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PEGASUS

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CAUX ROUND TABLE FOR MORAL CAPITALISM
NETWORK LOOKING AT BUSINESS ABOVE THE CLUTTER AND CONFETTI



Pegasus

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Introduction

This month's *Pegasus* tackles a big subject: Food and its relationship to health.

The Caux Round Table has not intently focused on these issues, but we find that our moral principles have good application to this lively and important discussion. The recent appointment of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to serve as secretary of Health and Human Services has only amplified the importance of food and health issues.

Steve Young opens by asking “are food and healthcare only public goods?” His essay argues that there are both public and private goods at play in these fields. And in some cases, the discussion of goods work across both spheres to create quasi-public and quasi-private goods. He notes that agriculture, for instance, has been regulated by public authorities for centuries, going at least as far back as ancient China (ca. 700 BC).

Steve argues that it is time for the Caux Round Table to expand its consideration of quasi-public and quasi-private goods, especially in the realm of food and healthcare.

Devry Boughner Vorwerk, a Caux board member and head of DevryBV Sustainable Strategies, asks in her essay: Does big food have a moral obligation to fix consumer's unhealthy diets? She argues that they do have some role, though consumers must play their part, too. She layers valuable personal experience with trenchant observations about the food industry and its relationship to our health. Big Food, while successfully feeding many, has not always put forth the most healthful solutions. She notes that many Big Food executives don't exactly scarf down their own product.

In his essay, Michael Hartoonian writes about food and moral sentiments. He cites a failure to “link food with its meaning in the life of all people.” More starkly, he argues that “Anyone who says that food is just fuel for the body is a fool.” He argues that Caux's views on moral capitalism have direct application to the proper thinking of food, self and wealth. Without morality, folks are more likely to “eat their seed corn,” something all good food thinkers avoid.

We hope you enjoy these timely essays and welcome your feedback.

Dave Kansas
Editor-at-Large
Pegasus

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Speaks about Food and Health

Here are some recent quotes and comments from Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., the new Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

"We are betraying our children by letting food industries poison them."

– At a rally last November

"Food is medicine."

– Fox News

"If you like a McDonald's cheeseburger and a Diet Coke, which my boss (Donald Trump) loves, you should be able to get them! If you want to eat Hostess Twinkies, you should be able to do that. But you should know what the impacts are on your family and on your health."

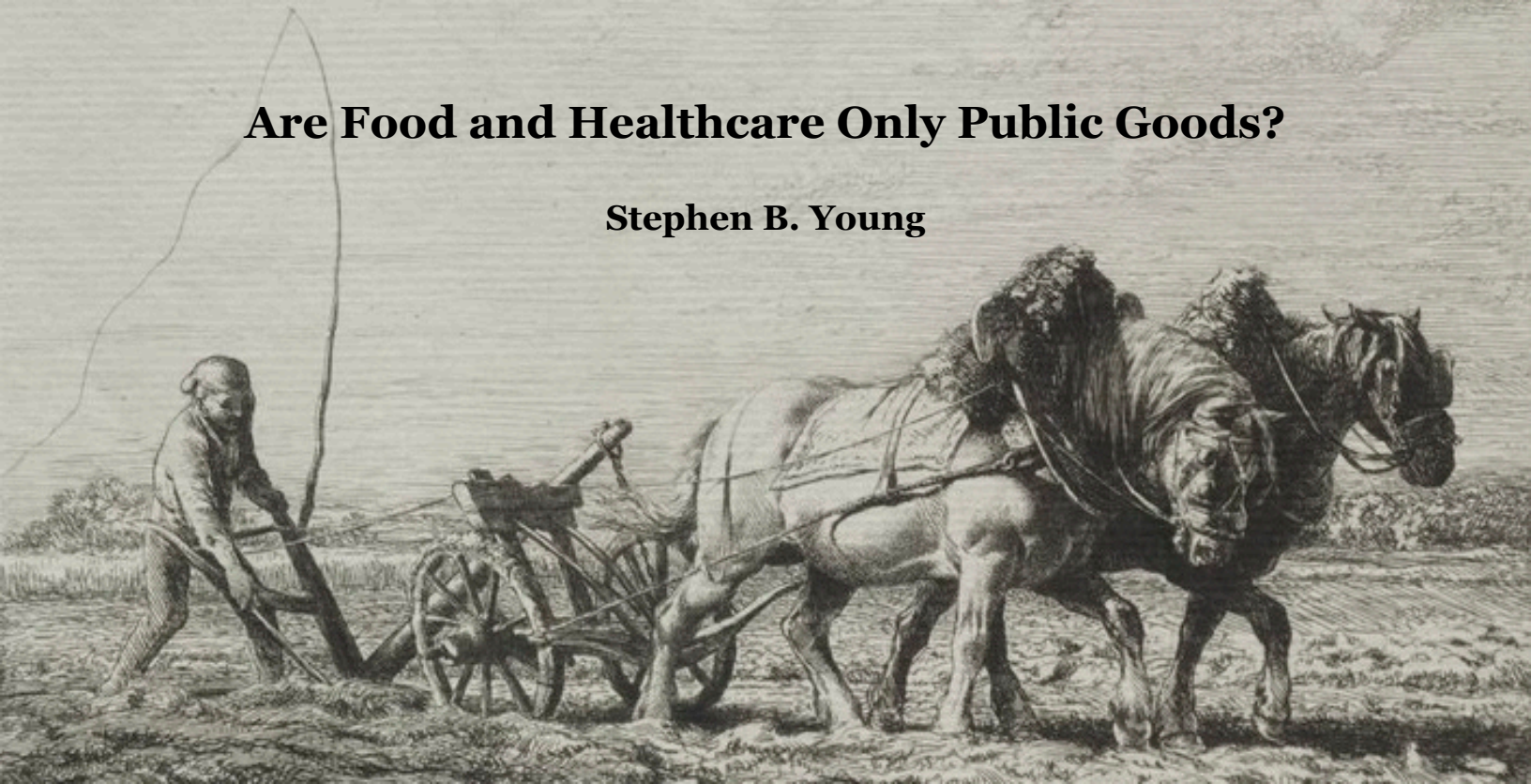
– USA Today

"For far too long, ingredient manufacturers and sponsors have exploited a loophole ("generally recognized as safe" or GRAS) that has allowed new ingredients and chemicals, often with unknown safety data, to be introduced into the U.S. food supply without notification to the FDA or the public. Eliminating this loophole will provide transparency to consumers and help get our nation's food supply back on track by ensuring that ingredients being introduced into foods are safe."

– CNN

Are Food and Healthcare Only Public Goods?

Stephen B. Young



In its work over several decades, the Caux Round Table has paid very little attention to the production and distribution of food and to the delivery of healthcare. The oversight has been somewhat intentional I think because most of us think reflexively of food and healthcare as public goods – societies need to feed their members and unhealthy people pose a danger to the public.

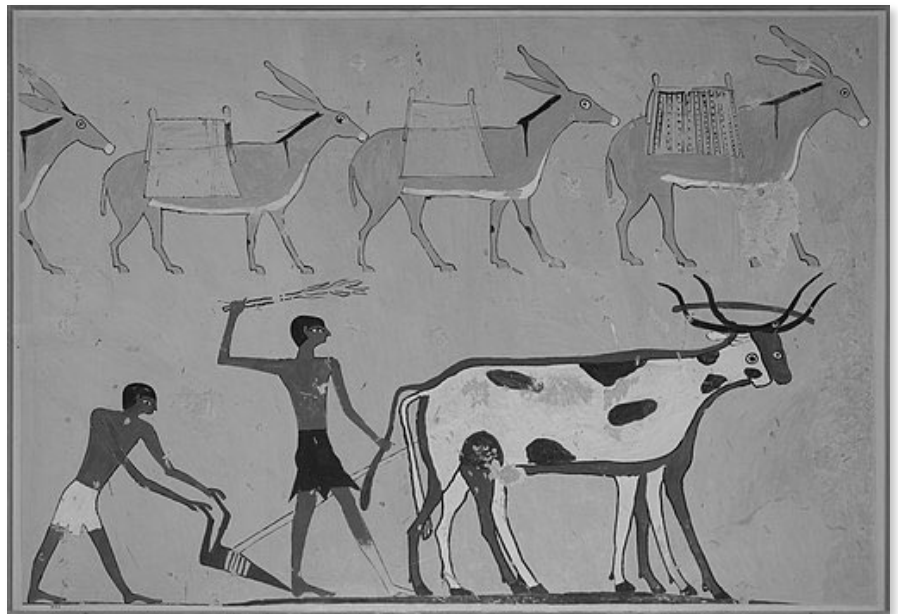
But now...

As I come to grips with the complexities of thinking about the moral dimensions of agriculture, food, medicines, health providers, health insurance and the best roles of markets and governments, I am thinking about the implications of what are private goods and what are public goods. My tentative conclusion is that the Caux Round Table Principles for Business and Government (and in healthcare non-profit organizations) can be used to mediate private responsibilities with public regulation.

Agriculture has been regulated by public authorities for centuries. In ancient China, Guan Zhong (720–645 BC), the prime minister of Qi, is associated with the “ever normal granary” system of stabilizing the price of grain for citizens. The government would buy grain and store it when supply was high and prices were low and then sell the grain when market stocks were low and prices high.

This concept was adopted by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace in the 1930s as a government program to support the financial well-being of farm families. In 1923, the U.S. government paid \$10 billion dollars to food producers.

In ancient Rome, the Pontine Marshes were drained and converted to farming to increase food supplies in urban markets, thereby lowering prices. The Roman authorities established systems to control and facilitate the transportation of grain from Egypt to Rome. Grain was often collected as a tax and then transported by barge on the Nile to Alexandria, where it was loaded onto ships for Rome. The Cura Annonae was a system of public grain distribution in Rome and Egyptian grain played a crucial role in ensuring the city's food supply.



In modern welfare states, food is inspected and regulated for quality and wholesomeness. Food is, thus, similar to drugs, medicines and healthcare as deserving of public supervision and regulation.

Public funding of healthcare is a foundational function of modern governments. Free markets are not trusted to provide the degree of healthcare that all citizens should expect as an entitlement to share in national prosperity. Insurance programs, rather than pay-as-you go, one-off, purchases, distribute the costs of healthcare across the population, subsidizing the less well-to-do.

But with President Trump's controversial appointment of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as secretary of Health and Human Services, the intersection of food production and consumption and of healthcare with moral capitalism and moral government has caught the attention of many.

Secretary Kennedy has questioned the propriety of using vaccines. Today, there is a measles outbreak in West Texas and New Mexico among those who were not vaccinated.

Kennedy also told top executives from PepsiCo, WK Kellogg, General Mills and other companies that a top priority of his was to eliminate artificial dyes from America's food supply. He said his intention is "to take action unless the industry is willing to be proactive with solutions."

In recently announcing a \$7.4 billion settlement with Purdue Pharma, Pennsylvania's attorney general said, "This epidemic, no doubt, was fueled by Purdue Pharma's manufacturing and deceptive marketing of OxyContin, a highly potent and addictive drug.

Dependency on the drug ruined countless lives, while the Sackler family and Purdue made more than \$35 billion from its distribution, profiting off of the suffering of others.”

Who can best manage the production of food and healthcare to provide quality, meet consumer demands, contribute to longer, happier and better lives: markets or government?

To answer this very important question, I suggest we should remember that a coin has two sides. Similarly, food and healthcare each show two faces – they are public goods and they are private goods.

Private Goods

Private goods can be transferred in a market. They can be priced and exchanged. A loaf of bread is a private good. Its owner can exclude others from using it and once it has been consumed, it cannot be used again. Private goods are conveniently the subject of personal ownership. They admit to designation as “mine” or “yours” and come within the reach of having a title that permits an owner to exclude all others from possession, use and enjoyment. With ownership, we can exclude others. Also, with ownership, people are in rivalry with one another to get their hands on the good or enjoy the service. For example, if one individual visits a doctor, there is one less doctor’s visit for everyone else and it is possible to exclude others from visiting the doctor. This makes doctor visits a rival and excludable private good.



Public Goods

Public goods include any product or service that is open to all, where there is no private ownership. Such products and services, like the air and roadways, are sharable. They are said to be non-rivalrous and non-excludable.

It is hard to personally own and exchange public goods, even though they can be enjoyed. A traffic light is a public good. One person can benefit in safely crossing a street and so can everyone else who passes by. But none of them owns the pole and light. Usually, the government does. Non-rivalry means that consumption of the good by one individual does not reduce availability of the good for consumption by others. Non-excludability means that no one can be effectively excluded from using the good.

Breathing air does not significantly reduce the amount of air available to others and people cannot be effectively excluded from using the air. This makes air a public good, albeit one that is economically trivial, since air is a free good.

A standard list of public goods include: peace, rule of law, a system of property rights and enforcement of contracts, communications and transportation systems, including the internet, the Linux community of software, beauty, knowledge and lighthouses.

Paul A. Samuelson is usually credited as the first economist to develop the theory of public goods. In his classic 1954 paper, “The Pure Theory of Public Expenditure,” he defined a public good or as he called it in the paper, a “collective consumption good,” as follows: ... *[goods] which all enjoy in common in the sense that each individual’s consumption of such a good leads to no subtractions from any other individual’s consumption of that good...*

In the real world, there may be no such thing as an absolutely non-rivalled and non-excludable good, but economists think that some goods approximate the concept closely enough for the analysis to be economically useful.

One of the most basic of public goods is a state where individuals can enjoy their liberties, including use of property and the pursuit of happiness. This public good is protected by the rule that one person’s freedom stops where it impinges on the equal freedom of others (“The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen”). Drawing the appropriate line between private rights, which authorizes private initiatives and limitations on that right to protect the rights of others, is a messy process.

Where does my freedom to smoke end so that your liberty not to inhale second-hand smoke can be vindicated? Adam Smith, in his lectures on jurisprudence, called this intersection of private and public goods the problem of “police.”

The production of public goods can also result in positive externalities which are not remunerated. If private organizations don’t reap all the benefits of a public good which they have produced, their incentives to produce it voluntarily might be insufficient. Consumers can take advantage of such positive externalities or public goods without contributing sufficiently to their creation. This is called the free rider problem or occasionally, the “easy rider problem.” (see *Global Public Goods*, Inge Kaul, Isabelle Grunberg, Marc A. Stern, editors; Wikipedia at “public goods”)

In the classic theory of the private firm, the business enterprise need not concern itself with public goods. It is to define its success or failure only with respect to the private goods or services it sells. Under this theory, as advocated with skill and passion by Milton Friedman and the Chicago School of economic thinking, if there are negative externalities spawned by the private sector creating a public concern, then it is up to government to step in and provide new, additional public goods in the form of regulation of private activity for the common good.

Thus, even in a theoretical world of purely private goods, there remains a problem along the border where something “public” arises to change the character of the private good into

something of greater communal concern. The border must not only be defined, but defended on both sides. The private goods side seeks to push the border farther away from its core autonomy and the public goods side seeks to prevent harm from crossing the border and to encourage positive externalities to be produced and shipped out “abroad” for public consumption. Watching over the border and adjusting disputes between the two sides is the function of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

We might note that both the collapse of credit markets in 2008 and the oil leak in the bed of the Gulf of Mexico are instances of private goods becoming more than, becoming of great concern to many publics. Questions are asked of cell phones and social media – are they only private goods or do they generate negative and dysfunctional externalities in culture and personal well-being to such an extent that they should be regulated?

Australia has passed a social media ban for children under 16 that will soon become the first law of its kind in the world. Platforms including TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Reddit, X and Instagram will be liable for fines of up to \$33 million for failing to block those under 16 from holding accounts. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the laws were aimed at mitigating the “harm” social media was inflicting on Australian children. “This one is for the mums and dads... They, like me, are worried sick about the safety of our kids online. I want Australian families to know that the government has your back,” he said.

A question of great import asks if AI is more a public good to be regulated or a private good to be left to entrepreneurs to produce and sell as only they see fit?



Outputs cannot so easily be allocated to just two categories of private and public. Some services that produce a public good, education for example, can be well delivered by private enterprise without government direction or supervision. Consider Oxford University or Harvard College. But say, are financial services similarly suitable for private enterprise production or do they require supervision of their externalities? What are we to do with goods of a mixed character?

It may make more sense to think of a continuum of goods, with completely private goods at one extreme and purely public goods at the other extreme. Next to fully private goods would come quasi-private goods and then a set of quasi-public goods before we get to purely public goods.

Quasi-private Goods

Quasi-private goods arise when private goods or services throw off positive and negative externalities. The idea is a crossing of the border between a purely private good and something with a more public character. A positive externality occurs when some benefit can be enjoyed beyond the ties of privacy, attaching one owner to a subsequent owner. Thus, a work of art, though it can be owned and rival others may be excluded from seeing or appreciating it, casts positive benefits of beauty and understanding. Its beauty or social meaning can be more than just a personal possession. Education provided privately is a benefit to more than those who pay tuition to learn new knowledge and skills. It contributes to social capital and to the capacity of a family or a society to advance in politics and economics.

A way of thinking of the difference between absolutely pure private goods and quasi-public goods is that others take an interest in the creation or the effect of quasi-private goods. The concept applicable here is analogous to that of negligence in the common law. Under the tent of negligence, when one's actions implicate the well-being of others, a duty may arise to use caution in so acting so that others are not harmed. Brett, Master of Rolls and later Lord Esher, put the concept this way in the case of *Heaven v. Pender* (1883, 11Q.B.D. 503): "Whenever one person is by circumstances placed in such a position with regard to another that every one of ordinary sense who did think would at once recognize that if he did not use ordinary care and skill in his own conduct with regard to those circumstances he would cause danger of injury to the person or property of the other, a duty arises to use ordinary care and skill to avoid such danger."

Much later, Lord Atkin offered a different version of this principle of responsibility for use of private property in *Donoghue v. Stevenson* (1932, A.C. 562): "The rule that you are to love your neighbor becomes in law, you must not injure your neighbor; and the lawyer's question, Who is my neighbor?, receives a restricted reply. You must take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which you can reasonably foresee would be likely to injure your neighbor. Who then, in law, is my neighbor? The answer seems to be – persons who are so closely and directly affected by my act that I ought reasonably to have them in contemplation as being so affected when I am directing my mind to the acts or omissions which are called into question."

A rather similar point was also made in "The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" in 1789 as follows in paragraph 4: "Liberty consists in the power to do anything that does not injure others; accordingly, the exercise of the rights of each man has no limits except those that secure the enjoyment of these same rights to the other members of society."

Private goods lose some of their privileged autonomy when they assume a character that can or will impact a wider circle of circumstances.

Quasi-private goods and services retain the core features of private goods. They are the subject of rivalry and potential owners and users can be excluded from ownership and use. They can be priced and sold with title changing hands or beneficial enjoyment placed in another's possession. But unlike pure public goods, they are encumbered with impacts on others outside the connection of buyer and seller. They create externalities. Thus, those others who are impacted by the use of the good or service take an interest in how the good or service is financed, made, sold, delivered and used.

A negative externality occurs when production and sale of a private good impinges on the enjoyment or well-being of others. Pollution of air and water from manufacturing is perhaps the classic case of a negative externality. As pollutants are discharged from private property into a public stream or river or penetrate into groundwater from which others draw their drinking water, they create negative externalities for those who might suffer from such pollution. Littering or not picking up after your dog on a sidewalk or a public park are other examples of a negative externality.

The concept of negative externality slides into the distinction of being a “public bad.” If enough people are negatively affected by behavior that undermines public health, the rule of law, public morals and decency, safety and security of persons and property, then it loses its entirely private character and becomes at least a quasi-private good or perhaps even a quasi-public good liable to regulation and control. Bad factory working conditions, for example, become quasi-private goods and generate advocacy for remediation on the part of unions and socially concerned NGOs. This is also true for public health, drug manufacture and sale, insurance and agriculture.



Quasi-private goods also include those public goods which can be and are rendered private – ownership rights are created to exclude others and make them compete for use. In this sense, farms, producers of chickens, eggs, pigs and cattle, sell quasi-private goods. Individuals ingest the food which nourishes and empowers their personal agency – a very private matter. But if they produce and sell food which makes people sick or facilitates obesity, are they not selling something with negative externalities – a public bad?

This occurs in intellectual property when creativity, knowledge and technique, which are conceptually accessible to all freely without dilution of their potential, are placed under patent or copyright to prevent free use and to force pricing of access through a market.

A poem, for example, can be read by many people without reducing the consumption of that good by others. It is non-rivalrous. However, the individual who wrote the poem may decline to share it with others by not publishing it and keeping it as exclusively “his” or “hers.” Similarly, the information in most patents can be used by any party without reducing consumption of that good by others. Copyrights and patents provide temporary monopolies or in the terminology of public goods, providing a legal mechanism to enforce excludability for a limited period of time.

Thus, we might say education or healthcare is a quasi-private good. Each brings non-excludable and non-rival benefits to a public, but can be provided through private contract in a marketplace where a price is placed on access to the service. Communities are better off with higher educational achievements and higher standards of public health.

A good which is rivalrous, but non-excludable is sometimes called a common pool resource. Such goods raise similar issues to public goods: the mirror to the public goods problem for this case is sometimes called the tragedy of the commons. For example, it is so difficult to enforce restrictions on deep sea fishing that the world’s fish stocks can be seen as a non-excludable resource, but one which is finite and diminishing.

Quasi-public Goods

Some outcomes are open to competition, but no claims of ownership can prevent entry of competitors. Natural resources are such quasi-public goods. Their exploitation gives rise to the tragedy of the commons: each acquirer of the good over-consumes and destroys the underlying asset, which is finite and diminishing. Fish in the oceans and potable water are such diminishing assets that will inflict harm once they are depleted. With such quasi-public goods, pricing for current market consumption does not charge enough to encourage slow use for preservation of stocks and supplies.

With quasi-public goods, the priority claim of privacy and autonomy in decision-making around the making and use of the good or service attenuates even more than with quasi-private goods. The scope or intensity of the externalities associated with the good or service is wider and deeper. So wide and so deep that something of a public interest can be said to have arisen. More than a few people external to the core production and exchange of the good or service care about its existential application in society, politics, the economy and the environment.

Another version of quasi-public goods are goods and services produced by businesses “affected with a public interest.” According to common law in traditional England, such businesses as hotels, ferries, common carriers and wharfs were held to higher standards of liability and responsibility because their customers had to rely, to their detriment, on the probity and caution of the owners. There was a general shared interest in personal safety to be enjoyed by numerous and unknowable future customers.

So, today, for similar reasons, utilities, railways and airplanes are regulated by government to ensure that the public interest in safety is vindicated by private parties.

Where a business has a monopoly or several businesses establish a cartel, government regulation steps in to prevent abuse of private power. When private capital is knowingly invested in such businesses, the private owners assume a responsibility to be good stewards of a public interest. Where private enterprise assumes the risk of market competition, it does not trespass into this zone of quasi-public goods.

Where private goods are created by intermingling private profit-seeking with government powers to exclude rivals, rent-seeking replaces market competition as the means of making money. Rent-seeking or crony capitalism creates less new wealth and more social injustice and markets for private goods only. These private goods therefore actually become “public bads” because of the damage their production and sale does to the rule of law and the abuse of power so engendered. Such rent-seeking transcends all justifications that tolerate private ordering through markets and so cannot benefit from the legitimacy of free market values. Such rent-seeking merits restriction and elimination on the grounds it has a quasi-public character (really a quasi-public “bad”) that is harmful to the community at large.

Airways for radio and television which, if un-regulated, would-be public goods, are placed under government control for allocation to private businesses for exploitation.

The Caux Round Table Principles for Business provide a framework for CSR management in every environment – private goods, quasi-private goods, quasi-public goods and even with public goods. The principles set forth seven primary considerations for the impact of business decisions and the guidelines provide a structure for evaluating the interests of key stakeholders. Under the stakeholder constituency of community, intersection of the private firm with provision of quasi-public goods and fully public goods is considered.

It's time for the Caux Round Table to expand its consideration of quasi-public and quasi-private goods, where both markets and governments have a claim to acting as standard setters and brokers between sellers and buyers, seeking to balance private decision-making with concerns for public well-being, markets using the invisible hand of rivalrous, competitive, decision-making and government with the do's and don'ts of regulation.

Stephen B. Young is Global Executive Director of the Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism.

Does Big Food Have a Moral Obligation to Fix Consumers' Unhealthy Diets?

Devry Boughner Vorwerk

Introduction

My roles in and around food are many. I'm a former executive in Big Food and experienced in international agriculture and food policy. I am also a mother and a board member of the Caux Round Table. From the vantage point of all those roles, I am witnessing a rapidly growing, food-related health crisis in the U.S. and worldwide. I have dedicated my career to food and it's time for essential changes to meet the nutritional needs of a growing global population.

Consumer's Personal Food Foundation Matters

"No, Devry, you may not have that! You're allergic to sugar," said my mother time and time again during my childhood. I grew up believing I was allergic to sugar. She would inform my teachers at school that I was not to have sugar. If there was a birthday party for a classmate, she sent along peanuts and raisins for me. No cookies. No chocolate milk. If we did sweeten anything at home, we either used crystalline fructose or honey. No sugar jar in our kitchen! She would make home lunch for me every day, which could be something like a cheese and alfalfa sprout sandwich on super dry wheat bread and I would get made fun of at lunchtime for my food options, "Eew, look at Devry eating grass sandwiches." I carry those memories in the card catalogue of my mind to this day. While friends scarfed ketchup and bologna sandwiches, I ate grass.



Often, my mother's food regime embarrassed me. An apple, while friends ate Twinkies. Ants on a log (celery, peanut butter, raisins), as I stared longingly at their cookies. They were so lucky. I was so deprived. Or was I?

I recall driving down Erringer Road across the railroad tracks in Simi Valley to the one "health food" store in our town to get our vitamins. The memory is so vivid, I feel myself as I write this sitting in the backseat of our White Rambler with the back left door held together with a wire coat hanger, window down, taking in the Saturday afternoon breeze. Despite the rambling, patched up car borne of saving nickels, my mother made every effort to buy

expensive health food to nourish her two daughters. She was educated on the ingredients. We wandered the aisles as she carefully read the backs of the bottles and packages. She would ask questions about the products and take her time to select items. Now and then, she'd bend. Carob bars and my favorite, even today: black Panda licorice.

My mother was a consumer ahead of her time. When at the “regular” grocery store called Alpha Beta, we would walk the cereal aisle and like any young child who is drawn to treats, we would want the colorful loops and other sugary “smacks” and she would grab the box, turn it over and say, “You see this ingredient, Red Dye #5 or Yellow Dye #XYZ,” I can’t entirely remember the numbers, “It’s crap. It’s chemicals. Do you want to put chemicals in your body?” Then, she would allow me to choose either raisin bran or puffy rice cereal and we were off to the dairy aisle to buy our Keifer.

Not only was my mother focused on what we ate, she was also focused on *how the food was produced*. Were harmful pesticides used? What was the water source? This was the 1980s and she was a “food activist” before that term existed. A fast-food joint was a no-go because of Amazonian deforestation by some of its beef producers.



Deforestation remains an issue today, one I was intimately involved in trying to address in my corporate role. Forty years on from mother’s activism and we are still battling with companies that destroy forests for food. This is a failure from the perspective of moral capitalism.

My mother was quite dogmatic about our nutritious and ethical diet. Yet my father was the opposite. Once my parents divorced, he would make giant steak dinners for us on Sundays and allow us to have sweets and treats during our weekly visits, as if it was an opportunity to bring us to “his side.” He’d buy us “Now&Laters” that would turn my lips blue and red with the chemical food colors and when I arrived home, my mother would see the collateral damage of the visit on our lips and tongues. We would get giant pieces of German chocolate cake that my stepmother would make and ice cream and lots of yummy treats. It’s like my sister and I lived two different food lives growing up. Maybe it’s why I can take a balanced perspective on food issues today. Treats, for instance, aren’t always demons, but they are not food and they should not have a central place in the diet. They should be treats.

I share this personal history to illustrate the “food foundation” that has shaped my “food philosophy” to this day. I believe a person’s “food philosophy” begins at the very early stages

of life. If a child is not taught nor given the opportunity to learn that what she puts in her body has both immediate and lasting consequences, then she can go into her adulthood *turning over one of the most important decisions in life to others, to those that process, package, market, distribute and sell food.*



Sadly, socioeconomics is a big factor in consumers’ “decision-making,” which I place in quotes because often in food deserts and lower income households, decisions are made for people based on what they can afford or what is available at local food banks. A cheaper grocery basket of ultra-processed foods wins over higher-priced fresh produce out of necessity. My mother’s quest required hard work and a bit of gumption. Our car barely held together – we couldn’t afford to fix it. She made certain sacrifices to ensure a proper food education.

Let me be clear. The consumer is the one placing the food in his or her mouth. Yet the consumer isn’t entirely responsible for that “choice,” especially when that consumer is a child. Sadly, children are the most vulnerable consumers and the hardest hit if they are not protected from the dangers of unhealthy foods that are pumped with added sugars and chemicals.

In his book, *Why Smart People Make Bad Food Choices*, Jack Bobo addresses consumer’s “decision fatigue.” Why are consumers making bad choices in their food purchases? These are reflex choices made in the moment. “The human brain gets tired after an intense round of decision-making or after a long day of making choices. When this happens, our brain leans toward whichever option feels easiest – and this is seldom the best choice for our health.” Taking this further, food marketers know and study the psychology behind what prompts a person to throw extra “junk” stuff in their grocery baskets. Product positioning and the closer we get to checkout, the more impulse buying happens. The industry exploits human behavior for sure and that is the ethical conundrum companies and executives leading them face. They know what to do to increase sales of candy bars and sodas: place them closer to the checkout stand after a shopper has already made too many decisions. Who is responsible for bad food choices?

Judgment of the Consumer Has No Place

While the consumer is the actor making the choice, they are not singularly responsible for his or her diet choices. The consumer is overwhelmed by the food system. The consumer cannot keep up with all the science behind the ingredients. Many consumers are placing blind

faith in a bag of chips, a soda, a bagged salad, a hamburger, a candy bar, an apple and so forth, to deliver daily energy and nutritional requirements. Consumers are also overwhelmed daily by a barrage of information: this study says coffee is good for you and that study says it's bad. Butter? Is butter good or bad? What about blueberries? What about GMO vs non-GMO? Or seed oils vs tallow? Milk? Is oat milk, almond milk, rice milk, really milk? Consumers are on information overload and the industry is speaking multiple food languages to break through to the consumer. Throw in the social media "influencers" and it's a wild mess of information and misinformation about what is good and what is bad for your body.

My "forced" food education in childhood is not commonplace. My mother was driven to make our own personal food system work for us. She had it in her to fight the system that was delivering products to the grocery shelves. We cannot expect every person to be equipped with the wherewithal to fight the food system like my mother has done her entire adult life. It was a personal crusade of hers. It's exhausting to account for every ingredient, every recommended daily allowance, every calorie, all day, every day. It's exhausting to fight the temptations put in front of us all day, every day. Food marketing is all around us, enticing us to buy that 500-calorie latte or the baskets of tasty chicken and fries. Willpower only takes us so far. It's a daily battle for our health. Also, as a society, we don't all share the same views and values around food and we don't all have the same parental, educational and financial resources to manage our personal food system.

Further, addressing food choices is a sensitive personal matter that, if not done well, can drive wedges between people. Over my career, I have learned that consumers do not want to be *educated* on food choices. Rather, they want to be *engaged* and *empowered*. Telling someone how bad something is for them could lead them to eat or drink more as an act of rebellion.



Acknowledging someone is obese and on track for diabetes, high cholesterol, heart disease, inflammation, hypertension, the list goes on, is not a judgment. It is a fact that the wrong kind of food and too much of it or not enough of the right kind of food, has dire consequences. So, let's throw judgment out the door and talk about responsibility.

Who is responsible for consumer food choices? Some build a food foundation on sand or sugar, fats and salts. And what if the individual has no line of sight to the harmful effects of food dyes, petro-based ingredients and other production and processing inputs? Are consumers responsible for knowing all the food science, nutrition science and industry actions and behaviors when they fill their baskets? Partially, but not entirely.

Who is Responsible?

Who is responsible for an increasingly unhealthy, undernourished, overweight and physically and mentally sick society? Certainly, there are many players. Individuals choose too much candy or soda. Food producers, in some (or many) instances, market items that sell well rather than feed us well. Retailers have a role. The store at the gas station? Slushies, chips and candy bars. Fast food? Cheaper, excessively unhealthy calories. Bars turn a blind eye to overserving, which is akin to driving people to buy chemical-laced, sugar-laden cereal. And what role does the government have? And if that's not too many players, what about the farmers that grow crops? Let's keep going. Is it the companies that make the "chemicals" or ingredients we find on the backs of packages? Is it the mom-and-pop restaurant? The local candy shop??

It seems there's an army of players and potential players who have some role – some bigger than others – who are responsible for causing the obesity and diabetes epidemic sweeping the U.S. and the globe.

The data tells the truth about the state of American health. In November 2024, Lancet published this headline: "Without immediate action, nearly 260 million people in the USA predicted to be overweight or have obesity by 2050." The study estimates that "Obesity rates among American adults (aged 25 or older) and older adolescents (aged 15-24 years) have at least doubled over the past three decades (1990-2021). Southern States are particularly impacted, with Oklahoma, Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Texas, West Virginia and Kentucky having the highest levels of overweight and obesity among older adolescents (aged 15-24 years). In 2021, over half of older adolescent males in Texas and nearly two-thirds of older adolescent females in Mississippi living with overweight or obesity.

Globally, the statistics paint the same picture, with the World Health Organization estimating over 1 billion (approximately one in eight people) are classified as obese, with rates doubling among adults and quadrupling among youth.

Again, who is responsible for ensuring the health of the citizens? Broadly, the "food industry" or what is known as "Big Food" (this descriptor encompasses a large group, which is not a homogenous industry), has argued for "consumer choice." So, is it the consumer's fault? What happens to the consumer choice argument when it comes to a child? Oh, then is it the parent's fault? It could be the school's fault, where kids are getting their school lunch. But wait, isn't that the government's fault?

The blame game leads to a vicious cycle of lack of accountability among all actors in society: the individual, business and government. The blame game is precisely why the situation continues to worsen.

Tragedy of the Commons

When it comes to an individual's health and therefore a society's health, we face a sort of ["tragedy of the commons."](#) An individual's health is a finite, valuable resource that can be "overused" and "exploited," wrecking the resource altogether. When scaled across society, the most valuable resource for that society's progression and overall security, a healthy and productive citizenry, is compromised.



Therefore, it's important to consider the moral obligation of actors along the food chain in correcting the tragic obesity and food-related health epidemic we are facing. I do need to say that I am sadly not optimistic that the situation can be reversed easily. Many have tried in the past 30 years to "take on Big Food" without much success. The moment an influential political figure steps in and cries foul on the food system, he or she is demonized or relegated to a "nut." Whether it is well-known scientists, politicians or

courageous business leaders within the system, changing the food system toward more healthy outcomes has been without great success.

We live in a moment where there is a strange convergence of polarized politicians and political parties in America taking on Big Food. Yet, it seems very shaky at this moment. With Robert F. Kennedy Jr. at the helm of Health and Human Services, which oversees the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), there is a conversation on the left and right about Making America Healthy Again (MAHA). Sadly, it is a shared crisis across every community in the U.S. and one that needs a systemic response. At the time of drafting this article, the governor of West Virginia is poised to approve a bill that imposes a sweeping ban on food dyes and preservatives: Red Dye 3 and 40, Yellow Dye 5 and 6, Blue Dye 1 and 2 and Green 3 and butylated hydroxyanisole and propylparaben. These are dyes and preservatives that the "crunchy" foodies have been working to ban for years and it is "liberal" legislation that was passed long ago in California.

Might citizen health and wellness be the issue that bridges the divide among our politicians? It's a wait-and-see situation. These are tiny gestures in a food system that needs more than gestures. Government has a distinct moral obligation to protect its constituents from known harms. The challenge going forward is what is known and what is yet unknown and whose science reigns with political leaders in the end? Will the industry stop hiding behind "sound science" when the science does not go their way? Might the industry go the road of deploying the "precautionary principle" used in Europe in instances where the science community needs more time to ensure there is no harm to humans from a chemical or ingredient?

The Truth, Time, Cumulative Impacts and Tradeoffs

Denying the truth and lack of morality leads to mortality.

I submit that selfish, non-moral capitalism (i.e., inadequate public policy and regulatory oversight) got us into this problem. Namely, a lack of leadership among business and government got us into this public health crisis. The individual “consumer” certainly has accountability. Still, when up against a system that is so vast and moving so quickly to get a share of the consumer paycheck and one not grounded on the premise of consumer health and wellness, it’s a daily battle for any citizen to keep up on what he or she should be putting into their body.

It all boils down to lack of moral leadership. I observe a global deficit of courageous, consistently ethical, truthful leaders across the international food industry and in government who are unwilling to steer the food ship in a different direction when faced with the moral and ethical choice to change. There are courageous leaders out there doing really good things, but just not enough of them.

Truth

At the company I founded nearly six years ago, we work with courageous leaders in the industry and deploy the guiding principle of truth. We support our clients in seeking, facing, following, and sharing the truth. We challenge business leaders to ask the following questions of the current products they sell in the marketplace and before they launch a new product, service, technology or capital investment:

- What are the benefits of this product, service, technology and capital to society?
- Is there any potential harm to society from this product, service, technology or capital?
 - If so, can it be addressed/corrected?
 - If not, what are other options?

Asking this line of questions often results in new innovations within the company.

If the harm cannot be corrected, it should not go into the marketplace, which is considered a utopian view in business. So be it. It is also the moral and ethical view. Of importance is that the evaluation of harm cannot focus only on the current day. Evaluation of harm must consider whether harm could exist well in the future.

Time and Cumulative Impacts

The notion of time and the future relieves current food executives of their moral burden. For example, when food dyes were launched, there was not enough science to explain the effects on the human body. It's just tiny doses of color, right? There is no impact, really. Really? Couldn't a food industry executive have asked that question? And what about the cumulative impact? What about the emerging science and the approach in Europe to ban these substances? Companies choose not to address critical questions or factors that impact the future and cumulative impacts on the human body when considering the safety of their products. That's also a burden for the regulators. The regulators should have held the industry more accountable and compelled them to stare into the mirror of truth.

“Tradeoffs”

The term “tradeoff” is often used as an excuse in business. “Yes, but we must launch this product because jobs depend on it. It's a tradeoff.” Tradeoffs are a slippery slope in the food industry, often leading to outcomes that work against public health. Tradeoffs allow negative externalities to permeate the public space, shrouded in public benefits.

It's difficult when a company has deployed a great deal of capital and time into building something that is found to harm people. Once the capital has been spent, the investment needs to become profitable. The assets lock in the industry leaders to lobby for the business's continued existence. Let's take high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), for example. The industry is locked into an infrastructure that would be costly and economically harmful to unravel. Jobs depend on the production of HFCS. The same for sugar production. If these industries are tied to requirements for continued growth, yet reducing caloric sweeteners is what consumers need, how do industry leaders account for the tradeoffs of jobs vs. public health? It's a moral dilemma that perpetuates the crisis.

The truth is that society needs a winding down of the amount of sugar and certain types of sugar and sweeteners in our food. New generations of non-caloric, nature-based sweeteners need swift investment and adoption. What's holding the food industry back? It's the profit gravy train of cheaper sugars that continues to pad the profit and loss of the companies.



Our households do not need any more added sugars to our diets. What is an executive to do? Let's unpack the executive mentality.

Do Executives Eat What They Make?

Here's a question to ask a global food executive: Do you feed your kids what your company makes daily for every meal? If I asked that of some of the executives I have encountered in my career, some would probably look me square in the eye and say, "Of course I don't feed my kids high-calorie, sugary food every day. Only as a treat, but most days they have something from us because we nourish the world and give consumers choices." Hmmm. I've been in discussions with executives where I've pushed issues such as added sugar labeling, adding calorie counts to restaurant menus, leading on sugar and salt reduction or pending reformulation regulations on hydrogenated oils, for example. Executives fought every single one of those issues and lost. Millions of lobbying dollars were spent to combat these issues. Why fight it? Why not lead the change? We assume executives want the same things as consumers for their own children, yet collectively, they are willing to fight as an industry against ethical and moral choices for the whole marketplace. By definition, this is not moral capitalism. It's greed.

If you pierce the corporate veil and ask food executives what they eat daily, I'm here to say it's not multiple bottles of soda, several candy bars and ultra-processed foods. In my experience, high-performing executives are attempting to eat well-rounded diets filled with fruits and vegetables, lean proteins and lower-calorie drinks.

Because there is no collective leadership accountability, the overall industry is engaged in what I call "nutrition washing," focusing on the ability of the industry to provide nutrition at scale across the globe when it's simply not the case. The farmers can produce nutrition at scale, but the processors are the players that can turn crops into nutritious offerings or harmful packaged goods.

Moral Capitalism is the Solution

Counterintuitively, capitalism is the only system that can help society reverse course. Still, *moral capitalism must be* at play, coupled with the steady hand of *moral legislation and regulation* (i.e., smart subsidization, taxation, ethical science and regulatory oversight that balances the need for businesses to innovate and grow, along with consumer well-being).

The market for healthy foods is growing and consumer demand is driving businesses to change, innovate and respond to consumer and public health needs. Some food companies are being founded to provide healthier options in the marketplace. It is an exciting time to be part of the healthy food revolution. For example, more sustainable meats and plant-based alternatives are flooding the marketplace and new biobased ingredients are being developed from renewable plant resources.

I should note that the traditional food industry has made progress in delivering healthier solutions to the marketplace, but change is not happening across all companies and Big Food,

especially, is not investing in the solutions fast enough and is also counter-investing heavily to expand the unhealthy products category at the same time. An example of a large multinational that has worked to expand its healthy product offering is Pepsi under former CEO Indra Nooyi's leadership. She recognized that they could use their scale for good and manufacture and distribute healthier food items. Yet the company continues to manufacture items that are a significant source of our public health problem: sugary sodas. They are but one example.

What if the entire food industry did a rethink on how it could use its capital and manufacturing footprint to rethink food at scale? Starting with thinking about what is possible could lead these companies down a very different road for the future of food.

Moral capitalism requires companies to prioritize the health and well-being of their customers over pursuit of short-term profits.

Food Industry Responsibility

Food industry leaders are morally obligated to rethink their priorities, given their influence. Instead of spending excessive amounts of lobbying dollars to put consumers in the back seat, food manufacturers, distributors and retailers must consider the long-term health impact of their products and place consumer health needs in the driver's seat.

If the industry acknowledges the direct link between ultra-processed foods and the ongoing health crisis, it must also recognize its role in reversing this trajectory by:

- Reformulating products to reduce excessive sugar, sodium and unhealthy fats while maintaining affordability.
- Pulling unnecessary and harmful ingredients from their products now, not waiting for the regulators to do it.
- Investing in genuinely nutritious food options that are accessible to all consumers, which requires shifting capital spent from the innovation of unhealthy products to investment in healthy solutions.
- Enhancing transparency around ingredients and production methods, making food labels easier to understand.
- Ceasing aggressive marketing of unhealthy products, especially to vulnerable populations, such as children.
- Lobbying for nutrition and hunger legislation that may work against their short-term interest, but is in the long-term interest of citizens.

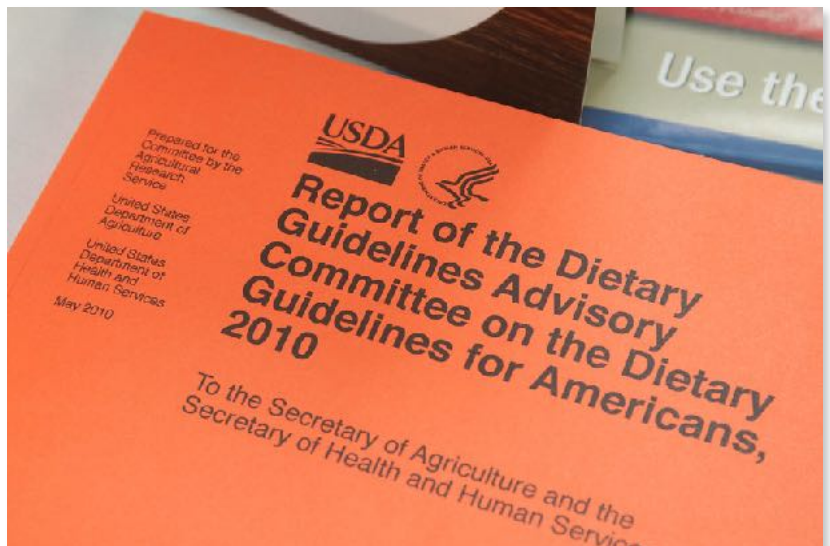
Moral capitalism within the food industry means not only responding to consumer demand, but also actively shaping a healthier demand. It requires industry leaders to prioritize stewardship of human bodies and to view consumers as people rather than mere market segments.

Government Responsibility

The government is crucial in establishing guardrails that promote public health while enabling businesses to succeed. However, the failure of existing policies to curb obesity and diet-related diseases suggests a pressing need for systemic change. To act responsibly, policymakers must:

- Enforce more substantial nutritional standards for food processing, labeling and marketing.
- Incentivize healthier food options through community programming, engagement and consumer subsidies that favor nutrient-dense, whole foods rather than processed commodities.
- Better regulate deceptive advertising practices that mislead consumers about the health benefits of products. Just because it is labeled with words like “natural,” “part of a healthy diet,” “whole grain” and the like, doesn’t mean the product is healthy. It could be packed with sugar.
- Improve access to healthy food in underserved communities through expanded food assistance programs and investment in local food systems.
- Implement educational, community-based financial services modules that support low-income households on healthy meal planning and purchases.
- Prioritize food education and fitness programming in schools (remember the Presidential Fitness Test!?) to ensure the next generation understands the relationship between diet, exercise and health.
- Reconfigure the school lunch program to cull unhealthy processed food items from the menu. This should not be political.
- Implement taxes or other financial disincentives on highly processed and sugar-laden products while making healthier alternatives more affordable.

Governments must recognize that public health interventions are not an infringement on personal freedom, but a necessary safeguard against corporate practices that contribute to widespread illness. Moral governance requires leaders to resist industry lobbying efforts that prioritize profit over people’s well-being and instead, implement policies that create a healthier, more resilient society.



Stewardverse Leadership: A New Approach Under the New Administration

Reversing the health crisis requires a fundamental shift toward stewardverse leadership. The etymology of steward is “safekeeper” of the “whole house” and verse is to “turn toward.” Under this model, business and government operate with a sense of duty to society and support actions and policies that promote both economic growth and human well-being. Stewardverse leadership embraces a framework emphasizing responsible stewardship of natural and human resources, promoting long-term health and sustainability.

Under the new administration, this approach can lead to meaningful changes by:

- Holding corporations accountable for their impact on public health and rewarding those prioritizing nutrition and sustainability.
- Creating public-private partnerships that drive innovation in food production, making healthy options widely available and affordable.
- Fostering a cultural shift where businesses and policymakers are encouraged – and expected – to take responsibility for the well-being of citizens.
- Deploying “sound science” that accounts for emerging concerns in health and wellness and that is not based on whims of belief (yes, this means holding RFK Jr. accountable to sound scientific approaches) in what is healthy *vs.* not. Not all ingredients are unhealthy simply because they have long, scientific names (e.g., Riboflavin, carrageenan and seed oils).
- Prioritizing food system resilience to ensure future generations are not burdened with the same preventable health crises.

The stakes are too high to ignore. The current trajectory of food-related diseases is unsustainable, not just for individuals, but for society at large. Through moral capitalism and stewardverse leadership, the food industry, government, communities and citizens can collaboratively forge a future where health, sustainability and economic prosperity are not mutually exclusive, but intrinsically linked. The time for incremental change has passed – bold action is necessary and it must begin now.

Devry Boughner Vorwerk is Founder and CEO of DevryBV Sustainable Strategies. She previously served as Chief Communications Officer at Cargill and Chief Corporate Affairs Officer at Grubhub. She is on the board of the Caux Round Table.

Food and Moral Sentiments

Michael Hartoonian

*What is a man, if the chief
Good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed?
A beast, no more.
-Hamlet, Act IV, Scene IV*

Introduction

A native American grandfather was sitting by a quiet lake enjoying the beauty of a peaceful landscape, when his young grandson approached and asked, “Grandpa, why do I have negative emotions like anger, greed and envy? And sometimes positive emotions about love and kindness?”

Grandfather: “Well grandson, you are troubled because there are two wolves fighting each other inside of you, a *good* wolf and a *bad* wolf. And in doing so, they are eating at your soul.”

Grandson: “That’s terrible! Which one will win, grandfather?”

Grandfather: “The one you feed by your thoughts and actions.”

— *A well-known story from the Cherokee people*

Is Eating Fuel for the Body?

It has been said that people do not live by bread alone. While food is necessary, it is not sufficient for a healthy life. That said, many people cannot afford the necessity of (healthy) food because they live in “food deserts,” where government policies and corporations feel no obligation for people and trade in transactional votes and profits.

For complex reasons, health and food are related, depending on the kind of food and the ways it is prepared and eaten. In fact, eating the wrong food in the wrong manner is unhealthy. In the U.S. and increasingly in Europe, more people are obese than ever before (WHO, 2022, just under 60% of Europeans adults are either overweight or obese.). In the U.S., it’s over 43% (CDC, 2021). Half of the people in America are destroying their health because they are obesely overweight. This condition is causal to ubiquitous diseases like diabetes, heart and coronary problems, cancer, drug use and even suicide. This, in spite of the fact that millions are spent on fitness programs, all kinds of dieting and millions more on drugs intended to

help people lose weight. Of course, all of these attempts to use drugs, fitness programs and dieting are not available to those people already living in food deserts. Without access to healthy food, eating “empty” calories is what you have to do just to live. Besides, it is mass-produced and cheaper than real food.

The Human Perspective

There is something much deeper in the human psyche that interferes with food and health. That something is a failure to link food with its meaning in the life of all people. The link is broken by thinking first of money, secondly about quantity and thirdly about people.

Anyone who says that food is just fuel for the body is a fool. The machine metaphor is insulting to us. We are not machines. We are not animals unless we behave like them and in some cases, animals behave better than we do. Humans are, through learning, rational and social beings. We should know the difference between human beings and animals. Animals have sex. Humans make love. Animals die. Humans pass on. Animals feed. Humans dine. Unless this is clear, food will never take its proper place in a life of meaning. We will say, of course, that we don't have time. Everyone is on a different schedule or we simply don't like or know how to cook. Well, this may be true of many who can't afford good food because of private and common (government and business) choices. Thus, in many poorer families, dining is often sacrificed for reasons beyond an individual's control, like working two or three jobs. The problem is we, as a society, don't know what we should prioritize. And again, with this sense of relativism, we diminish life's meaning and turn to amusing ourselves – to death. Leading with the attitude that everything is relative, food becomes irrelevant to meaning and its nutritional value and its role in the cadence of the day's activities become only an afterthought. Living this way quickly becomes a habit.

The Feeding of the Young

Some years ago, I was asked by a middle school principal if I could help the school deal with their discipline problem. I said maybe, but I would need to see the students in school and follow them through the day. With this approval, I spent a day and thought that the biggest issue was the way in which the children were fed at lunchtime. In the cafeteria, they had 20 minutes to eat and get back to their classes. It was an example of feeding, like animals are fed. There was no conversation, only shouting and worse.

If he and the board of education in Milwaukee were willing to “bend” some district rules about the union contracts, about the by-laws of school kitchens regarding how food is served, we could move ahead. They were willing and did three things as an experiment.

First, we changed the lunch time to 50 minutes, to have food served family style – by the students – and to have the menu posted so students could see what food would be served each day. There were no cafeteria choices. There would be one uncomplicated meal,

with a leaning toward ethnic foods. Students would also bus their dishes and clean their tables. I also suggested that the school should invite perhaps five or 10 older residents of the community to join the students each day at lunchtime.

In about two weeks, students were talking to each other and the older residents joined in. The children showed a degree of manners not seen before and in a month, the discipline issue became something to put in the background. Students were beginning to understand the difference between feeding and dining. I think we should make the most of this experiment. Few, if any schools, did.

Food and Virtue

Today, in most advanced economies, about 2% of the population produces all the food. It is relatively expensive for most consumers, but the quantity is plentiful. This condition is possible because of government subsidies, technology, pesticides, fertilizers and single crop agriculture and, of course, because of global markets and food preservatives. There are few farmers today, mostly extractive corporations and food factories whose virtue and market is mass quantity at the expense of quality and diversity and absent attention to relationships between food and health. The quantity of food is guaranteed by those large government subsidies, used by all “modern” nations. The quality is not so much of an issue. So, people eat a great deal of low nutritious foods, gain way too much weight, become sick and then turn to drugs. This is, of course, an oversimplification, but the overall framework is true. Citizens increasingly spend relatively less money on food and more money on healthcare and take little time thinking about how food and health are related.

Dining in Relationships

Several studies and observations on why some people on earth are healthier, live longer and seem to be happier, have almost everything to do with the food they eat. But just as or more important are the relationships they have with their family and friends, the exercises they do and how food is prepared and shared over conversations. Whatever truth, or lack thereof, in studies about places where people do seem to be happier and live longer, the one thing they and other healthy people share is good food and loving relationships. Another fact that links relationships and meaning is length of life data. We know that the life span of white men in the U.S. has fallen (by 2.5 years since 2021, CDC). A similar finding by WHO concludes that in Europe, for the first time in 75 years, the life span for men is not rising, but continuing at 2020 levels. Food quality may have something to do with these numbers, but I have a different theory, supported by the rise in suicide rates, increases in the number of people living alone and the increasing number of people in psychological counseling within advanced economies. That is, life’s meanings, which are directly tied to ethical relationships within and among families, firms, communities, and nations, are all in decline.

We know that prolonged stress kills. Also, that stress is born out of transactions among

people who are absent moral sentiments. These people will confess that they have few friends, few meaningful conversations and eating alone is not satisfying and gives them “ulcers,” but feel helpless, so they take more and more medicine to calm their stomachs. Not sure that this works if the conditions that cause stress stay the same or actually increase. Thinking of food in the wellness equation is most “healthy” and advantageous when shared in harmony, when handsome in nutrients and when prepared with family and friends. While all of these attributes are important, it’s sharing with others that is most important, as all other attributes follow from this precept. Dining can be used to bring people together and it may well have a positive outcome by diminishing stress and enhancing health. Theoretically, it is from this synergy that meaning is sustained.

The Seeds of Change and Continuity

Food is also fundamental to family and national *traditions and identity*. Sharing food creates the bond that helps hold families and cultures together. From wedding feasts to national holidays, all are punctuated by special foods. To say that you are what you eat is true only to the extent that your food is tied to a larger set of human relationships that have meaning for you and link you to traditions of families and communities, both today and from long ago. In fact, the history of family, national and regional recipes can give us an accurate story of the evolution of any society. It may be more accurate than art. But make no mistake. It is art. An art that can be recreated, enjoyed and loved in harmony with others. Food also can tell us a great deal about global exchange. From the spice routes of the 13th century to the trading of soybeans today, we see the competition of ideas along with the exchange of seeds.

Starting in the early 19th century, there has been a long and dramatic shift in the cultural continuity of food. While the sustainability of sufficient calories for survival has always been problematic, before the industrial revolution and the introduction of single crop agriculture, sufficiency was almost always a function of weather and climate change. But since about 1830, malnutrition has had more to do with government policies and the lingering belief in mercantilism. As we move into the present era, we know that millions of people starve to death each year while thousands of tons of food rot in warehouses, in fields and on docks. It would seem that the value of life, along with the value of diversity, nutrition and the cultural continuity of food have been intentionally diminished. This should not surprise us, as we have, for almost 200 years now, placed our future in the hands of those who would separate food from the centrality of living and pretend that it is simply an economic commodity like oil or steel. This classification makes a mockery of how wealth is created in the first place. Wealth is far more than money. It is our understanding of excellence in character manifested in ethical behavior. Wealth is created by the many, not the few. It is created by people, people who are healthy, educated and morally leaning and interested in doing good and doing well. They understand that doing well or making money without doing good or living a moral/responsible life only sucks meaning from whatever you do. The lives of so many “moneyed” people bear witness to this truth. They are left with no answer to the question: what have I contributed to improving the lives of people? As an aside, not long ago, I asked members of

my book club if they have any regrets at this stage in life? They confessed that they didn't serve their community or country enough. They never served in the military and they believed that they had nothing to die (or live) for, except to live out their lives in self-rituals and comfort. "It was too late now," they said. The saddest words in any language.

Conclusion

The Caux Round Table has developed a set of principles for both business and government that properly brings food to its central role in the everyday lives of people around the world. The Caux principles are based on a fundamental Japanese value: *kyosei* – *living and working together for the common good*.

Do businesses or governments have "leaders" who understand *kyosei* or practice the fundamental precept of Adam Smith's capitalism – moral sentiments? Without a moral anchor, there is no capitalism and no capitalist. Capitalism is not based on greed. If understood as only a license to trade, absent more relationships, it is destructive of self, markets and communities. Unless the market is encased in personal ethics, it quickly becomes expensive, sluggish and corrupt. As I look around the world today, I see few capitalists. And the ones I do see seem embarrassed and timid to stand up for their belief in moral behavior and in helping their community. They also refuse to acknowledge the worth of competition within settings of cooperation. The situation reminds me of many people who call themselves Christians without an understanding of Christian principles or any knowledge of Jesus' life. We call such people phonies.

Phony or crony capitalism will always lead to starvation because such "capitalists" will always eat their seed corn because they are ignorant of patient capital, how to create wealth and of how to engage morality into economic decisions. Until all market agents can understand how food, dining and human/environmental interactions and relationships are fundamental to the health and well-being of people and the earth, no amount of produced food will make a dent in malnutrition, general unwellness, extending life spans or living a more meaningful life.

Which wolf are we feeding?

Michael Hartoonian is Associate Editor of Pegasus.

The logo features a large, black, hand-painted circular brushstroke that is open at the bottom. Inside the circle, the text "CAUX ROUND TABLE" is written in a teal, sans-serif font, and "FOR MORAL CAPITALISM" is written in a black, sans-serif font below it.

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