



A NEW DISCIPLINE: DEVELOPMENT ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

'Development' has long been equated with modernization and Westernization and studied as a straightforward economic issue. The discipline of economics has been the main source of policy prescription for development decisionmakers. This view is now widely criticized as ethnocentric and as economically reductionist. Change is occurring: economics itself is reintegrating ethics into its conceptualization, methodology, and analysis; a new paradigm of development is in gestation; and a new discipline, development ethics, has come into being. Development ethics centers its study of development on the value questions posed: What is the relation between having goods and being good in the pursuit of the good life; what are the foundations of a just society; and what stance should societies adopt toward nature? The new discipline emerges from two sources, which are now converging: from engagement in development action to the formulation of ethical theory, and from a critique of mainstream ethical theory to the crafting of normative strategies to guide development practice. Development ethics has a dual mission: to render the economy more human and to keep hope alive in the face of the seeming impossibility of achieving human development for all.

Resumen

Por largo tiempo el desarrollo ha sido asimilado a la modernización y la occidentalización y estudiado como un tópico obviamente económico. La disciplina económica ha sido la principal fuente de prescripciones para quienes deciden políticas de desarrollo. Esta perspectiva es hoy ampliamente acusada de etnocentrismo y reduccionismo económico. Están ocurriendo cambios: la misma economía está reintegrando la ética a su conceptualización, sus métodos y análisis; un nuevo paradigma de desarrollo está en gestación; y una nueva disciplina se ha constituido: la ética del desarrollo. Esta centra su estudio del desarrollo en el valor de las siguientes preguntas: ¿Cuál es la relación entre tener bienes y ser bueno en procura de la buena vida? ¿Cuáles son los fundamentos de una sociedad justa y qué actitud hacia la naturaleza deberían adoptar las sociedades? Esta nueva disciplina emerge de dos fuentes, que ahora están convergiendo: desde el comprometerse en acciones de desarrollo hasta la formulación de teoría ética; y desde una crítica de las teorías éticas dominantes a la elaboración de guías normativas que guíen la práctica del desarrollo. La ética del desarrollo tiene una doble misión: hacer más humana la economía y mantener viva la esperanza frente a la aparente imposibilidad de alcanzar desarrollo humano para todos.

Introduction

As the 20th century opened, the world's political stage was peopled by a small number of colonizing nations, a larger number of colonized lands, and a few countries engrossed in their own affairs. Within fifty years, two world wars, two grandiose social revolutions, and a worldwide economic depression had totally transformed this global stage, the cast of nation-state actors, and relationships among them. Beginning with India in 1947, former colonies in Asia and Africa emerged as independent nations, politically committed to rapid improvement of their citizens' standard of life but lacking the capital, technical skills, and institutions to achieve it.

Thus did development, as a vision of a better life and a process of deliberate change to attain it, emerge after World War II as a universal national goal. Europe's reconstruction with Marshall Plan aid made it seem that rapid development could also be gained in the Third World through a massive infusion of financial and technological resources, and the transfer of institutional models and dynamic ideas from rich to poor countries. Experience soon revealed, however, that success in development depends most critically on a society's own efforts to change its policies, social structure, institutions, and values.

The multiple meanings assigned to the term 'development' mirror the diverse political, economic, and social conditions found in varied urban and rural settings around the world. To people whose physical circumstances are vastly more comfortable than those experienced by their families one or two generations ago, development stands for access to ever more diversified consumer goods. To the billion people who continue to live in extreme poverty much like what their forebears knew at the turn of the century, development is the modest hope of gaining a secure supply of food and drinking water, adequate shelter, and access to rudimentary health services.

Not everyone views development in material terms, however. For Brazil's revolutionary educator Paulo Freire, development is the ability of powerless masses to begin to shape their own destiny as subjects, not merely objects, of history. Many Latin American theorists of social change speak not of development but of liberation and argue that, before meaningful change can take place, political power must be transferred from traditional land-owning and modernizing technological elites to poor masses.

Many practical-minded problem-solvers, in poor as well as in rich countries, see development as the 'modern' way of doing things. Modern patterns of settlement concentrate people, jobs, services, and amenities in cities—thereby linking development to urbanization in

the perception of countless millions. And because the modern mode of creating wealth rests on the systematic application of technology to boost productivity, industrialization has become synonymous with development. Moreover, since the West industrialized first, industrialization is often assumed to involve the Westernization of attitudes and values.

Yet many in developing countries now find such notions insulting to their civilizations. With Paul Streeten they consider that “[I]t is development itself that interferes with human development.”¹ Today’s developing countries in growing numbers value the preservation of national cultural identity, in the face of imported values and practices, and the pursuit of development in a self-reliant endogenous manner. Self-reliance is neither autarchy nor self-sufficiency. Self-reliance means that basic decisions about the speed and direction of change must come from within poor nations and in accord with their traditions—not in blind imitation of practices and policies in Western industrial nations.

‘Development’ evokes cultural as well as economic, social, and political fulfillment. It is “the great ascent” toward new civilizations in which all human beings *have* enough goods to *be* fully human.² If genuine development is found where a society provides essential goods to all in ways that enhance their self-esteem and expand their freedom to create, then no society is yet satisfactorily ‘developed.’ It may well be that high-income nations have as much need to find a wisdom to match their sciences as poor countries have to test their ancient wisdoms in encounters with modern technology and dynamic social change.³

In its early years after World War II development was viewed as a straightforward economic problem. It was simply a matter of identifying and quantifying the composition of economic growth packages: of raising agricultural output, diversifying manufactured products, building infrastructure, increasing the provision of services. Growth objectives would be planned, resources mobilized to reach them, and the complex institutional apparatus for investing, managing, financing, and producing activated. This array of organized activities would yield ‘development,’ measured as higher national income, increased product, greater output. Eventually it came to be recognized that numerous social, cultural, institutional, and psychological determinants affect a nation’s prospects for successful development. Its work force has to be

¹ Paul Streeten, *Strategies for Human Development*, Copenhagen: Handelshøjskolens Forlag, 1994, p. 13.

² Robert Heilbroner, *The Great Ascent: The Struggle for Economic Development in Our Time*, NY: Harper & Row, 1963.

³ Denis Goulet, “The Quest for Wisdom in a Technological Age,” *Philosophical Studies in Education, Proceedings—Annual (1985) Meeting of the Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society*, edited by Robert J. Skovira, Coraopolis, PA: Versatile Printing Co., 1987, pp. 123–54.

trained, its people have to be motivated to desire the fruits of modern production and to accept its discipline, and cultural beliefs have to change: cows must now be defined as nutritional resources, not as sacred beings to be shielded from human consumption. To development's early practitioners certain values seemed self-evident and beyond dispute: that economic well-being is, everywhere and for everyone, a good thing; that technology should be harnessed to all human activities because it enhances their productivity; that modern institutions, characterized by specialization and the division of labor, are desirable because they foster economic growth. The study of development was not a value-laden philosophical pursuit but a technical examination of how to be most efficient in using resources, in mobilizing people to desire more goods and to labor to get them, and in fashioning institutional arrangements best suited to growth. In a word, development was the proper object of study for economics. And within economic discipline, it was the value-free 'engineering' stream of theory, methodology, and analysis that prevailed. As Amartya Sen explains:

economics has had two rather different origins, both related to politics, but related in rather different ways, concerned respectively with 'ethics,' on the one hand, and with what may be called 'engineering,' on the other... The 'engineering' approach is characterized by being concerned with primarily logistic issues rather than with ultimate ends and such questions as what may foster 'the good of man' or 'how should one live.' The ends are taken as fairly straightforwardly given, and the object of the exercise is to find the appropriate means to serve them. Human behavior is typically seen as being based on simple and easily characterizable motives...⁴

The 'engineering' approach analyzes technical problems in economic relations, especially those connected with the functioning of markets. For Sen, "the ethics-related view of motivation and of social achievement must find an important place in economics, but...the engineering approach has much to offer to economics as well...it is a question of balance of the two approaches."⁵

The ethics-related tradition is traceable to Aristotle, for whom, Sen notes, "[T]he study of economics, though related immediately to the pursuit of wealth, is at a deeper level linked up with other studies, involving the assessment and enhancement of more basic goals... Economics relates ultimately to the study of ethics."⁶ Sen laments that "[T]he methodology of so-called 'positive economics' has not only shunned normative analysis in economics, it has also had the

4 Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economics*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1987, pp. 2–3.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

effect of ignoring a variety of complex ethical considerations which affect actual human behavior and which, from the point of view of the economists studying such behavior, are primarily matters of fact rather than of normative judgement.”⁷

Above all else development is a question of values, human attitudes and preferences, self-defined goals, and criteria for determining what are tolerable costs to be borne in the course of change.⁸ These are far more important than optimal resource allocations, upgraded skills, or the rationalization of administrative procedures. Moreover, developmental processes themselves are dialectical, fraught with contradictions, conflicts, and unpredictable reversals. Development is an ambiguous historical adventure born of tensions between *what* is sought and *how* it is obtained. As technological innovations or new behavioral norms impinge on societies living in relative equilibrium, their values are deeply troubled. Innovations create new strains between demands and the effective ability to meet them. Expanded demands bear on information, material goods, services, freedom, or other presumed benefits. Yet all such changes, usually proposed under the banner of “development,” can threaten the very survival of a society’s deepest values.

Educators, researchers, and planners are engaged in the transfer of technologies, not the least of which are research techniques. And inasmuch as value crises in underdeveloped societies are closely linked to those faced by industrialized nations, it is essential to engage in critical inquiry into the value assumptions underlying research on development. Ethical judgements regarding the good life, the good society, and the quality of relations among people always serve, directly or indirectly, as operational criteria for development planners and as guidelines for researchers.

Development ethics borrows freely from the work of economists, political scientists, planners, agronomists, and specialists of other disciplines. Ethics places each discipline’s concept of development in a broad evaluative framework wherein development ultimately means the quality of life and the progress of societies toward values expressed in various cultures. *How* development is pursued is no less important than *what* benefits are gained. Although development can be fruitfully studied as an economic, political, technological, or social phenomenon, its ultimate goals are those of existence itself: to provide all humans with the

⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

⁸ A ‘value’ is defined here as any object or representation that can be perceived by a subject as habitually worthy of desire. Cf. Denis Goulet, “An Ethical Model for the Study of Values,” *Harvard Educational Review*, 41:2, May 1971, pp. 205–27.

opportunity to live full human lives. Thus understood, development is the ascent of all persons and societies in their total humanity.⁹

Development ethics is that new discipline which deals *ex professo* with these normative dimensions of development. Only recently has this specialization within philosophy become formalized.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the new discipline had noteworthy precursors who undertook to study development in value terms.

I. Precursors

1. Gandhi

Although he was neither economist nor ethicist, Gandhi formulated a vision and practice of development centered on values of nonviolent cooperation among social agents, responsible trusteeship in the ownership and administration of wealth, production by the masses over mass production, village development, the provision of basic needs over the multiplication of wants. As one student of Gandhian economics, Amritananda Das, observes:

the target of poverty elimination set by Gandhi in fact demands very rapid rates of growth. Remember that, in 1930, Gandhi set what he regarded as a 'decent minimum' standard of living at Re.1 per person per day. This works out to Rs.365 per year at 1930 prices, which would come to something like five times the amount or about Rs.1825 per year per person at current prices. This, too, is a 'minimum' and not a per capita average level. India in 1977 (after three decades of post-Independence development) is not even half-way to the mark. Thus, there is nothing 'anti-growth' about Gandhi. His only interest in need limitation stems from the justified conviction that the per head consumption of the poor cannot be raised to the needed extent unless other classes, to some extent, cease and desist from conspicuous consumption. There is nothing 'metaphysical' about this conclusion. It is an arithmetical truism that an employment-biased growth leads to rapid increase in consumption of basic necessities and a slow growth in the luxury elements of consumption. In this sense it calls for the giving up of luxury consumption as the *summum bonum* of life.¹¹

Das has schematized Gandhi's implicit model of development as follows:

⁹ L.J. Lebrét, *La montée humaine*, Paris: Les Éditions Ouvrières, 1959; Heilbroner, *The Great Ascent*.

¹⁰ On this see David A. Crocker, "Toward Development Ethics," *World Development*, Vol. 19, No. 5, 1991, pp. 457–83.

¹¹ Amritananda Das, *Foundations of Gandhian Economics*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979, p. 58.

1. It is based on the ideal of the development of a collaborative economic system and of its pattern of institutions.
2. These institutions comprise (a) cooperative groups of small farmers and artisans, (b) the cooperative institutions of credit and marketing, (c) large-scale private-owned and state-owned industries organized on the trusteeship principle, and (d) large-area infrastructure systems run by the state.
3. The coordination of the economic system is in terms of three types of planning processes: (a) the area development plans of local communities and clusters, (b) the marketing and reinvestment planning of the cooperative structure, and (c) centralized planning of large industries, the three processes being made to interact in a hierarchical indicative planning system of cluster/district/zone levels.
4. The objective of planning is visualized as the attainment of a zero structural unemployment state in the shortest possible time.
5. The acceleration of the growth rate of employment is seen as being achieved primarily by investment reallocation and the encouragement of appropriate technical innovations rather than by raising the rate of investment.
6. The resource mobilization for the small-scale sector is visualized as taking place through the reinvestment planning of the cooperative agencies, local infrastructure needs being met by local resource-raising at the cluster level and public resource mobilization relating only to large-scale industry and infrastructure.
7. Investment in large-scale industry and infrastructure is to be kept to the lowest level possible consistent with the small-scale sector growth plan.
8. The growth is visualized as taking place in a semi-autarchic context, at least till such time as the international trade and exchange system becomes free of its present exploitative character.¹²

Gandhi denounced 'immiserising modernization' and advocated instead an investment strategy that maximized employment and fostered a collaborative economic order, demanding of central planning that it create conditions favorable to economic decentralization. By centering his analysis and policy prescriptions on the values affected, Gandhi was operating, in effect, as a development ethicist before his time.¹³

2. Lebret

A second influential precursor of development ethics was L.J. Lebret, founder in 1941 of the *Economy and Humanism* movement created to study economic problems as human

¹² Ibid., p. 59.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 96–97.

problems.¹⁴ Underdevelopment, in his view, is not primarily an economic problem, nor simply the inability of social structures to meet new demands issuing from hitherto passive populations. Above all else, underdevelopment is a symptom of a worldwide crisis in human values; accordingly, development's task is to create, in a world of chronic inequality and disequilibrium, new civilizations of solidarity. Lebret designated such creation the "human ascent,"¹⁵ ascent in all spheres of life—economic, political, cultural, personal, and spiritual. It requires new patterns of solidarity that respect differences and do not posit easy shortcuts to the elimination of privilege and domination. If a human economy is to be implanted in small localities as well as in more extensive regions, national societies, and the world at large, monumental human interventions must occur, aimed at optimizing the use of all resources—natural, financial, technical, and human.

"The problem of the distribution of goods," Lebret wrote in 1959, "is secondary compared to the problems of preparing men to receive them."¹⁶ Underdevelopment bears witness to the bankruptcy of the world's economic, social, political, and educational systems. Not only have these systems created mass misery coexisting with alienating abundance; they have also reified human beings and subordinated them to the myths of growth and social control. Therefore, although rational resource planning, judicious investment, new institutions, and the mobilization of the populace are necessary to achieve development, such measures can never be sufficient. More necessary is overall cultural revolution in the values human beings hold. To Lebret, it seemed evident that underdevelopment is a byproduct of the distorted achievements of those societies that incorrectly label themselves developed. He argued that satisfying an abundance of false needs at the expense of keeping multitudes in misery can never constitute authentic development. Rather, a sound hierarchy of needs must be established for every society. These needs must harmonize with the society's spiritual and cultural values, with the exigencies of solidarity with others, with the demands of wise resource use, with the aspiration of all individuals and groups to be treated by others as beings of worth independent of their utility to those others.¹⁷

Lebret distinguished three categories of needs:

¹⁴ Cf. Joseph Lebret and René Moreux, "Manifeste d'économie et humanisme," *Économie et Humanisme*, no. special, February–March 1942.

¹⁵ Lebret, *Montée humaine*.

¹⁶ Lebret, *Manifeste pour une civilisation solidaire*, Calurie: Éditions Économie et Humanisme, 1959, p. 49.

¹⁷ Lebret presents his theory of scaled needs in numerous works, notably in "Pour une économie de besoins," *Économie et Humanisme*, no. 84, March–April 1954; and *Dynamique concrète du développement*, Paris: Les Éditions Ouvrières, 1961.

- essential subsistence needs (food, clothing, housing, health care, and the like);
- needs related to comfort and amenities that make life easier (transportation, leisure, labor-saving devices, pleasant surroundings, and so on);
- needs related to human fulfillment or transcendence, whose satisfaction confers heightened value on human lives (cultural improvement, deeper spiritual life, enriching friendships, loving relationships, rewarding social intercourse, and so on). These may also be called 'enhancement goods'; they enhance human societies qualitatively and find their expression in cultural or spiritual achievement.

The policy implications that flow from this vision are obvious:

- Basic development efforts must place priority on ensuring for all persons sufficient goods of the first category. This priority ought to dictate investment decisions, the kinds of social institutions adopted, the mechanisms of world resource exchange, and the allotment of scarce goods to competing groups.
- Sufficiency at the first level must not be pursued to the detriment of goods related to human fulfillment. Lebert insists, however, that the satisfaction of basic subsistence needs is the prerequisite or infrastructure upon which human creativity and expression normally depend if they are to flourish.
- The second category of goods, ranging from goods that are relatively useful to those that are luxuriously wasteful, is not totally useless but should be clearly subordinated to the others.

3. Myrdal

A third precursor of development ethics was a Swedish economist who agonized over the clash between the requirements of objectivity in social science and the imperative need for value-based interventions in the pursuit of development. Gunnar Myrdal pondered how development interventions could avoid being arbitrary and biased but rather be 'objectively' or scientifically valid and based on a positive economic analysis of facts and conditions. As he wrote:

[T]he ethos of social science is the search for 'objective' truth. The faith of the student is his conviction that truth is wholesome and that illusions are damaging, especially opportunistic ones. He seeks 'realism,' a term which in one of its meanings denotes an 'objective' view of reality.

The most fundamental methodological problems facing the social scientist are therefore, what is objectivity, and how can the student attain objectivity in trying to find out the facts and the causal relationships between facts? How can a biased view be avoided? More specifically, how can the student of social problems liberate himself from (1) the powerful heritage of earlier writings in his field of inquiry, ordinarily containing normative and teleological notions inherited from past generations and founded upon the metaphysical moral philosophies of natural law and utilitarianism from which all our social and economic theories have branched off; (2) the influences of the entire cultural, social, economic, and political milieu of the society where he lives, works, and earns his living and his status; and (3) the influence stemming from his own personality, as molded not only by traditions and environment but also by his individual history, constitution, and inclinations?

The social scientist faces the further problem: how can he be in this sense objective and, at the same time, practical? What is the relation between wanting to understand and wanting to change society? How can the search for true knowledge be combined with moral and political valuations? How can truth be related to ideals?

In our profession there is a lack of awareness even today that, in searching for truth, the student, like all human beings whatever they try to accomplish, is influenced by tradition, by his environment, and by his personality. Further, there is an irrational taboo against discussing this lack of awareness. It is astonishing that this taboo is commonly respected, leaving the social scientist in naïveté about what he is doing. To destroy this naïveté should be the object of the sociology of science and scientists, the least developed branch of social science. This is important, as these influences, if they are not controlled, are apt to cause systematic biases in research and thus lead to faulty knowledge.

Even if the influences conditioning research had already been exposed, so that the social scientist was more sophisticated about himself and his attitudes in searching for truth, there would still remain a problem of the philosophy of social science: are there logical means by which he can better assure objectivity in his research? This is the problem I shall lead up to in this essay.

We shall find, the logical means available for protecting ourselves from biases are broadly these: to raise the valuations actually determining our theoretical as well as our practical research to full awareness, to scrutinize them from the point of view of relevance, significance, and feasibility in the society under study, to transform them into specific value premises for research, and to determine

approach and define concepts in terms of a set of value premises which have been explicitly stated.¹⁸

Because Myrdal was a development policy planner as well as an economic theorist, his epistemological anxieties changed his way of 'doing economics.'¹⁹ "We will have to master the complex problems that exist in reality by whatever tools are available," he wrote. "This should not be taken as an excuse for dilettantism: it is our duty to develop our skills to the highest possible degree in order to solve the scientific problems before us. The student must try to improve and adapt his skills to suit the particular problem he is tackling; he must not be content to limit them narrowly to one of the traditional disciplines. In my own professional life I have sometimes wandered far from what is usually considered economic theory, my original playground."²⁰

Myrdal saw economics as radically flawed: in the name of value-free objectivity it abstracted from reality, and it uncritically extrapolated concepts from Western to non-Western societies. He understood that "the use of Western theories, models, and concepts in the study of economic development in the South Asian countries is a cause of bias seriously distorting that study."²¹ Among concepts central to economic analysis that are especially inapplicable to developing societies he numbered: employment and unemployment, savings and consumption, the supposed spread effects of investment, and the notion of output. The aggregation of magnitudes, which is central to economic analysis, he argued is meaningless in South Asian developing countries. As he assessed Western economic procedures for utilizing data, Myrdal concluded "that their categories are unrealistic...while in the Western world an analysis in 'economic' terms—markets and prices, employment and unemployment, consumption and savings, investment and output—that abstracts from modes and levels of living and from attitudes, institutions, and culture may make sense and lead to valid inferences, an analogous procedure plainly does not in underdeveloped countries."²²

Other precursors of development ethics have likewise shifted the development problématique away from technical economic analysis to value-centered investigation, among

¹⁸ Gunnar Myrdal, *Objectivity in Social Research*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1969, pp. 3–5.

¹⁹ His three-volume inquiry into the poverty of nations remains a classic monument of practical economic analysis and policy prescription. Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama, An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*, New York: Pantheon, 1968.

²⁰ Myrdal, *Objectivity in Social Research*, p. 11.

²¹ *Asian Drama*, Vol. I, p. 19.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

them the economists François Perroux and Jacques Austruy and the sociologist Orlando Fals-Borda.²³

II. Development Ethics: A New Discipline

In new and ever-changing settings development poses ancient philosophical questions: what is the good life (the relation between *having* goods and *being* good), what are the foundations of life in society, and what stance should human groups adopt toward nature? 'Development' provides one particular answer to these questions. Merely to engage in applied ethics, however, is tantamount to harnessing ethics in *instrumental* fashion to the uncritical pursuit of development. Yet it is the very goals of modern development and the peculiar answer it offers to the ancient philosophical questions that are themselves at issue. Accordingly, development ethics is summoned to a task beyond mere instrumental norm-setting in processes of change. What is needed is a critical questioning of the very nature of development and of its declared goals: a better human life and societal arrangements that provide a widening range of choices for people to pursue their common and individual good.

In formulating the new discipline of development ethics, its practitioners have traveled two separate roads. The first road runs from engagement as planners or change agents in development practice to the systematic articulation of formal ethical strategies. The second pathway originates in an internal philosophical critique of conventional ethical theory as ahistorical and far removed from reality, as ethnocentric and as reductionistically rationalistic. These critical philosophers move outward to the elaboration of a distinctive ethics of development as normative *praxis*. Their preferred methodology is analytical, subjecting language and concepts to rigorous tests on criteria of justice, efficiency, and solidarity.²⁴ Both modes of 'doing' development ethics go beyond instrumental application to a reformulation of ethical theory itself, this in accord with the inner exigencies of the development *problématique*. That new *problématique* leads, not only to new applications, but to new theoretical formulations as well.

²³ François Perroux, *L'économie du XX^e siècle*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964; Perroux, *Économie et société*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2^e éd., 1963; Jacques Austruy, *Le scandale du développement*, Paris: Éditions Marcel Rivière et C^{ie} 1965; Austruy, *L'Islam face au développement économique*, Paris: Économie et Humanisme, Les Éditions Ouvrières, 1961; Orlando Fals-Borda, *Conocimiento y poder popular*, Bogotá: Punta de Lanza, 1985; Fals-Borda, *Subversion and Social Change in Colombia*, New York: Colombia University Press, 1969.

²⁴ David A. Crocker, *Praxis and Democratic Socialism*, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1983.

Along the first road, ethical strategies are derived from the varied development practice of national societies, of opposition social movements experimenting with alternative counterstrategies, and of ethicists' own activities as a development practitioners.²⁵ The basic mode of study employed is phenomenological analysis, i.e., the methodical reduction or 'peeling away' of values and countervalues contained, usually implicitly and in latent form, in the policies, programs, and projects proposed and carried out by development agents.²⁶

This first stream delineates, illustrates, and presents a justification of development ethics:

- as a new discipline with its proper nature, distinctive methods, and research rules;
- as the constitutive source of general principles that serve as criteria guiding the formulation of ethical strategies;
- as operational guides or ethical strategies in specific sectors of development decision-making and action; and
- as the source of normative standards for evaluating development performance.

The second development ethics pathway is a specialized domain of theory and practice that links up with studies of environment, world order, and other transdisciplinary realms as peaks in a common mountain chain of concerns.

This second stream of development ethics has begun the task of conducting a formal analysis of:

- the foundational justification of rights, needs, and entitlements;
- the ethical assessment of policies as these affect special categories of persons victimized or marginalized by current development practices (women, children, dispersed and nomadic populations, ethnic and cultural minorities);
- evaluations of competing economic, political, and social systems;
- new conceptions of security posed by the militarization of societies, environmental stresses across national boundaries, new patterns of large-scale migratory and refugee flows; and
- issues of economic justice arising from the growing practice of 'social dumping,' the unfair trade advantages derived by countries that deny their workers basic rights or treat the environment irresponsibly;
- strategies of economic liberalization and the operation of transnational corporations;

²⁵ Cf., e.g., Denis Goulet, "Doing Ethics in Development Arenas," *Journal of Regional Policy*, Naples, Italy, Vol. 11, July/December, (3-4/1991), pp. 601-8; "Ethics and Development: A Development Ethicist at Work," *National Geographic Research & Exploration*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1992, pp. 138-47.

²⁶ On the phenomenological method applied to social issues, see Helmut R. Wagner, ed., *Alfred Schutz, On Phenomenology and Social Relations*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970, pp. 1-79.

- the ethics of intervention;
- the merits of democracy or autocracy in promoting development; and
- disputes over the control of biogenetic resources.²⁷

Professional ethicists were late arrivals to the stage of development studies. For many years development's value dilemmas were treated only peripherally by a small number of economists. As noted earlier, Gunnar Myrdal's 1968 study *Asian Drama* centrally defined development as a value-laden operation. And a 1968 textbook on development by the Canadian economist Benjamin Higgins insists that "the philosopher needs to be added to the development team; without a clear concept of the philosophy of development, the team becomes a simple *ad hoc* mission."²⁸ Incidental discussion of development's value questions was likewise conducted by a few post-WWII sociologists and anthropologists studying social change—Daniel Lerner, Edward Banfield, George Dalton, Bert Hoselitz, Georges Balandier, Manning Nash, and Clifford Geertz.²⁹ The systematic *ex professo* study of development ethics, however, except by a few philosophers working in isolation,³⁰ had to await the birth in 1987 of IDEA (International Development Ethics Association) in San José, Costa Rica. Three years earlier an "International Development Ethics Group" had been formed by 14 people at a World Futures conference in Costa Rica. This working group created IDEA in 1987 at a conference in Costa Rica attended by some 30 philosophers, social scientists, and development workers. A later conference held in Mérida, Mexico, in 1989 gathered over a hundred participants who issued the "Declaration of Merida," defining IDEA's mission: "[T]o transform the search for and study of an alternative for social transformation," this "[I]n the face of the profound inadequacies of modernization development strategies."³¹

A Third IDEA International Conference was held in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, 21–27 June 1992 on the theme "The Ethics of Ecodevelopment: Culture, the Environment and Dependency." IDEA's membership and activities continue to expand rapidly. Until recently

²⁷ One early example of conducting development ethics in this mode is Nigel Dower, *World Poverty, Challenge and Response*, York, England: The Ebor Press, 1983.

²⁸ Benjamin Higgins, *Economic Development, Problems, Principles, & Policies*, revised edition, New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1968, p. 369.

²⁹ See John Brode, *The Process of Modernization, an Annotated Bibliography of the Sociocultural Aspects of Development*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969.

³⁰ Denis Goulet, "L.J. Lebre: Pioneer of Development Ethics," Chapter II of *A New Moral Order*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974.

³¹ *Revista de la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán*, Edición Especial, Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico, 1990, p. 73.

IDEA's activities centered in the Americas, but they are now diversifying elsewhere (Latin America, North America, UK/Europe, Asia, Africa). At IDEA's founding three streams of ethical theory were represented: Yugoslav *praxis* humanists searching for a nondogmatic brand of Marxism, Central American analytical philosophers applying methods of symbolic logic to issues of technology and social transformation, and US analytical philosophers looking beyond Western theoretical sources to craft applied ethical norms to guide action in spheres of global change and public policy. The three groups shared a common view of ethics' proper mission: to diagnose vital problems facing human societies, to guide public policy choices, and to clarify value dilemmas surrounding these problems and policies. This threefold reflection they undertook to conduct around value questions posed by development. With the creation of IDEA, development ethics gained formal recognition as an interdisciplinary field in development studies and philosophy.

Twenty years before the 1987 conference, US political scientist David Apter had observed that the study of modernization "brings us back to the search for first principles and rapid-fire developments in social theory and the breakthroughs in the biological sciences, not to speak of the retreat of philosophy into linguistics, have combined to render us philosophically defenseless and muddled."³² The reason for the muddle is clear: in the 16th century Machiavelli³³ in politics and two centuries later Adam Smith³⁴ in economics had stripped ethics of its norm-setting role in society. Thereafter, all philosophies, as Feibleman writes, fell into disrepute as socially irrelevant,³⁵ nowhere more totally so than in economics. Now, however, a growing number of economists are working to restore value questions to the center of their theoretical, methodological, and thematic concerns.³⁶

The discipline of development is, in Lebrét's words, the study of how to achieve a more human economy.³⁷ The expressions 'more human' and 'less human' must be understood in the

³² David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967, p. 6.

³³ Erwin A. Gaede, *Politics and Ethics: Machiavelli to Niebuhr*, Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 1983.

³⁴ Kenneth Lux, *Adam Smith's Mistake: How a Moral Philosopher Invented Economics and Ended Morality*, Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications Inc., 1990.

³⁵ James K. Feibleman, *The Institutions of Society*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956, p. 61.

³⁶ Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economics*, Great Britain: Basil Blackwell, 1987; Thomas Michael Power, *The Economic Pursuit of Quality*, Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1988; Mark A. Lutz and Kenneth Lux, *Humanistic Economics: The New Challenge*, NY: The Bootstrap Press, 1988; Daniel M. Hausman and Michael McPherson, "Taking Ethics Seriously: Economic and Contemporary Moral Philosophy," *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. XXXI, June 1993, pp. 671–731.

³⁷ L.J. Lebrét, *Dynamique concrète du développement*.

light of vital distinction between *plus avoir* (to have more) and *plus être* (to be more). Societies are more human or more developed, not when men and women 'have more' but when they are enabled 'to be more.' According to the psychologist Erich Fromm, people always choose one of two modes of living.

The alternative of *having* versus *being* does not appeal to common sense. *To have*, so it would seem, is a normal function of our life: in order to live we must have things. Moreover, we must have things in order to enjoy them. In a culture in which the supreme goal is to have—and to have more and more—and in which one can speak of someone as 'being worth a million dollars,' how can there be an alternative between having and being. On the contrary, it would seem that the very essence of being is having; that if one *has nothing*, one *is nothing*.

Yet the great Masters of Living have made the alternative between having and being a central issue of their respective systems. The Buddha teaches that in order to arrive at the highest stage of human development, we must not crave possessions. Jesus teaches: 'for whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?' (Luke 9:24–25) Master Eckhart taught that to have nothing and make oneself open and 'empty,' not to let one's ego stand in one's way, is the condition for achieving spiritual wealth and strength.

For many years I had been deeply impressed by this distinction and was seeking its empirical basis in the concrete study of individuals and groups by the psychoanalytic method. What I saw has led me to conclude that this distinction, together with that between love of life and love of the dead, represents the most crucial problem of existence; that empirical anthropological and psychoanalytic data tend to demonstrate that *having and being are two fundamental modes of experience, the respective strengths of which determine the differences between the characters of individuals and various types of social character.*³⁸

The true indicator of development is not increased production or material well-being but qualitative human enrichment. Quantitative increases in goods and services are doubtless needed, but not any kind of increase nor growth obtained at any price.

The dual nature of development, as an array of competing images of the good life and as a social change process, is best understood by focusing on the value conflicts it poses. These conflicts, which make up the proper subject matter of development ethics, are found in four different arenas:

- debates over *goals*: economic growth, the provision of basic needs, cultural survival, ecological balance, transfers of power from one class to another;
- divergent notions of power, legitimacy, authority, governance, competing *political systems*;
- competition over resources and over rules of access to resources, competing *economic systems*; and

³⁸ Erich Fromm, *To Have or To Be?* New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976, pp. 15–16.

- pervasive conflicts between *modern* modes of living—with their peculiar rationality, technology, social organization and behavior—and *traditional* ways of life.

Development ethics functions as a kind of “disciplined eclecticism.” Four traits characterize any intellectual discipline: the *systematic* pursuit of knowledge in ways which are *cumulative*, *communicable*, and *verifiable*. Although development ethics is *eclectic* in its choice of subject matter, it is *disciplined*, in this fourfold sense, in its study of it. Behind all its operations lies a clear unifying mission: to diagnose value conflicts, to assess policies (actual and possible), and to justify or to refute valuations placed on development performance.

Conclusion

Contemporary development thinking is prey to unending and perplexed self-questioning. Books proliferate, asking what are the goals of development;³⁹ what alternative strategies must be adopted, either in pursuing development or in repudiating it;⁴⁰ how to rethink the Third World,⁴¹ its politics,⁴² and development itself;⁴³ what are Third World options and its hopes for “another development”;⁴⁴ and whether fifty years of World Bank and IMF global financial management is enough.⁴⁵

Economics itself, the grandfather of development disciplines, is subjected to the same critical interrogations. We are alternatively warned of the end of economics;⁴⁶ summoned to become thoughtful economists concerned with rationality, moral rules, and benevolence;⁴⁷ to reflect anew on economic rights;⁴⁸ to practice humanistic, real-life, or green economics;⁴⁹ to get

³⁹ *Goals of Development*, Paris: UNESCO, 1988.

⁴⁰ Keith Griffin, *Alternative Strategies for Economic Development*, London: OECD Development Centre, 1989; Robert Vachon, *Alternatives au développement, approches interculturelles à la coopération internationale*, Montreal: Institut Interculturel de Montréal, 1988.

⁴¹ Rosemary E. Galli, Lars Rudebeck, K.P. Moseley, Frederick Stirton Weaver, and Leonard Bloom, eds., *Rethinking the Third World, Contributions toward a New Conceptualization*, New York: Taylor and Francis, 1992.

⁴² James Manor, ed., *Rethinking Third World Politics*, New York: Longman Inc., 1991.

⁴³ David E. Apter, *Rethinking Development, Modernization, Dependency, and Postmodern Politics*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987.

⁴⁴ Justinian F. Rweyemamu, *Third World Options, Power, Security and the Hope for Another Development*, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Tanzania Publishing House, 1992.

⁴⁵ Kevin Danaher, ed., *50 Years Is Enough: The Case against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund*, Boston, MA: South End Press, 1994.

⁴⁶ Cristovam Buarque, *The End of Economics? Ethics and the Disorder of Progress*, London: Zed Books Ltd., 1993.

⁴⁷ Gay Meeks, ed., *Thoughtful Economic Man: Essays on Rationality, Moral Rules, and Benevolence*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

⁴⁸ Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller, Jr., and Jeffrey Paul, eds., *Economic Rights*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

⁴⁹ Lutz and Lux, *Humanistic Economics*; Paul Ekins and Manfred Max-Neef, eds., *Real-Life Economics, Understanding Wealth Creation*, London: Routledge, 1992; Paul Ekins, Mayer Hillman, and Robert Hutchison, *Green Economics*, New York: Anchor Books, 1992.

beyond our obsession with quantity and conduct the economic pursuit of quality;⁵⁰ and to adopt a new economics around the moral dimension.⁵¹

A new paradigm of development is clearly in gestation, centering on human development as the end, with economic development as the means.⁵² Development's philosophical questions have now regained center stage: What is the good life or human flourishing, individually and societally, across the divide of multiple cultures and value systems? What are the foundations of life in society, in a polity, what Illich calls conviviality—the joy of living together with others?⁵³ And what stance must humans take toward nature so as to render development sustainable?⁵⁴

Issues of environment, peace and security, demography and population movements, equity, and meaningful existence constitute a vast agenda offering to development ethicists unlimited materials for diagnosis, analysis, and prescription.

The essential task of development ethics is to render development decisions and actions humane. Stated differently, it is to ensure that the painful changes launched under the banner of development 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 that binds together multiple diagnoses of problems with their policy implications, this through an explicit phenomenological study that lays bare the value costs of various courses of action.

More fundamentally, however, the primary mission of development ethics is to keep hope alive.⁵⁵ By any purely rational calculus of future probabilities the development enterprise of most countries is doomed to fail, if one assumes that development requires 'catching up' with the 'first

⁵⁰ Thomas Michael Power, *The Economic Pursuit of Quality*, New York, M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1988.

⁵¹ Amitai Etzioni, *The Moral Dimension: Toward a New Economics*, New York: The Free Press, 1988.

⁵² On this, see UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 17ff.

⁵³ Ivan D. Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*, New York: Harper and Row, 1973.

⁵⁴ Anil Markandya and Julie Richardson, eds., *Environmental Economics: A Reader*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

⁵⁵ It is the view of some that there can be a 'science of hope.' Cf. Lamar Carter, Ann Mische, and David R. Schwarz, eds., *Aspects of Hope: The Proceedings of a Seminar on Hope*, New York: ICIS Center for a Science of Hope, 1993.

industrial nations⁵⁶ or the newly industrialized 'Asian tigers.'⁵⁷ Poor classes, nations, and individuals can never catch up with the rich 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 coexist 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 transrational calculus of hope, situated beyond apparent realms of possibility, can elicit the creative energies and vision that authentic development for all requires. This calculus of hope must be ratified by development ethics, which summons human persons and societies to become their best selves, to create structures of justice to replace exploitation and aggressive competition. The present dismal scenario is not ineluctable. In *The Coming Dark Age* Robert Vacca⁵⁸ gloomily forecasts a world with no future. Development ethics offers a corrective view by reminding us that futures, like the past, are not foreordained. Indeed the most important banner development ethics must raise high is that of hope, hope in the possibility of creating new possibilities.

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.⁵⁹ There is profound truth, even as there is literal exaggeration, in Marx's notion that till the present we have only witnessed prehistory. 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

⁵⁶ Cf. Phyllis Deane, *The First Industrial Revolution*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1965.

⁵⁷ Cf. *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy*, A World Bank Policy Research Report, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993; Peter L. Berger and Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao, eds, *In Search of an East Asian Development Model*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993.

⁵⁸ Robert Vacca, *The Coming Dark Age*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1973.

⁵⁹ Denis Goulet, "Makers of History and Witnesses to Transcendence," in *A New Moral Order*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974, pp. 109–42.

human agents are the responsible stewards, and with future generations, is the ethical key to achieving a development that is at once human and sustainable.