fueled by the Anglo-French rivalry of the day and a general fear of the French Revolution?
14. What does Malthus inevitable say about Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden and the existence of perfectibility and heaven? Have we in fact progressed downward?
15. What is Malthus' view of evil in the world? Is evil necessary?
16. Do you agree with Malthus that expanded intellect for humanity as a whole would "tend to repress future exertion and to damp the soaring wings of intellect?" Do you think such a level could be reached where individuals would no longer feel driven to learn more?
17. Malthus begins chapter nine with a scathing attack on Condorcet's writings as unscientific and without logic. Do you find this ironic considering that Condorcet's views were based on his faith in human nature and logic and other Enlightenment ideals? Do you agree with Malthus that Condorcet stepped outside the bounds of logic and reason? Or do you think Condorcet's views were within the parameters of the ideals he professed?
18. What does Malthus generally have to say about religion?