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HSDRGPID-63/UNUP-328

THE RIST DIALOGUES

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In a network like the GPID there is always the problem of maintaining dialogues between meetings. One possibility is by mail. Gilbert Rist started this type of "intellectual stimulation" in the GPID project. To make it known to others, three such dialogues are published here. They refer to papers already published in this series (and to some unpublished papers, but that should not worry the reader):

"Notes for an Epistemology of Holism" by Oscar Nudler (HSDRGPID-13/UNUP-65);
"Towards a Model of Human Growth" by Telma Nudler (HSDRGPID-7/UNUP-59);
"The Organizational Context of Development: Illuminating Paths for Wider Participation" by Chadwick Alger (HSDRGPID-17/UNUP-79);
"Two Views on Interdependence and Self-reliance: Politics of De-orientation and Politics of Re-creation" by Herb Addo.

Geneva, January 1981

Johan Galtung

This paper is being circulated in a pre-publication form to elicit comments from readers and generate dialogue on the subject at this stage of the research.

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FROM GILBERT RIST TO THE BARILOCHE GROUP

Geneva, August 15, 1979

My dear Carlos and friends,

In my attempt to stimulate some kind of intellectual collaboration within the GPID network, I have spent a couple of days reading - or re-reading - the various papers produced by your team in order to find out how they could be used by other people within the network and - modestly - how they could be revised in order to take into account some other floating GPID paradigms. May I say immediately that I found the task pretty difficult and that I am not sure that my reflection shall help you a great deal. In any case, I do not pretend to have a final word. I would therefore like you to consider this letter as a beginning of a process, or the continuation of dialogues which we already had, in order to bring about a better understanding in the project.

First of all, let me state the reasons for my difficulties:

- a. In a sense, I find it difficult to recommend concrete ways for integrating the Bariloche group into the GPID network, since you have probably made the greatest possible effort to find out ways of integration of the project itself (cf. your various papers on this subject).
- b. The holistic perspective of the Bariloche group makes it also difficult to determine what could have been "left out" of the approach (a simple look at your "needs table" would suffice to strengthen this point).
- c. The GPID matrix shows that the Bariloche group has chosen to work

mainly on the goals aspects of the GPID, which means that it might be unfair to say that your involvement in the processes or indicators side is too small. One could also add that the participation of the Bariloche team in the "goals sub-projects" (needs and visions of desirable societies) has been outstanding and that, through these sub-projects, you are indeed in constant touch with the GPID network.

The preceding points explain my structural difficulties when it comes to reflect on the better integration of the Bariloche group into the GPID network. I am tempted to say: Everything is fine, just continue along the same line. At the same time, I must confess that I feel also rather uneasy for more personal reasons, viz. because I have the impression that I am not included in the same "paradigm" as yours. Something which is rather difficult to explain, necessarily briefly, in a letter.

There is no secret that, for example, we have a different view about needs. I also know that my own perspective on this question is not very much shared within the GPID project as a whole. One possible explanation comes from the fact that I am dependent on "French" (Johan would say Gallic . . .) sources for my critique of the theory of needs, and this is probably why my only intellectual companions on this point (outside IUED) are found in Dakar and in Spain (I am thinking of José-Maria Tortosa). To my view, such a divergency is partly due to differences in cultural background (French vs. Anglo-Saxon), and I am still wondering why the Bariloche group should be included, for that matter, in the Anglo-Saxon tradition! I do not want to enter, once again, into the debate, since you shall have ample opportunities to meditate on my own approach, which will appear (in a rather revised form) in the book which Katrin Lederer is about to publish.

May I just say that I cannot see how the following statements can be reconciled: "Human needs are finite, numerable and perfectly classifiable" ("Human Synergy," p. 14); "The system of human needs is a hierarchically ordered system" ("Consciousness of Time," p. 7), and ". . . in human systems the presence of language and culture bring about complexities which are absent in other stages" ("Epistemology of

Holism," p. 7). In other words, the last sentence seems to me the most important one; if it is true, how can needs be ordered, numbered, classified? How can such a classification have an operational value for the processes?

Without entering into the details, the answer to such a question depends on the vision that one has of development as a process. Hence the importance of the papers on the "Quality of Life" and the "Model of Human Growth." I must say immediately that I am very sympathetic to a great many ideas developed in these contributions (also "Human Synergy"). I fully share the critique of western thinking (although I have the feeling that the "antidote" to it is mainly found in "the great civilisations of the East," and not enough in the actual social practices — taken as resistances to the western model — of the "underdeveloped" or "primitive" societies); I also agree that being is more valuable than having, that harmonious development in smaller units is preferable to authoritarianism linked to gigantism, that the human person should not be sacrificed to the development of society (although I do not share the kind of antinomic perspective which is found in "Human Growth," p. 4), and I also share the idea that maturity growth is preferable to individual success and competition. On the whole, this means a great deal of agreement! But at the same time, it is clear that it would be hard to be against such kind of goals for any human being. However, I feel a bit like a stranger in this kind of problématique. I am afraid to say that I have never met the kind of person you are describing in the "Human Growth" paper. In other words, I do not know this "universal man" (a kind of Übermensch) whom you are referring to, and who is like a "Cartesian subject," without history, without class identity, able to integrate conflicts in order to build up his personality, etc. I should hasten to say that I am not a psychologist and that I do not want to carry the debate on that level; the only thing I could say is that a great deal of American contemporary psychology (you are quoting The Primal Scream, but you could also have quoted Passages) has still not overcome the critique levelled by the Freudian tradition (where the conflict has a different value from what I think you are saying). In a sense, the debate goes beyond its purely cultural symptoms (Anglo-Saxon

vs. French tradition): what I am missing in your papers is both Marx and Freud, two old-fashioned gentlemen, beyond whom it is rather difficult to go (as far as the methodology is concerned). I also make this point in view of the fact that your own anthropology is much older than Marx and Freud: the whole idea of the nature of man, to which universal laws can be applied, seems to go back to the eighteenth century, if not to stoicism (mens sana in corpore sano, self-restraint, humility, generosity, etc.). Honestly, I do not believe (and it goes beyond a mere belief) that "it is a fact that a theory of normal growth exists" ("Human Growth," p. 5), nor do I think that a "good" (or healthy) group does not generate ethnocentrism (ibid., p. 24). For ethnocentrism is in itself a condition of cultural identity and the debate is not for or against ethnocentrism per se but for or against the western brand (universalistic, expansionist) of ethnocentrism.

The main idea behind the paper on "Epistemology of Holism" is a critique of the empirical Cartesian analysis of social reality and a desire to combine the various "human sciences," namely sociology and psychology (p. 12). I believe that we are all longing for (particularly within the GPID network) a kind of transdisciplinary approach, and you are probably right to emphasise the human side of the whole project. But I am wondering whether you are not making the task too easy by using, both in the socio- and in the psycho-theory, the same kind of trends ("idealism," to use a very broad label). What about trying to develop a kind of multiparadigmatic holism? Just an example: The critique of the western approach can be made by referring to Bergson, but structuralism can also be seen as a way of understanding the whole rather than the components.

No doubt, it would be far better to talk about these problems than to write about them. I feel forced to summarize so much my own thinking that my remarks are necessarily distorted; they become so schematic that you might even find that I am rather unfair to your rather balanced and harmonious papers. But this is probably part of the "game" which we have to play in our "written network."

Moreover, if we want to stimulate some kind of "intellectual collaboration" within GPID, these comments should not be restricted to you. The best I could do at this stage, it seems to me, is to share these remarks with those people, in the network, who are not so much working on goals (as Bariloche) but rather on processes, and invite them for comments. They might also correct some of my own statements, if they think that they are misplaced or unfair. In spite of the fact that I am sitting in the "co-ordinating unit," I do not claim to have the truth available. I am just trying to get the ball rolling, expecting other people in the network to take some steps further in the discussion; this is probably one possible way of achieving some progress towards, if not a common model of human growth, at least a common language.

With all best wishes to all of you; special regards to Carlos.

Sincerely yours,

Gilbert Rist

FROM OSCAR NUDLER TO GILBERT RIST

Dear Gilbert,

As one of Carlos' friends, thank you so much for your letter of August 15 to "Carlos and friends".

The words just quoted bring me to my not so little first point. I quote the formula you used to address us, not because I think there is something wrong about it. Quite the contrary. In this particular case, however, it seems to me that the formula misled you into letting you think that all the papers by people in the Bariloche group, though signed with different names, could be considered as written by just one single writer. This blurring of differences reminds me of a maneuver used in ideological discussions in order to reduce the opponent's complexity and manufacture a simple, clear target at which to shoot. I am not implying that your real intention was that. It seems more likely that the short time you devoted to studying our work - "a couple of days", as you declare - prevented you from getting a finer understanding of it. But independently of the motivation issue, the fact is that the one single writer formula is presupposed in your criticism. Thus, in page 2 of your letter you use the formula to "discover" a sort of contradiction in our work. Let me quote: "May I just say that I cannot see how the following statements can be reconciled: "Human needs are finite, numerable and perfectly classifiable" (Human synergy, p.14), "The system of human needs is a hierarchical ordered system" (Consciousness of time, p. 7) and "... in human systems the presence of language and culture bring about complexities which are absent in other stages, etc." (Epistemology of holism, p. 8). In other words, the last sentence seems to me the most important one; if it is true, how can needs be ordered, numbered, classified?". The papers referred to are "Human Synergy as the Ethical and Esthetical Foundation of Development" by C.A. Mallmann, "Consciousness of Time, Needs and Societies", first draft of "On types of Civilization. A Comparison through Three Dimensions," and "Notes for an Epistemology of Holism", the last two by O. Nudler. So the claim is that an inconsistency exists between a statement taken from Mallmann's paper and a statement taken from my last paper. The claim is ill-founded because no contradiction exists between saying that certain things are complex and saying that the same things are "finite, numerable and perfectly classifiable". All you can claim is that the task of classifying complex things would be difficult, maybe extremely difficult, but both statements could be perfectly "reconciled" on logical grounds. But what I like to stress here is that even though the alleged contradiction would be such, this would not be good grounds for criticizing us. And here I touch the main point. It is completely true that all members of our group share very basic beliefs. It would be not only impossible but also a bit out of place to enter here

into a detailed account of this common outlook. You have our contributions to the GPID and maybe other material too. Perhaps just a list of a few key words could give a hint of the main thrust of the work of all of us: human needs, human development or growth, holistic knowledge, non-depredatory, non-authoritarian, participatory micro, meso and macro social structures. It is therefore true that we share some essential beliefs about the human being and the human society. But this does not imply at all that the "one single writer" formula is an appropriate vantage point for approaching and evaluating our work. Many differences exist between us, sometimes great, sometimes minor: differences in field preferences, in background, in style and also in opinions. Needs theory could be a case in point. Besides a basic agreement, certain differences between us remain. I am not referring to Carlos' statement you quote, which inspires in me some reservations too, but which I think is taken out of context. I am referring, for example, to the classification of needs or to the consideration of needs as dynamic forces or just as logical categories. The important thing you should realize when looking at our group is that we try to practice the human growth, non-authoritarian way we recommend to others. And if we consistently proceed this way, differences will inevitably arise. We are not afraid of them, they are welcome. We think that the existence of these differences is a most fortunate fact since it allows us to maintain a co-operative and, at the same time, mutually challenging, stimulating dialogue.

So much for what concerns your supposed finding of an inconsistency in our work.

As to your criticism regarding my paper on holism I presented to the GPID, I cannot follow exactly what you mean. I see that you put a label on me - "idealism" - and I guess this is not intended to be praise. But why I deserve this label is not explained. I believe I am not an idealist (in any of the philosophical meanings usually attached to this word) but since, as Freudians would say that my unconscious could be cheating me, it would be most helpful if you could explain to me why you said that.

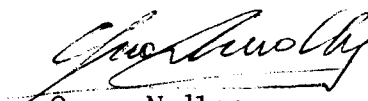
You suggest in the same paragraph of your letter in which you accused me of idealism (p.3) to try to develop a "multiparadigmatic holism". This seems to me a fascinating proposal, far more audacious than my own version of holism, and I would encourage you to work it out a little bit more. I would only object that your approach to this ambitious project is too narrow in cultural terms, since you take as an example of multiparadigmatic holism the combination of French structuralism plus Bergson (also a French philosopher).

Now a brief comment on your doubts about finding a way of integrating the Bariloche team with the rest of the GPID. Your main argument for this seems to be that you find us too holistic so that nothing would have been "left out" of our approach. But this is not, in my view, a sound argument. To be in favor of holism (by the way, a kind of holism which does not exclude analysis) does not imply at all believing that one's own forces are enough to carry out the desired "holisis". Quite the contrary, and this you may attribute to all of us, we are attempting to imply a plea for integrated work. This seems to me clearly shown through the several papers on integration which Carlos and I have written for the GPID.

And, independently of your argument, I would invite you to confront your doubts about our integrability in the GPID with the evidence produced by our integration work. I am pretty sure that such a confrontation with the facts will dispel your doubts. ent

Finally, let me express, beyond all our points of disagreement or misunderstanding, my warmest thanks for the attention you paid to our contributions to the GPID. In my view, you gave an extremely valuable example which deserves to be followed.

Sincerely,


Oscar Nudler

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FROM TELMA NUDLER TO GILBERT RIST

or

San Carlos de Bariloche, September 27, 1979.

Dear Prof. Rist,

Your letter of August 15 in which you analyze some papers presented by members of the GPID Bariloche group has reached us. At the moment neither Carlos Mallmann nor Oscar Nudler are in Bariloche. It will be some time before they return and will be able to take up the subject of your letter. For my part, I would like to reply to you at once.

I shall only refer to your comments on my paper "Towards a Model of Human Growth". Although all three of us share some fundamental ideas which provide us with a general framework in common, our papers contain individual contributions and do not always represent the opinion of the others.

In the first place, I would like to thank you heartily for your critical comments. I consider it a real pleasure to discuss these theoretical questions. I believe that polemics enrich intellectual work very much, they are an invaluable source of stimulation and help to clarify one's own thinking while at the same time obliging one to justify it or maybe even modify it. Moreover, your comments touch on points which are very central to my paper and this gives me the opportunity to develop them and perhaps deal clearly with some latent controversial points.

In the light of your comments, I realize once more what a great amount of assumptions are made which underlie the paper itself, as well as the subjective motivation of the author and the theoretical foun-

dations involved. In a way, the reader is obliged to "guess" or "imagine" these assumptions. It is as if only the peak of the iceberg is showing and the largest, most fundamental part is submerged. I believe that the clue here is in the concept of paradigm which you mention: when two persons share the same paradigm they somehow intuitively perceive or reconstruct the hidden part of other's iceberg. To share a paradigm creates something like a sort of intellectual "empathy". If not, the thinking of the other person always appears somewhat incomprehensible, maybe enigmatic and even absurd. The paradigm allows us to see and understand what fits into it and anything which is unconnected or strange becomes blurred or distorted.

For example, you say I adhere to a pre-Marxist and pre-Freudian anthropology (which is certainly saying a lot!). You also consider my thinking follows a line close to stoicism. I feel that this is absolutely wrong. On the one hand, I believe that the anthropological conception on which my paper rests incorporates elements both from Marxist and Freudian (and post-Freudian) theories, although not in an orthodox way. As regards stoicism, I consider that my conceptual framework is far removed from that philosophical school. Now, the fact that you interpreted my paper the way you did is probably not due to a wrong reading on your part but to an incomplete, partial (and maybe in some sense inadequate) exposition on my part. But, in the last instance, it is due to the fact that we move in different paradigms.

However, I believe that these paradigms need not be at all irreconcilable. They very probably have a common core and it would be desirable, in my opinion, that they should come to complement each other. For this reason, it seems important to me to explain the "anthropological" or "psychological" assumptions (the borderline between them is not clearly defined) on which I built my paper.

I do not know if this is quite correct or not because your criticisms point to statements made in the article and, if I were to proceed in orthodox form as regards an "academic" controversy, I should refer directly to your comments and to the corresponding paragraphs of my paper. Before entering into detail regarding your criticisms, however, I feel the need to clarify first some of my underlying beliefs. What good can this

do? Is it not too egocentric and unbecoming to set out here some of my paradigmatic assumptions? At the risk of receiving just such a reproach, I have decided to do so for two reasons:

1. A general reason: I believe that discussion on assumptions is useful and even necessary, especially when attempting to integrate in some way a working team. It would be interesting to ask oneself: "Are the different groups comprising the GPID in agreement with a basic paradigm? If not, what are the differences? Would it be worth while to attempt to bring the paradigms closer or is it better to keep them "closed", with their own internal coherence?
2. A particular reason: To reply meaningfully to your criticisms and enable us to understand each other, I must first try to reveal some zones of the "iceberg" which were perhaps not sufficiently visible in the paper.

I. Some Basic Assumptions regarding "Human Nature"

My conception of a human being, to put it very schematically and only in the aspects which are most relevant for this discussion, is the following:

I believe a human being is affected, more than any other living creature, by the influence of his environment, among other things because of his immense plasticity, his minimum endowment with instinctive behavior which would enable him to adapt himself "automatically" to his surroundings in order to survive, and because of his extremely helpless infancy (which also lasts longer than that of other animals).

The individual self is not innate. It is constructed all through a very complex process, in which other persons intervene decisively. Within the primary parental group, the family or other substitute social groups, the individual acquires in his first years of life the fundamental structure of his personality, the basic patterns for adapting to reality, the fundamental frames of self-perception, the sub-strata of his own identity. All this takes place through a subtle dialectic process in which innate and acquired mechanisms interact closely.

In all this initial process, the economic and cultural environment in which the individual is inserted will be fundamental. The personality

structure will vary, in a large proportion, with the different cultures and also within the same society there will be differences according to social classes and other socio-economic and cultural conditioners (rural or urban groups, marginal or integrated in the system, immigrants or not, religious or otherwise, etc.). Although I consider these social conditioners to be very important, providing the general frame in which the personality construction process develops, they are not by any means mechanical nor unique determinants. Other kinds of conditioners are fundamental for a child's personality, his primary-corporal link with his mother, the circumstances surrounding his birth, his parent's capacity for affection or their depressive nature, the coherence or incoherence of the messages received within the family, etc. (although all this in turn is conditioned by the environment and the social situation; but also by the psychic history of the parents, etc.).

The child gradually begins to receive more direct influences of his environment (not mediated by his family). He progressively takes part in other social groups where he "absorbs" a basic psychosocial climate, he learns certain basic rules of the social game and he adapts to the exigencies of his environment to survive physically and socially for occupying a place in the society, (in a manner more or less critical, more or less conformist).

Every person thus suffers the influence of a complex cluster of conditioners extending from material conditions and the more directly socio-economic and cultural variables, passing through values, attitudes, beliefs, expectations, etc., up to the variables closer to individual psychism and to biological conditions. All this process may be better or worse for the individual, so his life may be a good one or a bad one, a mutilated life or a full life, etc.

Therefore I believe that a human being is neither ahistoric nor universal. In my opinion "The" human being does not exist. Concrete human beings do exist and each is distinct from every other. Each person is unique because each person has his unique history, which can never be repeated.

Summing up, and as regards the problem of human nature, let me state that:

A. I DO NOT BELIEVE THERE IS A HUMAN NATURE either in the sense that all human beings are identical, made to a common pattern, or in the sense that

one can conceive of a universal, atemporal, ahistoric person. This would deny all the socio-cultural conditioning and individual psychic history. Nothing is farther from my thought.

On the other hand, I firmly believe that there are basic elements of a psychic nature which are common to all human beings. These traits comprise, among other things, certain potentialities or latencies and certain basic needs. For instance, among the former, I would refer to having potentiality for acquiring a symbolic function (fundamental trait for any specifically human development) and among the basic needs the fundamental need of every human being to receive corporal contact and caresses in the first months of life and to receive acceptance and recognition from his fellows during his whole life.

This set of traits which are proper to the human species is, in my opinion, what permits us to talk of better or worse social structures for the human being. Just as there are situations which the human being cannot withstand without perishing or becoming deeply hurt for biological reasons (which obviously nobody denies) I believe there are institutional forms and psycho-social mechanisms which deeply hurt psychically the human being, any human being, independently of the culture or historical period to which he belongs. (Possibly what does vary according to the period or the culture would be the degree of consciousness of suffering).

For instance, I think that slavery is bad for any human being because of certain physical characteristics proper to the species. I believe there are societies which outrage basic traits of human beings more and others which outrage them less. It is for that reason and for that reason alone that I believe there are societies which are better than others.

If I did not believe this, there would seem to me to be no motive for reflecting on desirable societies. Desirable for what? Desirable for what if it is not because they will give greater wellbeing to their members? And what is meant by giving greater wellbeing to persons if we do not accept that there is some kind of fundamental human nature which adapts better to certain social situations than to others?

Therefore I affirm that:

B. I DO BELIEVE THERE IS A HUMAN NATURE in the sense that there are certain

basic traits in the human species common to all human beings for bio-psychical reasons and that a society will be good only if it respects or adapts itself to the basic exigencies of that Human Nature and, in this sense, respects and promotes the authentic development of human beings.

We face here, no doubt, a semantic question: different uses of the term "Human Nature" given in A and in B. At all events, it would be very important for this discussion to know whether you accept or reject, from your conceptual paradigm, the existence of a Human Nature in the second sense. And if you do not accept it, what is your parameter for evaluating quality of life and the character – desirable or otherwise – of a society?

II. Analysis of Some Criticisms

1. I shall now analyze some of the criticisms:

In the first place let me refer to your lines: "I am afraid to say that I have never met the kind of person you are describing in the 'Human Growth' paper. In other words, I do not know this 'universal man' (a kind of Übermensch) whom you are referring to and who is like a 'Cartesian subject,' without history, without class identity, able to integrate conflicts in order to build up his personality, etc."

1.1. I suppose you are referring to the "ideal type" which appears in part IV, paragraph 2 (Two Paradigms: Success vs. Growth).

You say you have never met this kind of person. Strictly speaking and from a rigorously logical viewpoint this comment cannot be taken as a criticism because the fact that one does not know any individual of a given type does not mean that such individuals do not exist, and much less that they cannot exist. Such inferences are an illustration of what in logic is called a non sequitur. But I rather believe that what you mean is that such a person is "inconceivable", i.e. his existence is not possible, neither today nor ever. This is inferred from the last part of the phrase: "a 'Cartesian subject', without history, without class identity, able to integrate conflicts in order to build up his personality".

As regards this, I would like to make the following clarifications:

1.2. Real Existence of the "Mature Man"

I never stated at any moment in my paper that such an individual exists (that is why I spoke of "ideal types"). In this sense I say: "Within the prevailing conception of what constitutes a successful man, we can point out a series of typical achievements. We consider it would be interesting to compare these achievements or acquisitions which are characteristic of the successful man of utilitarian culture to the achievements which could be attained by the strong, mature or developed person who lives out a real, profound process of maturity growth. This comparison will be made using ideal or pure types, emphasizing the more significant features" (page 29).

The object here is to compare an ideal development model with a real, current model which is a fact in our society. It seems to me that in a society whose basic economic impulse is profit and whose individual subjective impulse is competitive individualism, it is difficult for many people to achieve a harmonious, balanced development. That is in fact one of the central cores of my article and because of your criticism referring to the "non-existence of such a type", I realize that this point has not been made sufficiently clear.

I tried to say that this "ideal" growth is very difficult in a society which needs another type of character structure, which generates another very different type of social character. In part III, where I ask: "Is Maturity Growth Possible?", I point out some of the psychosocial conditions which limit maturity growth. You can see there that I point out as negative for maturity growth a series of circumstances which occur frequently in our culture. Since the conditions which hinder or inhibit development occur extremely frequently, it is not to be expected that such development will take place. I therefore say at the end of part I, section one, page 3, that most people within our society are underdeveloped, impotent to achieve the real unfolding of their potentialities and aptitudes. I also say this explicitly at the beginning of part IV: "It follows from part III that the psychosocial conditions which characterize a utilitarian, individualist, and competitive society are not the most favourable for encouraging maturity growth".

Nevertheless, my paradigm is not totally "unreal", even within our society.

Some persons are closer to the model than others. There are people who, in spite of social obstacles (and due to circumstances peculiar to their personal history) have reached greater maturity growth than others. For instance, there are adults who can experience emotions and feelings (point 9 of the paradigm) intensely and others who are cold, withered. In this sense they are impotent. There are people with a capacity for change (point 11) and others who are impermeable, rigid. There are others who enjoy profound personal communication (points 2 and 4) and others who are inaccessible, shut in with their ego. There are people who have creative capacity (7) while others have none. There are persons who feel the impulse towards social transcendence and others who are locked inside a shell of sterile individualism. And so on.

All this, not because of any innate quality, but because of the greater or lesser opportunity given them by their personal history and their psychosocial environment for their growth or development.

1.3. "Desirable" Model

In the paradigm, I was not trying to describe a real, complete person (that is why you find him "without history", for example) but rather certain powers or potencies which are reached with maturity growth and which adults could achieve "naturally" with a desirable society (and which contrasts, moreover, with what is considered to be potency or power in a successful person within a utilitarian culture).

I believe it is important to discuss this because our image of a good human development and consequently a good life, a full life, a good society, is at stake. I invite you to pause at every heading separately and analyze whether or not you agree that a person who would live his human development in plenitude would come to bear these traits or not. And I ask you to point out to me specifically with which ones you do not agree, what aspects appear to you totally unreal, unachievable or undesirable. This would give a more constructive, more analytical sense to the discussion. For example, do you believe that a good society would stimulate people to greater self-knowledge or not? that the systematic exercise of introspection is positive or not?

Even when you stated at the beginning of your criticism that "it is clear it

would be hard to be against such kind of goals for any human being" (with which you appear to agree although at the price of making it trivial, of taking it as obvious) I am sure that many of the "potencies" analyzed here are considerably conflictive and debatable in themselves and that we are far from being all in agreement when we speak of "desirable society" and "human development in plenitude".

Here I believe lies the importance of opening up the growth paradigm and discussing it in detail. Many of the aspects indicated entail ideological questions which are anything but trivial.

1.4. Feasibility of the Model

To say that a development model is desirable is very different from saying it is feasible.

The message inferred from your letter is that you do not consider it feasible, although it is desirable (obviously desirable).

This brings up a question which seems to me to be valid: the problem of feasibility of such maturity growth (assuming that we consider it "desirable" as a goal or an ideal).

Let me divide this problem into four parts:

- Psychic feasibility
- Psychosocial feasibility
- Macro-social feasibility
- Historical feasibility

1.4.1. Psychic feasibility

In view of the intrinsic nature of human psychic processes, is maturity growth feasible, such as described? Or are there radical obstacles related to the very structure of the human bio-psychic apparatus which make this full growth model ontologically unworkable? The reply to these questions will depend naturally on the theoretical frame in which we move, and it is well known that psychology is far from having achieved a universally accepted paradigm. I believe that Freud would roundly deny that the model is feasible and I also believe that some critical Freudians, such as W. Reich, E. Fromm and A.S. Neill would say it is feasible. Thinkers who follow the line of J. Nuttin or C. Rogers would (I think) also agree.

1.4.2. Psychosocial feasibility

Can microsocial structures really exist which not only admit but also nourish and cultivate such development (small groups, family or school institutions, labor groups, community organizations, etc. which instead of generating competition generate solidarity, which try to raise social transcendency and individual development, etc.)? Or are there difficulties inherent to every human group that necessarily hinder such growth?

1.4.3. Macrosocial feasibility

Can economic and political structures really exist which make possible the microstructures mentioned above and, consequently, growth?

1.4.4. Historical feasibility

In view of the political and economic reality of the world today, can the transformation demanded in 1.4.3. be achieved?

2. Similarities with "Stoicism"

"... the whole idea of the nature of man, to which universal laws can be applied, seems to go back to the eighteenth century, if not to stoicism (mens sana in corpore sano, self-restraint, humility, generosity, etc.)".

2.1. In principle (and as a general clarification) I must say I do not believe that the antiquity of an idea necessarily makes it bad or unsuitable. Some eighteenth-century ideas can still be valid today in certain aspects.

However, I do not believe at all that my development model resembles either the illuminist or the stoic ideals.

I shall confine myself to an analysis of my differences with the viewpoint of stoicism, a philosophical way of thought from which I feel particularly far removed.

While the stoics emphasize the supremacy of self-determination governed by reason, "freedom as regards the working of the world", my preoccupation throughout all my work is to show how psychic development is severely conditioned and, consequently, how there can be no human plenitude as long as appropriate basic psycho-social conditions for full development of human

potentialities do not exist. (I must say however that the limits between determinism and freedom in the growth process are not at all clear to me, nor is the interplay of the conscious and the unconscious. But this complex problématique was not approached at all in my paper. I believe that if my paper is at fault it is in being excessively determinist, but never voluntarist). Moreover, stoicism is intellectualist and one of my points of emphasis in constructing the paradigm and on analyzing the different facets of growth (Part II, section 3) was to reevaluate affectivity and sensitivity, aspects which have been belittled since Plato through illuminism, positivism and marxism. Stoicism is moralistic and my approach is not. Stoicism has an individualist character in its ideal of "self-sufficiency", while my paradigm puts the accent on communication, active social transcendency and the critical transformation of reality. Just where does my model resemble the stoic model?

2.2. As regards that part of your criticism concerning human nature, please see Part I of this letter and paragraph 1.2. in Part II (Real Existence of the Mature Man).

3. The Role of Conflict

3.1. You say in your letter that "... a great deal of American contemporary psychology... has still not overcome the critique levelled by the Freudian tradition (where the conflict has a different value from what I think you are saying)".

3.1.1. I don't understand your reference to North American psychology. I don't think I defended it (or attacked it) in my article.

3.1.2. Nor do I quite understand your criticism. One possible interpretation is that you consider I deny the role of conflict. In that case, I would like to make it clear that this is not what I think, nor do I recall having said so at any time in my paper. Development is, without doubt, partly the result of conflicts (at an obvious level, for instance, I could refer to the conflict represented by becoming independent of parental figures).

In reality, I do not analyze at any time in my paper the subjective dynamics of growth, the interior growth process.

3.1.3. Nevertheless, let me say that while I do not deny the role of conflict, I do not accept the Freudian conception of it (and I do not feel obliged to adhere to it). In accordance with my concept of a person, I figure that the Freudian concept is too biological, mechanistic, reductionist. My own point of view on the role of conflict in development is much closer to an approach like this:

"I do not think that psychoanalytical interpretation exhausts the meaning of the situation of conflict. Nor do I think it necessary to reserve the term conflict for those dramatic moments in which personal destiny is compromised (...) The conflict is at the same time the consequence of the multiplication of contacts with beings and things, of affective and intellectual encounters, of activities, roles and the very cause, the dynamism of that 'expanding universe' which the life of an adult represents. Therefore it is neither normal nor healthy to try always to reduce conflicts, both for others and for oneself. The solution of a conflict is undoubtedly not positive when it consists of returning to the previous equilibrium, of appeasement, the refund safety of the womb (...) the final explanation of conduct is possibly not the reduction of tensions, requirements or of anxiety, but rather the search for a higher equilibrium, an enrichment, an increase of value. To use Atkinson's terminology, a certain number of authors tend today to substitute the drive reduction theory by a value expectancy theory which would explain certain conducts better than the reducer theories. Some research in animal psychology has shown the importance of curiosity, of seeking excitement for its own sake which certain animals demonstrate. The investigation of a novelty, the search for new problems, the pleasure of discovery, of risk, the courageousness of individual strategies and in particular of that of individuals who come to prefer suffering in order to defend a conviction, an ideal, appear to show that human beings do not seek only and above all equilibrium and security" (Germaine de Montmalling, in Lagache 'The Models of Personality').

3.2. In another paragraph of your letter you say, denying the feasibility of the model "... this 'universal man'... able to integrate conflicts in order to build up his personality, etc."

I don't understand why it should be theoretically repugnant to assume that a person can proceed to integrate his conflicts in the process of personality construction and growth.

4. "Normal" Growth

You say in your comments: "I do not believe (and it goes beyond a mere belief) that 'it is a fact that a theory of normal growth exists' ('Human Growth', p. 5)".

This phrase which you quote attributing it to the paper 'Towards a Model of Human Growth', does not in fact appear in the paper. So I am not sure which aspect of my article you are rejecting by this criticism. Perhaps you want to refer to what I say on page 4: "As in every society, an incorporated model of the 'normal' or 'mature' adult ... exists in our society". And later, on page 5, "this implicit existence of a 'normal' growth model is demonstrated...."

Let me clarify my thinking somewhat on this point (developed in Part I, paragraph 2 of the article 'The Model of Growth'). I believe that in every society there is a dominant cosmovision and I believe it is correct to state that "the dominant cosmovision is the cosmovision of the dominant class". Within this dominant cosmovision there is an anthropovision, a vision of what a human being is. Do you not agree with this? Do you not believe there is a generalized model of how a child should develop and grow to become a "normal" adult, what things can be expected of him, what things it would be as well to encourage, and what things we should discourage? Do you not think that there is a value system, incorporated into language as well, that shows us what society expects of us? One may be more or less critical, more or less "adaptative" with regard to the model, but it cannot be ignored.

It is true that there are many individual differences and also differences according to the different social classes, etc. (here I return to what was said in Part I about the differences in personality structure according to the social groups). In this sense I do not believe in total uniformity but I do believe in general lines that are proper to each society. In addition, I believe that if those general lines do not exist, we cannot

talk about a society. Let me give you some examples. Our society does not consider as normal the ecstasy and possession which a prolonged, frenzied dance can provoke, it does not consider pure mysticism to be either normal or desirable and it considers drug addiction an anomaly, if not delinquency. However, each of these conducts are performed normally and form part of the normal life of adults in other communities. Our society considers that an adult should struggle to succeed in life, to defend and maintain his family (monogamous). For this purpose it is desirable that he develops practical, utilitarian skills. Few parents (statistically speaking) dream of their child becoming a poet or an ascetic. All this forms part of a 'normal' development model. What happens with the 'normal' model is characteristic of all the most profoundly rooted cultural traits. They are so deep within us that it is difficult for us to see them as relative or socially conditioned. For instance, most people are inclined to suppose that individualism (and even the obsession with making money) is normal to human nature. It is what people see and have absorbed from the day they were born till the day they die, probably. Human sciences display the vast range of behaviors and values which the human species has constructed in the different communities. But for the person who breathes that "social atmosphere" as "natural" there are things which are "inherent" to human nature even when they really are the product of cultural apprenticeship.

5. Group and Ethnocentrism

You say: "Nor do I think that a 'good' (or healthy) group does not generate ethnocentrism. For ethnocentrism is in itself a condition of cultural identity...."

Once again it seems to me a semantic question is being posed. I believe that every group which really functions (and therefore has group identity) must have a cohesive force, a feeling of "us". But I do not think that the feeling of "us" should necessarily appear as an aggressive opposition to "the others". I do not know in what sense you use the term "ethnocentrism" when stating that ethnocentrism is a condition of cultural identity. I do not know if by ethnocentrism you mean "active consciousness of Us, interior group cohesion" or "active consciousness of Us, interior group cohesion in aggressive opposition to 'the others'".

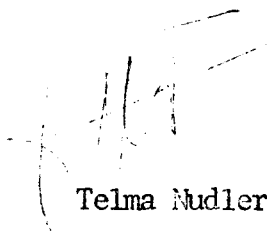
May I remind you here that my description of the "healthy group" refers exclusively to small groups (groups in which there is face-to-face interaction and individual recognition of members) as I clarified repeatedly in paragraph 4. Within the small groups I state that there can be cohesion and a feeling of "Us" without this implying having to assume "aggressive opposition to the others". Do you accept this or not? Or do you consider that the consciousness of Us can only be formed by active opposition to the "others"? I believe that here we have two distinct conceptions of the human group, of interaction and human communication. This point seems to me to be of the utmost interest.

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Dr. Rist, I really am ashamed at the length of my reply. You must be wondering if you have lifted the lid of Pandora's box! The truth is that these subjects fascinate me and I have the impression that they are ideologically very important, that they provoke strong reactions because they touch deeply rooted assumptions. It would be a pleasure if we could continue this discussion.

Thank you again for your comments. With kindest regards.

Cordially yours,



Telma Mudler

FROM GILBERT RIST TO CHADWICK ALGER

Geneva, September 7, 1979

Dear Chad,

In my attempt to create some kind of "intellectual stimulation" within the GPID network, I have been reflecting on the various papers which you have produced so far in order to find out possible links with other research units. Needless to say, the very nature of your concern (transnational processes) leads me to believe that the research done at Mershon should be coupled with all units. This is even explicitly said at the end of your paper entitled "The Organizational Context of Development: Illuminating Paths for Wider Participation" (pp. 21 ff.). In spite of these remarks, I shall limit the circulation of this letter and concentrate my comments on some specific issues. Let me also indicate that I shall refer to the following papers (plus the one mentioned above): "Memorandum Members of the GPID/HSD/UNU"; "People in the Future Global Order."

The main idea behind these papers is that "development is impossible without local control over transnational processes" ("The Organizational Context," p. 12). For this to happen, people should be made aware of the transnational involvement of their daily life, with a view to induce them to generate contacts, across national boundaries, with other similar groups at the same level. The development of this thesis (which I can only summarize here) is coupled with a strong criticism of the existing nation-state structure which is expropriating power from the people (not only in the realm of foreign policy).

There is a great richness indeed in your research which combines (nay, integrates) the various local, regional, national, and transnational levels, and which has the merit of raising the "good questions" (which is sometimes more difficult than providing the "good answers"). It can be considered as a new version of the theory of the withering away of the state, considered not so much as the superfluous superstructure of a classless society but rather as the useless remnant of a former stage in a transnational era (and even if you might challenge this formulation of your own position). Your research also combines the critique of the present state of affairs and concrete proposals concerning the possibility of overcoming the ignorance of the people about their transnational relations. I fully agree with you when you say that most people do not quite know how to go about interpreting their own situation in the world: the normally very parochial perspective of the people has to be broadened and the boundaries of one's own view should be extended far beyond the national sphere.

But this can also be seen as the source of a new question: it is a law of journalism that one dead in the village is more important than ten dead in the next town, who are still more important than 1,000 people who fall victim to a natural catastrophe in another continent. People are always more concerned with what happens in the neighbourhood than elsewhere and this is, therefore, one good argument in favour of a search for self-reliance. Yet your own thinking also goes in the direction of self-reliance ("People in the Future," pp. 16 ff.); my question, then, is: "How do you combine both trends?" It would seem to me that once people have understood the impact of the transnational relations on their daily life they would have a tendency to reject these "foreign linkages" rather than trying to create new ones. Of course, all transnational processes are not of the same kind: it is different to be exploited by a transnational corporation (TNC) than to be supported by a remote local group of Amnesty International. But on the whole, I think that the alienating aspects of transnational (TN) relations (which are mostly established by the centre countries) are more important than the liberating ones. It would be interesting to know what happens in other countries (Mexico, Italy) when people are made aware of the impact

of these shadow TN forces.

Your critique of the nation-state concept is a very valid one: I also think that the regional movements (Bretons, Quebec, Occitans, etc.) have to be taken very seriously in the search for alternative strategies in the West. But we should also try to make clear that our critique of the nation-state rests upon other premises than the one which is done by the "new right." (In France les nouveaux philosophes, in the US the Chicago school.) Since this tendency is strongly coming to the forefront, we might be well advised to make the partition line between them and us quite clear.

Let us now imagine for a while that two self-reliant communities have the desire of getting in touch with each other without using the classical channel of national bureaucracy. How would they do it? How do they get, first of all, the information about their potential partners unless through the knowledge of the established cosmopolitan clique? It might be that in the US there is a sufficient number of drop-outs from this established TN society who can pass on information. But what about third-world (TW) countries? How can they have the initiative of the encounter? Moreover, and this might be practically even more important, how will they find the necessary means to short-circuit the national/governmental channels? In other words, I think that there is a difference if the state withers away from the top or from the bottom, i.e., if the TNCs decide to get rid of it because it has become obsolete or useless for their own operations, or if the "grass-roots people" decide to go self-reliant because they know that nothing serious to satisfy their own needs can be expected from the people in power. My reading is that the first alternative is the most likely one, at least in the industrialized countries. The extension of the EEC is a witness to this trend and may be something transient on the way to a more global structure: we should not forget that the development of the nation-state is coeval with the development of the market (A. Smith, The Wealth of Nations). Regionalism, at least in Europe, can be interpreted (in the serious, non-folkloric instances) as a fight against the TNS' homogenizing trend. However, the situation

seems to be totally different in the TW, where the reinforcement of the state is (also) a way of diminishing the impact of the transnational processes (particularly of the TNCs). For sure, the net result consists in a reinforcement of the local bourgeoisie (cf. Fawzy Mansour, "Global Social Democracy and the New International Economic Order"), but this is precisely why the transnationalization which you are advocating ("People in the Future," p. 25) is so difficult to bring about. I wonder how the colleagues from IDEP who are working on the self-reliant "Africa 2000" project would react to your proposals.

Finally, I would like you to expand a little bit on what you have proposed as an "outline of a GPID project" ("The Organizational Context," p. 27 ff.). I have tried to figure out what it would mean for my own situation, but I have become quickly discouraged by the magnitude of the task! I grant you that Geneva can be taken as a special case given the considerable number of networks (counting only IGOs and INGOs) which are represented here (and which make the "Swiss way of life" possible because of the economic activity which they induce). But it is not only a question of adding IGOs to INGOs: in Geneva, like in Mershon, what do you do with the chocolate you eat, the petrol in your car (or the nylon of your shirt), the soap powder which you put in the washing machine, etc.? In other words, how do you "develop an inventory of the organizational context of a local community" (ibid.)? Even if it is purely impressionistic, it might be without end. But it may also be that I have misinterpreted what you mean by "organizational context." What is sure is that the transnationalization process in which we are is mainly geared not towards better understanding between people but rather to a better exploitation of the periphery. My ambivalence towards your perspective is akin to the ambivalence of, say, tourism. In a sense, it could be taken as one possible way of developing linkages between human settlements; this is, at least, one of the constant rationales of the tour operators, but we know that the reality is very different, as it — among other things — reinforces ethnocentric prejudices. I am not saying that you are working with the same paradigm as the tour operators, but I wonder how the other side of the coin could be included in your perspective: people might like to participate in

global processes, but those who handle these global processes might not like it.

Once more, I think that you have indeed explored some "illuminating paths for wider participation." My main question concerns how these paths shall be followed. Because people suddenly become aware of their existence, or because they are forced to use them? Or both? I sincerely wish that these transnational linkages could come into being, but, as you correctly pointed out, "each party must be allowed to give something to the relationship" ("People in the Future," p. 31). How does one do that?

It was really enjoyable to devote some time to your papers. I hope that these comments will not disappoint you too much: take them as a kind of TN thinking exercise, to which I am trying to contribute.

With every best wish.

Yours sincerely,

Gilbert Rist

FROM CHADWICK ALGER TO GILBERT RIST

Columbus, Ohio, September 21, 1979

Dear Gilbert:

I was extremely delighted to receive your letter of 7 September. Your effort to generate dialog within the GPID network is terribly important. In order to stimulate others to respond to your letter, I am hereby replying immediately. In doing this I am not suggesting that there are simple answers to your questions. I am simply trying to facilitate dialog. I hope to have more thoughtful responses later and, hopefully, after others have responded to you.

Let me then proceed to four key points in your letter:

1. Page 2, paragraph 2: "my question, then, is: 'How do you combine both trends?' It would seem to me that once people have understood the impact of the transnational relations on their daily life they would have a tendency to reject these 'foreign linkages' rather than trying to create new ones."

A simple answer would be: Why should we want to "combine both trends"? We wish to create conditions for self-reliance. Our goal is not to create transnational processes as ends in themselves but rather only in response to human needs. If elimination of exploitation requires the creation of a world of autarchic local communities, so be it! But a more realistic answer would be: Whether specific people would indeed develop transnational processes that serve their needs once exploitative transnational processes have been eliminated

would be difficult to forecast. But why would we expect that self-reliance processes would have more limited territorial boundaries than exploitative processes? Is it not true that in widespread philosophic and religious traditions there is belief in a transcendent human family? Are people everywhere not curious about what is going on elsewhere in the world, stimulating inquiry and travel? Are people everywhere not continually trying to learn from others and endeavoring to share what they know? Who is not linked to distant people and places by personal migration, migration of relatives or through knowledge of migrations in the past? Do not people everywhere crave a new taste, a new color, a different shape? In other words, I see no support for the notion that isolation is required for self-reliance. But powerful institutions have so successfully captured control of transnational processes that they make any other form of linkage among the "human family" unthinkable.

2. Page 3, paragraph 3: "I think that there is a difference if the state withers away from the top or from the bottom" i.e., whether the TNCs get rid of it or whether the "grass-roots people" decide to go self-reliant.

I completely agree with you. And you are right that regionalism in Europe is a strong, and I believe very promising, reaction to TNC control of transnational processes. Is the situation, as you claim, "totally different in the Third World"? Do you think the record of the state as protector of the people against the TNC is better in the Third World than it is in the industrialized world? Do you think that over the long haul the people of any part of the world will really be protected against TNCs unless they have the competence to do it themselves, in their own communities, in terms of interests defined by themselves? Why should we expect that "protective democracy", in contrast to "participatory democracy", will work any better in the Third World than it has in the industrialized world? It seems to me that the difference between the industrialized world and the Third World that you assert has a hint of prejudice--i.e., that Third World people are less able to take care of themselves than

people in the industrialized world. I know that you don't mean this. But is it not a heritage of the myth in the West that colonial peoples weren't ready for independence? Following on this is the myth that Western-style states are required, even though run by local elites, to protect local people. Is it not true that they would have been more able to protect their fishing grounds and farms had their national governments not joined with the TNC to take these things away from them? In other words, the belief that Third World people need the state to protect them from external domination is a product of statist ideology. Of course, on some occasions it might be true. But, this is a matter to be decided on the basis of empirical knowledge of specific situations and after consideration of alternatives.

3. Page 3, paragraph 3: "Let us now imagine for a while that two self-reliant communities have the desire of getting in touch with each other without using the classical channel of national bureaucracy. How would they do it? How do they get, first of all, the information about their potential partners unless through the knowledge of the established cosmopolitan clique?"

You have put your finger on a very difficult problem in social change. Experience in my Columbus, Ohio, laboratory has made me deeply aware of the fact that large and powerful structures distant from the lives of most people control transnational processes. Most institutions in most local communities do not have the depth of international competence that is to be found in governmental, military and TNC headquarters in distant cities. But, as you know, their information and expertise is biased toward maintenance of their own power, and every time these structures are used their control is reinforced.

I am more hopeful than you are that the "classical channel of national bureaucracy" can be circumvented. You speak of the "knowledge of the established cosmopolitan elite." To some considerable degree this "knowledge" is a myth--part of the mythology on which the

power of the nation-state system is built. Much of this knowledge is irrelevant to human needs, having to do with military strategy, development processes measured by production of GNP, and schemes for controlling people so they can be used for playing games of strategy in the nation-state system. Perhaps you would still call them a "cosmopolitan elite," but I increasingly encounter, among people espousing self-reliance, a counter-culture that is not ignorant of alternative collaborators in other parts of the world. There are networks through science, religion, research, education, ethnic ties, etc. whose potential is not fully understood because scholars, the press and national and international officials have studied, reported and supported entities in the nation-state system. This has strengthened these systems and prevented people from thinking concretely and creatively about alternatives. Of course, alternative networks now tend to be under the control of national government, military and TNC officials. But is this inevitable if alternatives are made thinkable by people like us?

4. Page 4, paragraph 2: "How do you 'develop an inventory of the organizational context of a local community'? . . . it might be without end."

The purpose of the inventory is primarily to help researchers to develop their competence to perceive and interpret transnational processes in their own community--not only the more obvious ones that fit into prevailing paradigms and that reflect existing power structures but also ones that can only be seen through alternative paradigms, ones that suggest potential power for fulfilling human needs in local communities. The inventory simply offers a base from which local people could be helped toward participatory learning experiences with respect to their present dependence and suggests possibilities for enhancing self-reliance. Thus the inventory is not an end in itself but a method for acquiring liberation from the nation-state paradigm. Once conceptual liberation has been achieved further inquiry is carried out in response to perceived possibilities for using transnational processes in serving human needs. This is where

dialog becomes very important. The present "science" of international relations has been infused with nation-state mythology and has thereby created a self-fulfilling prophecy, i.e., (1) that nation-states (a mythological term actually meaning a small elite) are required in order to protect people from external aggressors (i.e., small elites in distant capitals who acquire power by playing the same game), and (2) that nation-states are required for "development" (which usually does not mean improving the lives of most of the people who inhabit the territory involved). Dialog with local people, when infused with knowledge about transnational processes that transcend the national-state paradigm, can generate a "science" of transnational relations that is responsive to human needs. That is, it can stimulate inquiry about how people in their local communities can use transnational processes to fulfill needs, including strategies for eliminating existing exploitative processes. Of course, underlying this is a firmly held belief that knowledge about transnational affairs can be understood by most people. I see no justification for the widespread belief that these matters are too difficult for any but an anointed few. This is simply part of the mythology that keeps these few in power.

I agree with you. It must be difficult to cope with these issues in GPID headquarters in Geneva, at the center of a vast array of IGOs, INGOs and TNCs. It would seem that inquiry and dialog that would suggest alternative global systems, (in which the role of centers such as New York, Washington, Geneva, Brussels, London, Tokyo, etc. would be vitally altered) might necessarily take place away from the overpowering influence of these existing structures.

This suggests that revision of existing power structures that will serve self-reliance and fulfillment of human needs cannot be initiated in these centers but must come from the peripheries--in the industrialized world as well as in the Third World. I believe this will either require that intellectuals in projects such as GPID liberate themselves from the old centers and establish deep attachment to

specific peripheries or that new intellectuals from peripheries be recruited.

Sincerely yours,

Chadwick Alger

FROM GILBERT RIST TO HERB ADDO

Geneva, May 10, 1979

Dear Herb,

First of all, I should probably say that I very much share your concerns, and that, on the whole, I do not have any strong criticism to level against your paper, given the fact that I found myself very much on the same wavelength. Maybe too much so Consequently, criticism of your paper might very well be taken as a kind of auto-critique of my own stuff.

My main comment concerns your terminology. I believe you are quite right in showing that all the new words and phrases that have now entered the development jargon are co-opted by the establishment, and that actual circumstances are not going to be changed by simply modifying the use of words. For sure, "collective SR," in its present UN/NIEO understanding, is nothing but another way of getting concessions from the North, increasing "aid," etc., without proposing any kind of alternative on the domestic level. It is, therefore, true that, in general, the TW reacts rather than acts.

But I have a problem with your use of the word "interdependence"; you give the impression of taking it at its face value. You talk about interdependence between Europe and the "non-European" (what an ethno-centric concept, by the way!) world since the fifteenth century; you talk about the "discovery" of interdependence by the dominant parts of the world in the '70s; and then you talk about the necessity of periph-

eral capitalism to become self-reliant within an interdependent world. Now I am not sure that in these three cases the word "interdependent" has the same meaning. We might agree -- you and I -- that we want to promote a kind of interdependent world, but the fact remains that, in its present use (in the NIEO, for example), the term is used in order to blur the issue of dependence. Interdependence is an ideology, i.e., a form of camouflage of reality, and we should try to show that the reality it is supposed to describe is in total contradiction to the obvious meaning of the word. This is the usual economic trick: Adam Smith talked about harmony and the invisible hand at a time when Britain was in a mess because of the beginnings of industrialization; Keynes launched the theory of equilibrium when there was total disequilibrium; and the "new" IE "order" (together with interdependence) is used in order to mask the persistence of the world disorder and of dependence. So much for that, since you probably agree. My point is that it might not be sufficiently clearly stated in your paper.

To remain within semantics, I admire your neologisms: de-orientation (= import substitution/export promotion = desarrollismo) and re-creation (satisfaction of basic needs for all, non-exploitative economies). I do not object to these words, particularly since they could provide us with an alternative to "development," a term which is always abused and which for some people means de-orientation and for others re-creation. In a sense, it might help, even within the GPID network, if we could come to an agreement about this terminology. The trouble, however, is that everyone would obviously claim that his answer to the problem should be taken to mean re-creation rather than de-orientation. And, hence, we would find ourselves back into the very same problem which we now have with "development."

Just one word about the fact that you define exploitation as inequality x dependence and inequality as a function of dependency. This is certainly true for TW countries but how do you then explain inequalities in "non-dependent" countries? Do inequalities then arise out of the phenomena of internal dependency (i.e., at national level)? Would you say that in the TW external dependency constitutes the main factor of

inequalities and that in industrialized countries inequalities are the result of national dependencies? But, if exploitation is equal to inequalities x dependency, don't you think that inequalities could also be considered as the result of exploitation?

Now a final comment about your wish that "the preconditions (of re-creation) are the establishments in the TW nations of the kind of non-exploitative economy that they claim to seek at world level" (p. 16). This is where your paper resembles too much the kind of things which I am often saying In other words, I have no doubt about that, but I am still wondering how this should be achieved. What you are describing (a non-exploitative economy) is the final state of bliss which we are all longing for. But how do we get there? What you say, towards the end of your paper, about the Caribbean area is probably not explicit enough, at least to my taste. On the other hand, I think that we definitely must find some kind of answer to these questions, because they are too vital to be left unanswered; on the other hand, I sometimes wonder if we are the right kind of people to give the answer. I at least am not going to say what re-creation means for the Caribbean — but what worries me is that I do not see much more clearly what should happen in this part of the world. So what about putting together our question marks?

You will have noted that I played the role of the TW in reacting to your paper. What about you starting to act on my remarks?

With all best wishes,

Yours,

Gilbert Rist

FROM HERB ADDO TO GILBERT RIST

Stimulation on Politics of Re-creation

I very much appreciate your reaction to the piece on "De-orientation and Re-creation"; your comments are fundamental and therefore both stimulating and worrisome. You commented on the most pertinent parts of the paper in the characteristic Gilbert manner of constructive criticism.

The paper was the product of a hurried response to an invitation from the ISER, Mona, Jamaica, for a workshop they were putting on for UNCTAD V. I intended it to be read precisely the way you read it. Not too many papers get read the way the author intended it. You read it the correct way because we are on the same wavelength and the fundamental concerns are the same.

Let me react to your remarks:

You remark that I give the impression of taking the word "interdependence" at its face value. And you explain this by the fact that I talk about (a) interdependence between Europe and "non-European" worlds since the fifteenth century; (b) the "discovery" of "interdependence" by the centre in the '70s; and (c) the necessity of peripheral capitalism to become self-reliant within an interdependent world.

You are quite right on these points. But I definitely did not want to take the word at its face value. The fault here I think is trying to keep discussion on the word "interdependence" to the minimum. What I

really wanted to express is this.

Interdependence is nothing new in world-history. The development of the capitalist world-economy has meant the realization, in increasing form, of a world in which events and developments in one part have affected other parts, if not the entire world. Here I want to say that, from the world-system perspective, to make an issue of interdependence is to waste precious time on the obvious. The interdependent nature of the world has some particular characteristics, and to my mind it is the characteristics in their world-history contexts which are important. Among these is the Eurocentric nature of the interdependence, by which I mean the "European" dominance in the world-system.

To recognize this fact is not necessarily to be Eurocentric. I prefer to begin from this point in order to be able to point out that to make an issue out of this interdependence in the 1970s is to try to divert attention from the more important characteristic of this interdependence. In both our views the dependent characteristic of this interdependent reality is what we should highlight. My view, which I am sure you share, is: That the world is interdependent is not in dispute; but that this interdependent nature of the world is to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others is what is interesting. The ideology of interdependence is to my mind an attempt to incorporate into liberal thinking the radical critique of the capitalist world over the last few years. This will be dangerous if we let them. It will be even more dangerous if we let them force us to debate whether the world is interdependent. That the world is interdependent is implied by the meaning of the word "world" by contemporary conception, and it has been so far a long time now. For this reason, the word "interdependence" has no meaning by itself. It is the same as saying the world consists of interacting "parts." From this I will argue that it is our duty to argue that the word itself is not useful. It is not even interesting. What is useful and at the same time interesting are the characteristics of the world as an interdependent system. These characteristics, we agree, include the Eurocentric dominance and the consequent dependence of non-Europeans. Both these characteristics derive from the capitalist

nature of the world, which is interdependent.

I agree with you on what you say with respect to Adam Smith and Keynes, except I will add that they both believed that the prescriptions of their ideologies would cure the undesirables of their times. My point is that interdependence is introduced into the argument by the liberals to suggest that this fact is a late arrival in the affairs of the world and that its recognition will call for certain minor "adjustments" which will make the world "better." This is the point I take issue with. I argue that interdependence is not a late arrival; it is an old companion, or consequence of the development of the world-system. And the nature of the interdependence makes it impossible for the kinds of "adjustment" suggested to be of much use in changing the world.

The argument is that interdependence has become an irreversible fact of life in our present world; and any credible world that I can envisage will have to be more or less interdependent. The liberals use the term to serve as an ideological camouflage of the dependency relationships which constitute the interdependent reality and also as a warning to the TW not to rock the order which they believe could serve the interests of the TW as much as it serves theirs. The word is also used by the dominant parts as a justification, on their domestic fronts, for the minor and ineffective concessions they intend to grant to the TW. My argument is that, since the word has no obvious meaning outside a precise context, we should ignore semantics and move on to the analytically useful conceptualization of the term. There is nothing in or about the word "interdependence" which gives it an "obvious meaning." The word could cover all meanings between the equal/symmetric-unequal/asymmetric limits. Interdependence nowhere suggests equal or unequal dependence. It depends upon the concrete situations in question.

Common language may have endowed the word "interdependence" with a neutral stance vis-à-vis the equality or the inequality of the dependence substance, which the inter merely links. For this reason it becomes a semantic problem once the word is used. In a scientific discourse, such as we are engaged in, the characteristics of the concrete situation in

question are what give the word its precise meaning. In other words, we conceptualize the term by its concrete nature. In this sense, the only obvious meaning which the concept has is its unequal property. So that when I say on page 2 that the dominant parts of the world-economy have suddenly discovered interdependence, I am being sarcastic. As it stood, my view on the concept was not clear. The discussion was too brief; in fact, it was cryptic. Upon reflection, I think it was because I did not think it was worth discussing. I considered, and still consider, it an unclever excuse for the perpetuation of the existing system. Take a look at the photocopied pages 456 and 457 of the initial piece and you will agree that INDZ is the element that supplements IND3 to describe the interdependence answer to TW.

Let me agree with you then that you are right in pointing to the lack of clarity with "interdependence" as I briefly treat it on pages 2 and 3. Does the above make the intended view of the concept much clearer?

A more substantial point is the meaning I attach to self-reliance. I see S-R as having a useful role to play in restructuring the world-economy. I reason this way: If the world is irreversibly interdependent, and if what is sought is not the negation of this interdependence but the introduction of equal relationships and the removal of unequal ones, and, further, if we are talking about collective S-R at the world level, then I seem to think that the utility of collective S-R is to be sought in the extent to which it can be used to mount a frontal attack on the prevailing unequally interdependent nature of the capitalist world-economy.

From this I argue that if S-R comes in its individual and collective national forms, then the terms are understood differently by the centre and the periphery. The centre sees S-R as essentially meaning that the TW countries must rely more on themselves within the capitalist world-economy rather than looking to them for help of various kinds. The TW countries see it as meaning essentially their banding together to press for more concessions at the international level. I regard both interpretations as not amounting to much in terms of mounting the frontal

attack necessary to change the world-economy enough to make the irreversible interdependence more equal. Both meanings conform to what Parmar calls "narrow" because they do not aim so much at long-term restructuring of the world-economy as at its short-term foreign exchange budget. These views are growth-centred, not human-centred and equity-aimed. Here, see Johan's piece on S-R and BN (Berlin, May 1979).

From this, I would like to express in some detail that so long as the terms of unit reference remain the nations and the international, we miss the richer meaning of S-R in its national sense, which I understand as the main instrument in fashioning the fundamental basis for making collective S-R something more than a convenient short-term escape and projections for TW national élites. Most of these élites regard S-R as outward-oriented escape by passing the buck from their and to the international end. In this deceptive buck-passing, these élites appear to say this: It is not our fault; all the fault is externally induced. And while they cry out this excuse they open their nations for more external penetrations and they amass wealth in precisely the ways that will not let the benefits trickle down to those in their various countries who are most in need. In its inter-TW collective sense, S-R then assumes this meaning: Since all the problem is externally induced, let us use our collective strength to press for more structural exchanges in the international environment. This they do with some concerted gusto. No matter how great or meagre the benefits of such changes — take the ACP for example — what use seems to come out of this? Not much. Why? Because the gains are dissipated by not being used to build national economies that go some way to negate the unequal nature of the interdependent world. Take OPEC. The price increases in oil are a good thing. But what use are they, if the TW countries are those who feel the effect of these price increases most? What use are these price increases for development, as you and I understand it, if the OPEC nations use the money to build even more dependent economies, create instant millionaires among the many peasants, acquire sophisticated armaments, buy hotels in London and New York, and merely bring home to these OPEC élites their cherished colonial hopes of living like their counterparts in the centre?

The main question in your critique is how we bring about the desired changes. I am convinced that international actions alone will not do it. NIEO is basically an international action, and hence its limitations are clearly that; even if it were to be totally successful beyond our widest dreams, all it could do would be to buy some more time for the world capitalist system, and — worse — this buying time would mean creating strong nation-states of the wrong types in the periphery — OPEC types. The élites will be stronger, the masses worse off — it will take millions from the land and lumpenize them. The élites, without planning for a serious future change, will dissipate all the benefits of NIEO in a generation. The next élites will call for a new NIEO, and so on. In all this, the status of the periphery will still remain and the locus will still be in the periphery of the periphery, which for a long time to come will contain the majority of human beings.

NIEO is not bad considering the circumstances of the time. My argument then is: In which way can NIEO be put to the best use? It is here that I attempt to contrast de-orientation and re-creation. The distinction ought to be made sharper, I admit, and I expect help and insights from the network on this. Re-creation considers internal reform along BN lines, and the problem at its source and imperialist exploitation as its context. The two are connected by the imperialist connection — the nexus between the "internal-periphery" and the "internal-centre" sources of imperialism. The solution of this problématique is the dissolution of this nexus.

It is in this sense that I tend to see internal-periphery developments of a particular kind which attempt to institute the same kind of demand that NIEO contains in individual countries of the periphery: such an institution would provide the structural and moral basis for the transformation of the world.

On the sensitive matter of a separation between the exploiters and the exploited in the centre or the periphery, my stand is this: The topmost exploiters exploit all; but when it comes to changes which could affect those who are less exploited in both the centre (the workers) and the

periphery (the élites), they are against changes of a fundamental kind.

It is for these reasons that I have embarked on a paper based on the two politics, the abstract of which I enclose. Read and react. I aim to produce a theory of strata of sorts for the most effective implementation of NIEO.

I hope I shall see you or hear from you soon so we can keep the "stimulation" going. I hope to answer other points as I think more about them.

I just received your response to Gordon Jamm. Very good. I have the "Current Issues in Development Theory," but not the others. Gordon is visiting here in January; I shall talk to him on these matters with your view in mind. I think a network on the concept of development must be instituted. Is this not one of Kimon's main comments?

Thanks.

Herb Addo