

ETHICS AND IDEOLOGY IN THE BATTLE AGAINST
MALNUTRITION: WHERE DO YOU STAND?

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ETHICS AND IDEOLOGY IN THE BATTLE AGAINST MALNUTRITION:
WHERE DO YOU STAND? (1)

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Where results are opposite of intentions
it behoves a man to reexamine his strategies.

Michael Manley. (2)

Passion for the truth is the poetry of science.
Truth, is the total vision of a universal human
problem.

Josué de Castro. (3)

-What motivates us as nutrition workers?:

-What drives us to continue doing our daily work? Why did we choose Nutrition
and not another field? Is it the appeal to work in an area of high relevance to
present-day problems, either local or global? Are we aware of the political im-
plications of our daily activities both as professionals and as concerned citi-
zens (two inseparable spheres of action)? Can we evade or escape the responsi-
bilities that these implications bring with them?

These are the questions we will set out to explore here with the deliberate
intention to sensitize the reader, especially the young professionals joining
our field, about the controversial but vital issues one is bound to face in such
an inquiry.

In what applies to our profession, then, people and institutions seem to
embark in the battle against malnutrition compelled by quite different motiva-
tions:

1. The a-moral approach: Although we can safely assume that most of our
colleagues feel attracted to nutrition because of its relevance to people,

societies and/or the world, some of them stop their concerns just there; after
having gotten involved in nutrition as a career they often think that is (and
will be) their contribution to society as concerned human beings, as if nutri-
tion per-se, or doing one's job efficiently in a technical sense, were a magic
tool of change and development. This motivation we will call the a-moral
approach to nutrition, although it really falls under the scope of an ethics of
achievement. Because of its narrow scope, this approach has little to offer to
the resolution of malnutrition in the world. (At what point is concern with
nutrition per-se socially useful?)

(Of course, we could also conceive of two other approaches, an in-moral
approach to malnutrition - those cases in which someone in our profession does
not care at all about the hunger and malnutrition issue in the world and in his/
her surrounding environment - and a situational approach in which standards are
made up, as convenient, for each circumstance).

2. The moral imperative: This motivational drive is basically based on
the judeo-christian ethics that calls for compassion, charity, virtuousness and
righteousness. This imperative of moral responsibility is at the forefront of
many voluntary agencies working in nutrition.

In this category, we can find at least two types of individuals or institu-
tions:

- (a) Those who object to the capitalist system's injustices and feel that
their duty is to do something about malnutrition which they perceive
only as one of the injustices, assuming that others will attack the
system in other fronts. (We can also call individuals in this group
moral objectors or progressive humanists.), and
- (b) Those who, embracing the capitalist system as desirable but "out of
control", cannot morally tolerate the extreme poverty and malnutrition

the system generates and feel compelled to do something about malnutrition in order to mend this important shortcoming of the system.

We can also call these individuals humanitarians, or more pejoratively, moralists, since they have made these issues a matter of personal conscience, but lack a visible social rationalization.

This sense of responsibility as a motivation found in many scientists, does not seem to be sufficient either to see needed changes occur. It leads to a dead end. It may solve the conscience problems of the person who devotes his/her time and effort to do "something" to solve malnutrition, however, it seems to have little effect on the real problems of the poor and malnourished. This is why these groups so often go on repeating classical slogans and pushing traditional nutrition interventions that solve nothing much in the long run. In short, these positions lack political perspective. A genuine concern for the poor, even as part of a "holistic approach" does not seem to be enough, if it is not channeled in a political and ideological way. The concept of being socially responsible is nothing but an euphemism for what really should be political responsibility. Or, stated otherwise, do we really have a choice not to take political sides? Rights, after all, are at the intersection of ethics and force or correlation of forces. (4). A political commitment is important precisely because governments function as political entities. (5). Moral causes have usually - not always - made progress only when powerful interests (sub-classes) saw their advance as having "something in it" for them. (6). In such cases, moral imperatives were used politically.

A moralist's attitude very often comes from a religious imperative; if this religious imperative pushes them to act politically, they would tend to be more in the right track. But, if it pushes them to act "religiously", by turning the other cheek, they are most probably doomed to fail in affecting malnutrition in the long run.

3. The political (ideological) imperative: An emotional commitment is loose and romantic; ideological commitment is militant. People or institutions that fall under this category strongly feel that the capitalist system is wrong, that it generates and maintains malnutrition and they set out to fight its injustices, either by reforming it deeply or by trying to replace it with a more human-oriented system, more responsive to the basic human needs - "So foul a sky clears not without a storm" (Shakespeare's King John).

It must be pointed out that people who take this latter position also depart from a moral imperative, but they have gone one (or two) step(s) further. So, at the root of the ideological problem there is a moral problem. (5).

Are these individuals among us, who take such a position, on a much more realistic track? It is clear that they look more into the ultimate determinants of malnutrition which are to be found in poverty and in the different parameters of social injustice. Therefore, they would seem to be in the right track, or at least asking the right questions that should lead to the right answers.

(Of course, one could also conceive a political imperative from the right, ultraconservative, pro-capitalist, but this tendency is rare among our peers; it can be found in some colleagues, a number of whom work or represent the food industry.)

We will get back to more closely describing these basically different groups of co-workers later, but first let us have a look at how these attitudes are formed.

-How is our Ethos formed?

Social values and duties are implanted into and become imprinted in us early in life by our families (especially in the pre-school age) and later

(school-age and teens) also by our education and our social environment. All of the above are largely determined by our social class extraction. Some of the moral issues so acquired have universal validity; for most of us (not all) they are within the judeo-christian ethics; its general principles are not necessarily class-bound and are mostly expressed in a "non-ideological" way (although some of them most definitely are both class-bound and ideologically expressed).

-How is Ideology formed?

Ideological values and duties are imprinted by the family, through education and by the social environment too. Therefore, most of the time, the ideology tends to be pro status-quo (almost by definition, since the survival of that ideology would be otherwise at stake). Moderateness has a clear connection to the prevailing ideology and is the way in which the pursuit of material improvement and the non-material value-system are held together. (7). Ideology is definitely not so universally shared and is definitely bound more closely to our social class extraction.

Nutrition workers are, additionally, influenced by the experiences they have had in the different political systems in which they have operated. (5). Their coming from their own cultural and ideological bias is, therefore, unavoidable. People in our profession (or any other) often tend to think of themselves as a-political, and there simply is no such thing; despite the fact that the spectrum of choices is a continuum, in last instance, one either condescends to the system or one objects to it - totally or partially. Any of these are political stances.

Objection to the system is always the result of a conscious, voluntary effort to break with all or some aspects of the prevailing ideology; it is usually during adolescence that we begin questioning some of the values of society.

Going along with the prevailing ideology is less frequently a conscious, voluntary step; it is more often an unconscious vis-a-tergo attitude.

Ideology has several meanings. (1). Ideology as a "content of thinking" and as an "intellectual pattern" reflects the involuntary elements of ideology which we all, of any extraction, have and probably keep for life; it's part of our indelible (class) heritage. It is ideology that channels our social behavior in predictable directions. On the other hand, ideology as an "integrated politico-social program: is the result of a voluntary internalization of the values of a given society, be it real or ideal.

-Liberals and Radicals - a typology:

In the western world, objectors to the capitalist system have often been divided into two main groups, pejoratively named "liberals" and "radicals".

Liberals are basically objectors that look publicly neutral but are morally antiestablishment. Although liberals are considered opposition forces, they often only accommodate capitalist logic; they think that changes within the system are called for. Probably because of this fact, numerous internal ideological inconsistencies can be found in their reasoning. They believe the world to be profoundly other than it should be, and have faith in the power of human reason to change it. Basically, they are scientific optimists and their "theory and aims" for a new order are often vague and inconsistent.

There are also those liberals who feel impotent to change the system, although they disagree with it; therefore, they have subsequently learned to play the game within the system. They tend to be rather cautious in the implementation of actions that will amend the prevailing system. They tend to work in the capitalist bureaucracy (national or international), in academia (a preferred spot) or in think-tank institutes or centers and are often

very skilled at using their organizations to further their interests. They often even sit in many of the establishment's decision-making bodies, in or outside the government structure.

Liberals, more often than not, go along with the "content of thinking" of their class of origin, which is mostly middle-class, or sometimes lower-class "who have made it", and act like good petit-bourgeois.

They are outspoken in public, although often eminently declarative and formal; they openly denounce the evils of poverty and malnutrition and are, nevertheless, often involved in token nutrition interventions; or, they keep inventing new "more comprehensive" or "multidisciplinary" or "multisectorial" approaches to old problems as if these would change the major contradictions and the distribution of power within the system that is causing the problems to begin with. Liberals, for sure, coined the concept of "nutrition planning", so widely abused by some of us as the most rational panacea to solve hunger and malnutrition in the world, only to find out that little has changed for the poor majorities in the world; if anything at all, gaps have tended to widen.

Liberals are often manipulated and used by ruling elites and their pressure groups and they are perceived as no real threat to the system of conservative politicians; they are, therefore, let alone to protest as much as they want following the logic that dissidents are to be incorporated or tolerated, as long as so doing reduces levels of conflict and increases the system's macro-efficiency. (6).

What perspires from all the above, about liberals, is that they still embrace a bourgeois ideology in terms of a politico-social program. Therefore, this liberal political imperative misses the real political perspective too. It ultimately also lacks the political clout to change the system and, consequently, affect malnutrition

Radicals or "leftists" are probably more affected than liberals by the use of this pejorative labeling. People tend to think of them broadly as revolutionaries or temperamental activists ready to destroy the free enterprise system. Most of the time, this simplistic, stereotyped view is not accurate in our milieu.

This group among our peers is generally characterized by a more idealistic commitment to pursue the hard questions whose answers will lead them to the final and most important determinants of poverty and malnutrition. It is not infrequent that some of these colleagues of ours have adopted a marxist ideology, at least as an analytical tool (dialectics). They definitely question the principles of social justice of the capitalist system and of bourgeois ideology; they strive for a better, more rational politico-social program; they aim at generating social commitment in science. Because of the fact that they use an ideological approach in these efforts, there tends to be more internal consistency and more comprehensiveness in their strategies to approach and solve the problems of malnutrition. (A political approach is, by definition, a comprehensive approach).

Radicals tend to be action-oriented, often very verbal and are constantly trying to point-out contradictions in the system leading to malnutrition. They spend a lot of time denouncing the inequalities and injustices they see and, within their ideological framework, they make an effort to propose possible solutions to solve the major contradictions; they use every opportunity they have to share these concerns with their peers, sometimes with decision-makers and, if possible, with members of the community that are suffering the problems themselves. They often work for the same bureaucracies that liberals do and academia is also one of their preferred refuges. They tend to be skeptical about traditional top-to-bottom nutrition intervention programs, although as the

liberals, they often participate in some of them, but more often as a vehicle for organizing the beneficiaries at the base to let them embark in solving their own problems, and to help them gain some additional power to do so. They feel an urge to contribute to the liberation of the masses from social oppression and exploitation. This is not simply a belief or attitude of radical nutrition workers, but also an inner compulsion in their battle against malnutrition.

It needs to be added, here, that the replacement of the capitalist system has not necessarily been the original aim of all radicals in our profession. They only pursue those changes that they honestly believe have a real potential for solving malnutrition. If the changes called for, that would remove the root causes of poverty and malnutrition, would be accepted and implemented by the prevailing system, the system itself would not necessarily become the target of radicals. But since in most cases the needed changes cut deep into the basic structure of society, they are in conflict with the capitalist system and its basic principle - profit maximization.

Radicals prefer to bypass working with traditional government bureaucracies (i.e. ministries) and plan working as much as possible, as said, at the grass roots, organizing the people around their problems, malnutrition being only one of them. An important intervention for radicals, at that level, has to do with the task of creating awareness and conscientizing the people about their problems in an ideological context through organization. It is expected that people will channel their felt needs towards activities of self help, in the case of problems that can be solved locally, or towards an organized fight for outside inputs, be they governmental or not, in the case that such help is necessary.

Both liberals and radicals, not infrequently transcend the domains of pure or applied nutrition, digging sometimes deeply into the underlying politico-economic issues. Nevertheless, the conclusions drawn, the actions proposed and

seen through and the channels utilized by the two groups are frequently different in kind. This should come as no surprise, since even "objective" analysis and diagnosis techniques are ideologically biased. One pretty much sees what one wants to see. Even thinking about malnutrition in economic terms does not automatically assure commitment to something significant being done about it.

A number of nutritionists in our group, I'm sure, fall in in-between categories, between liberals and radicals. After all, each of us arranges his/her universe and his/her role in it as good as he/she can. People in this limbo are either in a slow transition to either category, or are permanently in-between. The latter, for sure, have a heavier burden to carry, since one can presume they have to confront more everyday contradictions within themselves.

-How relevant is our work? - a critique:

A lot of "semantic diplomacy" bridges ideological differences in our everyday contact with colleagues. If we are really interested in solving the problems of malnutrition, we should not neglect our intraprofessional responsibility of pooling together the genuine and honest predisposition to action of nutritionists ethically motivated and politically motivated because of their potential role of each of them as a change agent. The latter has to begin through a process of critical analysis of our own and our peers' professional affairs and goals with their inherent contradictions. This very process should, hopefully, show each one of us to what extent and how our overall activities in the field of nutrition can be channeled to achieve a real, final impact in ameliorating malnutrition anywhere, in a reasonable time frame. Basically, we should be searching for a new ethos, a political ethos in our professional lives. Here, again, is an appeal for us to give a new sense and meaning to what we do, an appeal for us to step down from our ivory towers; and that is no easy task, individually and much less as a group. Individual rationalities do not always lead

to collective rationality. This is primarily an ideological challenge that calls for political conscientization, a process which is only sporadically occurring within our group right now.

-Are scientists and/or nutritionists in a position to make this transition by themselves? Are they willing to, or interested in doing so at all? Is it worth expending any effort to achieve such a goal? Is an effort necessary to actively promote conscientization activities or encounters towards this end? Should position papers in this area be encouraged more vigorously in scientific meetings? Are papers, like this present one, ever going to be more readily accepted by scientific journals for publication?

These are the kinds of questions that come to mind at this point and for which answers are not really always too clear.

Of course, there will be those who will argue: "Why don't you just forget about those dilettant, bourgeois scientists (nutritionists included) and focus more your efforts on helping to change the people, the blue collar workers, the peasants, or the unemployed directly, since they will ultimately be the ones called upon to bring about lasting social changes anyway?" The answer to this question can be ambivalent too, neither of both activities being probably exclusive; it is mostly a question of what percentage of effort to devote to each of them. Alternative answers to the same question are certainly the basis for a vital set of internal contradictions that a good number of liberal and radical intellectuals carry with them and somehow manage to block.

In the long run, there will have to be moral changes on the part of those of us who enjoy the luxuries of affluence. The question is, will these lead to ideological changes in some? (5). We have already passed the era when we asked basic nutritionists to become more applied researchers; now we are asking them

to become more socially conscious and more committed as real change-agents, leaving behind a lot of epidemiological preciosity or snobbery. Depoliticized science is not science in the real service of man (Franz Fanon).

-Are we politically naïf? - a challenge to our effectiveness:

Many moralists think that politics is "dirty" or not a "virtuous" activity. That is probably why they insist in what many of us consider quixotic actions against the injustices of the prevalent social system - which they also, more often than not, condemn - without realizing that in the end they are being instrumental to its maintenance. They assume decision-makers are rational, righteous and pious and will bend in front of hard scientific evidence or react to outrageous injustice. Long before we contact them, politicians probably know from intuition what we are trying to quantify for them; nevertheless, corrective measures have not been taken. Moralists firmly believe that moral principles can be imposed by their universal and humanistic weight; they speak to the hearts often evoking sorrow and what we need is to shout to the consciences to invoke anger.

Liberals, on the other hand, pay a lot of lip-service to needed changes. They even may applaud radicals' interventions in public meetings or the media, or even endorse and sign loft-wing petitions or declarations. But they lack, perhaps as much as the moralists, the political education or the thrust that is needed to work out ways to, in our case, overcome malnutrition in capitalist societies. They probably have a more open attitude toward politics, but not always the basic understanding or skills to operate more decisively, or behave more politically, in the fight against hunger and malnutrition, which is eminently a political and not a technical struggle. Technology is hardly the adequate point of departure to achieve the deep structural changes needed to end

hunger and malnutrition; the right political approach, rather, is the better point of departure. Nutritionists are rarely trained as social scientists and therefore use social theory implicitly rather than explicitly. (8). This is where the challenge lies in searching for the missing ideological link.

Liberals will often shy-away from marxist ideology - mainly because of the stigmas this carries in our western societies - except perhaps for its more "romantic" and "egalitarian" principles which remain, nevertheless, vague to most of them. They will shy-away even from marxism's scientific elements of interpretation of social phenomena, not believing that the same scientific method their minds are tuned-in to is the one being applied to the social sciences. Therefore, more often than not, they have not even chanced to study the principles of historic and dialectic materialism, although the possibility always exists to reject its interpretations, assertions or theories if they do not conform to the readers' patterns of rationality or weltanschauung. The latter passive attitude is probably a remnant of the liberal scientist's (anti-communist) bourgeois upbringing. His class-ideology - mostly its involuntary elements - haunts him. It takes an initial very conscious and decisive step to bridge any ideological gap indeed.

It needs to be added, here, that the average applied scientist probably does not spend much time either in screening or purposely studying the basic theoretic elements of the bourgeois ideology or capitalist political economy to better understand how the system he lives in works. Radicals, will probably more often go through this exercise to better adjust their strategies and tactics.

Would all the above, then, mean that radical scientists or nutritionists have a higher level of social consciousness than their non-radical peers? It would seem that the answer is yes, and it has certainly cost them an additional effort. Once a certain level of consciousness is attained (is there a threshold?..)

an action oriented attitude usually follows. At that point there is a convergence of ideology and action which makes the difference between taking an observer's versus a protagonist's role. Knowing about injustices does not move us; becoming conscious about them generates a creative anger that calls for involvement in corrective actions. The latter can only happen within the framework of an ideology consciously acquired.

Political forces one fights with political actions not with morals. Nor with technological fixes. This does not mean that strong ethical principles cannot be used as a political weapon, but it is here where we fail, mainly for ideological reasons. It is because of ideological and political naivete that scientists who have occasionally jumped into the political arena in the western world (with all their good intentions) have so often failed as well.

-Are we afraid of speaking-up in political terms?

Many of us feel our positions in academia, government or international or private organizations might be jeopardized if we "come out of the closet" with more radical positions. We take a "survivor's" attitude. One can often hear one of us saying: "Now look, let's be realistic! I, agree with you; I know the system is wrong and perpetuating malnutrition. But we cannot change the system from where I stand, so tell me, what can we do in the meantime to help the malnourished who continue to die everyday . . .?" The result of such a position, as can be expected, is more palliative interventions that do not affect hunger and malnutrition greatly.

The truth is that there are certain actions that can be advocated in any system, that will have a more lasting effect and lead to truly combatting malnutrition. (see, for example, reference (9)). We seldom see agencies or concerned nutritionists primarily pushing those actions, because they are mostly, really, non-nutritional, at least at the onset. If we could at least begin giving priority to, or speaking-up for, some of these interventions (i.e. employment

generation and income redistribution measures) we would be contributing more to solving the feeding problems of the deprived sectors of the population than by devising sometimes sophisticated nutrition interventions of the more traditional type we are familiar with.

We have to stop thinking we cannot contribute anything (or much) to the selection and implementation of non-nutritional interventions because they are outside our immediate field of expertise. This is where our lack of political education shows perhaps clearest; we fail to recognize where the biggest contradictions lie and get caught trying to solve the secondary ones. It may be the honest recognition of our political inexperience or inadequacy that makes us not speak-up; but how long can we keep up this attitude?

If we are to behave scientifically, we have to be honest and, therefore, critical. Next, we have to categorize or prioritize the situations or conditions we criticize, and proceed then to denounce them, publicly if necessary. That is how we should see the logical sequence of our scientific obligations in the field. We scientists, are champions in denouncing transgressions to the exact sciences, anywhere they come across us. But we are not half so active, and much less effective, in denouncing transgressions to the social sciences. In the latter battle, too often we condescend; and that is morally wrong.

-Nutritionists in the Third World - an added responsibility:

-What do internationally funded nutrition programs in the third world really contribute to? How responsible are nutritionists working in those projects for their failure or success? Who do they see benefitting from these programs? How do they see the programs' impact in the long run? Since most of these questions can be answered by these workers quite accurately given the experience they have accumulated, these colleagues of ours have a very special or additional responsibility, mostly because we have seen so much money been wasted in worthless programs that seldom have reached the real needy.

A good number of these programs only scratch the surface of the local problems and, therefore, contribute to status-quo in those countries. Let's be aware, though, that most third world countries' governments would not accept foreign aid programs at all if otherwise.

Every donor brings its own view of development, with it and its development programs will reflect that ideology. The influx of outside, often foreign experts designing the projects, leads to a mystification of the planning process and a reinforcement of people's feelings of inadequacy about their own capabilities (10).

Professionals working in these projects should take part of the blame (or credit) for failures (or successes). In other words, how aggressive have they been (or are they) to fight for changes in direction if programs are not bringing about the anticipated results? Here, a new role of ours become more evident. That is, the role of the nutritionist as a denouncer of non-realistic programmatic goals, objectives or methods of achieving them, especially because, as was said earlier, there still are some interventions that will partly contribute to improving malnutrition in a given population even within the constraints of the prevailing system. It is true that these nutritionists, in most cases, did not participate in the program's design, but it should never be too late to change directions. Therefore, for these third world workers everything said about speaking-up in political terms is doubly important, be they ethically or ideologically motivated.

In summary, their first preoccupation should be to analyze and expose the impact of constraint mechanisms of any kind on nutrition and on social formations - the very first constraint mechanism probably being the one created by their own professional and ideological biases. (8).

-A new direction? - Some possible conclusions:

-"Yes, but what can I do"?

For those among us, accustomed to solving problems and putting them aside, grasping a problem as intractable as world hunger guarantees frustration.

The flaw in our thinking is that the solution to the malnutrition problem is not in nature, but in ourselves, in our approach to the fundamental social relationships among men. (11). Malnutrition should not be attacked because it brings mankind utility, but because it is morally necessary (Immanuel Kant). What we need to fight for is equity, not utility.

It seems that a full devotion to science is not enough; we need to use science to follow our conscience. We need to begin to think about ourselves as political human beings working as technicians, remembering that global change does not begin at the global level, but it starts with individuals. (12).

Many of us, nutritionists, have initially been motivated to simply transfer knowledge to the people; we need to start focusing more on the social dimensions of the problems of mass poverty and hunger. (13). We need to act as generalists (humanists), before acting as nutritionists. An important requirement for this is to seek knowledge about the real world and not only about the world we would like to see. (14). One cannot build on wishful thinking. It is precisely a misunderstanding of reality (or a partial understanding) that often reinforces the a-moral position of some of our colleagues. Or, some of them may not really want to understand; they have, all too often and for all the wrong reasons, already made-up their minds about one reality. The social reality is not like a laboratory; many variables in it are unknown and unforeseen and when we look at them we often do it the wrong way, searching for the statistical "whats" instead of analyzing the human "whys". (15).

When designing policies one transcends the margins of the scientific method by extrapolating. Politicians do this with more ease than we do, but then politics is also, therefore, an art and the motivations of politicians do not always follow a scientific logic. Experts seldom become politicians, but they can and should become activists in their fields.

Nutrition seems to be as good (or bad) an entry point as any other - employment, education, energy, natural resources, ecology, etc. - to get involved in questions of equity in our societies, if it is used as an ideology-laden concept or tool. Since the constraints in equity are structural in nature, criticizing them from any angle, initially, should lead us invariably to the core of the social structural problems. Nutrition can lead to global considerations if not made a "single-issue" goal. Advocates of such a limited approach to nutrition often look at constraints from a quite narrow perspective, a fact that seldom leads to more equity. There are too many substitutes for in-depth political action in "single-issue politics" that lead nowhere. The worst is that many people do not see this difference and a lot of political motivation and sometimes talent in scientists or lay people is lost because of a pseudo-ideological approach to global issues. Single-issue politics suffers from a lack of global vision of society and, in particular, a lack of will to make systematic historical changes. (16).

(It has to be admitted, though, that in a few cases one can see this latter kind of involvement as a springboard for people to finally join the ranks of those who struggle for equity.)

Mention has to be made, at this point, that there has recently been a call for a new ethic as the paradigm to replace the present western ethic of constant growth. (12). This new, "desirable" ethic has been called the "Ethic of Accommodation". It basically calls for simpler patterns of living, more in balance

with nature. One might agree with such an approach only in what pertains to the finite availability of natural resources in our planet, but in what relates to social and economic relationships between men in our world, this new ethic seems totally unacceptable and a typical example of a partial interpretation of priorities that promotes status-quo. It is a romanticized option, devoid of ideological content, unless we want to consider it the deliberate result of what we earlier called a political imperative from the right.

What is really needed, is more dedication to work directly with the poor so they can tackle the causes of their poverty and malnutrition themselves. This calls for us to go, as much as possible, back to field work and out of our offices or labs. It seems to be that only there we can get the strengths needed for a change in directions and perspective in our daily work. Knowledge and scientific power created in our institutions away from the people are returning to the people and affecting them. The gap between those of us who have social power over thinking - a very important form of "capital" - and those who have not, has reached dimensions no less formidable than the gap in access to economic assets. (13). Knowledge is a responsibility (Bronowski).

We need to be prepared to learn from the people and from their perceptions of the problems. We should establish links with local mass movements. We should participate in their conscientization. But we should be aware that this latter process may fail, because it is very possible that we do not see the socioeconomic contradictions present locally to be sharp enough to give priority to political action over, say, technological action that could immediately benefit the masses and for which there may be still room in the system. The choice is, essentially, between leading the masses toward social changes with an external consciousness and raising mass consciousness and their capability to make the changes. It is further important to demonstrate to the masses that it is in

their power not only to change social reality, but the physical reality that surrounds them as well. (13).

Strictly speaking, nutritionists can go to the field as researchers or in charge of interventions. But in reality, researchers should always participate and intervene as well, even at the cost of altering some of the parameters they are interested in studying. They should enter into a dialogue with the group studied which should direct the research towards the problems that are relevant to the group. It is probably because of this that short term research creates more frustration than motivation, both in researchers and in the community.

There are three levels of possible involvement of researchers in their field work (8):

In a first level, the scientists solicit the participation of the community in their project. Discussions occur and some token improvements are offered to the community by the team. The aim is to change people's attitudes and to motivate them to improve their condition. Participation has turned out to be harmless for the vested interests and is, therefore, a regular appendage of every government project. A second level calls for outright conscientization of the population; a dialogue between the oppressed and the elite is called for to surmount the contradictions of the social structure (in Paulo Freire's terms). It has to be noted, however, that conscientization in improperly motivated hands can be reactionary or reformist. At the third level, an effort is made towards the mobilization of the masses. The researchers get involved in organizing movements around lower class interests in order to strengthen their bargaining position; this may be in the form of cooperatives, trade unions, or other.

In any event, the desirable standard role of the nutritionist in the field would be one of a monitor that does not allow programatic interventions to proceed unchanged if they are culturally or politically neutral or biased against

the interests of the beneficiaries (decision victims). This leads us to the concept of accountability. -To whom should the nutritionists in the field be accountable for their work, besides to themselves?

Traditionally, we have been accountable to our peers and to funding agencies. Too often have we neglected our accountability to a third group, namely, the public at large, or, more specifically, the beneficiaries. (17). In the case of research, we seldom see researchers communicating their findings directly to the people being served or studied, in understandable language. Here, then, is another urgent area for improvement in our affairs.

This brings us back to our original question: What can I do? A number of possible directions have been explored so far. More opinions and alternative directions, in the words of others that have written about the topic, are appended in the final section of this paper. It is not expected for everybody to follow all, or for that matter any, of the leads. All that is said here just stresses the fact that the battle against malnutrition can be won, if we play our roles to their last consequences.

This paper basically explores our motivations and the objective outcome of our actions and efforts in solving malnutrition. Some corrections to its observations are certainly needed. Repetitions in the text are deliberate attempts to emphasize, not failures to edit. This exercise should be considered as the opening of a forum. A forum, among other things, is a tribunal. (1). Let us open a forum in which our daily work is put on trial. The challenge is thrown being fully aware that it is mostly an intellectual exercise which may not render any practical results. Perhaps it is time for us to get out and do some things and stop studying and discussing them so much, on the other hand remembering that ideas appear in print well before they start to produce real changes.

What follows, is an arbitrary grouping of some elements from the recent literature that pertain to the ideas voiced in this paper.

-Looking at what others have said: (*)

1. Isolation of the scientists from the real world:

1.1 Do nutrition-planners, nutrition program-officers, nutrition-administrators and nutrition advisors in fact have anything relevant to offer? . . . Nutritionists cannot wait forever: many nutrition advocates want to do something now, the danger being that they will become politicians and will run the risk of being persecuted. (5)

1.2 From the effectiveness point of view, international and national nutrition meetings have too often become exercises in futility, organized and chaired by the same conservative groups year after year. (18)

1.3 We keep diagnosing the obvious and giving prognosis of a tragedy. We emphasize sectorial solutions, dealing with what is important and not with what is fundamental. Everything is important, but what is fundamental? Important is the help given to some needy groups, but fundamental is the promotion of a permanent structure of jobs; important is long term, but fundamental is NOW.

We keep projecting tendencies, of all what we do not want to be continued. Tendency is not destiny. The destiny is in our hands . . . When dealing with the (malnutrition) problem it is important to act on the causes and on the effects. It is useless to take care of (the malnourished) while the causes (of malnutrition) are not solved . . . There are two ways to act: One, is to propose steps to avoid those causes to happen, and second, is to help solve the already existing problems. The greatest waste in this latter task is time (bringing about a loss or a delay in the possibility of implementing real solutions). Time wasted on diagnoses for checking easily verifiable tendencies; time wasted

(*): Parentheses are mostly the author's.

on excess methodology . . . Decisions are delayed by a system without any synchronization with the speed of happening. (19)

1.4 A program of conscientization directed at the scientific community might perhaps be undertaken as an initiative to apply science and technology to "another development". . . One of the greatest challenges facing humanity today is the challenge to meet the fundamental needs of the mass of human population. . . . Research, even applied has acquired an elitist character, with little or no relevance to our concern for the needs of the people. (20)

1.5 In turning away from roles to goals, we nutritionists could leave behind academicism and begin to look at real people and their needs. (21)

1.6 There is a tendency . . . to stop the analysis where "politics" begins, with formulations like: "this, however, is a political question". Of course, that is where the analysis very often should start . . . Our task is not merely to reflect the world, but to do something about it . . . A goal which is not at the same time a process, becomes a dogma. . . It is the "principle of (recognizing and acting promptly at the) ripe time" that mainly differentiates the politician from the theoretician. (22)

1.7 Institutional compartmentalization has separated political from economic analyses . . . resulting in a passive reluctance to call a cat a cat. (23)

1.8 Scientists ignore the mechanisms of economic/military/political power and how such power was achieved. It takes more than a myth to conquer half the world. But continually ignoring economic necessity subtly condemns (nutritionists) both to seeking economists' approval and to feeling traitorous for doing so. (24)

1.9 Too many economists and too many international organizations are seeking to take the politics out of political economy and the decision making process to avoid discord or conflict. . . . Many, if not most, aspects of life

should never be decided by the economists' yardstick only. The abolition of slavery or child labor laws certainly never would have passed a cost-benefit test. (25)

1.10 The classless approach of sociological studies, for the most part, focus their analysis on the poor, not on the economic system that produces poverty. Thus, not paradoxically, most of the strategies for eradicating that poverty have been directed at the poor themselves, but not at the economic system that produces that poverty. (26)

1.11 All the elements needed to study malnutrition in its wider economic and political context are there (i.e. unequal distribution between the various sectors of society, the role of state and private interests and the conflicts between them), but authors continue, in spite of this, to discuss matters within the framework of cultural habits and ignorance. Their implicit social model (ideology) does not enable them to handle the complex of social and economic phenomena they themselves mention. (8)

1.12 There is a total lack of social imagination among nutritionists. Nutritionists are in for a period of rough and agonizing reappraisal if they are to contribute to a world that is changing with remarkable speed. It is incumbent upon nutritionists to make governments conscious of health and nutrition in new ways, that medical empires do not solve health problems and that the answer is not to be found in small projects or with a few experts running around. (27)

1.13 Every age is dominated by what Foucault calls an "episteme" - a way of conceiving and perceiving the world, which brings certain features of existence into visibility and blurs or conceals others. If we are to understand history, then, we must come to terms with the episteme of each age. In it we will find the interplay between knowledge and power. (28)

1.14 Western civilization will not be judged so much on its vast accumulation of scientific knowledge, as on its trusteeship of that knowledge and its efficient application to the betterment of living. (29)

1.15 Unless philosophically (ideologically) inclined people are content to take life as it comes when things go reasonably well, preferring to evade the troublesome question of life's purpose or meaning . . . In times of trouble, however, the problem . . . forces itself on our awareness. The greater the hardship we experience, the more pressing the question becomes for us. (30); Mankind has no collective memory. (25)

1.16 Intellectual liberation is difficult to achieve, since many of us are prisoners of our own past training and somebody else's thought. (31)

1.17 All science is ultimately a search for meaning, but what that consists of varies from one person to another. The gap is not between science and humanities . . . but rather between those who have a scientist's or a humanist's eye for facts. (32)

1.18 We are taught that science is completely opposite from religion: Religion obtains knowledge by revelation and confirms it by faith; science obtains knowledge by observation and confirms it by replication. In this idealized view, a scientist can observe anything at all, write it and submit it to a scientific journal. The journal sends the article to several scientists for review and, if they agree the findings are interesting and the observations competent and accurate, the article is published. Other scientists read the article and try to replicate the experiment. If a number of them succeed, the new finding is accepted. Most scientists believe science works this way. But sociologists, historians of science and just plain people are beginning to notice how differently it works in practice. (33)

2. Significance of nutrition interventions:

2.1 Intervention strategies can be classified in three categories according to the principles that govern them: Comprehensive strategies that are multidisciplinary in nature and call for multisectoral cooperation; Improvement strategies that "put the needed spare-parts to the system" by assuming that only some things can be changed NOW, and Transformation strategies that call for radical changes of the environment or the social system. (34)

2.2 Problems are "solved" in an isolated and totally a-political way, because there is still a lack of understanding of what determinants are really important and how they need to be approached. (35)

2.3 Projects dreamed up in a social vacuum must play themselves out in the real world of injustice and conflict. (36). The objective consequences may turn out to be different from the subjective intent. (37). We need scientists who are strong and elastic enough to ask the right questions rather than sell the wrong answers. (38)

2.4 It is the power to determine rather than respond to a particular situation which awards (nutrition interventions) their political significance. The application of (nutrition interventions) for development is essentially, therefore, a political issue. (20)

2.5 Predilection of nutritionists for education interventions is the result of their adherence to a concept of society which derives from functionalist social theory. For the functionalists there are "practical difficulties" and "obstacles to desirable changes", but fortunately there are also "various services and/or facilities" to overcome them, so in the end everything will be fine. Nutritionists face a double problem: To judge the objective oppressive constraint mechanisms, and the subjective social, cultural and psychological reactions to them. A major activity of nutritionists should, then, be the analysis and exposure of the impact of those constraint mechanisms on nutrition. (8)

2.6 There are two kinds of problems: reducible and irreducible. The difference between them is simple: reducible problems have clearly definable solutions while irreducible ones do not. You know when you've got the answer to a reducible problem - it fits like the right piece in a puzzle. But problems such as inequalities, disparity or injustice are irreducible, because their solutions are not fixable; this kind of problem generates only vague, complex and temporary solutions . . . The problem with development is that too often we are trying to find reducible solutions to irreducible problems. Thus technological advances are the answer to reducible problems, but many hoped they would solve the irreducible problems. Misjudgement of the kind of problem and type of solution actually compounds the problem. (39)

2.7 In trying to solve malnutrition: Agriculturists emphasize the need for agricultural extension and application of technology; monetarists see production incentives as the key to remedying distortions in relative prices; culturalists emphasize general education as the way to achieve motivation and overcome cultural barriers; and structuralists focus upon the contradictions of a class structured society that explain economic inequalities and malnutrition. (40)

2.8 Program success does not mean elimination of malnutrition. . . . The goals of nutritional improvements have ridden the crest either of a research thrust or a humanitarian effort. Neither of these tracks has yet produced an example of overwhelming success. (5)

2.9 The strategy of "life-style politics" for correcting the deficits in the diet of our population, by individually changing the food consumption patterns (diet) of individual persons, avoids the political question of why the individuals consume that diet in the way they do. Thus, it ignores the enormous power of the economic needs of specific corporate interests in determining that consumption. (26)

2.10 Nutrition planning suffers greatly from the mystification of the issues involved through the language used - perhaps it is a device used to disguise issues that are often politically hot, with a technical cover. (41)

2.11 -Planners and other bureaucrats do what they are told by their political masters.

-International and national "survival" supercedes health and nutrition priorities.

-We do not need nutritionists to help people nutritionally.

-As government bureaucracy increases there is a concomitant atrophy of local organization. (42)

3. Choice of nutrition policies:

3.1 Economic injustice is not an accident. It springs from the very nature of capitalism. When profit governs the day-to-day decisions of business, the effect on the ordinary person will inevitably be considered secondary. Policy cannot be governed by the profit motive and by love thy neighbor at the same time. . . . Under liberal capitalism the most that can be hoped for are a few compromises . . . These alleviate some misery, but those underfed and underprivileged millions are still among us, suffering. (43)

3.2 "More income and employment generation so that the poor can purchase the food they need": This approach appears more sensible even at the risk of putting a number of nutrition -policy experts out of business. (5)

3.3 The politically disengaged scientific community frequently answers that not enough information is yet available to make definitive assessments of the interaction of different variables. The next response is, then, a call for more research . . . This argument is advanced even though absolute proof is an impossible goal. Political and economic opponents of any advocated changes are, of course, happy to espouse the scientist's argument . . . that proof is not yet

adequate, definitive or sufficiently general to create policy. . . . Predicting the outcome of policy choices in a universal, generalizable fashion . . . may be essentially impossible. . . . Policy is made not only on the basis of biological and behavioral interrelations, but also from the perspective of very specific value judgements, (ergo, ideology). . . . Policy is of necessity a more general tool than research and covers a much broader set of interactions. Therefore, the danger exists that policy could be based on mythology. (44)

3.4 In matters of science that have implication for public policy, the politician or policy-maker often has to form an opinion based on what he hears from those who don't know anything about the subject and are viewing it from the outside and on what he hears from those who do know a great deal about the subject and are viewing it from the inside. (45)

3.5 Without a more sophisticated analytical framework capable of accounting for macro-economic impacts, the public-policy decisions based on the result of a micro-economic benefit-cost analysis can be undesirable. If public-policy makers have additional objectives they would like to consider in making investment decisions, such as equity and distributional considerations, then it becomes necessary to incorporate them into the analysis. (45)

3.6 Given the current state of economic art, mathematical cost-benefit analyses are about as neutral as voter literacy tests in the Old South. They are often ideological documents designed to prove preconceived notions. Or, as a Library of Congress review has said of them "they tend to support the vested interests of the sponsor of the estimate or to fit the hypothesis of the individual making the estimate". (47)

3.7 When the nutrition issue is framed as a contest between pragmatism and ideology, which should come first in the solution of the problems? Ends and means, politics and philosophy, are always divisive subjects. (5)

3.8 Why do the attempts to be comprehensive not achieve the expected results? The complex nature of the problem (of nutrition) complicates policy making. . . . The essence of the problem transcends its interdisciplinary nature. Comprehensiveness cannot be obtained by achieving all-inclusiveness of the part, but by creating a philosophy into which all parts mesh. The development of such a philosophy has been avoided because it automatically raises larger issues about the direction of society and challenges the current system. . . . The essence of the matter is the need for new philosophies, methodologies and processes which help us work towards a society inspired by a different world view. We need tactics, but first we need innovative strategies. It is necessary to pass from the state of critique to (concrete action) . . . Tactics must be shifted from a defensive position to one that offers positive choices . . . A positive strategy will be most effective if efforts are made to go beyond the political goal of obtaining the lowest common denominator . . . that only serves to alleviate guilt feelings. (48)

4. -Political power, economic power and poverty:

4.1 Was there ever any domination which did not appear natural to those who possessed it? (49)

4.2 In any society, the dominant groups are the ones with the most to hide about the way society works. . . . Sympathy with the victims of historical processes and skepticism about the victors' claims, provide essential safeguards against being taken in by the dominant mythology. A scholar who tries to be objective needs these feelings as part of his working equipment. (50)

4.3 The Establishment is not those people who hold and exercise power as such. It is the people who create and sustain the climate of assumptions and opinions within which power is exercised by those who do hold it by election or appointment. (51). The Establishment is a pretty clumsy monitor of morality. (52)

4.4 To an economist, it is greed, not love that makes the world go 'round. While the world's religions condemn avarice as a deplorable vice, the world's economists exalt it as a cardinal virtue. Unlike priests, economists know that avarice is useful in understanding some of the major issues in today's economy . . . Avarice is the opposite of the weather. Everyone talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it. No one talks about avarice, but everyone does a great deal about it, and that is why economists believe that greed makes the world go 'round. (53)

4.5 The institutions which create growth are not neutral as to its distribution. . . . The concept of market demand mocks poverty or plainly ignores it as the poor have very little purchasing power. Market demand should be substituted by national consumption and production targets on the basis of minimum human needs. Development must be redefined as a selective attack on the worst forms of poverty. Development must be measured as the level of needs-satisfaction of the poorest 40%. Let us take care of our poverty and let GNP take care of itself. (31)

4.6 The poorest are the same everywhere. They are poor primarily because their needs are not central to the political priorities of governments. (54). Unemployment is the greatest generator of poverty. (55)

4.7 The egalitarian pronouncements of the political leadership come handy as a smokescreen to promote the interests of the privileged classes who control the levers of political power. (56)

4.8 (With the typical technocratic solutions we end up with) . . . people who have more education and more health than they have power and economic resources. (22)

4.9 Absolute poverty must be abolished wherever it exists. Relative poverty (dissatisfaction with one's relative position in the income pyramid) is

truly important, but morally not important as a priority. Nobody should increase its affluence, until everybody has gotten its essentials. The affluent 640 million people in the world, must pay for the minimum income reforms. Appropriate channels for transferring the savings of the rich into income for the poor must be found . . . This will require a new ethos, a discouragement of consumerism. Experiences show that this cannot be done without a radical change in power relations. The moment a maximum is suggested, the existing power structure feels threatened. It is seldom difficult to agree about desirable minimums. (57)

4.10 Conflict is common where there are competing interests, therefore, avoiding it is no solution. Conflict is not necessarily violence. Conflict is often a necessary means to attain true dialogue with people in authority. The poor do not achieve this until they have shown they are no longer servile and afraid. They have to move from the culture of silence to a position of dignified persons. (58)

4.11 Respect is denied to the weak more quickly than it is withheld from the strong; the display of power alone will permit one to practice a superior brand of ethics. Once this principle is established on the individual level, it requires little imagination to apply it to nations. (59)

5. -Commitment: Science for social change:

5.1 The role of science in raising mass consciousness is critical. It can generate a scientific attitude of inquiry among the masses so that they can move from fatalistic prejudices to a realization of their power to change reality in their favor . . . Scientists can bring to the masses systematic knowledge of the wider social structure and its working, a knowledge that is critical in the choice of strategies for social change; bring to them knowledge of initiatives to change society taken elsewhere, so that they may learn from the experiences. (13)

5.2 Development means liberation. Any action that gives the people more control of their own affairs is an action for development, even if it does not offer them better health or more bread. (60)

5.3 Measuring poverty in detail can often be a substitute for, or an excuse for not acting in respect of perfectly visible needs. (61)

5.4 An induced commitment to justice is shakier than a genuine one, be the former "bribed into" by voluntary agencies or others, or "frightened into" by the threat of political unrest. (62)

5.5 No government can do everything. To govern is to choose. But poverty will persist and grow if the choice too often favors the peripheral extravagance over the critical need. . . . Get the services to the poor and the poor to the services. . . . Even in those LDCs that have enjoyed rapid growth, the poorest income groups have not shared in it equitably; their incomes have risen only one third as fast as the national average. . . . No government wants to perpetuate poverty. But not all governments are persuaded they can do something about it. (53)

5.6 The fashion of the times dictates that, even in countries that are not fully committed to general social development, nutrition and nutrition programs have become glamorous, popular subjects. Thus, one can see a political commitment to the "idea of nutrition" without commitment to deal with the concomitant problems. (64)

5.7 The time has come, perhaps, to ask the question modern liberalism has always ducked: Why is the wealth of any "egalitarian" nation distributed so unjustly? The question itself sounds vaguely Marxist, which is one reason why welfare-state liberals have always ducked. . . . The long march of liberal solutions to social injustice is evasive of the more fundamental questions about wealth and its gross maldistribution. The liberal mindset, honorable and well-intentioned, cannot confront the natural limits that always will stand in its way. In the final balance, the welfare-state cares best for the prosperous, not the poor. (65)

In the U.S., because there is more or less enough to go around, the system can get away with less equity. (66)

5.8 An honest man must back the revolution as long as his conscience allows him, but once it deteriorates into bureaucracy or worse, he must stand up and denounce it. There is no escape from his role. The intellectual's purpose in this turbulent century must be one of fidelity and criticism. . . . I think that faithfulness is essential: you can't leave a group whenever you feel like it, whenever you don't agree with its political policies one hundred percent. If you belong to it you ought to stick with it as long as you can, or at least until the situation becomes impossible. But you must always remember that the role of an intellectual is to emphasize the principles of the revolution. And if those principles are not respected, then the intellectual has a duty to speak out and say so. Fidelity and criticism. It's no easy task, I assure you, but we have to fulfill that difficult role nonetheless, as best we can. (67)

5.9 What is the appropriate role of science in people's development in situations where exploitation and oppression are acute but room still exists for economic (technological) initiatives to improve the material status of the poor, at least up to a point? Many persons will deride such initiatives as "reformism". But can the masses be easily mobilized for exclusive political action for structural change if space for economic improvement within the existing structure still exists? Should progressive forces stand aloof from such space and leave them to be filled by real reformists thereby distracting mass attention from the need for fundamental social change for a more sustained improvement of their lives? Or should a combination of economical and political mobilization be pursued? (13)

5.10 The "Basic Human Needs" approach:

Basic needs are very important as political programs. Meeting basic needs will in most countries hardly require any new knowledge or any new hard technology. However, it will require political solutions which are likely to have a

number of technological inputs. But the political solutions are not dependent on first making the technological input available. (14)

Basic Human Needs focus on five target clusters (not limited to material needs):

1. Basic personal consumer goods: food, clothing, housing and furnishing.
2. Universal access to basic services: education (adult and child), pure water, preventive and curative health, environmental sanitation, communications, and legal services.
3. The right to productive employment.
4. An infrastructure (physical, human, technical, institutional) to produce goods and services.
5. Mass participation in decision making and review.

Not everyone who says "Basic Needs" supports the above strategic conceptualization. The Roman emperors provided "bread and circuses" for the masses; authoritarian regimes present modern variants, e.g. "football stadia and black beans", "basketball courts and rice". Basic needs defined in material terms, delivered by a bureaucracy and planned by an elite can create client groups, demobilize mass groups and create new patterns of dependence, examples of this being Brazil and South Korea . . . Devoid of a clear ideological orientation, Basic Human Needs do not clarify but mystify, they do not mobilize but manipulate.

Technocratic basic needs models assume that the problems are largely management gaps within the decision-making groups together with the lack of ability to grasp opportunities by the poor. (61)

5.11 (Scientists) in higher education in America help reproduce the class system with their right hand and it's hard to keep the left hand free to foster critical intelligence. We are not independent intellectuals floating somewhere above the economic system; we're part of it. (68)

5.12 (What we often see in liberals) is an excellent example of a depressing genre: powerful diagnosis joined to feeble therapy. (When making decisions) they often play zero-sum games in which losses and gains cancel out. (Poker is such a game . . .). However, once growth slows, it is much harder to play positive sum games in which everybody or almost everybody wins something. We are good at allocating gains but horrible at sharing out losses . . . All the players have acquired the capacity to stall indefinitely policies and changes they oppose . . . Organized interests can stall actions of general public merit . . . producers almost invariably defeat consumers because the stakes for them are much greater . . . Ideology and self-interest frequently clash. (69)

6. -Ethics, Ideology and Technology:

6.1 We need not retreat into helpless passivity, watching a biological and social system deteriorate. We can alter trends and avert catastrophes if we recognize and exercise our own power to make a difference. . . . We all carry around with us a bag of unexamined credos, and this unexamined life is what comes under pressure when we are faced with decisions. (70)

6.2 We often find ourselves accepting or supporting "ethically neutral", although "value biased" premises. In the name of scientific analysis, unemployment, malnutrition and poverty are often perpetuated through the impersonal mechanisms of economic policy and of the market. (71)

6.3 Whether a certain development in a society is interpreted as harmful or beneficial depends on one's theoretical position and one's class interests. . . . To understand and to change any social situation requires a knowledge not only of the internal dynamics of the situation, but also of the nature of the macro-system which provides parameters for the situation. (8) We have to learn to look at totalities, rather than fragments of reality. (35)

6.4 The crucial test of ethics is who defines who is functioning as a true social change agent. Without clear definition, without structured accountability,

the search for the true innovator can be the excuse for inquisitorial behavior . . . Many people believe that scientists' psychic energy is so powerful it transforms all around it. My question is: how can this gathered energy confront the Pentagon, Exxon or any other political or economic institution? What is missing, then, is urgent political strategy. (24)

6.5 The crisis of belief among capitalists is partly subjective, an inability to reconcile that vast disparity in economic privilege generated by the system with moral pressures for egalitarianism. (72)

6.6 The challenge in our present world is not to maximize happiness (in practice interpreted as maximizing economic growth, GNP, or the quantity of goods), but to organize our society to minimize suffering. Human happiness is undefinable; human suffering is concrete (hunger, sickness, unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, ignorance). (73)

6.7 Political equality may be achieved at the expense of economic productivity, or vice-versa, that is the historical dilemma. (74) In the long run, philosophical (ideological) considerations may prove as potent as economic considerations when the aim is to achieve relevant and durable solutions. (25)

6.8 While we say that as a democracy we have no ideology, in the communist sense, Marxists do not agree; Marx and Lenin taught that economics motivate and control policy in capitalist nations. (37) On the other hand, arguments against Marxism speak of a lack of freedom in "totalitarian regimes". The answer to that is that for Marxists the freedom from hunger and disease and other social evils is more important than freedom of expression which they view as a bourgeois value devoid of sincerity. (25)

6.9 When people who hold the fate of (malnutrition) in their hands make fine distinctions, semantics become statements of policy. Words have always been ideology and ideology has been policy. It, therefore, becomes important to take a

close look at our moral rights, our needs and our moral duties. Are these three also interlocked with political alternatives? What do we really mean by moral right? Is subjective conviction all there is to the concept of moral right? Obviously not, for otherwise any thief who honestly believes that because he has had a deprived childhood or because he has been wronged by society he has a right to help himself to a piece of someone else's property thinking that that would be morally right. And a Robin Hood who robs the rich to give to the poor, would be doubly right. The subjective conviction that one is in the right gives one the inner strength to do what one is doing. That is an important thing in itself. But for such a subjective conviction to become a moral right, it also has to obtain the sanction of others, even if not necessarily most or even all of them. Such a sanction may convert a Robin Hood from a highway robber into a social rebel, a terrorist into a freedom fighter. A subjective claim can become a recognized moral and legal right by external sanction. But there is another limit to any moral right which determines to what extent it will be sanctioned - its possible conflict with another moral right. When such a conflict arises, the sanction for one right against the other depends, in terms of morality and justice, on what claim is considered the stronger, the more urgent, the less injurious to the other. In terms of political reality it depends on whose claim can muster more support based on the real interests of those who have the power to grant the sanction or to deny it. These lines represent the extent of the moral and legal right the world is prepared to accept. However much we may regret it, the world never accepts more. Not only do the relative weights of conflicting moral claims change - political power interests also change. The question is, what sanction, moral, legal and political one can get for any new position . . . Morally, might is not right. Politically, it often is. Perhaps if we have the might, our subjective belief that we are doing no wrong would in time receive the

sanction of some and of time itself, if not on moral grounds then on the grounds of hard-nosed self-interest. But not only do we not have the might, no only do we not have the power to rally support, and not only does time work against us, but the very attempt to rely on our moral strength may lead to disaster. It may be good rhetoric to say that we need no one's confirmation of our rights, that we shall in all likelihood again win morally, but politically, however, it may bleed us to death. The question is not our right to (fight hunger and malnutrition), but how - and that, unfortunately, can not easily be imposed unilaterally. To (malnutrition) we have a supreme moral claim, sanctioned by the entire world. For the alternative, the claim to (structural social changes) we have no universal sanction. (Charity), therefore, is obscurantism, because it really means no solution. (75)

6.10 In the world that liberalism finally made, the world of the welfare-state and the multinational corporation, liberalism itself has become politically and intellectually bankrupt. Having overthrown feudalism and slavery and then outgrown its own personal and familial form, capitalism has evolved a new political ideology, welfare-liberalism, which absolves individuals of moral responsibility and treats them as victims of social circumstances . . . Moralists, are out of fashion (and they tend to be grumpy). In either case, reformers with the best intentions condemn the lower class to a second rate education and thus help to perpetuate the inequalities they seek to abolish. In the name of egalitarianism, they preserve the most insidious form of elitism. (76)

6.11 The ideologist is seldom a good listener; he already knows the problem beforehand; he already has the packaged solution; he already calculated what strategy to use; he sees nothing new about the present situation. (77)

6.12 Western scholarship is a fiction, a representation, a closed system, one that has developed according to its own rules. These rules have subdivided

the experience of a whole area into neat categories convenient to scholarly classification - though not necessarily conducive to a better understanding of the subject. . . These scientists are simply guilty of bad scholarship, which could be improved (and be made truthful) if only they would reform their methods and expunge their false preconceptions. Few scholars can resist the pressures on them of the scholarly tradition in which they work. (78)

6.13 There's a very effective kind of ideological control in the U.S., managed by politicians, media lords, capitalists, and mainstream American intellectuals. This system of thought control restricts how we perceive ourselves, the alternatives we can imagine, our understanding of the rest of the world, and, most importantly, it prevents any major ideological changes from taking place in the U.S. The United States political discourse and debate has often been less diversified even than in certain fascist countries, Franco's Spain, for example. We do not have significant Marxist or Socialist journalism in the U.S., and they may well enliven debate. Capitalism, albeit modified and socialized, is our way of economic life, and we're indoctrinated to it. (79)

6.14 The French have intellectual superstars because they care passionately about new ideas, while most Americans are still trying to get comfortable with the work of our last genuine intellectual: Thomas Jefferson. We have not, as an educated people, begun to assimilate the ideas of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud that underlie most current European thought. And this makes it extraordinarily difficult for us. (28)

6.15 There are two kinds of revolution - technological and political. It is technology which is flattening differences around the world - cultures which took centuries to build and sustain can be transformed by "development" in a few decades. Technology dilutes and dissolves ideology. . . . While political revolutions are almost always successful in response to a felt need - more liberty,

a different racial division, or simply more bread - technology invents needs and exports problems. Political revolutions always have motives - a why - such as grievances, and the need for redress. These are, as Jefferson told us, neither light nor transient, but involve a long train of abuses and usurpations. . . . Great technological changes, on the other hand, do not have a why. Technology, unlike politics, is irreversible. We may be able to develop a new strain of wheat and so cure starvation somewhere. But it may not be in our power to cure injustice anywhere, even in our own country, much less in distant places. (80)

6.16 Technology is not the origin of change, but merely the means whereby society changes itself. By technology I mean not just tools and machines, but also skills and motivation. The wrong technologies are rapidly destroying any real community life. (81)

6.17 When the world is messy, you fall back either on ideology or technique. Good young people respond to the seduction of technique. It's independent of experience and you don't have to know much. (82)

6.18 Better to change our order of thinking rather than trying to conquer malnutrition by the use of technology. Technology is basically improvisational. It treats the symptoms; it provides no lasting cures. Moreover, technology is part of the problem. New policies will require a patient and possibly painful reeducation of professional planners and public alike. (11)

6.19 Technocrats tend to dodge the moral issues of undernutrition: "We're afraid to confront the economists on nutritional issues, because they come down to moral questions and these are non-scientific and hard to grapple with. So we slide away from them". (66)

6.20 Technical pragmatism by men of good will can build national, regional and global strategies with no ideological content, appealing to all reasonable men and capable of being implemented. Technocrats shore up bits of dead polemics

and lost faith with fragments wrenched from "incomplete" alternatives . . . A pastiche is not a synthesis. If this is the best that the best applied thinkers of the international development establishment can produce, then indeed development thinking is a burnt out case wandering in a desert. Faith in technocratic platonic guardians leading gallant warriors in a global hierarchy of bureaucracies and universities to develop the world, remains unshaken. This leads an outsider to see a picture of general harmony of interests. It also leads to incoherence and to capitalism not with a human face but with bleary eyes and a nagging headache. We need to drop the fallacy of this universal harmony of interests so that areas of real parallel interests, negotiable compromises and package deals can be identified and promoted. (83)

6.21 The Ethics of Sociobiology:

Intellectuals bend the rules of discourse to suit their own interests; they argue for what they want to believe. . . . Determinist theories consistently tend to provide a justification of the status-quo and of existing privileges for certain groups according to class, race or sex. The judgement of a work of science depends on whether it conforms to the political convictions of the judges, who are self-appointed. . . . The constructions of science proceed to the values of ethics, which are affected deeply and unconsciously by a complex array of neurons and hormone-secreting cells located just beneath the "thinking" portion of the cerebral cortex, in the limbic system. Morality, then, evolved as instinct (as did social organization and many other distinguishing human characteristics). If morality did indeed evolve as instinct, then science may soon be in a position to investigate the very origin and meaning of human values, from which all ethical pronouncements and much of political practice flow. . . . Ethical choices not grounded in biology will not work in the long run, because man is inextricably mired in his biology. . . . The human mind is constructed

to judge the truth. Man believes what he is disposed to believe as measured against the evidence he sees. . . . What counts as a fact depends on the concepts you use, on the questions you ask. There is no neutral terminology. There are really no wholly neutral facts. All describing is classifying according to some conceptual scheme. . . . Motives are not just private states of mind, but patterns in everybody's life, many of which are directly observable to other people. We cannot say what somebody is doing until we know why he does it. Man can neither understand his nature nor his behavior until he understands his motives. It concerns us vitally to know his intentions. . . . Sociobiology scrupulously avoids any discussion of motive, but not mentioning it doesn't make it go away. . . . Feelings cannot be divorced from thoughts. In fact, it is wrong to say that we just establish the facts, and then, quite separately, take up an attitude to them, view them as good or bad. Thought and feeling must go together throughout. The intellect divides the indivisible - thought from feeling, form from content - but such dichotomies do not exist in nature; ambivalence is part of our nature, else we would not have developed a morality. . . . Asking different kinds of questions produces quite different kinds of answers. Slicing the world in different directions reveals different patterns. How you see it depends on how you slice it. All you have to remember is that there's more than one way to cut it. (84)

6.22 In "the way things areness", society makes disprivilege look right, creating, in marxist terms, false consciousness. Things are "explained away"; therefore, economics books, for instance, are books of ideology. Ideology is the way society explains itself; it is therefore filled with myths. (85)

6.23 Morality is one of the forms of social consciousness. It changes with each change of social order. The ruling class imposes its morality and puts it into practice in accord with its historical class interests . . . Politics, science, morality, art and religion are forms of ideology. There are only two

ideologies: bourgeois and socialist; humanity has not elaborated a "third" ideology. (Lenin). (86)

6.24 Human events, like physical events, can be viewed at many levels of abstraction, each providing a window on the world. To restrict our view to a single window is to invite partial truths. Half-truths can be dangerous; they can frighten and subdue the uninitiated while legitimizing the interpreters, deforming the moral discourse. (To believe strongly and passionately in something is to become biased and one-sided toward that point of view.) (87)

6.25 The "bourgeoisie" is too often left undefined, but its characteristics, are clear. Its ideology is based entirely upon commerce. Its morality has a rhetoric of retaliation based upon book-keeping. Qualitative values are excluded in favor of the quantitative. Its rationality is simplistic. It negates all that is different from itself. It is diabolical. It acts as if it were part of nature itself, and it is imperial . . . Everything in everyday life, from our films to our cooking is dependent upon the notions the bourgeoisie make us have. The bourgeoisie succeeds in its conquest by infiltrating everyday life with myth. Modern myths justify and enforce the power of the bourgeoisie by presenting it as a natural force. But such myths are insidious; they may appear innocent, but in fact, have a stronghold upon our life . . . (Liberals) touch only the surface of culture because they believe there is nothing underneath. They are attracted then to rich surfaces, even to those of the bourgeois world they so adamantly reject. (88)

6.26 Consolatory nonsense seems to me a fair definition of myth . . . Myth deals in false universals, to dull the pain of particular circumstances. (89)

6.27 The problem with labels is not that when they are applied too soon or too loosely, they are, while not necessarily despicable, usually not to be trusted. By trying to encapsulate too much, they oversimplify or mislead . . .

We often try too hard to pin down the presence of a new political consensus where, by our own admission, something a lot less than a real consensus actually exists . . . i.e. we can tell in the greatest detail what these groups are opposed to or simply worried about. But when it comes to the question of what, in positive terms they stand for, answers are often a puzzle . . . (liberals) are committed to stability as the prerequisite for justice, rather than the other way around . . . Their work is of high quality. They have connections in the Establishment. They address fundamental questions. They are literate. They are a new cast of experts (technocrats), and "reform-professionals", yet "stability professionals" might do equally well, or, perhaps "policy-professionals" would be the most neutral and suitable description . . . A large slice of contemporary society derives its well-being from expertise and position in large complex organizations. Scientists, engineers, technicians and intellectuals are restless, dissatisfied and critical and urgently in need of an ideology. But they are also doing quite nicely; they have a vested interest in the status-quo . . . And what is the ideology to be? Just a vague consensus for equal opportunity, but not for an egalitarianism which ends up with equal shares of everything for everybody . . . it emphasizes morality and fundamental values and is good at exposing unintended consequences of well-meant measures . . . This is downright dangerous . . . this position has evolved into an independent force threatening to give legitimacy to an oligarchy condition where essential conditions are made by corporate elites, where great inequalities are rationalized and where democracy becomes an occasional, ritualistic gesture. (90)

6.28 Many errors of truth, Spinoza once wrote, consist merely in the application of the wrong names to things. Terms such as conservative and liberal, right wing and leftist, radical and reactionary may be of some use, within limits, but they are a source of endless confusion. In foreign affairs, once upon a time

it was argued that attitudes toward the Soviet Union were the decisive test: liberals were sympathetic, conservatives were hostile. But a great deal of water has flown down the Moskva since 1917, and if the test ever made sense, it is now perfectly nonsensical . . . Why are these misleading terms so frequently used, then? Partly, no doubt, out of ignorance, one of the most underrated factors in politics. Partly out of the desire to save valuable newsprint. It is so much easier to use one short adjective than to explain at length . . . Quite frequently the "mistake" is deliberate. Some labels are more fashionable and attractive than others. . . some have a positive public relations image . . . All this is of more than semantic importance. Misleading language does not contribute to clarity of thought. One should be suspicious when next confronted with such labels . . . It may be an honest mistake or carelessness, but it could also be deliberate obfuscation. (91)

6.29 Unlike academic achievement, intellectual development cannot be separated from moral development. The connection between morality and the sciences may appear indirect, but I do not see how a deeply prejudiced person could be a good research scholar . . . The importance of the moral factor is more obvious when it comes to the social sciences and philosophy. In these disciplines, morality - who you are and where you stand - must make a difference . . . I do not want intellectual development to stunt moral growth; they must travel hand in hand . . . How does one deal with poverty around the world if by our behavior we abet those who favor an elitist and authoritarian view of society and see left wing subversion in every attempt to change the way people have been treated unjustly? . . . Whether we like it or not, what we are morally depends on the choices we make, the things we actually do. And what we teach honestly and convincingly depends on what we are. (92)

6.30 Although (moralists' views) carry an ideological debate with the culture that breeds them, they never confront that culture with another ideology . . . with political possibilities that are new or challenging. For without challenging the ideology many of them find abhorrent, they only perpetuate the passivity that has become their central image. (93)

6.31 To be human is to be a moral agent, able to choose freely amongst alternatives and to engage in consequential action. Moral questions arise as we consider how we ought to act in respect of others . . . The moral values we draw upon in choosing are themselves the product of collective life . . . Moral values are consensual, and actions based on them are said to be legitimate . . . It is clear, however, that the moral code of a community also legitimized established relations of power. An instrument of domination in the hands of the ruling class, it is not only an integrative but an alienating force; it renders exploitation of the people easier . . . Neither moral nor political, the market's powers are purely instrumental, relating means to given ends . . . By responding more and more to the logic of markets, communities are reduced to the functional requirements of livelihood, while the roles and moral obligations of citizens are dismissed as irrelevant and even detrimental to the uninhibited pursuit of pleasure. . . A system that has no place for a majority of the people has lost the moral authority to prescribe what should be done . . . It is by participating in the political life of a community that we acquire a sense of who we are. It is through political discourse that a needs-oriented economy comes into being. . . The right to equal access to such discourse is the radicals' demand. (94)

6.32 Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger both were contemptuous of the notion of morality in their foreign policy "Realpolitik", seeing in it an excess of sentimentality. . . Wilsonian idealism, on the other hand, has stressed moralism and morality as the central factors that ought to shape American foreign policy. (95)

6.33 To liberals, support from a liberal international environment is essential to alleviating poverty. They often are of the opinion that bureaucratic interventions are expensive and usually against the interest of the poor. When they communicate matters relevant or dear to them their target audience is often third world political/capitalist elites.

It is no surprise that liberals believe in the market and in competition. The market is to save the poor by slaying the elitist, inefficient monsters of bureaucratic regulation and incompetent, scheming landlords and businessmen who shelter behind them. Just how selective market rigging, to benefit the poor, is to be achieved is seldom analyzed or elaborated on by liberals. Access to urban services, irrigation, health and education are usually seen by liberals as not well handled by the market, although the emphasis on the latter two is based squarely on rising productivity to validate higher incomes.

Seldom do liberals see trade unions as valid market forces or as institutions to be backed.

Economic advocacy is perceived by liberals, if not as a branch of moral philosophy, at least as constrained by the elements of distributive justice. Liberalism has no operational political economy at its core. On the one hand it is abstractedly economic and on the other its desire to demonstrate mutual interests has resulted in expunging any real perception of the nature of political economic conflict perceived in interest-group or class terms. Unfortunately, the consequences of this are serious.

Even more striking is the so frequent lack of comprehension by liberals of transition to socialism strategies and practice (to the point of lack of mention). Algeria and even Yugoslavia are not taken to be seriously different from Brazil, South Korea or Taiwan in economic strategic or conquest of poverty terms. Very true, liberals cannot become advocates of bourgeois democratic revolutions let alone of transition to socialism. But they can and must analyze conflict seriously.

Therefore, liberals matter; capitalist road peripheral policies (capitalism with a human face) will continue to exist and people in them matter. If liberals continue their crusade against poverty and look a little bit harder at why elites resist it, they may perhaps have some muscle to move them. (96)

7. -Foreign Aid in Nutrition:

7.1 The American acceptance of the established ways has an important consequence. It leads to a belief that those with wealth and power - even if inherited - deserve their good fortune. If the rules are fair - and they do not question that they are - those who make their way must deserve what they have amassed. But a corollary of the acceptance of good fortunes is the acceptance of bad fortune. A man who is poor deserves to be poor - he must not have tried hard enough; perhaps if he had worked harder, he might have inherited something . . . Abroad, we doubt that poor nations really deserve our assistance. They must not have tried hard enough, or, had they looked harder, they might have found oil . . . This American attitude towards the permanently poor is confused with our attitude towards the temporarily afflicted; those faced with sudden disaster. No nation is more generous than the U.S. Yet, this generosity is only a natural extension of this same American vision. Victims of disaster cannot be held responsible for their plight. This being so, any poor nation should not only be grateful, but permanently beholden to us for any aid, because it should be recognized that the receiving nation really does not deserve the money. (97)

7.2 The U.S. is at its best in foreign scientific and technological programs when it treats foreigners like colleagues and not like wards. The "ugly American" has too often been a patronizing U.S. expert. (98) A new relationship between the developed countries and the underdeveloped countries is needed. Not one of self-sacrifice and charity, but one of solidarity that leads to harmonize their own changing needs with the aspirations of the underdeveloped countries. (25)

In Tanzania, for example, the pitfalls and challenges have been given ideological expression and offers of aid and certain private investments have been rejected because their consequences were held to be generally harmful. (99)

7.3 Moralists will send money to a distant Mother Theresa but ignore the poor and scorned only a few blocks away. "We can look with anger and contempt on the selfishness of the rich in Calcutta who let the poor starve, but how about our own responsibilities for conditions here in the ghetto of our own cities? Are we ourselves perhaps guilty? It is an unpleasant question. Better to think of the poor in Calcutta." The big difficulty arises from the traditional attitudes of the American people. We are afraid of radical change. How to reduce our fear - transform our cowardice, really - is a mystery that no one has figured out. (43)

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Ethos: The distinguishing character or tone of a social or other group.
Ethics: Science of moral duty, principles and practice or action.
Moral: Establishing principles of right or wrong.
Morality: Instills moral lesson; virtue.
Ideology: a) Content of thinking of an individual or class.
b) Intellectual pattern of any culture or movement.
c) Integrated assertions, theories and aims constituting a politico-social program.
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