

# Malthus on Classical Languages and Corporal Punishment: An Unpublished Prize-Winning Student Essay

---

Roger Pitcher and John Pullen\*

---

In 1787 Thomas Robert Malthus was awarded a prize by Jesus College, University of Cambridge, for the following Latin essay. He was then aged 20 or 21 and in his third year as an undergraduate at the College. The essay does not foreshadow any of Malthus's subsequent views on population and political economy, but it conveys some interesting biographical insights.

## Malthus's Latin Text

Interpres tantundem iuveris.

Credideram equidem, Academici, nunquam fore, ut in hoc vestrum conspectu, de scientia et literis propagandis esset disputandum. Rebar nimirum id praecipue ab omnibus desiderari quo humaniorum artium<sup>1</sup> cultura facillime promoveretur.

Quoniam autem ad certamen ventum est alacri et libente prorsus animo has partes suscepi, quae et e republica literaria<sup>2</sup> videntur, et quibus vos omnes assensuros et fautores esse confido.

De qua igitur sit quaestio videtis. Quantus an ad bonarum artium<sup>3</sup> scientiam patefaciendus sit aditus? Quantus an laevigandus et complanandus sit doctrinae callis? Quantus an discentium sit consulendum commodum; et in universos fluere, et ad omnium denique se ordinum mores confirmare debeat literarum humaniorum disciplina?<sup>4</sup>

Id profecto et a philosophis accepimus, et sapientium omnium vocibus confirmatum est, ut quo brevior laeviorque sit veritatis via, eo etiam sit utilior. Quid

igitur illis debemus quorum opera atque industria seclusi sunt omnes scientiae fontes, et ingens in hominum omnium disquisitionem area patefacta! Hoc ipsum nobis tam desiderandum, tamque laudabile praestiterunt interpretes. Non jam intra sylvas Academi, aut philosophorum musea, conclusa latet sapientia. Soluta est nimirum inceditque palam, et aperto campo spatiat. Quicquid habet splendidi vetustas, quicquid docti, quicquid ingeniosi, id omne, rupto velut aggere, in patriam populumque exundavit. Detracta veste qua cooperta est jam pridem effulsit philosophia<sup>5</sup>. Quocumque aut fortiter gesta, aut prudenter excogitata, aut egregie dicta, tradiderunt historici, non jam obscure, et per alienae linguae nubes tenebrasque indagamus, sed facile intuitu, et puro linguae vernaculae limine illustrata cernimus. Nobis insequitur gentium omnium, omniumque saeculorum industria. Lingua nostra loquuntur Graeci Romanique, consciique nostra data velut civitate adscribuntur.

Atque mehercule, Academici, quoties in juventutis nostrae institutionem atque educationem intueor, plane toties succenseo. Quantum in antiquis obsoletisque linguis ediscendis pretiosissimi temporis absumtum est! Quam in ignobili et inutili prorsus verborum et dialectorum indagatione versantur juvenes! Labuntur anni<sup>6</sup> irrevocabiles, vitae pars jucundissima exacerbatur et reportatur nuda quaedam syllabarum vocabula, accentuumque scrupulosa castigatio. Inter haec autem, ut inania, discendum mille modis in discipulos saevitum est; quasi profecto magni esset cruciatus, darentque animos plagae. Frangitur interea inhonestis verberibus, deprimiturque nobilis ille et generosus animi ardor et altitudo: et aut vacua fastidiosaque arrogantia superbit, aut horret omnino negligitque discipulus jam rude donatus<sup>7</sup> illam disciplinam quae sequentem rigore tanto, tantaque severitate a se arcere et deterrere videbatur.

Quid igitur si interpretatione usi fuerint? Negligeretur nimirum, aut plagosus quidam orgilius<sup>8</sup> exquisita illa articularum verborumque investigatio: irritae essent Criticorum omnium et Grammaticorum subtiles admodum et accuratae disquisitiones. Negligantur igitur - fiant irritae. Quid enim prosunt nugae difficiles, stultusque ineptiarum labor? Quod si ad interpretes confugerent, non jam adverso flumine<sup>9</sup> erit luctandum; sed ventis illico ferentibus vela dabunt<sup>10</sup> amnique prono<sup>11</sup> confestim deveherent. Atque auctoris formam et nitorem inquinant interpretes. Credant istud qui nihil aliud mirantur quam quod sacravit Libitina<sup>12</sup>. Me equidem iudice, felix scriptor cui accedit interpretationis illustratio. Si enim nullo auctoris amore percitus esset, famaeque suae tantum consulere interpres; in partes tamen quasque elegantiores summam operam navaret, summa cura explicaret, summoque ingenio ornaret; et splendidae quasque particulae ita disponeret ut, velut lychnis accensis, parietes speculis instructi, acceptam lucem reperiunt fulgoremque augent, sic haec etiam a lucido verborum ordine illuminentur quodammodo et quasi reflectantur<sup>13</sup>.

Sint igitur Academici tantae laudi praemia. Sumant interpretes superbiam mentis quaesitam. Asserantur in honorem viri illi qui aspera musarum juga complanaverunt: illorumque famae consulatur, qui doctrinae januas aperiendo reipublicae literariae optime consuluisse videntur.

## Translation

"As translator you could please so much.

Indeed I had never thought, learned gentlemen, that it would come about that I would have to discuss in your presence the dissemination of knowledge and literature. Truly I used to think that this above all was longed for by everyone so that the culture of the more humane arts<sup>1</sup> be most easily promoted.

Moreover, since people have assembled for the debate, I have taken up with a swift and absolutely willing spirit that side which seems good in a community of scholars<sup>2</sup> and which I trust you will agree to and favour.

You see then what the question is about. How much of an approach should be opened up for the knowledge of good skills?<sup>3</sup> How much should the path of learning be smoothed and levelled? To what extent should the convenience of pupils be taken into account; and ought the study of the Humanities<sup>4</sup> flow to everyone and make itself a solid element towards the moral formation of - finally - all ranks?

We have surely learnt from the philosophers, and it has also been confirmed by the opinions of all wise men, that the shorter and smoother the road of truth, the more useful it is. What therefore do we owe those men by whose work and industry all the fountains of knowledge have been unstopped, and vast space for man's enquiring mind laid open. This so desirable and praiseworthy task translators fulfil. No longer within the groves of Academe or in the halls of philosophers does Wisdom lie confined. She has assuredly been released and advances openly, and strolls on the open plain. Whatever brilliance old age has, whatever learning, whatever native ability, all of that, as it were with the bursting of a dam, has poured out across the country and the people. Having had stripped off her garment with which she was covered, Philosophy<sup>5</sup> long ago shone forth. Wherever historians have handed down brave deeds or wise thoughts or famous words we wander no longer obscurely and through the clouds and darkness of a foreign tongue, but see them illumined by an easy insight and by the pure light of the vernacular tongue. The industry of all nations and of all ages is serviceable to us. In our tongue speak Greeks and Romans, and they will be reckoned our confidants, as though granted our citizenship.

And, by Hercules, learned gentlemen, whenever I consider the instruction and education of my youth I am absolutely furious. What a great deal of most precious time was spent in learning ancient and obsolete tongues! In how unworthy and completely useless an investigation of words and arguments are the young involved! The years flow<sup>6</sup> never to be regained, the most pleasant part of life is afflicted, and all one comes away with is a bare sounding of syllables and an exact polishing of accent. Moreover, in the course of learning these as it were useless things the pupils suffer harsh treatment in a thousand ways; as though learning were assuredly a great torture and as though blows produced spirit. Meanwhile that noble and generous zeal and loftiness of spirit are broken and suppressed by unworthy blows: and the pupil already discharged, either takes pride in empty and disgusting arrogance or

altogether shrinks from and neglects that discipline which seemed to repel and deter the admirer by such great rigour and severity.

What then if they made use of translation? In fact there would be a by-passing of either your flogging school-teacher<sup>8</sup> or that far-fetched investigation of articles and words. The rather subtle and precise inquiries of all the critics and grammarians would have been in vain. And so let them be dispensed with - let them be of no use. For what is the benefit of difficult jests and the foolish labour of trifles? But if they have recourse to translators they will not have to strive against an already adverse current; but will stretch sails<sup>10</sup> to the winds bearing them thither and be immediately carried away by the headlong stream.<sup>11</sup> But (someone will say) translators pollute the shape and splendour of the author. Let them believe that who admire nothing other than what Libitina has made holy.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, according to my judgement, happy the writer on whom the light of translation falls. For if the translator had been roused by no love of the author and were only concerned with his own reputation, when certain more elegant passages are involved, he would accomplish the utmost task with zeal, explain them with the utmost care, elaborate them with the utmost talent; and he will so arrange certain distinguished clauses that just as, when lamps are lit, walls decorated with mirrors reflect the light they receive and increase the glow, so these clauses also would somehow be illuminated by the clear order of words, as though reflected in them.<sup>13</sup>

So, learned gentlemen, let there be rewards for such great excellence. Let translators take up the longed-for lofty spirit of the mind. Let those men who smooth the harsh yoke of the muses be declared honourable: let there be due regard for the fame of those who, by opening the doors of learning, best seem to have had due regard for the community of scholars.

Malthus 1787

### Commentary

One of the main themes of Malthus's essay<sup>14</sup> is a criticism of the waste of time involved in the learning of "ancient and obsolete tongues", and an argument for disseminating a knowledge of classical literature by means of translations. It is, of course, conceivable that Malthus treated the situation as a mere literary exercise, not as an occasion for expounding his personal convictions, and that, despite the essay's argument to the contrary, he was not really opposed to the teaching of Greek and Latin. The essay would presumably have been judged on its literary merits, irrespective of whether the adjudicators<sup>15</sup> agreed with its contents. If the adjudicators perceived the essay not merely as a literary exercise, but as a serious attack on the teaching of classical languages, the fact that they nevertheless awarded it a prize is a tribute to their tolerance and objectivity, given that their careers were presumably centred on the teaching of classical languages. If the theme of Malthus's essay were taken seriously, classical languages would be studied only by those

seeking to become expert translators - those who would accomplish their tasks with "the utmost care" and "the utmost talent".

The essay contains a delightful irony - Malthus was in fact seeking a prize for an essay written in Latin but opposing the general study of Latin - and also an element of irreverent undergraduate levity. It is a deliberate misreading of Horace's text. Horace's "interpres" was not a translator from one language to another, but a person reporting a speech. And more importantly, Horace's text reads (emphasis added): "*Non tamen interpres tantundem iuveris*" (Nevertheless as interpreter you could *not* give as much pleasure). Horace, in attacking the excesses of the Epicureans and ridiculing the extravagant cookery maxims of an unnamed lecturer, implores his friend Catus to take him to hear the lecturer, arguing ironically that the pleasure derived from hearing the lecturer's words in person would exceed the pleasure derived from Catus's second-hand account.

The passage has been translated:

Catus, by friendship, by the powers divine,  
Take me to hear this learned sage of thine;  
For though his rules you faithfully express,  
This mere repeating makes the pleasure less.

(*Satires and Epistles of Horace*, tr. Philip Francis, 1747; Hutchinson, London, 1906).

or alternatively:

For though you repeat [these maxims] all with a wonderful exactness, yet they must lose much of their force and beauty from the mouth of an interpreter. (Tr. D. Watson, revised by W. Crakelt, *The Works of Horace*, 1792, T. Longman, London; reprinted AMS Press, New York, 1976).

Thus, Malthus deliberately misread Horace's text in order to oppose Horace's argument on the usefulness of intermediaries. Horace argued (ironically) that it is better to hear the original speaker and not to rely on an intermediary (the reporter). Malthus argued that it is better for most students to study the classics through an intermediary (the translator).

There is additional contemporary evidence of this lighter side of Malthus's character. Richard Graves, his first school tutor, remarked on his unusually developed appreciation of humorous passages in classical literature. (See n. 4 below). William Otter, a fellow student and lifelong friend, described Malthus at Cambridge as "habitually cheerful and playful" and "often a source of infinite delight and pleasantries to his companions", although he added that this aspect of Malthus's character became less obvious in later years. ([Otter] 1836, pp. li, xxxi-xxxii).

If Malthus did really believe in 1787 that Greek and Latin should not be taught, he appears to have changed his mind subsequently. His later writings do not contain, as far as we are aware, any statements opposing the teaching of Greek and Latin and, on the contrary, appear to favour it.

As Professor of History and Political Economy at the East India College, Hertfordshire, Malthus published in 1813 and 1817 two defences of the College against its critics. The College had been established for the education of young men destined for careers in India with the East India Company, but because of a number of

well-publicised student disturbances at the College, and for other reasons, critics argued either for the transfer of its activities to India or for its abolition. In replying to criticism from Lord Grenville, Malthus gave the following details of the College entry requirements:

Every young man, before his admission into the college [at the age of sixteen], is required to produce a testimonial from his schoolmaster, and to pass an examination in Greek, Latin, and arithmetic, before the principal and professors, sufficient to ascertain his having previously received the usual school education of a gentleman.<sup>16</sup>

Malthus also outlined, for the benefit of Lord Grenville and other critics, the course of study pursued by the students during their two-year stay at the College. The students received lectures from different professors on "the important subjects of classical literature, the oriental languages, the elements of mathematics and natural philosophy, the laws of England, general history, and political economy." (Malthus, 1813, p. 9). Examination papers<sup>17</sup> set by the "Classical Department" at the College in 1808 show that "classical literature" involved classical languages as well as literature. Students were examined on the *Iliad*, Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, Quintus Curtius, Xenophon, Sallust, Cicero, Florus, and Caesar; and each examination paper contained not only questions of a literary or historical nature - for example, "What are the characteristics of Homer's genius? and what are the distinguishing excellencies of his poetry?" and "What was the immediate occasion of the Persian War? What were the dates, the place, &c. of its four great battles?" - but also (except in one paper for "Junior Students") questions requiring translations from Greek or Latin. One question on the *Iliad* required translation into English verse.

The fact that Malthus considered the study of Greek and Latin as evidence of "the usual school education of a gentleman", and that he did not criticise the teaching of languages in the "Classical Literature" department at the East India College, suggests that in 1813, if not in 1787, he was in favour of the teaching of classical languages.

This defence of the teaching of classical literature was repeated in Malthus's *Statements Respecting the East-India College*, 1817, where he advocated that the students destined for a career in India should be subjected to "a strict examination in classical literature ... to show that they had received the education of gentlemen, and that their minds were improved and capable of improvement" (Malthus 1817, p. 316). He also opposed any system of education of East India Company servants which was purely "mercantile" and which required "the complete sacrifice of classical studies" (Malthus 1817, p. 254). He believed that the study of classical literature, accompanied by a study of the Oriental languages that would be necessary at the students' future destinations, should be part of a more general education, as currently given at the East India College. He argued that this system of general education "seems to have had the best effect in invigorating and improving the mind" (Malthus 1817, p. 317), and had provided the East India Company with a system of education "suitable to the sphere of life in which their civil servants are intended to move" (Malthus 1813, p. 12).

Thus, whether or not Malthus as a student in 1787 really believed that classical languages should not be taught in schools, it seems fairly certain that in later life as a professor he approved of their being taught.<sup>18</sup>

Another main theme of the essay is a criticism of the use of corporal punishment. His comments on the "flogging school-teacher" were made with reference to the teaching of classical languages, but were presumably intended as a criticism of the use of corporal punishment in all teaching. It would be strange if he opposed corporal punishment in the teaching of classics, but supported it in the teaching of mathematics. The tone of his comments on this issue bears no hint of deliberate irony, nor of a position adopted for the sake of a literary competition.

Although the essay deplors the "flogging school-teacher", Malthus does not explicitly say whether he personally either did or did not receive such treatment. Malthus's early education in Latin and Greek was received at the hands of the Rev. Richard Graves, at Claverton Rectory, near Bath. Malthus resided with him between 1779 and 1781, i.e. between the ages of 13 and 15. There could well have been occasions - for example, his physical battles with other pupils - when Malthus might have received some form of punishment for misconduct, but Graves's glowing reports of Malthus' progress in Latin and of his keenness to undertake extra reading in history, suggest that it was not necessary for Graves to use corporal punishment as a teaching aid in Malthus's case. (See Pullen 1986, p. 142). After leaving Richard Graves, Malthus attended the Dissenting Academy at Warrington and when the Academy ceased operations in 1783 he was sent as a private pupil to reside at the home (at Bramcote, near Nottingham) of Gilbert Wakefield, a former teacher at the Academy. His letters from Bramcote suggest a cordial, non-violent relationship with Wakefield. In a letter to his father of 20 November 1783, Malthus said "Mr Wakefield acts quite as a companion, and we go out walking and shooting together". The daily regimen of study imposed by Wakefield was, however, demanding and strict. (See n. 16 above).

However, despite these remarks in 1787 against the corporal punishment of students, Malthus in his later writings does not appear to have objected to corporal punishment as such. He criticised the use of corporal punishment only if it is used as a substitute for the power of expulsion, which, he argued, should be the main form of punishment. He argued that other punishments for misbehaviour in schools, colleges and universities will be effective in maintaining discipline only if they are backed by the power and fear of expulsion. Students will submit to other punishments, corporal or otherwise, only if the alternative is expulsion:

the main support of all discipline, both in our public schools and our universities, is the power of expulsion; and ... few great<sup>20</sup> boys would submit to corporal punishment at school, and few young men to impositions and confinements at the universities, if it were not that the alternative of being sent from their school or college is always ready to be applied.

To those who assumed that boys at school "would be kept in order by the birch", Malthus replied:

In this, however, they would probably find themselves mistaken. Birch supports discipline, only because it is itself supported by the fear of expulsion: remove this fear, and the effect of the rod will soon cease. In almost all cases, the physical force is on the side of the governed; and few youths of sixteen admit to be flogged if they did not know that immediate expulsion would be the consequence of their refusal. If the East-India Company had an establishment for the education of boys from thirteen to sixteen, there is great reason

to believe that without the usual gradation of ages from nine and ten upwards, and with any hesitation in resorting to the punishment of expulsion on all the usual occasions, it would be scarcely possible to enforce proper obedience; and the rod itself would probably be one of the principal causes of resistance and rebellion. (Malthus 1817, pp. 257-8).

Let any master of a great school in the kingdom be asked whether he could maintain discipline by mere flogging, unsupported by the power of sending his boys away; and, unless his opinion is given in direct contradiction to his practice, he will say, that it is perfectly impossible. (Malthus 1817, p. 313).

However, the threat of expulsion would not operate effectively for young Englishmen studying at a college established by the East India Company in India. Once they arrived in India, expulsion from a college set up to train them for service in the East India Company would be virtually impossible. It would mean either that they would be deprived of a career and of the means of supporting themselves in India, or that they would be sent to work immediately for the Company, without completing their education and without acquiring the language skills required for the efficient performance of their duties. Moreover, by enabling such students to enter upon their career sooner, insubordination would be rewarded and encouraged.

His experience at the East India College must have convinced him of the need for "imposition and confinements" if the "laws and regulations of the college" are to be obeyed. He was in no doubt about the need for a "regular system of discipline" maintained by "appropriate sanctions". The riots, rebellions and disturbances of the College students are documented by James 1979, pp. 214-16, 230-4. In the most serious disturbance, fourteen disguised students armed with sticks attacked two of the College servants, and were subsequently sent for trial. The difficulty of maintaining discipline amongst unruly students at the College was exacerbated by the prevailing system of patronage. Some of the students were sons, grandsons, or relatives of Directors of the East India College, while others were sons of families who were close friends of Directors; and could therefore not be easily expelled or even rusticated for a period.

In not objecting in his later writings to the use of corporal punishment (as a supplement to the power of expulsion), was Malthus contradicting the views he expressed in the 1787 essay? Might one cynically conclude that he opposed corporal punishment when as a student he or his fellow students received it, but supported it when as a professor he either administered it or condoned its administering?

One of the critics of the East India College had reportedly said "... those who did not *learn* should be made to *feel*" (quoted in Malthus 1817, p. 313). But Malthus advocated that in an educational institution for "persons above the age of mere boys" there should be

a more liberal system of discipline ... where, instead of being kept to their studies by the fear of immediate observation and punishment, [the students] might learn to be influenced by the higher motives of the love of distinction and the fear of disgrace, and to depend for success upon their own diligence and self-control; upon the power of regulating their own time and attention; and on habits of systematic and persevering application, when out of the presence of their teachers. (Malthus 1817, pp. 255-6).



This suggests that Malthus intended to distinguish between, on the one hand, the methods to be used in enforcing "the laws and regulations of the College" and in maintaining "college discipline" (Malthus 1813, p. 23); and on the other hand, the methods to be used in teaching. Amongst the former, he was prepared to admit corporal punishment, provided that it was supported by the power of expulsion. For the latter, he advocated not punishment but an appeal to "higher motives".

Of the literary style of the essay, we will leave others to judge, except to note its copious use of metaphor - "the path of learning", "the road of truth", "the fountains of knowledge", "the vast open space for the enquiries", "Philosophy ... stripped [of her] garment", "the clouds and darkness of a foreign tongue", etc. This metaphorical facility was used effectively in his later writings, but (fortunately) with more restraint.

---

\*Department of Classics and Ancient History, and Department of Economics, University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia 2351.

## Notes

1. *humaniorum artium*. In this context, "The more humane arts" refers to the subjects Malthus would have been studying at Cambridge, namely Greek and Roman literature and philosophy.
2. *republica literaria*. *Respublica literaria*, "republic of letters" in eighteenth century terminology, is translated "community of scholars" here in an attempt to convey the meaning in more contemporary terms.
3. *bonarum artium*. *Bonae artes* can be traced back at least to Cicero (*de oratore* 1.158). It becomes a standard phrase for the traditional education in skills appropriate to free-born Romans; in particular, literature, mathematics and music. This term is virtually indistinguishable from *artes liberales* "liberal arts" and *artes ingenuae* "free-born arts".
4. *litterarum humanorum disciplina*. The "study for the Humanities" encompasses the *bonae artes* just mentioned and echoes the reference to "the more humane arts" of the opening paragraph. Malthus no doubt has in mind the course of study he has undertaken at Cambridge. In the Latin, notice the threefold use of the interrogative *quantus*, a simple tricolon in imitation of Cicero. Further, notice the increasing complexity of the successive questions. In these opening paragraphs the rhetorical influence of Cicero is paramount.
5. *sapientia . . . philosophia*. These terms have been capitalised in the translation, to emphasise the personification of wisdom and philosophy. A passage from Cicero's *De Legibus* (I 22.58) goes so far as to identify *sapientia* with *philosophia*. Malthus perhaps was thinking of that passage in writing this paragraph.
6. *labuntur anni* is taken from Horace *Odes* II 14.2.
7. *rude donatus* is taken from Horace *Epistole* I 1.2, literally "having been presented with a blunt sword", which refers to the custom of giving a wooden sword to a Roman gladiator when he retired from service.
8. *plagosus orgillus* is a mistake for *plagosus Orbillus*, Horace *Epistoles* II.1.70-71. *Orbillus* is the name of a school-teacher.
9. *adverso flumine* occurs several times in Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* IV 423 and VI 720, as well as in Vergil *Georgics* I 201.
10. *vela dabunt*. The phrase *vela da* "give sails" is fairly common: e.g. Horace *Odes* I 34. 4.
11. *anni prono* is another echo of Vergil, *Georgics* I 203, suggesting that Malthus had this passage in mind when using *adverso flumine* a couple of lines earlier.

12. *quod sacrauit Libitina* is another echo of Horace, *Epistles* II 1.49. Libitina is the goddess of funerals, in whose temple the registers of deaths were kept.
13. The allusions in paragraphs 5 and 6 to Horace and Vergil reveal the extent of Malthus' Classical education up to 1787. Taken with the echoes of Cicero in the opening paragraphs they reflect the standard school texts of the second half of the eighteenth century. In fact, Malthus' education at this time was very little different from the classical Roman model: the attention to minute grammatical detail and the importance of form over content, together with the punishments imposed for mistakes, could be paralleled from Roman experience. His training is more in rhetoric than history or literature; this adds a certain liveliness to this essay, as Malthus employs the very skills his education has taught him as a weapon against that education. The idea that learning should be available to all, without the necessity of undergoing the torture of learning Latin and Greek, reflects well the egalitarian/democratic leanings of the later eighteenth century.
14. The exact date in 1787 on which the essay was presented is not known. Malthus was born on 13 February 1766, entered Jesus College on 3 November 1784, took his final examination in January 1788, and graduated on 18 January 1788. See James 1979, pp. 25-33. As far as we are aware, the essay has not previously been published. The original (in Malthus's hand) is held in the Old Library of the College. It is bound in a volume of prize-essays by members of the College in the 1780s and 1790s. We are grateful to Mr D.J.V. Fisher, former Keeper of the Old Library, for providing a copy of the essay and for granting permission to publish; and to Mr P.R. Glazebrook, the present Keeper of the Old Library, for additional information concerning the essay. A brief summary of the essay is given by Patricia James in Malthus 1989, pp. 287-8.
15. Although the wording of the first two paragraphs suggests that the essay was presented orally, it is possible that a pretence of oral presentation was used as a literary device. However, oral examinations were customary at the time, and we knew from a letter to his father (see n. 16) that Malthus had previously given a Latin "declamation" at Cambridge.
16. Malthus 1813, p. 13. The study of Greek and Latin occupied a considerable portion of Malthus's own education. A letter from Richard Graves (Malthus's first tutor) to Daniel Malthus (Malthus's father), dated 30 July 1779, advised that Malthus already possessed considerable competence in Latin as well as a keen sense of humour:

You may not be satisfied with my little friend's application; but I never saw a boy shew a quicker sense of the beauties of an author or at least of any humorous and unexpected strokes.

Confirmation of Malthus's continued progress in classical studies was given by Graves in a letter of 20 October 1780 to Daniel Malthus:

He begins to write tolerable Latin, I think, tho' now and then, through inattention, he may be guilty of a solecism. He has finished Horace, but is going over an ode or two in a day by himself; and has read give Satyres in Juvenal with apparent Taste; and I never saw a boy of his age enter more instantaneously into the humour of the 5th Satyr which describes so feelingly the affronts and mortifications which a Parasite meets with at a great man's Table. He also reads alternately Virgil's *Georgicks* which with Warton's translation he seems to understand perfectly well. He has finished Tully's *De Senectute* and is just beginning the *Jugurthine War* of Sallust just in the afternoon. (Bonar, 1956, Ch. II, p. 7).

Perhaps it was his use of Warton's translation which gave Malthus the idea for the first part of his prize essay of 1787. After leaving Graves, Malthus continued his schooling at the Dissenting Academy in Warrington. His letters to his father report his continued classical and other studies. On 26 April 1783 he wrote: "In the classics we read alternately Longinus and Lucretius", and on 17 June 1783: "We finished yesterday Longinus's sublime treatise or treatise on the sublime". When the Dissenting Academy at Warrington ceased to operate, Malthus continued his studies at the home of Gilbert Wakefield, near Nottingham. From there he wrote to his father on 20 November 1783, concerning his classical studies:

I am at present reading a funeral eulogy from Thucydides, whose manner of writing is so short and concise that I find it very difficult to get on. After tea I read Horace and Cicero alternately. (Letter to Daniel Malthus, 20 November 1783, in Bonar 1956, Ch. IV, p. 11).

His use of translations was encouraged by Daniel Malthus in a letter of 27 November 1783:

I think Mr Wakefield has made the best determination with regard to the manner of making yourself acquainted with the Greek Historians; as indeed I have no doubt he will in every plan of study which he may suggest. At the same time perhaps it might not be disagreeable to you to read an English or French translation of them as your amusing books; if a passage occurs which strikes you, you may refer to the Greek; it would be proper to begin with Herodotus and I think I have one. (Bonar 1956, Ch. IV, p. 14).

And he offered to send Malthus a latin translation of Greek historians:

I have extracts from the Greek historians with the Latin at the end if it will be more convenient to you. (Letter of 5 January 1784, in Bonar 1956, Ch. IV, p. 18).

However, Daniel Malthus also urged his son to read at least some classical authors in the original. On 16 March 1784 Malthus told his father he had "lately began Aristotle's Art of Rhetoric" (Bonar 1956, Ch. 14, p. 2; misdated 1783 by Bonar), and in his reply of 7 april 1784 Daniel said:

I hope you read Aristotle in the original and then you will be sure of getting something by him; not that I mean to undervalue his matter.

In the same letter he promised to send Malthus "the English Polybius", and added:

After Thucidides [sic] you should read Xenophon's history and Diodorus Siculus ... I have the retreat of the ten thousand, which is a very valuable work of Xenophon's, of the same kind of value that Caesar's commentaries are. Have you read any part of it in the original with Mr. Wakefield. (Bonar 1956, Ch. IV, pp. 22-3).

In a letter to his father of 14 January 1784, Malthus outlined the time spent on classical studies with Wakefield:

When we have no interruption we divide our day thus: About two hours and a half in the morning Greek history, after which an hour alternately Euclid and Algebra; after dinner an hour and a half alternately some Greek Poet (at present the Philocletes of Sophocles) Cicero and verses; after tea till supper alternately Virgil, Horace, and latin translation to compare with Cicero. (Bonar 1956, Ch. IV, p. 20. In a letter of 20 November 1783 he described the daily routine under Wakefield: "We get down to study about a quarter before seven in the morning, breakfast at half past eight, dine at one, drink tea at five, sup at eight, and go to bed at ten.")

In the same letter of 14 January 1784, he sent his father, apparently in reply to a request from the latter, a four-line latin verse translation of a Greek inscription.

Towards the end of his year with Wakefield, a few months before his entry to Cambridge, Malthus wrote to his father:

I have employed all my time lately in latin composition, verses and greek. I have got but very slowly forward in history, as I thought that I had better employ what time I had with Mr. Wakefield in matters that more required his assistance. (Letter of 19 May 1784, in Bonar 1956, Ch. IV, p. 26).

At Cambridge his study of classical literature continued, although "The chief study is mathematics for all honour in taking a degree depends upon that science" (Letter of Malthus to his father, 14 November 1784, in Bonar 1956, Ch. IV, p. 28). His letters to his father also mention Tacitus (14 November 1784), Quintilian, and a "latin declamation" (30 April 1785).

17. These examination papers of the East India College for 1808 are held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

18. It is perhaps worth noting that Malthus used some Latin and Greek expressions in his own later writings.

19. "... flogging may be a very good thing in itself" (Malthus 1817, p. 313).

20. By "great boys" Malthus presumably meant those attending "great schools" (see, for example, Malthus 1817, pp. 286, 287, 313).

## References

- Bonar, J. 1956. *Life of Thomas Malthus*. Typed transcripts of correspondence, held in the Rare Book Room, University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign. (See Pullen 1986. The originals of these transcripts have now been located, but there has not yet been an opportunity to check the accuracy of the transcripts against the originals.)
- James, P. 1979. *Population Malthus. His Life and Times*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.
- Malthus, T.R. 1813. *A Letter to the Rt. Hon. Lord Grenville Occasioned by Some Observations of His Lordship on the East India Company's Establishment for the Education of Their Civil Servants*, London.
- Malthus, T.R. 1817. *Statements Respecting the East-India College, with an Appeal to Facts, in Refutation of the Charges Lately Brought Against It, in the Court of Proprietors*, London.
- Malthus, T.R. 1989. *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, variorum edition, Cambridge University Press, ed. Patricia James.
- [Otter, W.] 1836. "Memoir of Robert Malthus", in T.R. Malthus, *Principles of Political Economy*, 2nd ed.
- Pullen, J.M. 1986. "Correspondence between Malthus and His Parents", *History of Political Economy*, 18(1), pp. 133-54.