



TASKS AND METHODS IN DEVELOPMENT ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

Growth paradigms of development are now widely criticized as anti-developmental because they bring benefits to few while keeping the masses poor, and destroy valuable cultures. Some critics repudiate development altogether. Most international institutions and national planning agencies still follow old models, however, although they modify them under the rubric of "structural adjustment." Yet a new model is in gestation, which raises basic value questions about the good life, the just society, and the right stance toward nature. Modern conditions, characterized by large scale, complex interdependencies among all social systems, and the extreme rapidity of change, render ancient answers to these normative questions obsolete. The ancient answers were framed in static environments marked by slow change, high degrees of isolation of one system from another, and small scale. Clearly, what is now needed to create a modern development ethic is critical dialogue between ancient wisdoms and modern sciences. In the past, ethics has not successfully answered normative questions posed by economics. A new approach is needed: an ethic as "means of the means," that is, a strategy in which ethics formulates its norms from within the constraints faced by those who wield economic policy instruments. Ethics is to lay bare value gains and losses attendant upon diverse policy choices, and establish criteria for determining which value sacrifices an affected population will tolerate. Four arenas of ethical discourse are analyzed to show where ethics may engage politics, economics, and other technological rationalities to forge working strategies for problem-solving. The tasks of ethics are to devise value strategies in development, and to keep hope alive in a world where rational calculations of probable developmental success would lead to despair.

RESUMEN

Los paradigmas de crecimiento en la teoría del desarrollo son ahora ampliamente criticados como anti-desarrollistas a causa de conllevar beneficios a unos pocos mientras dejan a las masas pobres, y destruyen culturas valiosas. Algunos críticos repudian totalmente el desarrollo. La mayoría de las instituciones internacionales y de las agencias de planeación nacional todavía siguen viejos modelos, aunque sin embargo los han modificado etiquetándolos como "ajuste estructural". Con todo, un nuevo modelo está en gestación, cuestionando los valores básicos acerca de la calidad de la vida, la sociedad justa y la postura apropiada respecto la naturaleza. Dándose condiciones modernas, las viejas soluciones ya no sirven, son obsoletas a tales cuestiones normativas, de ahí la necesidad de una ética moderna del desarrollo y por lo tanto la necesidad de un diálogo entre viejas sabidurías y ciencias modernas. En el pasado, la ética no ha sabido responder a cuestiones normativas planteadas por la economía. Se requiere un nuevo enfoque: una ética como "medio de los medios", esto es, como estrategia para entrar dentro de los límites y dinamismos propios a los instrumentos de política económica. La ética deberá encargarse en poner de manifiesto ganancias y pérdidas de valores derivadas de cada opción política escogida, y establecer los criterios para determinar qué sacrificios de dichos valores tolerará una población afectada. Se analizan cuatro campos de discurso ético para mostrar dónde la ética podría tomar parte en política, economía y otras racionalidades tecnológicas para forjar estrategias de trabajo en la solución de problemas. Las tareas de la ética son idear estrategias de valor en la teoría del desarrollo, y mantener la esperanza viva en un mundo dónde los cálculos racionales de un probable éxito en el desarrollo llevarían a la desesperanza.

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TASKS AND METHODS IN DEVELOPMENT ETHICS

1. Development Paradigms: Critiques and Alternatives

Nowadays development is increasingly denounced as a very bad thing. The noted French agronomist Rene Dumont sees the performance of the last forty years as a dangerous epidemic of misdevelopment.¹ In Africa, he argues, development has simply not occurred. Latin America, on the other hand, has witnessed the creation of great wealth, ranging from sophisticated nuclear and electronic industries to vast skyscraper cities. But this growth, Dumont laments, has been won at the price of massive pollution, urban congestion, and a monumental waste of resources. Moreover, the majority of the continent's population has not benefited. For Dumont,² misdevelopment is the mismanagement of resources in both the socialist and capitalist worlds; it is the main cause of world hunger and it afflicts "developed" countries as severely as it does Third World nations.

Other development writers strike the same theme, viz., that growth is often irresponsible, inequitable, destructive, and worsens the lot of poor people. The late Swiss anthropologist Roy Preiswerk and his colleagues judge that change processes have led to misdevelopment or maldevelopment, that is, a faulty orientation of development, in rich and poor countries alike.³ In an earlier work, this author termed much of what was called progress antidevelopment because it is the antithesis of authentic development, defined as qualitative improvement in any society's provision of life-sustaining goods, esteem, and freedom to all its citizens.⁴

Authors like the African Albert Tévoèdjré and the Haitian Georges Anglade reject the dehumanizing economic development which often prevails by recalling that the greatest wealth any nation possesses is its poor people themselves.⁵ Their claim is

that the poor, acting in concert, constitute a greater resource for developmental change, than natural treasures, financial wealth, or technical assets. The most absolute attack on distorted development, however, comes from the pen of those who totally repudiate development, both as a concept and as a project. Prominent among these is the French economist Serge Latouche, who urges us to discard development because it is a tool used by advanced Western countries to destroy the cultures and the autonomy of nations throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America.⁶ Similarly, the Montreal-based Monchanin Intercultural Centre, through its quarterly review Interculture, tirelessly promotes the thesis that development must be rejected as the instrument which destroys native cultures, their political, juridical, economic, and symbolic meaning systems. The Cultural Survival movement, headquartered at Harvard University, has likewise struggled, since its creation in 1972, to prevent "development" from destroying indigenous peoples and their cultures. Its founder, anthropologist David Maybury-Lewis, writes that "violence done to indigenous peoples is largely based on prejudices and discrimination that must be exposed and combated. These prejudices are backed up by widely held misconceptions, which presume that traditional societies are inherently obstacles to development or that the recognition of their rights would subvert the nation state. Our research shows that this is untrue."⁷

Even those who seek to preserve the language and ideals of development, while purging it of its failings, nonetheless insist that Third World nations should pursue an alternative to growth-focused change. They advocate instead meeting the basic needs of all, creating jobs in non-modern sectors, generating decentralized foci of autonomy, and nurturing cultural diversity.⁸

In the real policy-making world of national governments and international financing agencies, however, development is still operationally defined as maximum economic growth and a concerted

drive toward industrialization and mass consumption. The national success stories praised worldwide are South Korea and Taiwan, twin paragons of high-capital and high-technology economic growth, allied to success in competitive international trading arenas.⁹ Development reports remain discreetly silent, however, about the costs in political repression attendant upon these economic successes!¹⁰ The World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the International Monetary Fund, and most national planning agencies continue to promote strategies which treat maximum aggregate growth as synonymous with genuine development. What makes matters still worse is that many national planning ministries not only follow the old model of development, but simply "place on hold" or ignore those sound elements of policy contained in that old model. These elements called for investments in infrastructure, job-creation, and market expansion. National strategists are guided by a single imperative: to achieve "structural adjustment." Structural adjustment, however, is nothing but a euphemism for mere survival; it means, in fact, to avoid drowning or going under in a sea of debt, recession, or inflation. Under the banner of adjustment, policy recommendations ranging from tightened credit to budget discipline, wage freezes, and export expansion are urged upon one developing nation after another. The development efforts of poor countries are reduced to crisis management, to a race to generate revenues in order to pay off their paralyzing debts. Some observers, it is true, are concerned with the impact of macroeconomic policy on the lives of poor people and champion adjustment with a human face.¹¹ But in most cases even the "developmental" objectives of the earlier growth model (e.g., improved standards of living, job creation, better social services, and a diversified basket of available consumer goods) are forgotten or relegated to back burners. The rhetoric of development is still invoked, but in reality debt-servicing and

the avoidance of catastrophe now occupy center stage in arenas of development planning and policy-making.

Notwithstanding the residual but still dominant strength of growth models in policy arenas, however, a new development paradigm is now in gestation. One sign of its ascending legitimacy is that lip-service is now paid to its values even by those who pursue traditional growth strategies. These alternative values include the primacy of basic needs satisfaction and the elimination of absolute poverty over mere economic growth, the creation of jobs, the reduction of dependency, and the respect for local cultures. Although it is often paid but perfunctorily, such lip-service is at least an implicit admission that development is essentially an ethical concern.

Two recent formulations of this alternative paradigm reveal how thoroughly value-laden and ethical in nature is any serious talk about development. In September of 1986 the Marga Institute held a week-long seminar in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on Ethical Issues in Development.¹² Theorists and practitioners gathered there reached a consensus that any adequate definition of development must include five dimensions:

- an economic component dealing with the creation of wealth and improved conditions of material life, equitably distributed;
 - a social ingredient measured as well-being in health, education, housing, and employment;
 - a political dimension including such values as human rights, political freedom, enfranchisement, and some form of democracy;
 - a cultural dimension in recognition of the fact that cultures confer identity and self-worth to people; and
 - a fifth dimension called the full-life paradigm, which refers to meaning systems, symbols, and beliefs as to the ultimate meaning of life and of history.
- Integral human development is all of these things.

Some years earlier a seminar on the essential components of Latin American development reached near-identical conclusions. Its comprehensive definition of development centered on four pairs of words: economic growth, distributional equity, participation/vulnerability, and transcendental values.¹³ The two final sets of words require some explanation. Participation is a decisive voice exercised by people directly affected by policy decisions, and vulnerability is the obverse side of the participation coin: poor people, regions, and nations must be rendered less vulnerable to decisions which produce external shocks upon them. The words "transcendental values" raise the vital question: "Does man live by GNP alone?" As David Pollock writes:

Let us assume that a country's economic pie increases. Let us further assume that there is a heightened degree of equity in the way the fruits of that economic pie are distributed. Let us, finally, assume that decisions affecting production and consumption of the economic pie--internationally and internationally--involve the full participation of all affected parties. Is that the end of the matter? Does man live by GNP alone? Perhaps the latter has been the prevailing line of thought throughout the postwar period since, in the short-run, policy makers must focus primarily upon the pressing issue of increased incomes for the masses; particularly for those below the poverty line. But, despite the obvious importance of such short-run objectives, we should also be asking ourselves other, more uplifting questions. Should we not take advantage of our longer-term vision and ask what kind of person Latin America may wish to evolve by the end of this century. What are the transcendental values--cultural, ethical, artistic, religious, moral--that extend beyond the current workings of the purely economic and social system? How to appeal to youth, who so often seek nourishment in dreams, as well as in bread? What, in short, should be the new face of the Latin American Society in the future, and what human values should lie behind the new countenance?¹⁴

Each of the five dimensions of development listed by Marga and the four dimensions listed by Pollock is value-laden. Indeed development choices pose anew, and in a new mode, ancient philosophical questions.

2. Normative Questions

Development thrusts three basic moral questions to the surface.

a. What is the relation between the fullness of good and the abundance of goods?

b. What are the foundations of justice in and among societies?

c. What criteria govern the posture of societies toward the forces of nature and technology?

If providing satisfactory answers--normative and institutional--to these questions is what makes a country developed, it follows that not every nation with a high per capita income is truly developed.¹⁵ One misses the "concrete dynamics of development"¹⁶ if one fails to examine the ideals and institutions of the good life and the good society.¹⁷

What renders these ancient moral questions specifically developmental and the old answers obsolete is the unique cluster of modern conditions.

a. The first of these modern conditions is the vast scale of most human activities. In the size of our cities, bureaucracies, and factories, and in the sheer volume of images and fantasies which assault our senses we have reached the point where, as Hegel put it, a quantitative difference produces a qualitative change.

b. The second modern feature is technical complexity and the specialized division of labor which ensues therefrom. No single set of skills--manual, intellectual, or artistic--can equip us to cope adequately with all our needs for unity, integration, and openness to change. We crave new facts but are crushed by information overload and can find no wisdom to match our science, no unifying threads through which to weave the countless strands of our expanding knowledge. In such a world it becomes almost impossible to answer such disarmingly simple questions as: What is the good life and the relation between

goods and the good, the basis of justice and equity, the right stance toward nature and technology?

c. A third contextual condition of modern life is the web of interdependence which transforms local happenings into global events, and causes international conflicts to impinge on local destinies. The growing interdependence of nations, communities and individuals is a two-edged sword, simultaneously a good and a bad thing.¹⁸ Starving pastoral populations in Ethiopia are rescued by food airlifted from Nebraska in the wake of a television report. But American weapons and mercenaries can also be used to kill innocent peasants in Nicaragua for reasons unrelated to their local decisions or those of their national leaders.

d. The fourth and most dramatic modern condition is the ever-shortening time lag between changes proposed or imposed on human communities of need, and the deadline these communities face for reacting to these changes in ways which protect their integrity. Mass media, modern medicine, and technology constantly affect the consciousness, values, and destinies of people, leaving them scant time to take counsel with themselves, their traditions, or their images of the future so as to shape a wise response.

Thanks to these four distinctively modern conditions, the moral questions all societies faced in the past have become contemporary developmental questions. By and large, however, these normative questions have been ignored or badly answered by development experts and ethicists alike. Galbraith chides fellow economists when he laments that "The final requirement of modern development planning is that it have a theory of consumption....a view of what the production is ultimately for -- has been surprisingly little discussed and has been too little missed...More important, what kind of consumption should be planned?"¹⁹ Should productive capacity be employed to produce a decent sufficiency of essential goods to meet the basic needs of all, or should it produce whatever goods will be bought by those

who possess effective purchasing power? Most development experts flee value-laden questions, branding them unscientific or impressionistic. Ethicists, in turn, have rarely taken development processes and conflicts as the raw materials of their moral reflection. By remaining outside the dynamics of social change, however, ethicists risk imprisoning themselves within sterile forms of moralism which are useless or positively harmful. The answers to normative questions posed by development do not pre-exist in any doctrine, nor are they easy to supply. Neither ancient wisdoms interpreted in static fashion, nor uncritical modern scientific approaches suffice. Sound answers can issue only from new dialogues between ancient wisdoms and modern visions in modes which avoid ethnocentrism, dogmatism, and ideological manipulation.²⁰

The task is difficult because the very language of development conceals two ambiguities. An identical term designates both the goal of change processes, namely, some vision of a better life, and those very processes themselves seen as means to reach the goal. Moreover, the term "development" can be used either descriptively or normatively. One speaks descriptively when listing a country's GNP growth rates, trade balance, rate of savings or investment. But one may shift to normative language and condemn these very accomplishments by branding them modernization without development or by decrying the failure of quantitative growth to produce human development. These twin ambiguities are unavoidable, for development is simultaneously a goal and a means thereto, and a label of what is as well as a pointer to what ought to be.

Serious discourse on development is impossible except in ethical terms? The North American political scientist David Apter explains that: "Perhaps the most important consequence of the study of modernization is that it brings us back to the search for first principles. By this I mean that it requires the unity of moral and analytical modes of thought."²¹

Accordingly, development ethics needs to take its place alongside development economics, politics, anthropology, and planning to analyze and solve problems which are at once economic, social, political, cultural, technical, and ethical in nature. Ethicists are well-advised to display proper humility, however, as they enter policy arenas: their past performance in such arenas is, on the whole, discouraging.

3. Ethical Performance

Although economic thought is resurrecting teleological questions long considered the special province of philosophy, nothing has equipped economics to answer its own questions. Consequently, more and more economists turn to ethics. Ever since the separation of economics from the study of morals, however, ethics itself has had a dismal career. Hence it too finds itself incapable of answering development's troubling normative questions.

Why is modern ethics so ill-prepared to answer normative questions posed by development economics? The emancipation of economics from moral philosophy wrought in the last two centuries is simply one manifestation of a general trend toward specialization in knowledge. Major gains have been made since the Enlightenment by those branches of learning which made cumulative gains in knowledge by relying on empirical investigation derived from revisable inductive theories. Greatest methodological progress has come in the natural sciences. Such progress greatly facilitates observation and classification and has been the springboard for major breakthroughs in theory (evolution, relativity, astrophysics). Later, by borrowing freely from natural sciences, the "sciences of man" also reached impressive levels of theoretical generality (systems theory and general theory of action). But social sciences deal with life, and even recent gains have not dissipated the growing malaise of social scientists in the face of life's complexities.

Ethics, in turn, once stripped of its effective role as society's normsetter, strayed along diverse paths. Very quickly all philosophies fell into disrepute. With each new success of the experimental method and the rising ascendancy of empirical science, philosophical speculation came to be regarded as an "armchair procedure" enjoying dubious value.²² Many contemporary philosophers have taken highly subjective existentialist routes, a jungle maze replete with meandering byways. Others have embraced Marxist prescriptive doctrine and become exegetes of a new scripture, that of dialectical materialism. A third group, few in number and limited in influence, maintains allegiance to "natural law" morality. The majority of ethical theorists in "developed" countries, however, have chosen the road of positivism, which abandoned normative prescription on grounds that it is pretentious, unscientific, or both. Instead, ethics now seeks to derive guidelines for action from social preferences, positive law, psychological conditioning, or the demands of efficiency. By its own admission, positivist ethics regards teleology as meaningless. When, therefore, economists ask what consumption is for or what kinds of goods foster the good life, or what is the nature of welfare, positivistic ethics has nothing to tell them.

Marxist ethics does, it is true, supply one set of answers to these questions. But, as a growing number of its own contemporary champions acknowledge, Marxist ethics has long been under the spell of its own dogma and refused to examine a whole gamut of profoundly meaningful questions on the ground that such questions are vestiges of "bourgeois decadence."²³ In recent years, however, certain Marxist moralists have begun to view ethical inquiry as an essentially open-ended process without predetermined answers. In the words of Gilbert and Gugler, specialists in Third World urbanism, "Like any other theory, the closer neo-Marxian analysis approximates reality, the more complex it becomes and the less able it is to predict the future."²⁴ For their part, existentialists have either rejected

social ethics as unimportant or engaged in tortuous, self-analyzing (and self-justifying) efforts to build dialectical bridges from their quasi-absolute commitment to personal freedom as the ultimate value to the demands of social philosophy. Such commitments to personal freedom necessarily render the formulation of a social ethic difficult. Camus and, in more explicitly critical terms, Sartre have doubtless laid a foundation for bridging the gap between personal and societal ethics. But their language and style are so strongly conditioned by their particular historical experience of World War II and postwar France that their "social" morality has experienced difficulty in gaining wide acceptance in developing countries. As a result, many Latin American social philosophers find Marxism far more attractive than existentialism. For the Brazilian philosopher, Vieira Pinto, "The philosophy of existence, among all contemporary doctrines, is the one which most clearly exposes its followers to the danger of alienation." He believes the reason to be that "existential philosophy is the philosophy of the centers of domination over underdeveloped regions."²⁵

Thus, development economists do not receive much normative help from moral philosophers even when they seek it. On issues of importance to policymakers and development planners, available ethical systems provide little light. Existentialists are too individualistic and too complex, Marxists too deductively prescriptive and not sufficiently responsive to social and symbolic relativities. Natural-law ethicists are increasingly viewed as defenders of a particularistic confessional doctrine in a world become increasingly secular and pluralistic. Positivists suffer from an overdose of success in description and analysis, resulting in the atrophy of their ability to engage in normative and evaluative inquiry. To put it bluntly, the mainstream of moral philosophy has run dry.

Nevertheless, as the historian of philosophy Etienne Gilson remarks, "The first law to be inferred from philosophical experience is: Philosophy always buries its undertakers."²⁶ For over twenty-five centuries the death of philosophy has been regularly attended by its revival. The present moribund state of moral philosophy is possibly the harbinger of a new spring. Among telltale signs of such a new spring are the ample debates generated by the publication of Rawls' study of justice in 1971 and a burgeoning normative literature on ecology and development. Few contemporary philosophical systems attempt to provide a total explanation of reality, in part because philosophers know how difficult it is to reach a synthesis of realities which are themselves fluid and complex. Permanent inquiry into meaning goes on, nonetheless, and new philosophies are in gestation whose hallmarks are non-dogmatism, a reaction against simplistic forms of relativism, and a genuinely self-critical spirit.

An "economic" law may be at work here: human societies cannot long endure unless their need for meaning is met by adequate philosophies. Technology and mass demonstration effects presently challenge the values of all societies. United Nations reports, development plans, and aid documents repeatedly invoke such normative terms as "better life," "greater equity in the distribution of wealth," the need to assure "social improvement" for all. Here is clear proof of the existence of a "demand" for development ethics. It is the "supply" side which is wanting. If moral philosophers prove incapable of supplying answers, or if they take refuge in concepts alien to the real experiences which alone can provide raw materials for their ethical reflection on development, others will try to formulate an ethics of development. Economists, anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists will attempt it. They risk being reductionist. A more alarming possibility is that political demagogues, technological manipulators, or high priests of ideological thought-control will do it. There may

still be time, however, for moral philosophers to stop "moralizing" and undertake serious analysis of ethical problems posed by development, underdevelopment, and planning. In order to succeed they must go to the marketplace, the factory, the planning board, and the irrigation project and create ethical strategies of social decision-making which enter into the dynamics and the constraint systems of major policy instruments: political, technical, and administrative.

Because development decisions pose value-laden questions, they call for ethical analysis which is no less systematic and rigorous than that supplied by economic planners or technical project designers. It thus becomes important to identify an approach to ethical strategizing which is capable of illuminating these choices.

4. Ethics as "Means of the Means"

Not every ethical approach or "way of doing ethics" is adequate to the task of integrating the diagnostic and policy domains of development with its value realms. It is easier to state what must NOT be done than to specify what is needed. Evidently, no abstract deductive ethics can serve. The discipline of development is an art, not a science: it deals with decisions and actions taken in domains of high uncertainty, not with orderly or perfect patterns of logic or design. Great practical wisdom is required in development affairs. Wisdom brings unity out of multiplicity only after facing contradiction and complexity. In this it is distinguished from naiveté whose unity of meaning is gained by fleeing from contradiction and complexity. No development ethics can be adequate if it is either ethnocentric or reductionist. On the contrary, development ethics must pay attention to political and economic imperatives, while recognizing that these operate in highly diverse settings marked by varied cultural antecedents, resource endowments, and explanatory meaning systems. The best way to characterize how development ethics must operate is to

say that it must become a "means of the means." How can this enigmatic phrase be interpreted?

In a critical study of Nietzsche published in 1975 the French philosopher Gustave Thibon reinstates what he calls the Nietzschean ideal of the sanctification of power. Heretofore power and purity could coexist, one separate from the other. It was possible, without causing too much damage, for the first to remain spiritually impure and the second materially ineffectual simply because power had limited means at its disposal: The worst whims of caesars did not totally threaten the equilibrium and survival of humanity. But nowadays power disposes of almost infinite means of destruction; therefore, can we seek salvation elsewhere than in the union of force with wisdom?²⁷

What Thibon seeks is not some new legitimation of political power, but some way of converting power to a higher ethic.

Ethicists no longer imagine that ethics can exorcise evil from realms of political power simply by preaching noble ideals. The North American Jesuit writer James Schall argues that Christians "have no formal social and political doctrine and that they are free to take on whatever ideological or practical form they wish in order to achieve the goals of Christianity."²⁸ In short, the Gospel issues no warrant for socialism or capitalism, for social change or for any status quo. This view, however, is vigorously repudiated by a growing number of radical pacifists. Chief among these is John Howard Yoder who contends "that the ministry and the claims of Jesus are best understood as presenting to men not the avoidance of political options, but one particular social-political-ethical option."²⁹ Whatever one's theoretical position may be, however, there is no doubting the prophetic summons to liberation which inspires Latin American, African, and Asian theologians of liberation. Nevertheless, no theology of liberation or ethics of development wields prescriptive power unless it is able to take us beyond moralism. Ethics must somehow get inside the

value dynamisms of the instruments utilized by development agents and become, as it were, a "means of the means."

Ethicists do not discharge themselves of their duty merely by posing morally acceptable values as goals or ends of economic or political action. Nor does it suffice for them to evaluate the economic and political instrumentalities employed to pursue those ends in the light of some extrinsic moral rule. Rather, ethicists must analyze and lay bare the value content of these instrumentalities from within their proper dynamism. For example, they must ask whether a policy of export promotion favors economic equity or not, whether it consolidates fragile local cultures or not, and so on. A kind of phenomenological "peeling away" of the value content--positive and negative--latently present in the means chosen by technicians of decision-making must take place. Any moral judgment must relate to the technical data pertinent to the problem under study in realistic terms. Moreover, such a judgment must utilize those data in ways which professional experts can recognize as faithful to the demands of their discipline. This is the sense in which ethics must serve as a "means of the means," that is, as a moral beacon illuminating the value questions buried inside instrumental means appealed to by decision-makers and problem-solvers of all kinds.

Too many ethicists who comment on social justice rest content with portraying ideal ends and passing adverse judgment on the means used by politicians, planners, or others to mobilize social energies. This approach fails because it remains outside the real criteria of decision invoked by those who, in plying their craft as decision-makers, make and unmake social values. One may legitimately postulate for ethics the role assigned to sociology by Ralf Dahrendorf in the following terms:

It is the sociologist's business to consider what a modern civilized society might look like and what roads might lead to it. That is the domain of theory. It is also the sociologist's business once he

is equipped with his theories to take part in the process of changing reality in making what is reasonable real. This the the domain of practice.³⁰

Genuine ethics is a kind of praxis³¹ which generates critical reflection on the value content and meaning of one's social action. Unlike the mere extrinsic treatment of means, ethical praxis conditions choices and priorities by assigning relative value allegiances to essential needs, basic power relationships, and criteria for determining tolerable levels of human suffering in promoting social change.³² Alternative development strategies, programs, and projects have varying impacts on populations victimized by poverty, class privilege, economic exploitation, or political domination. This is why an ethic of social justice and equity needs to harness concrete instruments in support of the struggle conducted by social classes at the bottom of the stratification ladder. It is a hollow, if not a hypocritical, exercise to speak rhetorically about human dignity unless one builds social structures which foster human dignity and eliminate what impedes it: endemic disease, chronic poverty, an unjust system of land tenure, or political powerlessness. A vital nexus links any society's basic value choices to its preferred development strategy and to the criteria it applies in all arenas of specific policy, be it employment, investment, taxes, or education.

Ethics is doubtless concerned with the means of human action, but as Morris Ginsberg writes: "It is concerned also with the relative worth of the different ends in relation to the costs involved in attaining them, and this task it cannot fulfill adequately without inquiry into the basic human needs and grounds of our preferences and choices."³³ Certain values stand as ends which are worthy for their own sakes. These ends guide and orient, even if they cannot fully command, the choice of appropriate means to reach them. The manner in which ethics deals with means is crucial. As noted above, ethics must strive untiringly to become a "means of the means" by transmitting, from inside the very instrumentalities and constraints

surrounding decisions and actions, selected value allegiances and value criteria. The greatest danger faced in this enterprise is that development ethicists will fall into the role played by plantation preachers in the days of slavery, namely, giving good conscience to the rich while providing spiritual, "other-worldly" solace to the victims of unjust structures. Thus development ethicists cannot discharge their function merely by harnessing human aspiration or values to such developmental imperatives as growth, modernization, or even structural change. This is to treat values instrumentally, as mere aids or obstacles to goals uncritically accepted as values. Ultimately, development itself must be critically subjected to the value tests of justice, human enhancement, spiritual liberation, and reciprocal relations. These values judge development, not vice versa. My point here is that values can only judge development choices by getting inside their concrete specificity. There is a sound epistemological reason for this, namely, that the closer any knowledge comes to human subjects--especially in their societal context--the more difficult it becomes to sustain any real difference between the observed connections among phenomena and the organization of ends of action. As one contemporary French philosopher, G.G. Granger, explains:

what distinguishes epistemologically a "human" economics from traditional science is not that such an economics aspired to be normative, but rather that it assigns a value and a role, in the pursuit of knowledge, to the dialectic of the conscious intervention of the human agent over the products of his own culture.³⁴

5. Levels and Arenas of Ethical Discourse

Ethical discourse is conducted at four distinct levels: general ends, specific criteria which determine when these ends exist in concrete situations, clusters of interrelated means or systems which constitute strategies congenial or uncongenial to the ends sought, and individual means taken separately.³⁵

The sharpest ethical disagreements in questions of social change arise in the two middle realms--the criteria which specify when desired goals are effectively reached and the system of means or strategies deployed to obtain targeted objectives. Discussion over general ends, on the other hand, rarely engenders debate for the simple reason that such ends are universal and are easy to disguise behind verbal smokescreens. Thus even tyrants profess to cherish freedom and warmongers peace. The fourth level, that of individual means, breeds little discord because each means usually can be put to a good or to a bad use and cannot be characterized as ethically good or bad except by reference to diverse circumstances, motivations, constraints, and consequences. That most arguments should rage at the two middle levels is not surprising once it is recalled that methodological differences usually mask ideological divergences. One's ethical stance on ends is dramatically revealed in the means one adopts to pursue them. Consequently, development ethics as "means of the means" requires not that moralists pose ideal goals and pass judgment on the means used by others to pursue these or other goals, but rather that decision makers versed in the constraints surrounding vital choices promote the values for which oppressed and underdeveloped groups struggle: greater justice, a decent sufficiency of goods for all, and equitable access to collective human gains realized in domains of technology, organization, and research. This stance differs qualitatively from an ethic of pure efficiency in social problem-solving or the mere rationalization and defense of elite interests.³⁶ The difference lies between a view of politics as the art of the possible (manipulating possibilities within given parameters) or as the art of creating new possibilities (altering the parameters themselves). A decisive choice must be made between these two readings of political possibility. This is so because development politics consists essentially in creating new possibilities, not merely in re-allocating resources of power,

influence, and wealth within societies. In most cases structural changes are needed. Therefore, developers must be systems-transformers, not mere systems-maintainers. Indeed, development practitioners ought to adopt as their "moral imperative in development" those strategies which harness existing social forces to implementing the values to which they give their allegiance. In practice this means preferring strategies, programs, and projects (and even modes of reaching decisions) which assign more importance to ethical considerations than to mere technical criteria of efficiency.

In ideal circumstances, ethicists would share responsibility for the practical consequences of joint decisions taken by teams of development planners, economists, and technicians. Unless economists, planners, and technicians assess the ethical import of their decisional criteria from inside the dynamics of their respective specialties, however, they will fall prey to the determinisms of what Ellul calls "pure technique."³⁷ Conversely, ethicists, need the critical input from problem-solvers if they are to avoid purely extrinsic moralism. Only dynamic interaction between the two categories of interlocutors can lead to the formulation of ethical strategies which are a "means of the means."

Development ethics has a clear mandate to adopt an intrinsicist methodology or procedure. Its need for a clear view of its tasks and functions is no less acute. The first task of development ethics is to raise high certain banners proclaiming such values as:

- the primacy of needs over wants (what economists call effective demand);
- obligations incumbent on favored nations and populations to practice effective solidarity with those less favored. These obligations are based in justice and not merely in optional charity;

- an insistence that the demands of justice are structural and institutional, not merely behavioral or reducible to policy changes; and

- an exegesis of politics as the art of the possible which defines the role of development politics as that of creating new frontiers of possibility and not merely manipulating resources (wealth, power, information, and influence) within given parameters of possibility previously defined in some static form.

It is futile to raise banners, however, without justifying and defending them. Development ethics has to make its intellectual case for the values just enunciated. It will have to argue persuasively the reasons why solidarity should be the norm and not some exclusionary "triage" or lifeboat ethic. If Garrett Hardin is correct in posing limits to altruism,³⁸ development ethics must discover how these limits are to be transcended.

Its second essential function is to formulate ethical strategies for a multiplicity of sectoral problem-solving domains ranging from population policy to investment codes, from aid strategy to norms for technology transfers and criteria for evaluating human rights compliance.

Ethicists can strategize only by entering into the technical and political constraints of any problem domain and rendering explicit the value costs and benefits of competing diagnoses and proposed solutions to problems. They must also establish criteria and procedures by which technical, political, and managerial decision-makers may choose wisely and implement at the lowest cost possible what sociologist Peter Berger calls a calculus of pain and a calculus of meaning.³⁹

Max Millikan, the late North American econometrician and development planner, wrote as far back as 1962 that:

The process of arriving at a national plan should be one in which the planners present to the community for discussion a variety of critical choices showing for each alternative the consequences for the society of

pursuing that value choice consistently and efficiently. It is only by this process that the community can clarify its individual and social goals.⁴⁰

The sad truth is that most development planning is not conducted in this mode; neither is most program or project design. One mission of development ethicists consists in discovering ways of rendering such an alternative planning process feasible.⁴¹ This the ethicist may do by engaging, with others, in an innovative mode of decision-making.

Three distinct rationalities, or basic approaches to logic, converge in decision-making arenas: technological, political, and ethical rationality.⁴² Each has a distinct goal and a peculiar animating spirit or basic procedure. Problems arise because each rationality approaches the other two in reductionist fashion, seeking to impose its view of goals and procedures on the decision-making process. The result is technically sound decisions which are politically unfeasible or morally unacceptable or, in other cases, ethically sound choices which are technically inefficient or politically impossible. From observing experimental innovations in negotiation, in arenas as disparate as resettlement schemes in dam construction sites to the political empowerment of peasant associations seeking to redefine criteria of credit eligibility in large World Bank projects, this author has concluded that the three rationalities must operate in a circular, not a vertical, pattern of interaction. This is the only way to avoid reductionism; it is the only way to avoid guaranteed bad decisions. It suffices to say here that ethicists, no less than economic planners and other developmental problem-solvers, must earn their right to speak theoretically and normatively about development by engaging in action, or at least in consultation, with communities of struggle and of need. More consciously and intentionally than other specialists, development ethicists must undergo that "professional revolution" called for by Robert Chambers. This revolution of attitudes, or conversion, weans

them away from elite values and allegiances to the values and allegiances of those left powerless and stripped of resources by the "normal" operations of resource transfers.⁴³ It is from within the constraint systems enveloping any development decision that ethicists must establish the phenomenology of values at play in those decisions and actions.

6. In Conclusion: the Essential Task

The essential task of development ethics is to render development decisions and actions humane. Stated differently, it is to assure that the painful changes launched under the banners of development and progress not result in antidevelopment which destroys cultures and individuals and exacts undue sacrifices in suffering and societal well-being--all in the name of profit, some absolutized ideology, or a supposed efficiency imperative. Development ethics as a discipline is the conceptual cement which binds together multiple diagnoses of problems with their policy implications, this through an explicit phenomenological study of values which lays bare the value costs of various courses of action.

More fundamentally, however, the primary mission of development ethics is to keep hope alive. By any purely rational calculus of future probabilities, the development enterprise of most countries is doomed to fail. The poor can never catch up with the rich--classes, nations, and individuals--as long as these continue to consume wastefully and to devise ideological justifications for not practicing solidarity with the less-developed. In all probability, technological and resource gaps will continue to widen and vast resources will continue to be devoted to destructive armaments. Catastrophes generated by environmental folly or demographic tunnel vision, to say nothing of nuclear or radiation poisoning, are likely scenarios of despair. Exacerbated feelings of national sovereignty will, in all likelihood, continue to co-exist alongside an ever more urgent need to institute new forms of

global governance and problem-solving. By any reasonable scenario projectable over the next fifty years, development will remain the privilege of a relative few, while underdevelopment will continue to be the lot of the vast majority. Only some trans-rational calculus of hope, situated beyond apparent realms of possibility, can elicit the creative energies and vision which authentic development for all requires. This calculus of hope must be ratified by ethics. Jacques Ellul writes eloquently of the need for hope in a time of abandonment.⁴⁴ He speaks in an openly theological vein, arguing that human beings cannot count on a Deus ex machina salvation from whatever gods they believe in. Only the human race can extricate itself from the human impasses--nuclear, ecological, economic, and political--it has itself created. Yet human beings will despair of even attempting to create a wisdom to match their sciences, says Ellul, unless they have hope, and grounds for hope, in some God who has entrusted the making of history to them.

In analogous fashion, development ethics must summon human persons and societies to become their best selves, to create structures of justice and of what Ivan Illich calls conviviality⁴⁵ to replace exploitation and aggressive competition. There is hope for improvement, and the present dismal scenario is not ineluctable. The basis for hope is provided by René Dubos and other sociobiologists, who remind us that only a tiny fragment of human brain-power has been utilized up till the present.⁴⁶ This means that Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans are capable of inventing new and more authentic, models of development. They need not become the consumers of a single pattern of modern civilization in order to become "developed." Robert Vacca,⁴⁷ in The Coming Dark Age, gloomily forecasts a world with no future. Development ethics offers a corrective view by reminding us that futures, like the past, are not fore-ordained. Indeed the most important banner development ethics must raise high is that of hope, hope in the possibility of creating new possibilities. Modern men and women have grown

properly skeptical of facile Utopias; but they also understand that far more changes than were ever anticipated are possible.

Development ethics pleads normatively for a certain reading of history, one in which human agents are makers of history even as they bear witness to values of transcendence.⁴⁸ There is profound truth, even as there is literal exaggeration, in Marx's notion that till the present we have only witnessed pre-history. The beginning of authentic developmental human history comes indeed with the abolition of alienation. Development's true task is precisely this: to abolish all alienation--economic, social, political, and technological.

This long view of history and of development as a historical adventure is the only guarantee that development processes will ensure a future. Solidarity with the planet of which we human agents are the responsible stewards, and with future generations, is the ethical key to achieving a development which is at once human and sustainable. The late L.J. Lebreton, a French pioneer in development ethics, defined development as a revolution leading to universal solidarity.⁴⁹ Here, in capsule form, we find a guide to the tasks and methods facing development ethics--to institute a universal revolution of solidarity.

NOTES

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- 5 See Albert Tévoédjré, La pauvreté, richesse des peuples, Paris: Economie et Humanisme, 1978; and Georges Anglade, Eloge de la pauvreté, Montreal: ERCE, 1983.
- 6 Serge Latouche, Faut-il refuser le développement?, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986.
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- 8 On this see "What Now: Another Development," in Development Dialogue, No. 1/2, Uppsala, Sweden: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 1975; and Denis Goulet, "The Global Development Debate: The Case for Alternative Strategies," in Development and Peace, Volume 6, Autumn, 1985, pp. 5-16.
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- 12 No documents have yet been issued from the seminar. The author participated in it and here reports from notes taken at the time.

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- 14 Pollock, Ibidem, p. 9.
- 15 For an earlier statement of this point see Denis Goulet, "The United States: A Case of Anti-Development?", Motive, January 1970, pp. 6-13.
- 16 Cf. L.J. Lebreton, Dynamique Concrète du Développement, Paris: Les Editions Ouvrières, 1961.
- 17 Cf. Anthony Arblaster and Steven Lukes, eds., The Good Society: A Book of Readings, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971.
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- 19 John Kenneth Galbraith, Economic Development in Perspective, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962, p. 43.
- 20 Cf. Robert Vachon, "Développement et Libération dans une Perspective Interculturelle et Cosmique," in Bulletin Monchanin 8, No. 2, Cahier 49, 1975, pp. 3-30. Cf. also Denis Goulet, "Development Experts: The One-eyed Giants," World Development 8 (7/8): 481-489 (July/August 1980).
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- 22 On this, cf. James K. Feibleman, The Institutions of Society, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956, p. 61.
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- 27 Gustave Thibon, Nietzsche ou le déclin de l'Esprit, Paris: Fayard, 1975, p. 75. (Translation mine.)
- 28 James V. Schall, "The Nonexistence of Christian Political Philosophy," Worldview 19, April 1976, p. 26.
- 29 John Howard Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971, p. 23. Cf. Richard K. Taylor, Economics and the Gospel, Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1973. A useful attempt to evaluate the significance of disagreements in these domains is found in James W. Fowler, "Faith, Liberation and Human Development," in The Thirkfield-Jones Lectures, Gannon Theological Seminary, February 26-27, 1974, pp. 1-33.
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