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Malthusian Theory in World Literature

Lela Chogovadze [1]

Abstract: In the nineteenth century, the social views of Thomas Malthus (1766–1883) were very popular in the world, in which the growth of the population was discussed in relation to the growth of the means of existence (amount of food). According to Malthus, the population increases with geometric progression, and the means of existence (amount of food) increases with arithmetic progression. In the work "Essay on Population" (1798, 2nd edition - 1803), Malthus emphasized the importance of such factors as disease, hunger, violence in the process of stopping population growth rates, maintaining the balance between population growth and its provision through existence. ("positive control" of population growth), abstinence from sexual life, late marriage, moral restrictions ("preventive control"). Malthus tried to formulate the biological and social factors of population growth processes in the form of "the law of naming". Malthus's theory was unacceptable to writers, and his criticism did not stop throughout the nineteenth century. In this regard, Georgian writer Davit Kldiashvili's (1862-1931) story "Samanishvili's stepmother" and Anton Chekhov's (1860-1904) novella - "Before Marriage" are interesting. In both works, Malthus's theory is anti-humanist, and by quoting it, the authors emphasize the moral degradation of the characters. In the nineteenth century, the social views of Thomas Malthus were very popular in the world, some mercilessly criticized him, while others supported him. Malthus's theory was also reflected in literature, but the attitude towards it was uniform - negative. Who was Malthus and what was the essence of his social views?

Keywords: Thomas Malthus, social views, demographic issue, threat to humanity, Georgian literature, Davit Kldiashvili, impoverished aristocracy, moral degradation, Anton Chekhov.

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Thomas Robert Malthus was an English priest and economist who was the first in the world to raise the question of the demographic problem. In 1798, he published the book "Experiment on Population", in which he established the natural law of population growth. Before Malthus, it was accepted that population growth was good and economically beneficial because it increased the number of workers in the economy. Malthus looked at population growth from a different angle and stated: Even when population growth can increase total output, there is a tendency to decrease output per unit of capital.

The beginnings of the Malthusian doctrine had already been put forward, "Population increases by geometrical progression, while the means of subsistence increase by arithmetical progression." To this observation, Malthus connected his point: there are two main great desires that nature has instilled in man - to eat and to have sex. Malthus said that it is impossible to suppress or control either of these two desires, and therefore, over time, with an ever-increasing population rate, people will need more and more resources to satisfy their needs. We will analyze that the resources needed for life are limited, and when these resources are depleted or degraded, life on earth will come to an end. The essence of the doctrine is that: population growth is impossible without simultaneously reducing the necessary resources, and sooner or later, it will be necessary to do the opposite.

Malthus argued that there are two causes that can reduce the population: physical defects and excruciating diseases, two necessary evils (their agents are war, famine and disease). In the 1803 edition, Malthus added the new concept of "moral restraint" (premarital chastity and late marriage to maintain a low birth rate) as an additional factor inhibiting population growth.

The main point of Malthus's essay is that we are all faced with the choice of "taking advantage" of all the factors that inhibit population growth (such as disease, war, and so on) or suffering from excessive population growth. Malthus's ideas had further influence, with Paul Ashridge writing several books stating that famine is the result of population booms.

Malthus's theory is not a way of establishing poverty and justifying it, but it is a search for a way out of poverty. The motivation for creating this theory is to find an effective way to escape from poverty, i.e. The starting point is the existence of poverty and the search for ways to fight it. In the words of Malthus, “The doctrines conveyed in this treatise are not contrary to the laws of nature. It has in mind the establishment of a healthy and strong population and its multiplication in such a way that vice and poverty do not follow.

According to Malthus, among the countries of antiquity, only the Greeks resorted to conscious regulation of population size. Malthus praises and extols the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle, in which the law of population growth was first realized. Malthus found himself in a barrage of personal criticism. People who knew nothing about his life criticized him mercilessly. In 1819, Shelley called Malthus a eunuch and a tyrant, William Godwin criticized Malthus's theory in the book On Population. John Stuart Mill defended Malthus's ideas in his book Principles of Political Economy. Mill said that the criticism of Malthus's ideas was superficial.

In the era of Malthus, the demographic problem was not acute. The merit of Malthus is that he was the first to feel it and warned mankind about the impending danger. It is true that he expressed many incorrect and incorrect views on this issue, but his vision of the future turned out to be fundamentally correct.

The question arises - is Malthus a humanist or an anti-humanist? He wants to save people from misfortune, to give them the right to human existence, to ensure their freedom. In this he does not differ from the humanists, and yet his theory is mainly aimed at refuting the doctrines of other humanists. Malthus fights against all theories that look for the causes of human misery in society and consider revolution as a necessity for equality. It is an expression of anti-revolutionary attitude. People need to realize the real cause of their own misery, which lies primarily in the natural drive to reproduce without conforming to the means of existence.

Malthus's theory was unacceptable to writers, and his criticism did not stop throughout the nineteenth century. In this regard, Georgian writer Davit Kldiashvili's (1862-1931) story "Samanishvili's stepmother" is interesting. The economic hardship put the once rich nobility in unbearable conditions - the once stretched houses turned into small thatched houses, huge estates and boundless fields were torn to shreds. Divorced brothers, divorced fathers and sons multiplied. In the courtyards of the nobles, hungry and thirsty children in torn shirts are as tantalizing as peasant boys. Life puts the nobles to the test, the stomach problem became the purpose and basis of their existence, turning them into beasts. Platon

Samanishvili and lawyer Ivane Hidevanidze d. Klidiashvili is brought out first as a confessor and then as a follower of Malthusian theory. Let's remember their dialogue on the village road. Malthus' theory will be voiced for the first time by Plato, this seemingly harmless, hard-working, family-adventurous nobleman - "Bad times have come, bad times are coming! The people have also increased... if the country will be cleansed at least a little by fighting..." (Plato's words are the first indication that behind these words there is a character who will do anything to save himself), Hidevanidze also agrees with Plato "If Madliani lost one Orola child, instead of them, she would have more sustenance, she did not It was better." Both Ivan and Plato put Malthusian theory into practice. According to Plato's characterization, Hidevanidze is to be thrown out, because he "sows evil", as he admits, he put the Bregadzes into the hands of "the cannibal Hidevanidze, this unforgiving man". He is not better himself. When he lost hope, he dragged his pregnant stepmother to kill her, beat her like a beast, and with endless resentment, she prematurely took her father to the grave. The "bite-separating" young brother and his mother "have no fence, no border, no place left, forcing the poor old widow and mother to lie in court every week." As we saw d. For Kldiashvili, Malthus's theory is anti-humanist, and by quoting him, he emphasizes the moral degradation of his heroes.

Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) has a novel - "Before Marriage". In this several-page work, the shortcomings of Russian society and the atmosphere of that time are shown with extraordinary skill in a critical-realistic method. The humor of the young Chekhov rises to the point of satire, he mocks the characters of the story not as the eternal embodiment of human vice, but as direct products of the social existence of the time, and in the process he gracefully mixes the theory of Malthus. The marriage between the maiden Podzatilkin and the registrar Nazaryev is based on a bribe from his son (Nazarev is a man of medium build, with a straight face, flat-faced, he works somewhere, he receives a small amount of money - he barely has enough for tobacco. The woman's father promised one thousand five hundred manats as a dowry. However, later this amount turned out to be one thousand manats, which terribly upset the bride). Before the marriage, Mr. Podzatilkin teaches his daughter: "European civilization has given rise to the opposition among women, that the more children a woman has, the worse off she is. It's a lie! It's a ballad! It is better for parents to have more children. However, no, it's not like that, on the contrary! I was wrong, Souliko. The fewer children you have, the better. I read this in a newspaper yesterday. Someone will invent Malthus". For a society that is faced with the problem of maintaining physical existence, Malthus' theory of population is quite acceptable, although they also know very well that it is better to have many children.

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There is a question whether he knew D. Kldiashvili A. Chekhov's novel and was he influenced by the Russian writer? A. Chekhov wrote the novel "Before Marriage" in 1880, and "Samanishvili's Stepmother" was created 16 years later - in 1896. At the moment, "Before Marriage" has not been translated into Georgian, although D. Klidiashvili was free to read it in the original. We think that the great Georgian prose writer responded to the problems of the era - he recorded his negative position towards Malthus's theory. Moreover, with great literary skill, he included this theory in order to show the spiritual degradation of his characters.

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