

governed by 'exclusive and moronic ruling classes' that suppressed 'all enterprise and innovation'; and a parody of the 'Washington consensus' in which economic growth depends on private incentives untrammelled by state interference. His cursory discussion fails to confront serious institutional arguments. Later discussions of the disappearance of trial by combat and the ineffectiveness of laws prohibiting usury do nothing to strengthen his case.

Malthusian dynamics certainly deserve centre stage, but Clark's near exclusive focus on continuous Malthusian equilibrium is surprising. He notes that demographers find that the English death rate fails to show the systematic negative association with income expected for fluctuations around a Malthusian equilibrium, but finds solution in the positive association between urbanization and mortality. 'Thus the development of trade . . . which fostered greater urbanization . . . also allowed living standards to rise, but by purely Malthusian mechanisms' (p. 104) and 'the relative wealth of the English . . . probably stemmed mostly from the relative filth in which they wallowed' (p. 108). Most economic historians and historical demographers, while recognizing the power of Malthusian forces, would question the adequacy of a single-minded focus on Malthusian equilibrium. The rise in real wages following the Black Death constituted a (temporary) removal of the Malthusian restraint and the subsequent decline in wages that began in the fifteenth century was a Malthusian force, but hardly equilibrium over most of the period. By the seventeenth century, much of Europe may have returned to Malthusian equilibrium, but the Netherlands and England diverged from the rest. High urban death rates are not the answer—England's overall death rate was unusually low. The economic history of early modern Europe extends beyond Malthusian equilibrium and whether Malthusian equilibrium or not much else of importance potentially happened (as Clark's later discussions imply).

Shifting to the industrial revolution, Clark focuses on the changed relationship between population and income and the acceleration of productivity growth that this implies. He surveys and rejects models of knowledge growth based on institutions and human capital formation. He also points out that in aggregate it is difficult to pinpoint the start of the 'kink' in the efficiency curve and highlights that the neo-Whig emphasis that Douglass North and Barry Weingast place on the Glorious Revolution is not supported. Then, in a contradiction to his previous emphasis on the stasis of Malthusian economies before 1800, Clark opts for 1600 (with a possible reservation) as the beginning of a gradual transition into modern economic growth. He also argues that the transformation apparent in nineteenth-century Britain is something of an illusion. Technological change had a greater aggregate impact because it occurred in textiles, a large industry, and faster productivity growth coincided with a population explosion supported by American land supply: 'Britain's rise to world dominance was thus a product more of the bedroom labours of British workers than of their factory toil' (p. 243).

Clark argues that technological progress accelerated in a peaceful and stable England, largely unchanged institutionally since the middle ages. Having rejected a conventional emphasis on institutions, he returns to demography. His earlier discussion introduces his main theme of Darwinian alteration of behavioural choice. He has discovered from early seventeenth-century wills that the rich had the most children. He then infers, despite the fact that inherited land was the source of most wealth, that the rich passed on middle-class values: 'thrift, prudence, negotiation and hard work' (p. 166). 'Modern man's' new preferences generated lower interest rates, greater literacy, and longer working hours. Initially, in a Malthusian equilibrium, these traits made no impact on the standard of living, but eventually they led to the end of the long Malthusian era. 'Thus we may speculate that England's advantage lay in the rapid cultural, and potentially also genetic, diffusion of the values of the economically successful throughout society in the years 1200–1800' (p. 271).