

# Metaphors for mankind?

*Merchants of Despair: Radical Environmentalists, Criminal Pseudo-Scientists, and the Fatal Cult of Antihumanism* (Kindle edn)

Robert Zubrin

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Marc Ambler

## Ideological roots of radical environmentalism

The scientific cases for many of the environmental *causes célèbres* over the past few decades seem to be ridiculously overstated. Environmental movements often call for measures with potential consequences way beyond the evidence of the particular environmental problem they ostensibly seek to address. This book reveals disturbing underlying reasons for this.

Robert Zubrin sets out to trace the ideological roots and goals of many of these causes and the individuals and organisations that promote them. At times, the implications of his thesis are so horrifying, that were it not for his careful referencing, you worry that he is some kind of unstable conspiracy theorist. The fact that he is the founder of the Mars Society, which advocates a manned mission and even colonization of Mars, somewhat adds to this caution. But his Ph.D. in nuclear engineering and various other degrees in mathematics, aeronautics and astronautics, and numerous patents, from Three Player Chess to a nuclear, saltwater rocket<sup>1</sup>; as well as authoring several books; suggests he is visionary rather than loony.

What makes the book especially intriguing is that the author embraces

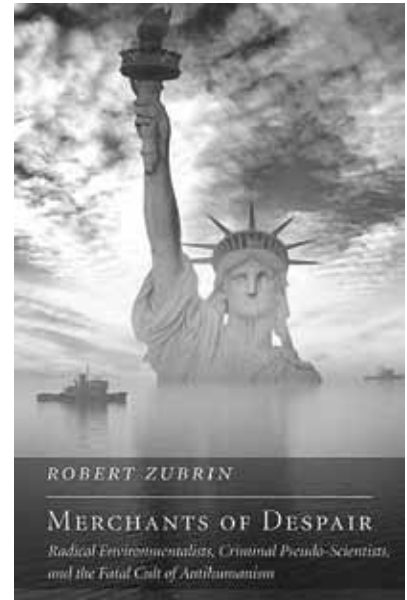
the theory of evolution, while identifying Social Darwinism and eugenics, both of them logical and immediate fruits of evolution, as the ideological foundation of the horrors he describes.

The first chapter of the book, entitled “Thomas Malthus, the Most Dismal Scientist”, documents the foundation of the idea that the geometric growth of human population (i.e.  $2+4+8+16+32+\dots$ ), outstrips the available resources, most notably of food production, which increases in an arithmetical manner ( $1+2+3+4+5+\dots$ ).<sup>2</sup> He quotes Malthus in his *Essay on Population*:

“We are bound in justice and honour to disclaim the right of the poor to support ... . (We) should facilitate, instead of foolishly and vainly impede, the operations of nature in producing this mortality; ... . Instead of recommending cleanliness to the poor, we should encourage contrary habits ... . We should reprobate specific remedies for ravaging diseases; and those benevolent, but much mistaken men, who have thought they were doing a service to mankind by projecting schemes for the total extirpation of particular disorders” (l. 135<sup>3</sup>).

Such a theory, implying the imminent doom of the human race should populations rise unhindered, provides a justification for oppression and tyranny. He shows that far from being the result of overpopulation, such episodes as the Irish famine in 1846 and starvation in India in the late 1800s, were more as a result of oppressive taxation from the British, than of the potato disease and drought respectively which are normally given as the sole cause of these tragedies.

He goes on further to show how the basic Malthusian premise, though



seemingly logical, is falsified by actual historical data and experience. In the section at the end of Chapter 1, entitled “The Data That Proves Malthus Wrong”, Zubrin looks at actual data of world population growth against such indicators as real actual GDP per capita growth, as well as the growth of technology. He shows how these various social indicators have historically far outstripped population growth. His basic premise backed up by data, being that with the right political and social conditions, men’s inventiveness, creativity, collaboration and innovation actually accelerate the production of food and other resources as population increases, rather than deplete them. This is a fascinating theme which occurs later in the book again, showing how food production in the past few decades has grown exponentially and how new technologies have replaced the need for scarce or outdated resources.

## A hostile witness to the fruits of Darwin

In Chapter 2, entitled “Darwinism’s Moral Inversion”, Zubrin first nails his flag to the evolutionary mast

by stating, “Evolution is a fact. To deny the fossil record documenting evolution is simply to deny reality” (l. 405). He then goes on to blame social Darwinism as the foundation for eugenics and the ‘catastrophically unethical policies’ (l. 427) he describes later in the book, while asserting that these are ‘incorrect’ (l. 427) applications of evolution. Here he exhibits his blind spot evident in other parts of the book. While he correctly ascribes a historical high view of man in the west to Judeo-Christian belief that led to the many benefits of western human freedoms and dignity, his acceptance of evolution totally undermines all authority of that belief system. In other words his high view of man comes from Christian capital, and cannot possibly come from evolution. Ultimately, a view of man derived from evolution has to be utilitarian. In order to determine social policies for a desired outcome, a consistent evolutionist has to go with what he thinks will work, that’s all. The book documents a social-Darwinist, eugenics approach to achieving social outcomes while the author advocates a human-potential, technological approach. Both would use evolution as their philosophical foundation. One or the other approach may work; but evolution cannot say which is morally ‘right’. Having said that, as Christians believing that man is uniquely made in the image of God, but living in a world steeped in evolution propaganda, we can only wish that the author’s view were dominant, rather than the dehumanising eugenics approach described in this book.

In a section entitled, “The Descent of Man”, he states that Darwin’s theory of racial superiority “did a perfect job of justifying brutal European imperial looting of the less developed world” (l. 473). He relates how Darwinism was responsible for reversing thousands of years of Judeo-Christian belief in the evil of death, to one where “war,

disease, and famine were now good and necessary” (l. 513). While he asserts that such racial or biological superiority is ‘counterfactual’, within an evolutionary framework, even if the superiority is limited to technological, one wonders what hinders the use of that technology to dominate and subordinate or even exterminate people groups without that technology?

He traces the birth and rise of ‘eugenics’ from the originator of the concept and term, Darwin’s cousin Sir Francis Galton, and its spread to Europe and America. This was the belief that “all the human qualities causative of either individual, national, or racial success are inherited” (l. 533), and that “if evolution was to be advanced, it was essential that superior people be encouraged to have more children, and inferior types be constrained to have fewer” (l. 539).

Galton proposed a grading system to provide for the criteria of such race assessment. Really interesting in the light of China’s current encroachment into Africa, is the quote from a letter Galton wrote to the *Times* of London:

“(In Africa,) as elsewhere, one population continually drives out another ... I wish to see a new competitor introduced—namely the Chinaman. The gain would be immense to the whole civilised world if he were to outbreed and finally displace the negro” (l. 555).

Under Galton, and others influence, including some of Darwin’s sons and relatives, eugenics societies began to arise in various Western countries to promote social initiatives to achieve eugenic goals. The influence was particularly strong in Germany where Ernst Haeckel, “an extreme racist, virulent anti-Catholic bigot, anti-Semite, anti-Pole, pro-imperialist, Pan-German fanatic” (l. 618) used his ‘scientific’ authority and ‘popularisation skills’ to convince an educated German public. Sterilisation of ‘undesirables’, population control and eventually forced euthanasia began to be practised in many of these countries. Haeckel’s numerous protégés and disciples included many ‘race scientists’ who went on to formulate the “racist eugenics and anti-Semite

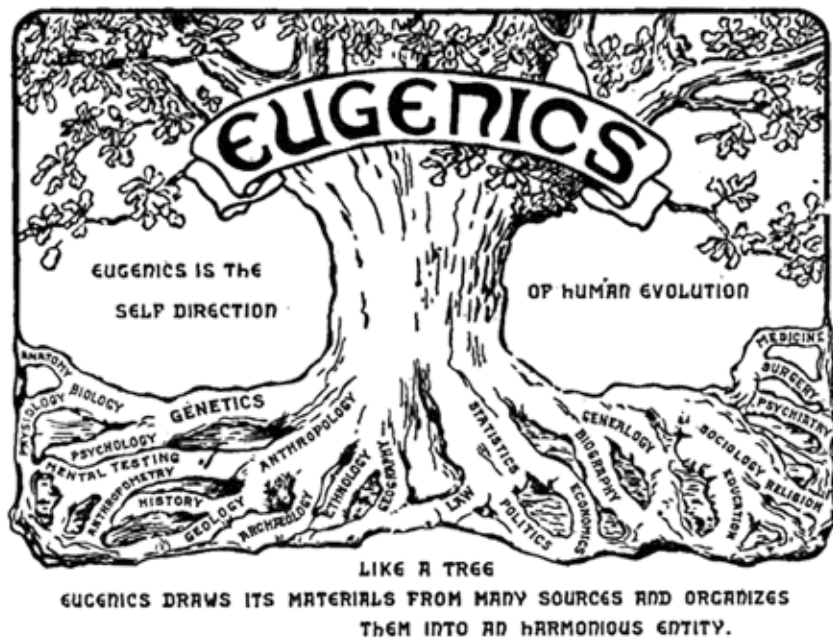


Figure 1. The ‘universal philosophy’ of eugenics.

laws of the Third Reich” (l. 668). As well as at home, these policies began to manifest themselves in the colonies, notably the attempt to exterminate the Herero nation in German South West Africa, the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>4</sup>

### From Darwin to Dachau

Eugenics and belief in racial supremacy eventually led to the horrors of Nazism on the European continent. In a later chapter, Zubrin argues that the evil deeds of the Nazis in occupied Europe, far from being done under cover, and without the awareness of the majority of the German population, was carried out with the complicity and knowledge of the majority. Thoroughly indoctrinated by ‘scientific’ racism, the German people would see Hitler’s actions as at minimum a necessary evil, or even for the ultimate ‘good’ of the Nordic Aryan people. Hitler is quoted as saying in 1941, “The law of existence prescribes uninterrupted killing, so that the better may live” (l. 984). As proof of his argument, Zubrin relates that

“At the height of the Third Reich, there were over 20,000 death camps, and most were discovered by Allied forces within hours of their entering newly liberated territory—as the stench of the camps’ crematoria made them readily detectable. Hundreds of thousands of Germans were employed operating these facilities, and several million more were members of armed forces or police units engaged in or supporting genocidal operations” (l. 1011).

The idea that the general populations of Germany and other European countries where this was being carried out were unaware of the Holocaust stretches credulity.

As a further proof of the acquiescence of these peoples due to social

Darwinian indoctrination, the writer gives the account of the White Rose resistance group. These Munich based, college students, mainly Lutheran and Catholic, began a campaign of leaflet distribution throughout Germany in 1942.<sup>5</sup> Some quotes from their leaflets illustrate their awareness of what was going on:

“Who among us has any conception of the dimensions of shame that will befall us and our children when one day the veil has fallen from our eyes and the most horrible crimes—crimes that infinitely outdistance every human measure—reach the light of day?” (l. 1077).

“Since the conquest of Poland, *three hundred thousand Jews* have been murdered in this country in the most bestial way. Here we see the most frightful crime against human dignity, a crime that is unparalleled in the whole of history. For Jews, too, are human beings . . . . All male offspring of the houses of the (Polish) nobility between the ages of fifteen and twenty were transported to concentration camps in Germany and sentenced to forced labor, and all the girls of this age group were sent to Norway, into the bordellos of the SS! Why tell you these things, since you are fully aware of them? . . . . Why do the German people behave so apathetically in the face of all these abominable crimes, crimes so unworthy of the human race? . . . . Each man wants to be exonerated of a guilt of this kind, each one continues on his way with the most placid, the calmest conscience. But he cannot be exonerated; he is *guilty, guilty, guilty!*” (l. 1081).

These brave students were captured and tortured in 1943 and some beheaded, some imprisoned. By highlighting this awareness, Zubrin is preparing us for what is possible when men lose their perception of who we are through Darwinian (he

would not use the term evolutionary) indoctrination. As another White Rose leaflet declares,

“... when of his (man’s) own volition he leaves his place in the order of Creation as founded for him by God in freedom; when he yields to the force of evil . . . . We will not be silent. We are your bad conscience. The White Rose will not leave you in peace!” (l. 1100).

The thesis of Zubrin’s book is that, under the same belief system as the Nazis, genocide has taken place throughout the world over the decades since the war, though by different, less obvious means.

### Eugenics in America

Eugenic societies and ideas also began to increasingly manifest themselves with a ‘back-to-nature’, ‘Darwinian antihumanism’. Notable disciples in America were such influential individuals and families as the Roosevelts; Henry Fairfield Osborn; and Margaret Sanger, the founder of the American Birth Control League who argued for legal abortion as a means of “eliminating undesirable racial stock” (l. 892).<sup>6</sup> In the build-up to WWII, blind eyes were turned in America to what Hitler was doing. Eugenic and population concerns lead to the obstruction of European Jews trying to flee, and even to refugees being turned back from American shores, as it turned out to the ovens of Germany (l. 1155). The Darwinian, Malthusian, eugenic influence continued after the war, though subdued due to the devastating fruits seen during the war, in such organisations as Planned Parenthood, the Sierra Club and the Club of Rome, as well as many influential global organisations such as the World Bank and UN.

One of the recurring themes of this book, is of how pseudo-scientific, eugenic books and publications such as that of Madison Grant’s *The*



*Passing of the Great Race*, which Hitler referred to as his ‘bible’ (l. 836), became populist propaganda tools under which devastating policies were justified and implemented. Grant was the vice president of the Immigration Restriction League and a trustee of the Museum of Natural History. This use of eugenic-inspired media was also key in ‘numbing’ the public to other policies later described in the book *Man and Earth*, a neo-pagan tract written in 1913, was influential in the birth of another child of Malthus’s theory of limited resources—“This twin was environmentalism” (l. 1056), closely linked philosophically to eugenics in both Germany and the USA. It was reprinted in 1980 as one of the founding documents of the West German Green Party (l. 1065), whose founder and first chairman was August Haussleiter, a former SS officer.

*Our Plundered Planet*, written in 1948 by Fairfield Osborn, the son of Henry Fairfield Osborn, was a 3-million copy bestseller “which became the founding manifesto of the postwar environmentalist movement” (l. 1185). These movements and foundations such as the Conservation Foundation, Sierra Club and the Environmental Defence Fund, had population control as their primary focus. This was especially for

developing nations, but was also promoted in post-war Japan where key American eugenic advocates were placed in influential positions, and forced ‘population control’ measures on the Japanese people.

Commissioned by The Sierra Club, *The Population Bomb*, written by Paul Ehrlich in 1967 amidst much publicity (figure 2), became the “new Malthusian bible for modern times”. Typical of this type of propaganda, prophecies of impending doom were used to induce a popular panic which became a smokescreen for increased government interference in people’s lives.

“The battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970s and 1980s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death ... . We must have population control at home, hopefully through changes in our value system, but by compulsion if voluntary methods fail” (l. 1584). “A cancer is an uncontrolled multiplication of cells; the population explosion is an uncontrolled multiplication of people ... . We must shift our efforts from the treatment of the symptoms to the cutting of the cancer. The operation will demand many apparently brutal and heartless decisions. The pain may be intense” (l. 1605).

Under the hysteria of this type of propaganda (proven false by history), measures were taken throughout the world to coerce people into population control measures. As an example, Zubrin documents the World Bank’s making loans to third world countries, often ruled by corrupt leaders. The loans were subject to the implementation of broad, coerced programs including abortion, sterilisation and involuntary insertion of IUD’s. These programs often meant that while normal healthcare facilities were neglected and underfunded, ‘population control’ staff, facilities and resources were state of the art.

### Anti DDT, Nuclear, GM and CO<sub>2</sub>; pro-nature or anti-human?

The writer begins in Chapter 6, entitled “In Defence of Malaria”, to document another post war implementation of eugenic ideology. Most telling is a quote from Alexander King, a co-founder of the Club of Rome, who said “my chief quarrel with DDT in hindsight is that it has greatly added to the population problem” (l. 1350). DDT began to be used by the Allies in WWII in areas where malaria threatened to derail the campaign against the Nazis and Japanese, with dramatic effect. After the war, DDT programs in the Southern USA, Ceylon, South Africa, and other countries reduced malarial deaths and incidence to almost zero. Alarmed by the implications to population growth, particularly in third world countries, alarm bells again began to be rung by influential eugenicists. If eradicating DDT programs had been overtly sold as a means of reducing population, Western sensibilities would not have accepted it. In what has become a predictable routine, an environmental reason was given to halt DDT use. The marine biologist and nature writer, Rachel Carson was contracted to write *Silent Spring* (figure 2). In it she

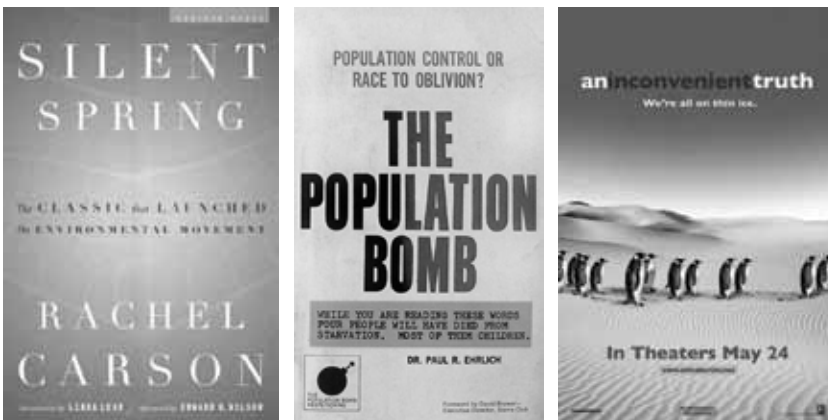


Figure 2. Pseudo-scientific, emotional, propaganda ‘bibles’ of the modern environmentalist movement.

warned of the dangers of DDT to wildlife, particularly birdlife. The evocative title says it all, if DDT programs were continued, one day mankind would awake to a 'silent spring' bereft of the sound of birdlife. Zubrin goes on to show that the various claims were totally unscientific and cites a number of scientific studies to document this. The environmentalist campaign was successful and DDT was banned in western countries and aid to third world countries again made subject to their suspending the use of DDT. Today, "Malaria kills more than a million people worldwide each year—90 percent of them in Africa; 70 percent children under the age of five."<sup>7</sup> This is more deaths than due to AIDS, but receives far less media attention; while the cheapest and most effective remedy available to African countries, DDT, is denied them.

The next leftist, environmental cause that Zubrin examines is 'The Anti-Nuclear Crusade' (l. 1907). Due to its practically unlimited ability to fuel energy, which is necessary for economic growth, essential to sustain population growth, nuclear power is seen as an enemy of the eugenic cause. As a nuclear engineer, Zubrin demonstrates how nuclear power, though with potential dangers, as has any technology, is far less dangerous than the anti-nuclear campaigners had the media and broader population believe. The book shows how historically, nuclear energy is responsible for far fewer deaths than other major sources of power and the latest technology power stations are almost fool proof.

The book goes on to document the real reason behind environmental and 'green' opposition to genetically modified seeds and foods; namely, their threat to the Malthusian cause. The ability of GM to build in pest resistance, pesticide resistance, disease resistance, drought resistance and even the ability to enhance the

nutrition value of certain staple foods; is a threat to population control. Zubrin makes an interesting point in stating that just about all the animal and plant food we eat in any case, does not exist in the wild but has been developed by hybridisation techniques over centuries and so is, in effect GM. New technologies and a greater understanding of genetics enable that process today to be taken a step further.

Of course, this book would not be complete without examining today's environmentalist *cause célèbre*, the man-made, CO<sub>2</sub> induced, global warming scare. The familiar pattern exposed in this book is seen: CO<sub>2</sub> is synonymous with man. From breathing to driving to fizzy drinks, and especially traditional, fossil fuel energy production, we emit CO<sub>2</sub>. In Chapter 15 entitled, "Quenching Humanity's Fire: Global Warming and the Madness of Crowds", Zubrin exposes the familiar methodology. From Al Gore's unscientific propaganda piece, *An Inconvenient Truth* (figure 2), to media, celebrity and political 'buy-in', to pressure on third world nations, to public acquiescence; the foundational anti-population agenda is again evident. While Zubrin tends to accept that man-made CO<sub>2</sub> is contributing to a general warming trend (though many would dispute this), he basically says, "so what!" His argument is that increased CO<sub>2</sub> = increasing temperatures = increased precipitation, all of which add up to increase in vegetation growth. He backs this up with data to show that vegetation growth has globally increased over the past few decades. He also shows how planet Earth has a built-in, self-regulating system to ensure that global climate does not head inexorably in one direction only. He does accept 'long age' assumptions in his data, but it is an interesting point.

The results of the global warming hysteria have been predictable in

my own continent of Africa, where economic growth is critical and where coal to fuel that growth is abundant. In South Africa, the necessary skills and experience exist to build efficient, coal fired power stations. But pressure from western organisations such as the UN, World Bank and European Union, has led African nations to slow down the commissioning of coal fired power stations, and to adopt expensive, imported technology from the West and China. The net result has been a dampening of economic growth. All this while Africa continues to export vast amounts of coal to Europe and China, to the detriment of its own growth. The hypocrisy is breathtaking.

The campaigns to coerce 'population control', stop DDT usage, stop the adoption of GM foods and deny energy for development, have undeniably resulted in the death of tens of millions of people on all the continents of the world. This book convincingly documents the connections between social Darwinian and Malthusian eugenics ideology and many of the individuals and organisations behind these programs. While some of those caught up in such movements assuredly have purer motives, genuine concern about conservation and the environment, could it be that they are 'useful idiots' used as foot soldiers in the cause?

### Humanist anti-humanitarianism

In opening his final chapter with a quote from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Zubrin shows that, just like the policies and ideologies he justly condemns, he is also utopian in his outlook. He believes that a utopia created by human freedom and ingenuity is achievable. His subtitle of the book refers to these policies as 'antihumanism'. In fact, many of the individuals influential in the movement the book decries count themselves as Humanists. Men such as Julian Huxley believed that Man is the

final arbiter of right and wrong and has the obligation to create their chosen Utopia on earth, no matter the methods employed. Zubrin is also a humanist, ultimately; only his methods differ from those he decries, as infinitely preferable as those methods may be. Such a preference can only be absolutely established from the basis of the Judeo-Christian view of mankind given by the Bible. It cannot come from the theory of evolution which is the humanist creation myth, and is silent on morality. Not evolution, only God and His Word, the Bible, can serve as the objective basis for his admirable opening sentence to Chapter 16—“MEN ARE BORN free and equal; naturally endowed not only with life, but liberty, and the right to pursue happiness” (l. 3668).

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