

Week7 Population History

1. Is it very wrong to reduce ‘the debate on the relative importance of fertility and mortality in their relation with real wages and population change’ into the following simplistic question?

“Which of the two is more ‘socio-economic’ phenomenon? Birth or Death?”

Does this question make any sense?

2. Wrigley & Schofield’s book seems to be in conversation with Thomas McKeown’s studies on English population, which emphasized the importance of mortality. Thomas McKeown, *The Modern Rise of Population* (New York: Academic Press, 1976) and Thomas McKeown, *The Role of Medicine: Dream, Mirage, or Nemesis?* (London: Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, 1976). I once had a chance to read the second one, in which he argued that the modern increase of population had been mainly the result of decrease in mortality and also that the decrease in mortality had had little to do with advancement in medicine. It seems like there was a big debate throughout the 1970s. If there was such a debate, what were at stake? What kind of social or intellectual conditions in the 1970s formed the background of the debate among the population historians?

3. Why are Wrigley & Schofield searching for causality, instead of being satisfied with correlation? What is the historians’ job?