

ON THE NEED TO POLITICIZE POLITICAL MORALITY: WORLD HUNGER AND MORAL OBLIGATION

KAI NIELSEN

I

Much of our talk about moral obligation and of what justice requires presupposes that we are talking about one society or at least a group of closely related societies. What is to be said when the whole world is our subject? Brian Barry's analysis of this tricky subject is sensible, and I am in substantial agreement with much of it; but all the same it fails, paradoxically enough, *both* through the lack of a sufficiently developed political sense and through a certain lack of moral idealism.¹ It is deficient both in its sense of *Realpolitik* and in its sense of the moral relevance of a vision of a possible future. Such a dark saying needs explaining; and in what follows, after I have set out something of Barry's case, I shall explain what I have in mind and attempt to justify it.

While not being at all shackled by positivist myths about *wertfrei* social science, Barry still wishes to be a tough-minded, no-nonsense analytical political theorist. But, for all his good intentions, his analysis suffers from an insufficient awareness of the reality of socioeconomic and political factors in the relations between human beings in very different material conditions and spread out in various parts of the world.

Starting from Peter Singer's influential "Famine, Affluence and Morality," Barry asks about the moral claims of poor

countries to economic assistance from rich ones.² What obligations, if any, do such countries have to make transfers to poor ones? It is plain enough that in a rather straightforward way they have an obligation not to harm them, parallel to the obligation of individuals not to harm others. But the significant question here is whether they have an obligation to help poor countries where that comes to something more than simply not harming them. Where rich countries do not make poor countries worse off than they otherwise would be, do they have an obligation to help them?

Singer takes an unyielding utilitarian line here, though for him international redistribution, which he takes as something that should be extensive, operates quite explicitly at the level of individual obligation. Singer starts from a premise that has rather general acceptance. Indeed, it will be widely taken as a moral commonplace, though that of course is not an impediment to its being true. I refer to Singer's claim "that suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad."³ His second key premise has a stronger and a weaker statement, the stronger being that "if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it," the weaker being that "if it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, without sacrificing anything morally significant, we ought, morally, to do it."⁴

Barry has little difficulty in first showing that the stronger form is too strong and then in showing that the weaker form has a number of difficulties of detail in its specific formulation. However, Barry recasts the weaker statement, plausibly capturing what appears at least to be its intent, in what he takes to be a vague but still a tolerably acceptable form. On Barry's formulation, and additional specification, it comes to be the claim that, where it is possible to do so, "there really is an obligation to relieve dire poverty out of superfluity and this [obligation] is not limited by distance or lack of direct relations between the parties." Just as I have an obligation to save a drowning child from a wading pool when I am by it and no one else is, so I have an obligation to give aid to starving children even though I have never met and never will meet the child or children I aid. The lack of face-to-face contact and not being from the

same culture or a similar culture is morally irrelevant, as is the fact that millions of others are in the same or in a similar position to help.

If we accept Singer's premises or his own modification, Barry argues, we have, if we are tolerably well off, a moral obligation to help such starving people even when they are from poor countries very distant from and dissimilar to our own. We have, that is, an obligation to help prevent starvation and the debilitating life that results from severe malnutrition. Daily thousands of people are starving in places like the sub-Sahara, while we (particularly the "we" who will be the readers of this chapter) live in moderate affluence or at least in reasonable security.

Living as we do in moderate affluence or at least in reasonable security, we have an obligation to relieve such suffering. Whether or not it is justice that requires it, at least we have an obligation to relieve suffering as a matter of humanity. This is not just something that it would be good or virtuous of us to do but something, Barry and Singer argue, we have an obligation to do. Morality requires this of us.

Barry takes up the neo-Malthusian argument that accepts the principle that suffering should be relieved but denies that aid to the impoverished countries is, in the long run, a way to relieve suffering. International aid at least appears to be an effective way to reduce, for the present at least, the amount of disease and suffering in the world, but, the neo-Malthusians argue, it also helps all over the world to bail out corrupt, exploitative, extremely class-stratified, antidemocratic regimes—regimes that continue to produce just these conditions that give rise to the suffering in the first place. Moreover, and perhaps more important, such famine relief will actually worsen an already desperate situation. With such aid the populations of these impoverished countries will increase even faster until we reach the state where even more people are starving, and we will not be able to do anything about it.

That such dire predictions will come true, that this will be the upshot of such aid, is of course a factual issue, and both Barry and Singer present telling reasons for doubting that that will be the upshot. However, what such considerations do, in effect, is to bring out the fact that the rich countries need to be very careful about what kind of aid they give. They need to help

with the provision of various contraceptive devices; with aid that will build up the economic and agricultural base of the country; with aid that will increase the educational level of the country; and with military and other aid to revolutionary insurgents struggling, in places such as Latin America and Africa, to topple dictatorial, antisocialist regimes, regimes that are opposed to land reform and to an economic development of the country oriented to meeting the needs of the masses of the people.

The latter sort of aid is surely not going to be forthcoming from most capitalist countries. Capitalist giants, such as the United States and West Germany, the latter even with its Social Democratic government, are going to do just the opposite, but it is just such aid that is sorely needed. And if such aid is given, it is very unlikely that the horrendous consequences the neo-Malthusians predict will obtain. If these consequences are unlikely to occur, it seems plain that the rich nations of the world have a moral obligation to aid the poor nations and that we, as individuals in such countries, have an obligation to press for such aid. (I think, for roughly the reasons Barry gives, that it is governmental action, not individual action per se, that is required here. It is governments that should give such aid. Individuals should devote their energies to help bring about the reality that the rich nations come to have governments committed to such aid—aid that would take the form of a significant redistribution of wealth. It is such governmental aid that has the promise of really being effective.)

Barry concludes against Singer that the stronger and more rigorous utilitarian rationale for giving aid cannot be sustained; but, as we have seen, he argues that we can demythologize out of Singer's account the vaguer but still correct claim that "there really is an obligation to relieve dire poverty out of superfluity and [that] this is not limited by distance or lack of direct relations between the parties." Barry then remarks, correctly I believe, that the facts being what they are, a recognition of this obligation, along with an acceptance of Singer's first premise, that is, his uncontroversial premise "that suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad," is sufficient to require an immense increase in the scale of aid from rich countries to poor ones.

Barry then proceeds to argue that both on the donor side and on the recipient side such obligations "are most effectively carried out if they are enforced by the state rather than left to individual charity."⁵

II

I agree, and for much the same reasons that he gives, that "individual charity" is not going to accomplish much in meeting the problems of world hunger. What is needed is state action on both the donor and the recipient side. But it is just here where the apolitical quality of Barry's account begins to bother me. (I should add that a similar criticism should be made of Singer's account.)

In considering an obvious criticism of Singer's account, to wit, that voters in a democratic society wouldn't buy such a scheme, that they would never vote for taxes that would make for a significant redistribution, Barry makes a number of responses that seem to me quite ineffective. He first points out that it is not the people but their elected representatives who vote for foreign aid and then claims that their elected representatives have a lot of latitude here in the amounts they can vote. But to this it should be responded that it is very unlikely, under the present system, that many of the representatives will be enlightened types with any considerable degree of moral sensitivity such that they will give much thought to starving and undernourished people in the poorer parts of the world. (Exceptions such as present-day [1979–80] Cambodia prove the point. Starvation of that magnitude goes on persistently in many places quite unnoticed. But in the Cambodian case the Americans can gain political advantage from publicizing it.) They will rather divide their attention between, on the one hand, having their ear to the ground to try to discover what they think their constituents want or could be readily sold, and, on the other, to serving faithfully the capitalist order and by so serving that order to enrich themselves. Neither of these activities is likely to lead to much increase in aid. What we need firmly to recognize is that it is hardly likely that from that lot any great move toward a redistribution of wealth will occur.

Barry also remarks that people may behave in a more public-

spirited way when voting than in writing out a check for Oxfam. This may well be true, but it does nothing to show that with either they will tolerate the kind of redistribution necessary to help the poor countries significantly. And while it very well may be rational to prefer a collective decision to an individual decision, where you are seriously contemplating giving funds, this does nothing to show that it is rational to prefer a collective decision *sans phrase* where one of your options may be to give nothing at all or only a little "conscience money," which you then can conveniently deduct from your income tax. Indeed, as far as individual rationality is concerned, it is rational to opt to see everybody 10 percent worse off than be 10 percent worse off yourself while everybody else stays the same. But that is not the only option. You also have the option of giving nothing at all or only a fraction of a percent as "conscience money," which, where certain Nozickian ideological mystifications are at work, may do quite nicely. The question remains whether in capitalist societies, with their characteristic routines of ideological indoctrination, it is even remotely plausible to think that we would get anything even approximating the aid that is required from a moral point of view. With the mentality of proposition 13 around, do we have any reason at all to think that people, left to their own devices, will support anything like that? And is there any reason to expect that the consciousness industry will engage in the kind of sustained and rigorous campaign to turn around people's consciousness about such matters? I am inclined to think the prospects are nil, but at the very least they are extremely bleak.

The political and socioeconomic nature, as distinct from the ecological, scientific, or technological nature of the problem is in effect shown by some of Barry's own evidence. The crucial difference between malnutrition and a tolerably adequate diet is decided in many cases by the state's agricultural policy. If the poorer countries would avoid such an exclusive development of cash crops and the manipulation of the market for profit and would concentrate instead on agricultural production to meet the needs of their people, for some of the countries at least, there could be produced a reasonable diet for the people in their jurisdictions without an influx of aid from outside. The

countries of middle wealth, such as the countries of the Middle East and the better-off ones in Latin America, could meet their famine problems adequately if they would engage in a redistribution of their existing wealth, including a parceling out of land—often very underused land—to the peasants. Even in the sub-Sahara the lack of food is in large measure a result of counterproductive agricultural policies of the states of that region. In these societies a minuscule elite, dependent on a capitalist order, based for the most part in the powerful capitalist countries, exploit, often in a very inefficient way, the poverty-stricken masses—many of whom, if employed at all, are only marginally employed. Even without pumping additional wealth into those countries, if the existing wealth were extensively redistributed and their agricultural policies reoriented, these societies could overcome their hunger problems.⁶

Singer speaks of people channeling their aid money into population control programs. An even better way for individuals to channel their money, if there were any general movement toward this at all, would be to channel it into those genuinely socialist insurgent movements that are trying to topple corrupt and dictatorial governments. If the U.S. government were serious about aiding such Latin American and African countries, it could threaten economic sanctions against their governments in the way the United States is presently harassing Iran. Indeed, if it cut off support of their elites and carried through economic sanctions, all sorts of corrupt and dictatorial regimes would quickly fall. At a minimum, it could do a lot of good by just leaving these countries alone to work out their own destinies. The World Bank, instead of being a policing device for capitalist interests, could be a genuinely liberating instrument, but it is simplistic to believe that it will play that role. The problem of world hunger is plainly political and socioeconomic. And the culprit is capitalism.

What I am arguing is, given the political consensus in the United States and in much of the bourgeois world, “way out” and “utterly utopian.” Given the dominant ideologies in our societies, it will be generally perceived as the posturing of what Noam Chomsky ironically refers to as the irresponsible, critically oriented intellectual—the chap disputing about and using, so

the story goes, ideology. (Chomsky, of course, both defends such critical intellectual "posturing" and brilliantly exemplifies, as did Bertrand Russell before him, what it is to be such a critical intellectual.⁷) And, of course, it is pure fantasy to expect that the United States, West Germany, Japan, Canada, France, or Great Britain—any of the major bourgeois countries—will do anything of the kind. Given the consciousness industry, the moral case for such alternatives will plainly never even get a hearing. The underlying causal agent generating the problem is not the development of science or medicine or overpopulation or pollution; it is capitalism.

Barry talks about the lack of political will in recipient and donor countries, but he never mentions the role of the capitalist economic order in all this, and he never discusses what difference it could make if we had a democratic, participatory socialism—I do not speak of an *Ersatz State* socialism—in place with its very different socioeconomic orientation, namely a socioeconomic order that treats production to meet human needs as central and capital accumulation as secondary and instrumental.⁸

Perhaps I am overly optimistic in thinking these changed priorities could make such a difference. Surely conventional wisdom in bourgeois societies would incline us to believe that I am being wildly overoptimistic. Indeed, for anything like what I hope for to become a reality, the relations between nation-states would have to be radically different than they are now, the tolerable inequalities far different and the rationale for production radically changed. It would seem at least, particularly given the truth of the factual claims Barry stresses, that this would be sufficient to overcome the problem of world hunger. But perhaps I am being overly sanguine? Perhaps, even with such radically changed socioeconomic priorities and concomitant changed conceptions of an adequate life that would go with a developed socialist consciousness, there would still be too great a drain on world resources? I am not claiming that the answers are obvious. But what I am claiming is that it is just such issues that need to be faced. We need to concern ourselves with such things rather than to worry about trivial issues such as whether present-day Indians starving in Calcutta are to be blamed or

held responsible for the past mismanagement of Indian governments. But none of this gets aired in Barry's essentially apolitical account, an account that stays fastidiously clear of what he may well regard as ideological issues.

Perhaps Barry believes that the possibilities for socialist transformations of society are so remote that one should best opt, in such moral-cum-political arguments, for a normative position that would settle for the few crumbs we might get from a capitalist social order conjoined with liberal welfare states. (But with only that kind of aid in the offing, the neo-Malthusian arguments become more worrisome.)

There is, indeed, a tragic political morality, deeply rooted in cultural pessimism, that has honorably and sometimes intelligently opted for just that. But with the specter of Euro-Communism haunting Europe, social transformations in the offing in Scandinavia, liberation struggles in Southern Africa and Latin America seething under dictatorial boots, such historical possibilities are not so plainly fanciful. Cultural pessimism may itself be the romantic posture. We need, in thinking about these matters, to avoid being held captive by the rather myopic vision we can get from America. The world in fifty years, perhaps even in a decade, may very well look very different than it does now. And in a radically changed socioeconomic environment world food problems might look very different.

Indeed, it is fair enough to respond that that is a long time to wait, given the magnitude of the food problem (ten thousand people die of starvation every day) and its likely acceleration. But then what are the alternatives? Are we likely to get more than a few crumbs out of capitalist world order? Perhaps I am too pessimistic and too cynical? Capitalism, for whatever reasons—perhaps to achieve world stabilization—might come through with a little more, though its track record is not very good. It is just such issues that need airing in a discussion of world hunger. But that is radically to politicize the discussion and our conceptualization of the problem. But not a whisper of that comes into Barry's and Singer's through-and-through apolitical analyses. Yet it is just these issues that must be brought to the fore if we are to discuss problems of world hunger and moral obligation seriously.

III

I asserted at the outset that Barry's account was defective not only in its political sense—in its lack of *Realpolitik*—but also, and paradoxically in relation to my first claim, in its sense of the moral relevance of a vision of a possible future. In discussing the appropriate scope of political principles, Barry argues, sensibly and realistically, against the extension of such principles to the whole human race. Different countries have different laws and different customs, and this does not seem generally to be a source of injustice. Moreover, in different countries different conditions obtain so that, Barry claims, it is not an injustice to pay, say, steel construction workers of equal skill and doing the same kind of work with the same kind of tools, substantially lower wages in Lebanon than in the United States. Treating equals equally does not involve treating them the same in such different circumstances. As things stand, this is surely correct. There are in those circumstances justified inequalities and indeed inequalities that may even be just inequalities. However, such inequalities may not be just inequalities in what is not only a perfectly well ordered society but a perfectly well ordered world. And even if such a conception is but a heuristic device, a picture, used as a model of a perfectly just world, it still has that role. Ideals, even if they can only be approximated, still have their uses. And it is there, if we operate with Dworkinlike deep assumptions about the moral equality of all human beings, where it is not so evident that our extension of the scope of political principles, for such an ideal picture, must not be to the whole human race.

Barry rightly does not want to extend the notion of justice into an all-inclusive social ideal. That is an overextension of the concept, for justice is plainly not the only social end. A society might be rich or poor, cultivated or philistine, religious or secular, and still be just. A perfectly just society might still not be a perfect society, and it might very well still be a morally criticizable society. People, Barry argues, might still be treated justly and yet be treated differently because they are in different jurisdictions.

Consider, in trying to assess this, something as deeply affecting a person's vital interests as effective equality of educational

opportunity. While Barry is sympathetic to Thurgood Marshall's claim that "the right of every American to an equal start in life" is so vital that the decision whether or not to provide genuine equality of educational opportunity cannot be left to the discretion of the various states in the United States, Barry will not extend this beyond the borders of the nation-state. Since "the world as a whole," he tells us, "does not form a single labor market," we are not justified in "extending the concept of equality of opportunity in education beyond national boundaries."⁹

Now, as things stand, and perhaps always will stand, what Barry says here makes perfectly good sense. For while it makes sense to argue about there being equality of educational opportunity between Americans and Canadians, it makes little sense to speak of equality of educational opportunity between an American and a Dinka living in his native condition in the Sudan. Their conditions of life are just too different to admit of meaningful comparison; moreover, since "ought" implies "can," it makes little sense, as things stand, to try to establish equality across such jurisdictions. But if our ability to think clearly about these matters is not so deeply ideologically deformed as to make such thinking impossible, it is important to try to distinguish between ideal and nonideal theory when we are trying to think what the design of a perfectly just world order would look like.

If, in setting out that structure, we start from a conception of the moral equality of persons—a conception shared in our societies, though with different readings, by egalitarians and inegalitarians, socialists and liberals, libertarians and state socialists—it is difficult to resist the claim that, for ideal theory, at least, where other equally crucial values are not being sacrificed, we should, in such a *perfectly* just world order, seek a situation in which not just every Canadian or every American but every human being, as far as that is possible, should have an equal start in life. If we start, as most of us do, with the deep underlying assumption—indeed an assumption that is one of our most deeply embedded considered judgments—of the moral equality of human beings, then it appears, at least, to be the case that the egalitarians have the edge on the others, at least as far as ideal theory is concerned.¹⁰ People, if such a

moral equality is accepted, must have equal life chances, as far as this is possible without undermining other things—such as moral autonomy—to which we are also deeply committed. In ideal theory, we cannot be as complacent about the moral relevance of different jurisdictions as is Barry. We think, when we reflect in a primitive gut way, about what is just and unjust, fair and unfair, that simply “being born into one country rather than another should not determine one’s fate to the extent that it does now, so that a person born into a poor society is condemned to almost certain disease, malnutrition and poverty while another, who has the good fortune, to be born into a rich society, has an excellent chance of living a healthy and comfortable life.”¹¹ It isn’t that the criterion of fair exchange has been broken here but that justice as equality has not been achieved.

Barry sees justice as having three aspects: (1) the *formal* aspect, accepted even by Nietzsche, of treating equals equally; (2) justice as reciprocity, which itself has three aspects—justice as fidelity, justice as requital, and justice as fairness; and (3) the notion that everyone has an equal claim to the earth’s natural resources. But he neglects another aspect of justice, an aspect that has been called *justice as equality*.¹² This conception, like justice as reciprocity, can take several different readings. (1) A perfectly just world order is a world order in which each person is treated in such a manner that we approach, as close as we can, to a condition where everyone will be equal in satisfaction and in such distress as is necessary for achieving their commonly accepted ends. (2) A perfectly just world order is one in which there is a complete equality of the overall level of benefits and burdens for all human beings. (3) A perfectly just world order is a world in which the institutions of all societies are structured in such a way that each person can, to the fullest extent compatible with all other people doing likewise, satisfy her or his needs. These articulations of justice as equality are both vague and distinct, though they all have a similar thrust. My preference is for the third formulation, for, with its stress on needs, it brings out, as Marx’s second maxim of justice in the *Gotha Program* brings out, the importance of a respect for individuality and the differences among people within a fundamental commitment to an equality of treatment.¹³ (In doing

this it escapes Berlin's and Dahrendorf's basic criticism of egalitarianism.¹⁴)

Though these conceptions are vague, they are no vaguer than other general conceptions of justice, and they do mark out an important domain of justice that is missed in Barry's account. It is such conceptions of justice as equality that give a partial moral vision of the future and provide a moral idealism lacking in Barry's account. If we really do believe in the moral equality of persons, we will naturally gravitate toward some such conception of justice as equality and seek, as I have, to find principles of justice to match it.¹⁵ We will also, without making justice an all-purpose virtue, be inclined to argue not only that we have an obligation to relieve starvation, as a matter of humanity, but that we must also recognize that a world with starvation and malnutrition in it could not obtain in a perfectly just world order where conditions of a rather minimal moderate affluence could be worldwide.¹⁶ A not inconsiderable number of us in certain countries live under conditions of moderate affluence, while other people, in less fortunate circumstances, suffer from malnutrition and, not infrequently, are threatened with starvation and indeed do regularly starve. Where this obtains it is correct to say that there is an injustice there that should be rectified if it can be done without reducing the more fortunate people to similar life conditions. (There is no justice in simply spreading the misery around.) But such a rectification can be made without such untoward effects. The struggle to achieve it is an obligation of justice, and not just of humanity.¹⁷

NOTES

1. Barry's ideas are further developed in his forthcoming volume, *Rich Countries and Poor Countries*. The quotations from Barry in this essay are taken from the version of his paper delivered at the Society's meetings. Although they do not appear in these words in his essay, *supra* pp. 219–52, he has not altered their substance.
2. Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 229–43 (1972).
3. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Barry, "Humanity and Justice in Global Perspective," pp. 221ff.

6. *Ibid.*
7. Chomsky does this in a series of well-known books and articles, but in the last half of his book on Bertrand Russell he brilliantly shows (a) how Russell played this role of critical intellectual and (b) exemplifies it himself in his own discussions of social issues discussed by Russell and social stances taken by Russell. Noam Chomsky, *Problems of Knowledge and Freedom* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971).
8. The case for this has, of course, been made repeatedly in the socialist tradition, but for one contemporary statement that is particularly powerful and that faces in an informed and tough-minded way a whole range of problems, see Richard C. Edwards et al., eds., *The Capitalist System*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978).
9. Barry, "Humanity and Justice in Global Perspective." In the revised version of his essay published here, Barry does not discuss equality of education [The editors.]
10. Ronald Dworkin, "The Original Position," Norman Daniels, ed., *Reading Rawls* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), pp. 16–53.
11. Barry, *Rich Countries and Poor Countries* (unpublished manuscript).
12. Christopher Ake, "Justice as Equality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 69–89, (1975); Kai Nielsen "Class and Justice," in, John Arthur and William Shaw, eds., *Justice and Economic Distribution* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978), pp. 225–45; Kai Nielsen, "Radical Egalitarian Justice: Justice as Equality," *Social Theory and Practice* 5, no. 2 (Spring 1979), pp. 209–26, and Ted Honderich, "The Question of Well-Being and the Principle of Equality," *Mind*, forthcoming.
13. Allen W. Wood, "The Marxian Critique of Justice," 1 *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 244–82 (1972); Ziyad I. Husami, "Marx on Distributive Justice," 8 *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 27–64 (1978), and Allen W. Wood, "Marx on Right and Justice: A Reply to Husami," 8 *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 267–95 (1979).
14. Isaiah Berlin, "Equality," in his *Concepts and Categories: Philosophical Essays* (New York: Viking Press, 1979); and Ralf Dahrendorf, "On the Origin of Inequality among Men" and "Liberty and Equality," both in his *Essays in the Theory of Society* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1968).
15. See the reference in note 12, *supra*, to articles by me.
16. I certainly do not intend my reference to socialism to be treated as a magical formula to solve all problems. I see socialism as extensively flourishing only as a worldwide system and not as something extensively flourishing while it remains in deadly con-

flict with capitalism. But even with socialism in place in a worldwide system, redistribution between poor and wealthy areas will be required. Here something like the general schemes for International Taxation sketched by Barry in section 7 of his "Humanity and Justice in Global Perspective" (pp. 241–43 of this volume) seem to me entirely reasonable.

17. The editors have thought it necessary to remind me "that sometimes explicitly and sometimes by implication" I "make a great many debatable but completely unsupported assertions." They then suggest that I make "a brief statement . . . to the effect that this paper is an expression of a point of view, or set of beliefs, which in the space available it would be impossible to support by evidence or argument." This conservative liberal sensitiveness ("edginess" is perhaps the better term) is revealing. It is an expression of an ideology pervasive among liberal intelligentsia. It is surely not the case that my article is devoid of argument, but arguments require premises; and there are, of course, some premises that are not supported. In philosophical writing on social and political topics, it is routinely the case that a great many unsupported and debatable assumptions are made. This, as Peirce and Wittgenstein have taught us, is quite unavoidable in many contexts, if we are to say anything of substance. Where the debatable and unsupported assertions are part of the liberal consensus or (sometimes) even those of a right libertarian, they tend to pass unnoticed. Perhaps they are not even seen as being debatable and unsupported. But where they reflect the orientation of the Left, such disclaimers are often thought necessary. Noam Chomsky perceptively analyzes such liberal ideological reactions in the first chapter of his *American Power and the New Mandarins* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1969). See, as well, Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *The Political Economy of Human Rights* (Montreal, Canada: Black Rose Books, 1979). It should also be noted that in *The Political Economy of Human Rights* some of the factual support occurs on which some of my assertions rest.