

Neo-Malthusianism, Anarchism and Resistance: World View and the Limits of Acceptance in Barcelona (1904-1914)

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abstract

This paper attempts to identify the barriers to the acceptance of Neo-Malthusian discourse among anarchists and sympathizers in the first years of the 20th century in Barcelona. Neo-Malthusian anarchists advocated the use and promotion of contraceptives and birth control as a way to achieve liberation while subscribing to a Malthusian perspective of nature. The revolutionary discourse was disseminated in Barcelona primarily by the journal *Salud y Fuerza* and its editor Lluís Bulffi from 1904-1914, at the same time sharing ideological goals with traditional anarchism while clashing with the conception of a beneficent and abundant nature which underpinned traditional anarchist thought. Given the cultural, social and political importance of anarchism to the history of Barcelona in particular and Europe in general, further investigation into Neo-Malthusianism and the response to the discourse is needed in order to understand better the generally accepted world-view among anarchists and how they responded to challenges to this vision. This is a topic not fully addressed by current historiography on Neo-Malthusian anarchism. This article is derived from my Master's thesis in Contemporary History at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona entitled "Neomalthusianismo, anarquismo y resistencias: Los límites de su aceptación en Cataluña", which contains a further exposition of the ideas included herein, as well as a broader perspective on the topic.

keywords

Anarchism, Neo-Malthusianism, Barcelona, Conceptions of Nature, Birth Control, World View

One of the great philosophical forefronts in the 19th century and early 20th century was that of the conceptualization of nature and man's place within it. Differing and often contradictory theories of nature underpinned various ideologies across the political

spectrum. Nature could be seen as harmonious, just and egalitarian; random, arbitrary and indifferent; or hierarchic and aristocratic.¹ These varying conceptions of nature, which Mike Hawkins classifies as 'world views', or the "set of assumptions about the order of nature and the place of humanity within it", differ in order from 'ideologies', which he defines as the "theory of human interactions and how these are mediated by institutions."² Considering the innate power of the order of 'nature', adherents to differing political movements guarded their own world views as these frequently formed the basis of their ideology and justified their visions of society. As Álvaro Girón states:

Si el hombre es un animal, también puede ser clasificado y está sometido a las mismas fuerzas que actúan sobre el resto del universo viviente. La carga sociopolítica se hace muy explícita, sobre todo si tenemos en cuenta que los distintos evolucionismos tuvieron un papel clave en la justificación de la desigualdad. Si las diferencias sociales tienen una base biológica, es decir, no son más que la manifestación de superficie de diferencias innatas, descriptibles en términos de inferior-superior, entre individuos, clases o grupos sociales y razas, las propuestas igualitarias – reformistas y revolucionarias – parecen convertirse en auténticos proyectos de violación del orden de la Naturaleza o en amenazas para el bien biológico de la especie. Además, si la desigualdad es inevitable, si la escala social es el fiel reflejo de los seres mejor y peor dotados, se puede llegar a la conclusión de que conviene facilitar la perpetuación de un estado social que favorezca la propagación de las aristocracias naturales y la aniquilación de los seres poco aptos: por definición, *los débiles*.³

Central to the question of the conceptualization of nature was the figure of Darwin and the legacy he left. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Europe Darwinism and Darwinists as a coherent set did not exist, rather, as Peter Bowler notes, they were those "who expressed loyalty to Darwin as the founder of evolutionism, whatever their beliefs about how evolution actually worked."⁴ That is to say, those who saw themselves as Darwinists claimed his intellectual legacy, the concept of evolution, but not necessarily the core elements of pressure from natural selection and unpredictable random mutation.⁵ The flexibility of metaphors in Darwin's and his admirers' writings remained pliable and malleable enough to be used by many widely opposing groups.⁶ This meant that to have a stake in the game, having a legitimate claim to Darwin's legacy was paramount. As D. A. Stack notes:

¹ John Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 92-94. Michael Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 8.

² *Ibid.*, 8.

³ Álvaro Girón, *En la mesa con Darwin: evolución y revolución en el movimiento libertario en España (1869-1914)*, (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2005), 207.

⁴ Peter J. Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 73. As Daniel Pick notes, "in a sense, any quest for a 'pure' Darwinian affiliation in this period is an historical anachronism." Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder c. 1848 – c. 1918*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 112.

⁵ Bowler, 1988, *op. cit.*, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 154. Regarding the flexibility of the metaphors, one can see Burrow, *op. cit.*, 93, "Darwinism could be used to justify all sorts of different positions, yet could not adjudicate between them: Darwinian principles were invoked to defend social hierarchy or to attack it (depending on whether it was thought of as natural or unnatural), to condemn state intervention and welfare or to demand them; to justify extreme individualism or

The left needed Darwinism for both positive and negative reasons: positively, as an alternative to the traditional forms of authority they were busy disavowing; negatively, as a way of disarming those erecting biological barriers to socialism by lifting the Darwinian mantle for the socialist cause. Thus, in the period from the publication of the *Origin of Species* in 1859 through to the outbreak of the war in 1914, there was a series of attempts, by turns ingenious and disingenuous, to reconcile radical and socialist politics with Darwinian science.⁷

Thus, like other leftist groups, anarchists attempted to incorporate Darwin, or at least those aspects conducive to their ideology, into their world view. However, the figure of Malthus, who had considerable influence on Darwin due to his conception of population pressure, proved to be a difficult obstacle to overcome.⁸

Anarchism in Barcelona at the outset of *Salud y Fuerza* and The Anarchist World-View

Álvaro Girón notes that, starting in the 1880's, "it would be fair to say that anarchists were also Darwinists [...] that is, they were evolutionists: they believed that the origins of life, of man, and

to denounce it. The principles were called on in social, economic, international, racial, imperialist and colonial contexts (indigenous people were said to disappear). Extreme laissez-faire theorists, statist, nationalists, utilitarians, racialists, anti-humanitarians, even utopian believers found something in Darwin. What Social Darwinists chiefly argued about, without consciously putting it in those terms, which would have given the game away, was which form of competition was desirable and ensured progress or, if one adapted to it successfully, survival, and which types of competition should be suppressed."

⁷ D.A. Stack, "The First Darwinian Left: Radical and Socialist Responses to Darwin, 1859-1914," *History of Political Thought*, Vol. XXI, No. 4 (Winter 2000), 684.

⁸ According to D.A. Stack, "In particular, three areas of agreement between Darwin and Malthus grated on the left. Firstly, Darwin had taken from Malthus the notion that nature was not benevolent and harmonious, but a malevolent 'struggle for existence.' While many radicals were ostensibly materialists, radicalism, as a discourse, had long rested on a providential account of nature, which allowed radicals to locate all evil and disharmony in political institutions. Secondly, Darwin had taken from Malthus the notion of competition in the natural world, and this seemed to offer a cast-iron defence to the practices of *laissez-faire*. This naturalization of free market capitalism seemed to follow automatically from Darwin's proposing 'one general law, leading to the advancement of all organic beings, namely, multiply, vary, let the strongest live and the weakest die.' Thirdly, Darwin's reading of Malthus reinforced the breaking down of the distinction between the human and animal world which he had achieved in his notebooks; both were subject to the same fixed laws of animal existence. Moreover, just as Malthus had challenged radical programmes for human perfectability, so Darwin's emphasis on inheritance – nature rather than nurture – severely limited the power of social reform programmes. At best such programmes were useless, at worst a positive evil which frustrated 'natural selection'. Nor did Darwin leave the left any solace in the notion of evolution as progress. Whereas a literal translation of the Latin *evolution* – is the unrolling of a preordained plan, Darwin was at pains to emphasize that evolution by natural selection implied only change, not necessarily progress."

Stack goes on to note: "Darwin's triumph [over other evolutionary theories] had paradoxical, rather than wholly negative, consequences for the left. Broadly speaking, evolutionary theory held strong attractions for the left, but the integration of a specifically Darwinian version of evolution was problematic, if not impossible. On the one hand, by ensuring the acceptance of evolution it opened up the possibility for change. On the other, by explaining evolution in terms of natural selection it seemed to simultaneously undercut radical and socialist politics, as the smooth teleological progress of Lamarckism gave way to Malthusian brutality and wastefulness." *Ibid.*, 688-689.

of the diversity of species could be explained exclusively by the action of natural law.”⁹ Darwin’s prestige and the idea of a materialist origin of life represented a possibly crippling blow to one of the mortal enemies of anarchists, the Catholic Church, while evolution portended change away from the status quo. As such, many anarchist thinkers considered Darwin a hero, though they realized how complicated his legacy, and, more importantly, the interpretations of his theory were. Girón summarizes the traditional anarchist interpretation of Darwinian evolution as such:

La evolución no es vista simplemente – como así lo hacían la práctica totalidad de sus contemporáneos – como progresiva, sino como ‘justa y armónica’, rasgos que coincidían con los atribuidos normalmente a la versión de la Naturaleza como depósito de las cualidades del contramundo utópico.¹⁰

In other words, for traditional anarchists the long-awaited just and anarchic society was predicated on Darwin’s theory of evolution being wrenched free from Malthus’ conceptualization of nature which envisioned competition for scarce resources and strife.¹¹ On the other hand, for Neo-Malthusian anarchists, the liberation of the individual and society would take place within this Malthusian framework, working against the pressures of nature. The use of birth control, a practice derided by Malthus,¹² would act as the tool to separate the Malthusian world view from its usual conservative and hierarchical conservative ideology.

On the Historiography of Neo-Malthusian Anarchism

The historiography of Neo-Malthusian anarchism in Barcelona does not place much emphasis on the separation of world view and ideology and how the former could affect the acceptance of Neo-Malthusianism in anarchist circles. After receiving scant attention in José Alvarez Junco’s *La Ideología Política del Anarquismo Español (1868-1910)*, the first in-depth study on Neo-Malthusian anarchism in Barcelona comes from Teresa Abelló i Güell’s thesis *El*

⁹ Álvaro Girón Sierra, “The Moral Economy of Nature: Darwinism and the Struggle for Life within Spanish Anarchism (1882-1914)” in *The Reception of Darwinism in the Iberian World*, eds. Thomas F. Glick, Miguel Angel Puig-Samper, and Rosaura Ruiz (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 189.

¹⁰ Álvaro Girón, *Evolución y anarquismo en España 1882-1914*, (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1996), 183. As the authors E.R.A. note that for anarchists “[d]e totes formes, la llei de l’univers, la de l’evolució, mou la humanitat tot a cap al fi esperat.” E.R.A., *Els anarquistas, educadors del poble: “La Revista Blanca” (1898-1905)*, (Barcelona: Curial, 1977), 44.

¹¹ Stack, *op. cit.*, 687. “[T]he left persisted in the belief that they could rescue a non-Malthusian essence from Darwinism”. Álvaro Girón also concurs on this point, referring to attempts to extirpate Malthus from Darwin. Álvaro Girón, “Kropotkin Between Lamarck and Darwin: The Impossible Synthesis,” *Asclepio: Revista de Historia de la Medicina y de la Ciencia*, LV Fascículo 1 (2003), 189.

¹² John Avery notes that Malthus himself saw the possibility of birth control as an answer to the population problem, but discarded the practice as immoral. “[Malthus] seems to be gliding far too lightly over important questions. When Malthus says ‘something else as unnatural’, he means birth control, or, more generally, any non-fertile form of sex. Why should birth control be immoral? What harm does it do? Whom does it damage? Is prolonged celibacy really preferable to birth control within marriage as a means of preventing excessive population growth? If so, then why does Malthus not face these questions, although they lie at the very heart of the problem of population, and although methods of birth control existed at the time when he was writing.” John Avery, *Progress, Poverty and Population: Re-Reading Condorcet, Godwin and Malthus*, (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 71.

neomaltusianisme a Catalunya: Lluís Bulffi i la "Liga de la Regeneració Humana", which detailed the journal's goals and charted its history. She notes that over time, the repetitive nature of the topics, a lack of contributors (female contributors in particular), overreliance on foreign writers, external pressures and dwindling readership eventually led to the journal's demise, concluding that there was a numerically weak following of Neo-Malthusian anarchism during this period.¹³

Before arriving at the most extensive piece of historical research found in Eduard Masjuan's *La ecología humana en el anarquismo ibérico: urbanismo "orgánico" o ecológico, neomalthusianismo y naturismo social*, *Salud y Fuerza* received historiographical attention mostly in passing on the way to broader subjects. Focusing more on the eugenics, sexual revolution and the issue of abortion of the 1920's and 1930's, Mary Nash concludes that the Neo-Malthusianism put forth by *Salud y Fuerza* was a reformist movement, though the reasoning seems to be based on the journal's opposition to abortion.^{14,15} Richard Cleminson also discusses the journal, though more as an in-road to the advances in sexuality of the 1920's and 1930's. He concurs with Abelló on the limited following of *Salud y Fuerza* and sees theoretical confusion as one of the main reasons for the journal's closure. Alvaro Girón Sierra provides valuable insights on the journal's relationship with Darwinism and evolutionary thought, though the Neo-Malthusianism of *Salud y Fuerza* is only one element of many in a larger historical survey on evolutionism and anarchism.

In his *Ecología humana*, Masjuan seeks to carve out a space for Neo-Malthusian anarchism and rescuing it from reformist labels placed on the movement. He does so by stressing the points of agreement in ideology between Neo-Malthusian and traditional anarchists, stressing their shared hatred of "la nefasta trilogía"¹⁶ or capital, church, and the state and the desire for the reigning organization of society needed to be upended. In stressing these ideological confluences, Masjuan equates and conflates Neo-Malthusians and anarchists in Barcelona, noting that "en rigor histórico, no tiene sentido distinguir en España entre neomalthusianos y anarquistas"¹⁷, attributing the journal's disappearance to external factors.¹⁸ However, in stressing the ideological convergences, the vastly different world views and other points of contention are not thoroughly discussed. This results in an exaggerated acceptance of Neo-Malthusian

¹³ Teresa Abelló i Güell (1979): *El neomaltusianisme a Catalunya: Lluís Bulffi i la "Liga de la Regeneració Humana"* [manuscrit], [S.I.]: [s.n.], Tarragona, Universitat de Barcelona, Dependències de Tarragona, 10, 14, 36-7, 142-144.

¹⁴ Mary Nash (1984): "El neomaltusianismo anarquista y los conocimientos populares sobre el control de natalidad en España" en Mary Nash (ed.) (1984): *Presencia y protagonismo: aspectos de la historia de la mujer*, Barcelona, Edicions de Serbal, 316-319.

¹⁵ Considering abortions to be "una estupidez" for irresponsible people who could not plan, the journal stated "No será atendida ninguna consulta sobre abortos." *Salud y Fuerza*, n. 7, 1907, 110.

¹⁶ José Álvarez Junco, *La Ideología Política del Anarquismo Español (1868-1910)*, (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno de España (2nd Edition), 1990), 173.

¹⁷ Eduard Masjuan, *La ecología humana en el anarquismo ibérico: urbanismo "orgánico" o ecológico, neomalthusianismo y naturismo social*, (Barcelona: Icaria, 2000), 288, emphasis in original.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 234.

anarchism in Barcelona,¹⁹ as traditional anarchists could not readily accept the Malthusian view of nature. Combining the aforementioned works on Neo-Malthusian anarchism with leading historical investigations on evolutionary theories and on the difficult coetaneous state of anarchism at the dawn of *Salud y Fuerza*, this paper employs several previously unutilized primary sources, as well as a novel reinterpretation of important primary documents such as Bulffi's *Huelga de Vientres*, to establish certain limiting factors on the acceptance of Neo-Malthusian anarchism in the first years of the 20th century in Barcelona.

On Malthus, Neo-Malthusianism and Anarchism

Examples of the attempt to extirpate Malthus were still alive when *Salud y Fuerza* started publishing. Writing in the Barcelona-based anarchist journal *Natura* in 1905, the Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta wrote:

Desde Malthus, los conservadores de todas las escuelas han venido sosteniendo que la miseria no es debida al reparto injusto de la riqueza, sino a la limitación de la producción o a la insuficiencia de la industria humana. El socialismo, en su origen histórico y en su esencia fundamental, es la negación de esta tesis.²⁰

Malatesta's statement reflected the traditional anarchist and socialist perspective on Malthus,²¹ long seen as the ideological champion of the propertied classes.²²

The traditional anarchist conception of nature stood in stark contrast with the deprivations Malthus envisioned; Nature was progressive, teleological, beneficent, spontaneous, harmonious, and abundant.²³ That which was natural was exalted, adorned with adjectives like fertile and

¹⁹ Pere Gabriel, "Prologo: Vigencias y marginaciones de los estudios de historia del anarquismo en España" in *Antología documental del anarquismo español*, Vol. I, *Organización y revolución: De la Primera Internacional al Proceso de Monjuic (1868-1896)*, eds. Francisco Madrid y Claudio Venza, (Madrid: Fundación de Estudios Libertarios Anselmo Lorenzo, 2001), 12. Also, see Xavier Diez, "Noves perspectives per a una historiografia sobre anarquisme," *El contemporani: arts, historia, societat* 26 (Juliol-diciembre 2002), 9-11. Extrapolating from an article on Spanish anarchist historiography published before Masjuan's book, one may attribute this conflation of Neo-Malthusians and anarchists to the historian's positive opinion of anarchism and conscious procreation. Martha Duncan addresses the parallel issue of anarchism and its Messianic qualities in her article: Martha Grace Duncan, "Spanish Anarchism Refracted: Theme and Image in the Millenarian and Revisionist Literature," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23 (1988), 323-346.

²⁰ Errico Malatesta, "Infiltraciones burguesas en la Doctrina socialista" *Natura* 39 (1905), 228.

²¹ "[F]rom the French communists to the Russian populists [...] there was universal opposition" to Malthus and his theory. Michelle Perrot, "Malthus and Socialism" in *Malthus Past and Present*, eds. J. Dupaquier, A. Fauve-Chamoux, and E. Grebenik (London: Academic Press, 1983), 259. George Woodcock notes "if such doctrines as Malthusianism [...] were in fact justified, then the basic anarchist argument – initiated by Godwin – that men are naturally social and spoilt by government, would be jeopardized." George Woodcock, "Introduction" in Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1989), xxv.

²² Eric B. Ross, *The Malthus Factor: Population, Poverty and Politics in Capitalist Development*, (London: Zed Books, 1998), 56. See also, Marvin Harris and Eric Ross, *Death, Sex, and Fertility: Population Regulation in Preindustrial and Developing Societies*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 125; Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800*, (London: Longman Press, 1981), 123; Woodcock, 1989, *op. cit.*, xxiii.

²³ While many references could be employed here, the standard bearer for these topics remains: José Alvarez Junco, *La Ideología Política del Anarquismo Español (1868-1910)*.

fecund for feminine concepts and virile for masculine ones,²⁴ while that which was unnatural was condemned as deviations, bound to disappear once the reigning social order had been replaced by a more natural system. Considering nature's progressive character what was necessary was a harmonization with her laws; as Morales Muñoz notes, "[s]olo una sociedad que acorde con las leyes de la Naturaleza y basada por tanto en las ciencias físico-naturales permitiría a todos y cada uno de sus miembros conducirse libremente y de acuerdo con sus necesidades."²⁵ The stateless society with individual liberty and equality was seen as the culmination of the teleological and progressive process of natural evolution. After a long debate in the seminal anarchist journal *Natura* on the overarching characteristics of nature the editors concluded that the inevitable movement to the anarchic state mirrored natural evolution:

Amamos el progreso como el que más. Somos socialistas, somos comunistas, somos anarquistas, porque el estudio de toda la evolución del reino animal nos ha enseñado que el progreso se ha efectuado y efectúa partiendo del comunismo homogéneo, incoherente, confuso, para llegar al comunismo orgánico, solidario, universal, fundado en la división del trabajo; partiendo de la promiscuidad sexual, grosera, animal, desordenada, para elevarse a la unión sexual racional fundada en el amor libre; partiendo del disociacionismo político, incoherente, para llegar a la autonomía individual, anárquica, ordenada, orgánica y solidaria.²⁶

These conceptions had paradoxical implications and led to many internal contradictions with regards to nature and man's place within it. The conception of nature outlined above, combined with a generally positive view of human nature, a progressive view of history, a sometimes Messianic belief in the immediacy and inevitability in the Social Revolution, and a confused view on the relationship between the revolutionary elite and the masses, frequently contradicted each other, with these cracks beginning to show when *Salud y Fuerza* began publishing.²⁷ The Neo-Malthusian movement proposed alternative solutions to these contradictions, however the discourse arrived at a juncture which was not conducive to wide acceptance of ideas that so deeply challenged the entrenched traditional anarchist world view.

In the final years of the 19th century and first years of the 20th century, traditional anarchism experienced many great changes and was in a state of crisis.²⁸ A current of individual anarchism via Stirner and Nietzsche came and left discredited by most traditional anarchists, while a brief

²⁴ Lily Litvak, *Musa libertaria: Arte, literatura y vida cultural del anarquismo español (1880-1913)*, (Madrid: Fundación de Estudios Libertarios Anselmo Lorenzo, 2001), 58. For the role of virility in leftist political rhetoric, see José Álvarez Junco, "Cultura popular y protesta política," in *Peuple, mouvement ouvrier, culture dans l'Espagne contemporaine/Pueblo, movimiento obrero y cultura en la España contemporánea*, eds. Jacques Maurice, Brigitte Magnien, and Daniele Bussy Genevois (Saint-Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 1990), 162.

²⁵ Manuel Morales Muñoz, *Cultura e ideología en el anarquismo español (1870-1910)*, (Málaga, Servicio de Publicaciones: Centro de Ediciones de la Diputación de Málaga, 2000), 123.

²⁶ La Redacción, "Autonomía y Solidaridad: V y Ultimo", *Natura* 39 (1905), 231.

²⁷ For a detailed investigation into each of these topics, see the corresponding chapters of Álvarez, 1991, *op. cit.*

²⁸ The crisis was not limited geographically to Barcelona as James Joll notes that there was a general air of desperation among many anarchists at the time. James Joll, *The Anarchists, 2nd Edition*, (London: Methuen, 1979), 158.

flirtation between intellectuals and anarchists came and went.²⁹ At the same time the aftermath of the failed general strike of 1902 left most traditional anarchists disconnected from the masses and with a generalized dismay of their revolutionary capacity,³⁰ with uncertainty looming about the direction of the movement, of the immediacy of the revolution, of individualism and solidarity, and of man's relationship to nature. In spite of all the difficulties, Joaquín Romero Maura concludes that "no habría revisión crítica sino exégesis doctrinal", one that "condujo a una campana de homogeneización doctrinal por vía de la anatematización de los heterodoxos."³¹ With progress seeming elusive in the years following the general strike, many anarchists attributed the backward slide to the "theoretical confusion" regarding the basis of anarchism and the reformism of the masses³² surrounding them. Many accepted the progressive evolution had temporarily stopped or slowed due to the degeneracy of the masses;³³ however Neo-Malthusian discourses on progress and degeneracy were unlikely to find much traction.³⁴

Progress, Degeneration and Regeneration

"*Degenerescence*" writes Daniel Pick "had its resonance in the apocalyptic visions of socialism, conservatism, and liberalism" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³⁵ The idea, one touched on by Darwin, reflected fears and enmities of various social classes but was also closely tied intellectually with the idea of progress and ways to explain the crises of teleological evolution.³⁶ Degeneration either disproved the idea of progress or proved that something, or someone, had created a barrier to progress.

²⁹ On individualism and anarchism, see Joaquín Romero Maura, *La rosa de fuego: Republicanos y anarquistas: la política de los obreros barceloneses entre el desastre colonial y la semana trágica 1899-1909*, (Barcelona, Buenos Aires, México D.F.: Ediciones Grijalbo, 1975), 236. On intellectuals and anarchism, see Pere Gabriel, "Introducció," in *Escrips politics de Federica Montseny*, (Barcelona: Centre d'estudis d'història contemporània, 1979), 5.

³⁰ Girón, 2005, *op. cit.*, 306.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 236.

³² As Pere Gabriel states: "El fracaso final de la huelga desconcertó enormemente a los principales teóricos anarquistas, los cuales se sorprendieron ante el hecho de que una huelga general no fuese necesariamente revolucionaria, no abriese el camino a la generalización de la revolución en España. Muchos anarquistas se lanzaron a criticar despectivamente el reformismo de las masas." Pere Gabriel, "Anarquismo en España" in George Woodcock, *Anarquismo: historia de las ideas y movimientos libertarios*, (Barcelona: Ariel, 1979), 356.

³³ See Girón, 2005, *op. cit.*, 306, where he cites Leopoldo Bonafulla's undated text lamenting "La degeneración física de la raza (...) masas sin ideal (...) masa castrada."

³⁴ Though this article focuses on the contradictions between the world views of Neo-Malthusian and traditional anarchists, there were other reasons that posed barriers that can be found in primary and secondary literature which cannot be discussed here due to space limitations. These included the emphasis on individualism at the expense of solidarity, conceptions of how to realize the Social Revolution and of its inevitability, iconographic differences, sexual morality and stereotypical gender roles, and a fear that the possibility to control childbirth would subjugate women to mere sex objects, among other issues. For more on these topics, one should consult works by Xavier Diez, Richard Cleminson, Angus McLaren, Lily Litvak, Sharif Gremie, and Linda Gordon, among others.

³⁵ Pick, *op. cit.*, 42.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 102. See also, Girón, 2005, *op. cit.*, 285: "Ciertamente, parece existir una conexión casi natural entre el concepto de evolución progresiva y el de degeneración. Si se podía concebir que la historia se dirigía a la mejora biológica de la raza humana, también se podía pensar – al menos teóricamente – en el estancamiento o incluso la inversión del proceso."

In this sense, many anarchists were willing to accept and contribute to the idea of degeneration, though with obvious differences in opinion from other political groups.³⁷ Álvaro Girón has noted that extraneous, unharmonious elements were seen as the causes of degeneracy. Girón states:

La *degeneración* de la especie, una de las grandes obsesiones de fines del XIX, se convierte en un *hecho de experiencia* para no pocos anarquistas. En cuanto a los remedios, los libertarios pensaban que si la degeneración tenía un origen social, el remedio había de ser social. La Revolución aparece como la medicina adecuada, la única medida ambiental capaz de acabar con el mal de raíz. Sin embargo, no se desprecian otros recursos. Las propuestas antropotécnicas no serán extrañas en el anarquismo español, y la idea de que la mejora biológica de los individuos pueda ser condición o resultado del establecimiento de la Anarquía era relativamente habitual en articulistas como Federico Urales.³⁸

The chain of causation for degeneracy was of the utmost importance³⁹ and a point of contention between traditional and Neo-Malthusian anarchists. For the bourgeoisie, the chosen style of life was the den which bred the degeneracy⁴⁰ – a view point which coincided well with established tradition. That a worker could be a degenerate was more problematic – socially imposed conditions, ignorance and ‘theoretical confusion’, as well as a deficit in biological input compared to physical output were acceptable explanations for degeneracy;⁴¹ that this degenerate worker could be a cause of degeneration, as many Neo-Malthusians proposed, was a different matter. Above all, “era prioritario que la *inferioridad* del pueblo no tenía un origen natural”;⁴² societal organization had to shoulder the blame.

The Neo-Malthusian Challenge

The Neo-Malthusian response clashed with many core concepts of the traditional anarchist world view and proposed differing reasons for the current predicament. Within the philosophically compatible confines of *Salud y Fuerza*, the world view portrayed by Neo-Malthusians was vastly different from the traditional anarchist view. In one article in *Salud y Fuerza*, Manuel Devaldes seemingly praises the English pastor for his theory as being, ironically, anti-religious. Malthus’ law had disproved the goodness of God and exposed the notion as a “buena mentira”; by showing the true law of nature, “Malthus no fue más feroz que cualquier otro científico que prueba la obra de una ley natural.”⁴³ While Devaldes’ conclusion that “hay individuos que se hallan privados del poder de vivir, para quienes el derecho a la vida queda en abstracción, una idea sin vida”⁴⁴ may have been more harshly expressed than by other Neo-Malthusians, others expressed similar sentiments. Echoing Devaldes, Gabriel Giroud claimed that nature could not provide for all, noting “[h]emos ensayado [...] de comprobar la exactitud de esta afirmación, que no ha sido nunca puesta en evidencia por nadie, idea *a priori* porque si, de

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 210.

³⁸ Girón, 2005, *op. cit.*, 209-210.

³⁹ Pick, *op. cit.* 9; Girón, 2005, *op. cit.*, 288.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 312.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 222.

⁴³ Manuel Devaldes, “Malthus y el derecho a la vida,” *Salud y Fuerza* 24 (1908), 314.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 315.

que la tierra alimenta a todos sus habitantes.”⁴⁵ In accepting Malthusian bases, Giroud and other Neo-Malthusians were no longer content to accept the abundant benevolent conception of nature faithfully repeated by anarchists in numerous calculations which showed nature’s productive capacity. This conception of a limited nature was reflected in Lluís Bulffi’s most important Neo-Malthusian pamphlet, *Huelga de Vientres*.

In this pamphlet, individual liberty, social justice and progress were all explicitly predicated on guarding oneself against natural currents. As such, Bulffi dedicates a great deal of space to discrediting the notion of a harmonious, just and progressive conception of nature. He remarks:

[e]l hambre, la miseria, compañera fatídica de aquel que en la lucha por la vida está predestinado, por el mero hecho de nacer de un vientre proletario, a sobrellevar sobre sus encorvados hombros el peso de las injusticias sociales, los rigores de todas las inclemencias de la madrastra Natura y las ambiciones de los explotadores.⁴⁶

While socially imposed conditions still share part of the blame for the evident human misery, nature is no longer presented as the harmonious and abundant mother to all. Not only does nature fail in her motherly productive capacities, she is the wicked step-mother, the enemy. Bulffi poetically muses that humans should attempt to emancipate themselves from, rather than harmonize themselves with, the rules of nature. He writes:

Nos emancipamos de las leyes *divinas* por absurdas, con el estudio de la física, queremos emanciparnos de las leyes *humanas* (sociedad actual) por ser contrarias al libre desenvolvimiento del hombre, con el estudio de la sociología, ¿qué de extraño tiene, pues, que nos hayamos emancipado de las leyes perniciosas de la *natura*, llevando a cabo un acto a conciencia de nuestra voluntad y no al azar de los resultados contrarios a nuestro deseo con el estudio de la química? ¿Es natural el rayo? ¿Es antinatural colocar un pararrayos para evitar que este nos destruya y nos mate? ¿Es natural [sic] las grandes tormentas y tempestades? ¿Es natural elevar diques y encauzar los ríos para evitar los desastres, la ruina y la muerte que ocasionan las inundaciones y las grandes crecidas producidas por aquellas? ¿Es natural [sic] las enfermedades que afligen al hombre? ¿Es antinatural recurrir a la medicina para librarnos de esos azotes que nos diezman y nos aniquilan? ¿Es natural [sic] el frío, el calor, la sed y el hambre? [...] ¿Todo es natural...? ¿Sí? ¿Existen cosas antinaturales? Resueltamente afirmo: no. [...] Solo hay una cosa *antinatural*, que es la vergüenza de las llamadas sociedades civilizadas: la explotación del hombre por el hombre.⁴⁷

Social organization can still be portrayed as one of the causes of deprivation; however, misery, struggle and strife are the rules governing nature. In this manner, from a Neo-Malthusian perspective, nature could be seen as an *initial* cause of misery and inferiority, explicitly contradicting the intellectual efforts of traditional anarchists.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Gabriel Giroud, “Población y subsistencias (1): XII Conclusión,” *Salud y Fuerza* 12 (1907), 154.

⁴⁶ Lluís Bulffi, *¡Huelga de vientres! Medios prácticos para evitar las familias numerosas: VI edición*, (Barcelona: Biblioteca Editorial Salud y Fuerza, 1909), 8.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 20-21, emphasis in original.

⁴⁸ Girón, 2005, *op. cit.*, 222.

Nature also played a key role in the Neo-Malthusian idea of degeneration. Like many other anarchist publications, degeneration was a key element in the pages of *Salud y Fuerza*.⁴⁹ However, the discourse on degeneration in *Salud y Fuerza* mixed social and natural causes for degeneration. As Bulffi writes:

[Afirmamos] que la insensata procreación de los proletarios solo sirve para dar vida a seres degenerados que son los apoyos con que cuenta el Estado, el Capital, y la Iglesia para mantener sus privilegios; en que la procreación abundante solo sirve para sumir en la miseria a los trabajadores y que la miseria mendiga y no reivindica; en que las subsistencias no hallándose en proporción con la población es uno de los factores de la causa *inicial* de la miseria aumentada por la mala organización social.⁵⁰

The first order cause of degeneration in Bulffi's conception is natural, coming from people's own unrestrained procreation, only to be augmented by the reigning social organization.

Outside of *Salud y Fuerza* Neo-Malthusian anarchists took different approaches to tackle these questions. The forum which many chose to expound their position was the anti-Neo-Malthusian *Porvenir del Obrero*.⁵¹ Two articles cited here show some of the ambiguity regarding Neo-Malthusian practice. The first of these articles concedes that the limitation of births does not necessarily have to be revolutionary and can in fact be reactionary, depending on one's motivations. The author states: "¿Qué es el neo-malthusianismo? Se puede dividir en dos partes. Para los obreros *aburguesados*, que hay muchos, un medio de vivir más holgadamente";⁵² the other, and obviously more important half for the author, is the revolutionary side, which has been amply documented.⁵³ The author here betrays an unfavorable opinion of the masses when he states that "las revoluciones nunca han sido hechas, o por lo menos preparadas, por los hambrientos, sino por el contrario, por los que tenían la tripa llena."⁵⁴ Hence, the strand of Neo-Malthusianism presented here seems destined for the revolutionary elite, rather than the masses

⁴⁹ Richard Cleminson, *Anarchism, Science and Sex: Eugenics in Eastern Spain, 1900-1937*, (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000), 31.

⁵⁰ *Salud y Fuerza*, 1905, n. 2, 16, cited in Masjuan, *op. cit.*, 229, emphasis in original.

⁵¹ Lluís Bulffi, "¡Aclaración!", *Salud y Fuerza* 10, (1907), 111. "Si francos, leales y benévolos adversarios entre la prensa hemos tenido, bien podemos montar en primer término de entre el número de los que nos han combatido, al semanario anarquista *El Porvenir del Obrero*, quien desde el comienzo de nuestra campaña abogando en pro de la procreación razonada, se declaró abiertamente contrario a ella. Franco, porque nunca ocultó su aversión al neo-malthusianismo; leal, porque al combatirnos no llegó a manejar las groserías del insulto, y benévolo porque a pesar de su no conformidad con nuestra labor y siendo nuestro adversario, nos dispensó varias veces el favor de publicar en sus columnas algunos de los escritos por nosotros enviados."

⁵² Aber-Mein-Otoónj, "La anarquía y el neo-malthusianismo," *El Porvenir del Obrero*, 23 de marzo, 1906, 3.

⁵³ For more on the anarchist-revolutionary aspects of the Neo-Malthusianism presented in *Salud y Fuerza*, Masjuan remains the most in depth work on the topic. For the revolutionary aspects in the sphere of sexuality and reproduction, Xavier Diez' and Richard Cleminson's works are the standard bearers.

⁵⁴ Otoónj, *op. cit.*, 3. Oddly, in the article the author seems to imply that Kropotkin, Reclus and Malatesta all wrote articles defending Neo-Malthusianism in papers in Brazil, France and elsewhere, though most historians seem to concur that these renowned anarchists resoundingly rejected Neo-Malthusianism. See for example Marie Fleming, *The Anarchist Way to Socialism: Elisee Reclus and Nineteenth-Century European Anarchism*, (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 231.

– a case which some anti-Neo-Malthusians felt was applied backward.⁵⁵ For the true revolutionary, Neo-Malthusianism could thus be a way of preserving strength and energy in order to create a revolutionary elite, whereas for workers *aburguesados* it would only be a counterrevolutionary attempt to mimic bourgeois lifestyle, a charge that many anarchists levied against Neo-Malthusianism.⁵⁶

The second article, “Huelga de vientres” by Juana Dubois, echoes some of the statements made in the preceding argument, noting that “si el individuo [que suscribe a teorías neo-malthusianas] tiene ideas burguesas (y entre los proletarios, muchos las tienen), solo pensará en dorar sus cadenas, en vez de procurar partirlas”.⁵⁷ However, Dubois still believes in the revolutionary aspects of Neo-Malthusianism. One problem she seems to have in fitting her proposals into the traditional anarchist doctrine is the contradiction with the exaltation of fertility as the expression of the bounty of nature. She notes:

En virtud de la tendencia de la mayoría de los hombres revolucionarios de exaltar la fecundidad natural, es bueno, a mi parecer, hacer observar que, no recurriéndose al amor voluntariamente estéril, fatalmente se vería obligar a arrasar todos los terrenos, a destruir todos los sitios pintorescos. Pienso en el encanto de las florestas solitarias, en las necesidades de los artistas, para quien la contemplación de un bello punto de vista es un placer sin igual y exclamo entonces: ¡Cómo! Al paso que limitando voluntariamente el número de las gracias, al amor por el amor, sería relativamente fácil asegurar a los hombres la vida material, sin saquear todas las maravillas de la naturaleza salvaje, si la población ultrapasase ciertos límites, solo se verían campos de trigo, de patatas, de zanahorias, árboles frutales cuidadosamente cultivados, convenientemente esparcidos, y vides cantando loas a los numerosos, numerosísimos partos.⁵⁸

Here, Dubois presages some of the conservation arguments used by later Neo-Malthusians and thus a slightly ambivalent attitude towards the goodness of nature. Fecundity, nature’s expression of herself, can be found both in abundance but also in limited forms; it is not necessary to “generar todas las veces que la naturaleza lo permite” to promote happiness.⁵⁹ In fact, Dubois makes an explicit claim: “no me limito a reivindicar la maternidad libre; considero la fecundidad natural como uno de los peligros sociales, y no a la manera de Malthus, como el peligro social.”⁶⁰ While she hedges her bet with this statement, there is still evident conflict with the traditional anarchist world view.

⁵⁵ M. (1907): “Neo-malthusianismo”, *El Porvenir del Obrero*, n. 294, 8 marzo, 1907, 3. “Si fuese posible hacer la propaganda neo-malthusiana, no entre los trabajadores revolucionarios, sino en los pueblos más atrasados [...] entonces menos mal, aunque siempre sería mejor instruirlos y civilizarlos para que se convirtiesen de rémoras en auxiliares” for the Revolution.

⁵⁶ M., “Neo-malthusianismo”, *El Porvenir del Obrero*, 8 de marzo, 1907, 3. This anti-Neo-Malthusian tract takes the exact opposite approach on creating a revolutionary elite claiming that, if it were possible, it would be best to spread Neo-Malthusianism amongst the degenerated masses, not among the revolutionary elite.

⁵⁷ Juana Dubois, “Huelga de vientres,” *El Porvenir del Obrero*, 22 de diciembre, (1905).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

The Traditional Anarchist Counter-Response

Given the evident contradictions between Neo-Malthusian anarchism and traditional anarchism and the coetaneous 'anametización de los heterodoxos' described by Romero Maura, what is striking is the relative lack of strength in the counter-response to *Salud y Fuerza*.⁶¹ Many anti-Neo-Malthusian tracts deal with the practice in a cursory way. Several of the responses in the overtly anti-Neo-Malthusian *Porvenir del Obrero* show no agreement with Neo-Malthusianism, but also little urgency in combating it:

Otra vez hemos recibido el folleto de Luis Bulffi ¡Huelga de Vientres! con recomendaciones del autor para que lo refutemos. Varias veces hemos dicho lo que pensábamos del neo-malthusianismo. Cuando tengamos espacio procuraremos razonar nuestras opiniones contrarias a que la restricción de los nacimientos sea un remedio de los males que sufre la clase trabajadora.⁶²

In other articles, the Mahon based newspaper claims that, while they oppose the movement, they will refrain from attacking the Neo-Malthusian challenge in order to show solidarity due to governmental persecution of *Salud y Fuerza* and to avoid further divisions within anarchist ranks.⁶³

Two prominent, explicitly anti-Neo-Malthusian publications by Anselmo Lorenzo and Leopoldo Bonafulla dedicate most of their space to reinforcing the beneficence and abundance of nature. *Salud y Fuerza*'s insistence on the limits of nature was, to employ a nature idiom, a low-hanging fruit for its critics. Bonafulla in his *La familia libre* cites figures that show the abundance of nature and states:

está sobradamente probado que la primera base de la teoría neo-Malthusiana es falsa, y ni siquiera puede merecer nuestra consideración, en tanto que pretenda apoyarse en el desequilibrio que no podemos negar existe en nuestros días y ha existido antes, puesto que la causa de él no deriva de la infertilidad de la tierra, de la esterilidad productiva, sino que ya se sabe, lo provoca el régimen económico-social reinante por su crisis de todo género, por la carestía o altos precios de las subsistencias, por la apropiación y retención de ellos.⁶⁴

⁶¹ In a separate work, Masjuan and Joan Martinez-Alier notes that the Neo-Malthusian discourse among anarchists in France aroused much greater debate than in Spain, but also notes that French Neo-Malthusian anarchists tended to put more stress on individualism rather than the Malthusian conceptions of nature. Eduard Masjuan and Joan Martinez-Alier, "'Conscious Procreation': Neo-Malthusianism in Southern Europe and Latin America in and around 1900," *International Society for Ecological Economics*, Montreal 11-15 July 2004. <http://www.h-economica.uab.es/cast/documentos/04/3-2004.pdf> (consulted June 4, 2009), 12. The best source for the Neo-Malthusian anarchist movement in France is Francis Ronsin, *La Grève des ventres : propagande néo-malthusienne et baisse de la natalité française, XIXe-XXe siècles*, (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1980).

⁶² *El Porvenir del Obrero* (Mahón) "Papel impreso," 12 de octubre, 1906, 4. Similar responses can also be found in *La Revista Blanca*: "Me ha gustado mucho el modo que tiene de combatir las opiniones ajenas el que firma Timone en el num. 74 de este periódico [*Il libertario* de La Spezia, Italia]. Critica el Neo-malthusianismo de una manera tan suave y persuasiva, que hasta parece está conforme con su tesis, cuando es lo contrario." La Redacción, "Libros, revistas, folletos, y periódicos: *Salud y Fuerza*," *La Revista Blanca* 158, (1905), 444.

⁶³ *El Porvenir del Obrero* (Mahón) "Entre compañeros," 16 de febrero, 1906, 4 and *El Porvenir del Obrero* (Mahón) "Papel impreso," 13 de abril, 1906, 4.

⁶⁴ Leopoldo Bonafulla, *La familia libre*, (Barcelona: Toribio Taberner, 1910), 141.

Bonafulla presents other arguments to voice his opposition to Neo-Malthusianism, but first order targets are the limited conception of nature and the reigning social organization.

Meanwhile, Anselmo Lorenzo's *El banquete de la vida: concordancia entre la naturaleza, el hombre y la sociedad*, the title of which explicitly refutes Malthus' well known and controversial statement, spends the vast majority of its roughly 90 pages praising the fecundity and abundance of nature. Only towards the end of the book does he directly dedicate space to Malthus (and by extension Neo-Malthusianism) explicitly. Closing his book, Lorenzo states:

Si – por una suposición absurda – contra todos los razonamientos, todos los cálculos, todas las previsiones y todas las demostraciones estadísticas, escaseasen aun las subsistencias y se realizase al fin la fatídica profecía malthusiana, lo único justo, racional y económico sería acortar la ración a todo el mundo, y poner todos los activos, sin distinciones jerárquicas de ninguna clase, a contribución con la propia actividad, como náufragos que luchan por salvarse en unión fraternal, no como torpemente quieren y practican los privilegiados estableciendo un sistema de despilfarro para unos y de miseria para otros.⁶⁵

Hence, even if the Malthusian argument were correct, the corresponding morality which some, though certainly not all, Neo-Malthusians subscribed to and which many anti-Neo-Malthusians attributed to them⁶⁶ was impermissible. Whether or not Bonafulla's calculations or Lorenzo's conception of nature were correct, they remained extremely important beliefs that served as powerful motivating and unifying conceptions.

In retrospect, one may suspect that female anarchists would be more sympathetic to Neo-Malthusianism than their male counterparts. After all Bulffi spent a great deal of his *Huelga de Vientres* appealing to women. For Bulffi, sovereignty over conception "*depende solamente de vosotras. Sois absolutamente dueñas de vuestro destino y nadie, nadie, tiene derecho de imponeros una cosa que no sea de vuestra propia y exclusiva personalidad.*"⁶⁷ Freed from the yoke of fertility, Bulffi hoped that "[l]as mujeres emancipadas de la esclavitud de la fecundidad,

⁶⁵ Anselmo Lorenzo, *El banquete de la vida: concordancia entre la naturaleza, el hombre y la sociedad*, (Barcelona: Impr. Luz, [1905]), 87-88.

⁶⁶ M. (1907): *op. cit.*, 3. With widespread acceptance of birth control, some anarchists feared the following situation would be typical: "el joven que habita una gran ciudad, experimentando una multitud de rápidas emociones, teniendo una facilidad grandísima de acercarse a una mujer cuando lo necesita y abandonándola enseguida con indiferencia que nace de la costumbre, no comprenderá seguramente la vida monogámica que llevan muchísimos, la gran mayoría de los hombres, y en ello, por más que lo extrañen los *supers* que "cambian de mujer como de calcetines", encuentran la dicha y la tranquilidad de su vida. Ese falso concepto de las cosas y de los hombres, en que incurrn los que viven demasiado apartados de la naturaleza, es el que arrastra a muchos a creer que la mujer es siempre una prostituta y que el amor libre sería una perpetua fiesta de bacantes.

⁶⁷ Bulffi, 1909, *op. cit.* 11, énfasis en el original. It is exactly this sovereignty over the womb that Xavier Diez considers to be the true revolutionary aspect of the Neo-Malthusian discourse. "L'adaptació individualista del discurs neomalthusian retornava a la dona la propietat del seu cos. La maternitat conscient implicava la sobirania femenina a l'hora de decidir amb qui, quan i quants fills vol – si vol! – engendrar [...] [E]n el seu context històric representa una concepció autènticament revolucionària." Xavier Diez, *Utopía sexual en la premsa anarquista de Catalunya: la revista Ética-Iniciales (1927-1937)*, (Lleida: Pages, 2001) 117.

compartirán las alegrías de la lucha por la Emancipación al lado de sus compañeros."⁶⁸ In spite of this targeted appeal to women, Abelló i Güell noted the relative absence of Spanish female collaborators, specifically Teresa Claramunt, one of the prominent female anarchists in Barcelona.⁶⁹ Of the two biographies recently dedicated to Claramunt, neither pays much, if any, attention to her opinions regarding Neo-Malthusianism. Claramunt's pamphlet encapsulating her views on female issues, *La mujer: consideraciones generales sobre su estado ante la prerrogativa del hombre*, came out in 1905, during the first years of *Salud y Fuerza*. As the companion of the anti-Neo-Malthusian Leopoldo Bonafulla, Claramunt could not have been ignorant of Neo-Malthusian practices and theories. The tract compiled her thoughts on the role of women and their potential in society and dealt harshly with men while discussing the roots of female oppression. In the article Claramunt remains silent on the issue of Neo-Malthusianism. After combing through her text, the closest reference that one can find with any relation to the issue is a two-sentence extract with no explanation or further exploration of the topic. "La Naturaleza", writes Claramunt:

[a]l separar los dos sexos con facultades y obligaciones propias de cada uno, completó un fin común, útil y armónico: el progreso interminable de la especie; mientras que el hombre, con su odioso orgullo, al pretender corregir la Naturaleza, impone divisiones que violentan los espíritus y perjudican la procreación. No debemos continuar por este mal camino.⁷⁰

While not mentioning Neo-Malthusianism by name, impeding or 'correcting' nature was exactly what Bulffi and other Neo-Malthusians proposed.

Given the deeply divergent views on the conception of nature and the extraordinarily difficult situation in which anarchists found themselves, the shared characteristic to the Neo-Malthusian anarchist challenge was a negation of the limited conception of nature, a reaffirmation of natural bounty and beneficence, and the teleological and progressive qualities of evolution. Other traditional anarchist challenges posed other objections, believing that Neo-Malthusians imitated bourgeois lifestyles, targeted the wrong audience (that is the would-be revolutionary elite, instead of the degenerate masses), or that by limiting reproduction they had reduced the liberation struggle to the individual, rather than the entirety of society.⁷¹ However, these issues were all underpinned by the Neo-Malthusian insistence on nature's limited resources as well as their insistence in nature being the first order source of misery and degeneracy rather than the reigning social organization.

⁶⁸ Bulffi, 1909, *op. cit.* 27.

⁶⁹ Abelló i Güell, 1979, *op. cit.*, 75-76.

⁷⁰ Teresa Claramunt, "La mujer: Consideraciones generales sobre su estado ante la prerrogativa del hombre," (Mahón: Biblioteca de El Porvenir del Obrero, S.A., 1905), in María Amalia Pradas Baena, *Teresa Claramunt: La "virgen roja" barcelonesa, biografía y escritos*, (Barcelona: Virus editorial, 2006), 210.

⁷¹ LA REDACCION [de *El Porvenir del Obrero*] (1905): "Por nuestros hijos", *El Porvenir del Obrero*, n. 188, 17 febrero, 1905, 3. Romero Maura and James Joll each identify exaggerated individualism were identified by anarchists as the greatest threat to solidarity. Romero Maura, 1979, *op. cit.*, 236-237 and Joll, 1979, *op. cit.*, 155.

Conclusions

Ideologies and world-views are neither static nor monolithic, but certain characteristics connect people together. The entrance of the Neo-Malthusianism discourse into anarchist circles in the first years of the 20th century came at a time of confusion and uncertainty within traditional anarchism and the ideas expressed therein reflected certain intellectual currents in European thought of the time regarding the conception of nature and the place of humanity within it. Certainly, there were points of ideological convergence between traditional anarchists and Neo-Malthusian anarchists such as their shared hatred of “la trilogía nefasta: el capital, la religión, y el estado”; however in many ways, the Neo-Malthusian movement took a different tack from traditional anarchists especially in their world view and how to deal with the thorny question of how to appropriate Darwin and Darwinism (which itself had appropriated much of Malthus). Traditional anarchism contained many intellectual contradictions regarding evolution and progress, human nature, and the abundance and innate beneficence of nature which the Neo-Malthusian anarchists by and large rejected, proposing instead to situate the anarchic ideal within a Malthusian conception of nature. With the atmosphere not being overly conducive to heterogeneity, the Neo-Malthusian discourse seemed to find little resonance within anarchist circles of the time. It appears that most traditional anarchists, having drawn from the beneficent and harmonious conception of nature were in a sense inoculated against the Neo-Malthusian proposal during the first years of the 20th century. This is not to discount the revolutionary character of Neo-Malthusian anarchism or to cast shadow on its importance as the Neo-Malthusian discourse may have helped lay the groundwork for future changes in the world view in anarchist ranks, though this is out of the scope of this article and a topic which merits further investigation.

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