

(28 July 86)

When S.Africa's Pres. Botha said yesterday, "I'd prefer sanctions to suicide," he hit the core of his nightmare and the situation: the "Afro" population of S.Africa has exploded from 0% (before they began to move in as cheap labor for the white regime) to ca.82%, most of whom are "excess" to the S.African ecogovernment in that (1) they are not needed for the maintenance and advance of the present government's ecoculture (ie, its material and spiritual way of life), and (2) they are, in their very existence, a burden and drag on the ecoculture now in power. Please do not read emotion into that first sentence! To describe such a social agony as S.Africa, wholly objective (non-emotive) words are not available; but I've tried. Yet many of my friends consider the very notion of "excess population" illegitimate: (1) Are not all human beings equal in the sight of God (babies being made in the same locale as marriages, viz, heaven)? (2) Is not the very adjective "excess" an insult to all human existence? (3) How can one human being relate humanly to another human being whom the first human being considers "excess"? (4) If the Christian gospel is Good News for everybody, how can it even get off the ground under the weight of the notion that some humans are "excess," ie, should not even exist? (4) How can any humane planning occur in an atmosphere polluted with the notion that some of the humans beings planned for and planning should not even exist? (5) Is not the very notion of "excess population" blinding as (a) elitist and (b) corrupting of moral sensitivity?

1. In the planning process, or any other concerted thinking (sustained intellection), what you leave out wrecks you. I observe that the concept of "excess population" is so tabu as to be left out, as a dirty secret, in all disciplines' discussion of the 1986 human condition. I for one consider the concept legitimate and necessary, and this thinksheet is a complaint against leaving it out. If it's legitimate and necessary, it can't be Good News to leave it out: one cannot leave it out and be faithful to the Christian gospel. By attack, I thus defend myself against the accusation that in this position, I'm subChristian.

2. We live out, each one of us, our lifestories by stories. The story in which the phrase "excess population" appears negatively is Dickens' "A Christmas Carol." Miser Scrooge refuses to give charity on the logical ground that it would do more harm than good: keeping "excess population" alive is bad news; we ought rather to favor the natural forces that "kill off" this excess. By love and fear, the two most powerful motors of humanization, he gets converted to the Bible's mindless charity (eg, "Don't let your left and right hands notice what each the other does"). At this point (Mt.6.3) in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is pleading for a benevolent, outgoing, automatic affirmative response to the existence and needs of the neighbor--a set of the soul, not a rule for the mind or a law for the life of the person and society. To use this scripture to support mindless charity is to turn good into evil. Further, it's to confuse individual responsibility with the individual's responsibility to participate in social responsibility. But what hope have I of anyone's sympathizing with my sympathizing with Scrooge's preconversion attitude on "excess population"? Can I even hope you'll read beyond sec.2 of this thinksheet? Dickens is so right, and Scrooge is so wrong...yet Scrooge was not entirely wrong....

3. Note, in sec.2, "natural forces." For almost 2 million years they (1) eliminated some species, (2) encouraged other species, and (3) kept the most dangerous species, us, in homeostasis with the rest of nature. Then we hypertrophied, went cancerous vis-a-vis the other species, and began--three centuries ago, at first slowly and now exponentially--to lower environmental quality for ourselves and other species. Increasingly we're able to defeat two natural forces serving to keep the human population in equilibrium with its environment, viz, the fertility rate

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and the infant-mortality rate. In being good news to individual human beings by helping them baby-make and baby-keep, medical science and technology is increasingly bad news to baby's cradle, the less-and-less-good earth. No, I'm not for "letting nature take its course" as it used to. I'm for freeing both nature and society from the burden of excessive human birthing (morally, mechanically, chemically, surgically, and legislatively).

4. It's almost tautological to say that "excessive human birthing" is the cause of "excess population." Natural forces having been defeated, unnatural forces must replace them as population constraints. These unnatural (in the sense of transbiological) forces have two loci, viz, the human heart (in the Hebraic sense of all dimensions of consciousness, including decision-making) and social sanctions (ie, all constraints society puts on the individual: tabus, customs, persuading/dissuading legislation and administration thereof). In all premodern societies, religion has been the core of this intrapsychic, interpersonal, and societal control. Since WWI, the wasting away of biblical religion among the control-class (the societal "principalities and powers") has had the paradoxical effect of (1) loosing demonic rationalistic-and-naturalistic religions, chiefly etatistic (eg, Fascism, Nazism, Leninism) and (2) encouraging the development of "religionless" humanisms that virtually deify humanity and dignify the individual human being with a level of sacrality formerly attributed only to the Holy One. Neither of these fallouts is prepared to take the concept of "excess population" seriously, any more than are the West's traditional religions. The concept was in much of the Hudson Institute's "scenarioing" when I worked for its founder, Herman Kahn; but must it be limited to futurists? The pop opinion of Herman, who was a sensitive human being, was that he was a moral monster because of, eg, REPORT FROM IRON MOUNTAIN: am I a moral monster for writing this thinksheet? On the contrary, I consider it monstrously immoral to let tabus interfere with confronting this one of humanity's two worst problems (1, too much life by "birth control" in the sense of controlling FOR birth & infant survival; 2, the threat of too much death, viz, nuclear).

5. What would Jesus say? Clearly he said to concern yourself about the needs of the "neighbor," the Aram.-Gk.-Lat. meaning "near one": direct love-in-action, "charity," whether the near one is stranger, friend, or enemy. That's the way it is/is to be in God's Kingdom, Shalom Rule. But would he agree with straightline societal inferences drawn from his very Jewish, very timebound, very human and ennobling call to individual action to meet immediate individual human needs? I cannot believe it, any more than I can believe (as I said in #2078.4) that the command to "fill the earth" is to be obeyed without consideration, interconnectedly, for ecology and for human society.

6. "Excess population" in the light of what? in comparison with what? Above, I've dealt with this largely vis-a-vis ecology. Scenario: The present world-pop is not ecologically excessive IF (1) stasis, zero pop, could be instituted instantly, and (2) peoples could be instantly distributed with ecological efficiency as the control value (ie, thinning the pop in one place and thickening it in another). Since both "if"s are daffy and nightmarish, the scenario is unviable. But both "if"s point in necessary directions....How about vis-a-vis economics? All "high" cultures have depended on cheap labor sustained at or slightly above subsistence level, but that bilevel social arrangement is becoming less and less viable as demands from below--for "rights," "equality," etc.--have become more clamant....And how about vis-a-vis government? Excess populations are rendering more and more nations ungovernable.