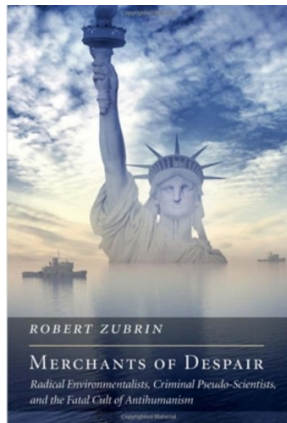




Written by [James Heiser](#) on June 4, 2012

A Review of Zubrin's "Merchants of Despair"

Robert Zubrin's (pictured at left, next to his latest book) previous books have compelled readers to think "outside the box," and his most recent title, *Merchants of Despair*, is likely to prove his most challenging work to date. His first book, *The Case for Mars* was published in 1996, and in it, Zubrin set forth his comprehensive plan for human exploration of the Red Planet, and led to the formation of the Mars Society in 1998, an international organization that encourages scientific research, maintains analog stations in the Canadian Arctic and Utah for study, and continues to inspire people in dozens of countries. Several of Zubrin's later works have built on the foundation of *The Case for Mars*, exploring the prospects for the growth and expansion of human civilization which the 'new frontier' offers to mankind, a future defined by hope and optimism.



In *Merchants of Despair*, Zubrin explores the alternative future of despair and restricted human horizons offered by those whom he describes as adherents of antihumanism:

There was a time when humanity looked in the mirror and saw something precious, worth protecting and fighting for, indeed, worth liberating. Starting with the Biblical idea of the human spirit as the image of God, taken forward by Renaissance humanists defending the dignity of man, our greatest thinkers developed a concept of civilization dedicated to human betterment and "unalienable rights" among which are "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness," proudly asserting that "to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men."

But now, we are beset on all sides by propaganda promoting a radically different viewpoint. According to this idea, humans are a cancer upon the Earth, a horde of vermin whose unconstrained aspirations and appetites are endangering the natural order. This is the core idea of *antihumanism*.

For Zubrin, antihumanism has developed as a modern ideology since the time of Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), and throughout this time, it has been an ideology marked by the propounding pseudo-scientific models which have demonized human development and the scientific — and even numerical — growth of the species as a profound evil. As the author declares in the concluding chapter, "In a world of plenty, antihumanism declares that the hungry may not eat. Where there is space enough for everyone, antihumanism insists that myriads must be slain to make room for others. Where cures are available to avert disease, antihumanism demands that they not be employed. When new technology could make power cheaper and cleaner, antihumanism cries halt."



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Zubrin traces antihumanism record of ruin to Malthus' crackpot theory that human reproduction always outpaces economic growth. As the author observes, Malthus' theory is refuted not only by its failure to predict future events, but by the simple reality that past events easily refute it. For modern Malthusians such as Paul Ehrlich (the author of the environmentalist screed, *The Population Bomb*), the growth of human prosperity which has taken place within living memory sufficiently negates their theoretical models: "Ehrlich was born in the year 1932. If the world were wealthier in the less-populated 1930s than in the 1960s and 70s, then he would have witnessed it himself. Instead, within his own lifetime, he had seen the world population double and the global standard of living more than triple at the same time. He didn't have to open an almanac to know he was wrong — he just had to open his eyes."

In Zubrin's assessment, the combination of Malthusian economics and Darwinian theory led to almost unprecedented human misery in the twentieth century. Malthus' pernicious influence led to the disastrous neglect of famine victims in India in the 1870s. Darwinism, by providing the pseudo-scientific framework for racist neglect of human suffering, led to the denigration of compassion and the glorification of human suffering as the driving force of human evolution. Given the confluence of so-called Scientific and Social Darwinism in the first generation of Darwinists, Zubrin recognizes that Darwin and his followers are responsible for eugenics and other atrocities perpetrated on the ideological basis of evolutionary theory:

What is more important for our present discussion, however, is that this purported universal law of nature *when applied to human affairs* leads to wildly incorrect conclusions (some by Darwin himself) and catastrophically unethical policies (by his followers)...

Where a *true* understanding of the human condition would lead to love, Darwinism prescribes hate. In place of international friendship between diverse nations sharing the benefits of the talents of all, it calls for genocide, falsely warranted by putative scientific law.

Zubrin maintains that such Darwinism was driven by, and sustained, a campaign of brutal subjugation of Third World peoples. The end of colonialism did not end such brutalities; in fact, some of the most horrific effects of the eugenic doctrines created by Darwin's followers have been perpetrated in the past few decades. In China, as a tool of Communist plans to cull the nation's population to an 'ideal' level, and in India and elsewhere as an expression of U.S. foreign aid policy since the Johnson administration, hundreds of millions of forced sterilizations and abortions have brought misery to virtually every corner of the globe to advance a theory which views the expansion of the human race as a blight on the planet. Some of the most horrific pages of *Merchants of Despair* deal with the linkage of US foreign aid and "population control" which began during the Johnson administration and expanded during the Nixon years.

Although the tale of human woe worked by the "strings" attached to American foreign aid has been told elsewhere, Zubrin has done an masterful job of weaving the anti-population campaigns which have stretched from the 1960s to the present into the larger context of efforts to reshape the human race running back a full century earlier. Antihumanism unites many disparate threads: from eliminating the use of DDT (because it saves human lives in the third world, not because it is a threat to birds), to assaulting nuclear power (because cheap energy expands human activity), to forced abortions and sterilizations (because too many people are a threat to prosperity) to the environmentalist cult of global warming, Zubrin demonstrates that antihumanism has gone forth into the world, seeking those whom it may devour.

The mania surrounding the scientific spectacle of anthropogenic climate change provides the grist for



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Zubrin's conclusion. As has been noted in many articles for *The New American*, and elsewhere, Zubrin notes that the driving force behind the climate change pseudo-science is not global warming, but restricting human activity:

The global warming crusade contains a threat that goes well beyond societal regulation and enforced economic stagnation. Unlike the campaigns against DDT, nuclear power, and genetically modified crops — but very much like the eugenics movement — the global warming cause is universal enough to serve as the basis of a pseudo-religion....

Put simply, it's not about weather, it's about power. The movement is everything, the goal is nothing. It's not about curbing CO2 emissions; it's about creating a mob — a mass cult whose legions empower its shamans, and whose systematic anti-human ideology serves as a basis for reorganizing society along totalitarian lines.

Full justice cannot be done in a brief review to the scope of Robert Zubrin's new book. For astute readers seeking to better understand the antihuman thrust of UN and American population planning policy in recent decades, *Merchants of Despair* has much to offer.

Robert Zubrin, *Merchants of Despair — Radical Environmentalists, Criminal Pseudo-Scientists, and the Fatal Cult of Antihumanism*, (New York and London: Encounter Books, 2012). 318 pages. hardcover. \$25.95



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