

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES

Working Paper Series No. 195

CULTURE AND THREE LEVELS IN DEVELOPMENT ETHICS - from advocacy to analysis and from analysis to practice

Des Gasper

April 1995

WORKING PAPERS

Comments are welcome and should be addressed to the author:
c/o Publications Office - Institute of Social Studies - P.O. Box 29776
2502LT The Hague - The Netherlands



Contents

Introduction

1. Three levels in development ethics: emerging cultural questions
 2. "Culture and development": sources, problems, and ethical questions
 3. Needs and cultures
 4. Universalism and relativism; cultural critiques and ethical alliances
- Summary and conclusion

Notes

References

Key:

- AWOD = "A World of Difference", The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1990 (Dutch edition), 1991 (English edition)
BHN = Basic Human Needs
BMN = Basic Material Needs
C&D = Culture and development
DE = Development ethics.

Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this paper was prepared for a May 1993 workshop on 'Culturele Factoren van Ontwikkeling' (Cultural Factors of Development), organized by the National UNESCO Commission in the Netherlands, and revised for a follow-up international conference on "Cultural Dynamics in Development Processes" (Woudschoten, June 1994). The United Nations system has taken 1988-97 as the Decade for Culture and Development, with UNESCO as the lead agency responsible. As part of the Netherlands contribution, these meetings examined a series of topics in relation to the theme of culture-and-development and considered a commitment in the Netherlands Government's 1990 policy document "A World of Difference" to treat culture as the basis for sustainable development. Versions of this paper were also presented to a Development Studies Association study group meeting at the University of Leeds, February 1993, and to the Association's conference at the University of Lancaster, September 1994. I am grateful for reactions and/or suggestions from John Cameron, Raff Carmen, Nigel Dower, Mark Lutz, Purna Sen, Thierry Verhelst, Raymond Apthorpe, Jan Nederveen Pieterse, C.A.O. van Nieuwenhuijze, Peter Waterman, and especially Sipko de Boer and Andras Krahl. Responsibility for the opinions expressed in the paper rests with the author.

Introduction

Unfavourable comparisons exist between the levels of life-expectancy, literacy and related matters in certain countries, such as India, and levels in other countries such as Sri Lanka and China which have similar average income but have achieved far more. Or is use of the term "achieved" a reprehensible and Eurocentric-cum-developmental imposition of a single measure of improvement, blind to diverse and non-comparable ways of human existence? This reaction is suggested by, for example, the recent "Development Dictionary" (Sachs et al., 1992). Perhaps some people prefer short, literacy-free lives?

Also available now are sex-disaggregated comparisons which reveal that the achievement-shortfall applies primarily to women. For example, in the countries of South Asia, women's lives on average are shorter (or no longer) than men's - in contrast to in the rest of the world. In Pakistan in the 1980s, female literacy was half the figure for men, compared to almost parity in Tanzania, and maternal mortality was fifty per cent higher than Tanzania's even though Pakistan's real per capita income was four times greater (UNDP, 1990). But perhaps the women in the two countries, in their diversity of culture and identity, are equally content? - so the "Development Dictionary" might suggest. If they were equally content, would that be sufficient justification for their different conditions?

My aim in this paper is to examine how two areas of work -- "development ethics" (DE) and "culture and development" (C&D) -- can inform and contribute to each other. I consider the two fields largely complementary. Both arise from dissatisfactions with mainstream development ideas and strategies and with economism. While the C&D work is sometimes substantively better informed and more aware of dimensions of meaning, often the DE work is more conceptually probing, systematic and critical. Given two broad and encompassing fields, my coverage will inevitably be very selective. However, work in both fields is still relatively young or limited. This partly reflects economistic dominance in development studies, including in research funding, as well as difficulty of some of the issues and concepts involved.

I will first sketch recent work on development ethics and how it increasingly faces questions dealt with in the discussions of culture (Section 1). This leads to a conspectus of some positions and common weaknesses in the "culture and development" / "culture is development" / "culture not development" discourses, and of ethical issues that arise (Section 2). We come then to the central questions of universalism versus relativism and of the possibilities of both coexistence and fruitful criticism of different cultures. How can one avoid presuming one's own culture has universal validity, and yet also avoid treating each culture as sacrosanct and beyond criticism? Can we establish some well-grounded prioritizations, recognizing both cultural variety and shared humanity? Recent work -- on rethinking basic human needs (Section 3), on criteria of justice and acceptable cultural variation (with special reference to the position of women), and on the nature of ethical argument (Section 4) - takes us some way to integrating the discussions of ethics and culture and balancing universalism and relativism.

1. Three levels in development ethics: emerging cultural questions

Dower (1992) presents development ethics as a branch of philosophical applied ethics which treats issues that arise in partly-controllable social change, at whatever social level, whether in economically rich or poor countries or in their mutual relations. He makes a case for thinking of it as a single field, which will parallel traditional ethics' question "How ought one to live as an individual?", by asking in addition "How ought a society to exist and move into the future?" (p.14). Elsewhere he and others add also a similar question for world society. My own characterization of development ethics / DE focused more on issues in poor countries and in their relations to the rich (Gasper, 1994a); for I expected in practice some divisions of Dower's huge field, into sub-fields that attract different audiences.

I will sketch here three levels or "generations" of work in DE. The three levels represent more an intellectual than a chronological sequence, since each level is active at present and very probably should continue so.¹ We will see how (inter-) cultural

issues have emerged openly as challenges that must be faced.

1.1. Crocker's survey in "World Development" (1991a) proposes that "development ethics" as a self-conscious and cumulative body of work was founded by Denis Goulet, insofar as by any one individual. Goulet's "The Cruel Choice" (1971) is part of a first level or "first generation" of DE work, which puts forward views of human interests, rights, duties, and dilemmas, while reacting to and reflecting on the problems and horrors of orthodox developmentalisms, capitalist or socialist. Peter Berger's "Pyramids of Sacrifice" (1974) was another influential early treatment. This first-level work reconsiders meanings of "development", and advocates or examines concepts like "equity", "basic needs", "participation", "autonomy", and "empowerment".

Utilitarian economics, in both its neo-classical and Fabian/Leninist variants, has heavily shaped the concepts and policies of development (see e.g. Gasper, 1987, 1993); thus much first level work reacts against economic views of development and the implicit, culturally impoverished ("economic man") sets of values. Goulet emphasized that people seek compatibility and synergy between their significant values (meanings) and their performative values (activity-choices); but that a gap has opened, notably in developing countries, between significant values and the new performative values demanded in economic development. This may undermine both sets of values, whereas: "Every society must feel that its values are worthy of respect if it is to embark on an uncertain future with confidence in its own ability" to handle that future (Goulet, 1971:49). Many policies are to protect a vulnerable identity or to make it less vulnerable. He argued that while this cultural core demands protection, there can be great flexibility in more peripheral components of a culture.

Such first level work has had real but limited impact. Advocates of a poverty-focus and popular rights did force some modifications of adjustment programmes in the 1980s, though probably more was due to civil disturbances and political instability than intellectual conversion of policy-makers. Interestingly, the official doctrine of the Dutch development programme now includes much first level discourse. Its 1990s' flagship policy statement, the book "A World of Difference", has major emphases on

each of culture, democracy, individual freedom/autonomy, basic needs, and a range of other posited human rights. But, typically, *it makes only brief reference to the possible conflicts amongst this range of different considerations (pp.196, 204). To deepen criticism, and to clarify and face conflicts of principles, we require some coherent philosophical alternative(s) to economic growthmanship.*

1.2. The second level of DE involves work on: attempted theoretical justification of positions on the first level issues, by probing the foundational issues of the nature of well-being and of criteria for what is good/right, including the claims of different philosophical traditions, and the methodology of ethical theorizing and practice; and clarifying and systematizing what we mean by the field of "development ethics" itself.² Important examples of foundational probing are Sen's capabilities theory (e.g. Sen, 1985), attempts to extend Rawls's ethic to world level (e.g. Beitz, 1979), and O'Neill (1986)'s neo-Kantianism.

Neo-Kantianism for instance sees development as extending individuals' ability to set and pursue ends freely chosen by themselves. It implies rights to an equal voice, literacy, information, participation, and public accountability (Cameron, 1992). As formulated (though not theorized) in "A World of Difference" (AWOD): "Is autonomy not the goal? Autonomy for individual people in a society, so that they have the opportunity from the outset to decide for themselves what development should mean, what life and existence should signify?" (p.38; my emphasis).³ It later advocates "a development ideology which is based on the principle of autonomy" for individual women (p.205); we will look at this in Section 4.

But what are the identities of these "individuals"? And what precisely should we mean by free choice in a world of many determining factors? We may need a richer, more social, picture of the living, choosing, individual than in Kantian (or Rawlsian) models. Neo-Aristotelianism seems to offer a more adequate basis, exemplified in Nussbaum's (1990, 1992) deepening of Sen's work. We touch on this in Sections 3 and 4.

Further, AWOD itself later declares that "the overriding goal of Dutch development policy [is] to reduce poverty on a lasting basis" (p.292). Its statements of priority to both individual autonomy and poverty reduction require integration (for example via Sen's ethical theory); and both then need integration with the claims of culture.

That sort of theory building is slow and abstracted. It leaves things out, especially at first; starts with models from disciplines that are strong on systematic theorizing, like philosophy and economics; and risks losing touch with the variety and root discontents from the first level. The research programme of Sen, Crocker and others moves ahead promisingly in its own terms (see e.g. Crocker, 1991b, 1992), and may communicate to and influence some mainstream economics and governments, for example via the UNDP Human Development Report series. However, work that is not by philosophers or economists tends to reflect a wider range of experience and factors and to reward the general reader more (see the mini-survey in Gasper, 1994a).

We can see conflicting trends at present. A range of writers are strengthening the critique of market liberalism and of commodity-centering of life. Often this critique is through refinement of a "Basic Human Needs" position (see e.g. Aman ed., 1991; Doyal & Gough, 1991). At the same time attacks on "needs" discourse claim that it treats people like animals, by neglecting their quintessentially human activity of cultural construction of identities, meanings, values, and societies; and that it is paternalist and degenerative in practice (see e.g. Illich, 1992). Others declare that "development ethics" as a whole is Northern / Western thought parading as universal, mystifying abstract ethical categories inherited from long past, while neglecting the specificity, richness and variety of societal cultures. Similar points figure in attacks on the notion of "development" itself. DE has indeed typically relied on universalistic "Western" categories, like needs, utility, rights, and liberties. This Western philosophy though is not simply the reflection or root of Western mainstream economic life: it is often critical of that life (and thus often ignored); and its universalistic principles contain strong democratic potentials (Hussein, 1992).

1.3. So a third level of DE issues includes deeper attention to the very notion of "development ethics" and its categories like "needs" and "development", in light of the claims of cultural variety and relativism; and to the demands of practice, for how to achieve influence in a world of rampant capitalism and other furies -- including through possible alliances among different ethical views (such as religious and non-religious, rights and needs, or modernist, pre-, and post-modernist).

The "Development Dictionary" (ed. Sachs, 1992) provides a strong version of the attack on "development". Given the pervasive influence of Ivan Illich, it can seem somewhat mono-cultural itself. Sachs and his fellow authors refer to "development" as the global project presented in President Truman's 1949 inauguration speech, which they view as epochal because it took over the Westernization project shorn of the negative connotations of colonialism. (At the same time Sachs et al. seem to subsume Marxism-Leninism in "Westernization".) The Dictionary's attacks on subsequent mainstream practice hit many targets, but try to flatten everything in sight: "development does not work" (p.1) seems an insufficient account of East Asia's third of the world or the near-doubling of life expectancy in much of the South. Illich's claim that "most people become poorer as GNP grows" (p.93) might reflect a definition of poverty based on culture. Indeed Sachs argues that "development's hidden agenda was nothing less than the Westernization of the world", and that the South is now devastated by "vast furrows of cultural monoculture" (pp.3-4). This is a less optimistic view of Southern cultural resilience and adaptability than from most culture theorists.

"Development" is also attacked on grounds that it proffers a universal concept of social improvement. Normative usage of the term is allegedly incompatible with the reality of "diverse and non-comparable ways of human existence" (Sachs, 1992:3). Thus Esteva considers endogenous development a contradiction in terms, for "endogenous" implies coming out of a specific culture and its values, whereas "development" implies some single measure of improvement -- not diverse culture-specific measures -- and "the oneness, homogeneity, and linear evolution of the world" (1992:12). In fact comparability does not presume simple homogeneity. Japanese cultures and values are different from American, yet some degree of comparison of

their degrees of "development", each measured in terms of their own values, is possible, and done (e.g. in national income measures). *Further*, Esteva and his colleagues themselves go on to make greater comparisons, of the value of different ways of life. They do not merely say that e.g. American values and X-ian values differ, or that X-ians appear more developed in terms of their own values than Americans are in terms of theirs; they go further and criticize American values.

I agree with Corbridge (1993), who while accepting parts of the post-modernist analysis of "development", rejects attempts -- post-modernist, communitarian, or New Right -- to restrict the scope of morality to national or local communities.⁴ Apel notes what is at stake: when the post-modernist "critique of rationality calls into question [by reason!] the fundamental identity and unity of reason, in the name of difference and plurality, it overshoots the mark and threatens the very diversity that it aims to protect" (Apel, 1992:16; my interpolation). For the strong will then declare themselves "different" and entitled to pursue their own rationality and the unique values of their own incomparable way of life, including by consuming the weak. Think of apartheid South Africa.

To some significant extent, we can abstract from local specifics and morally reflect in a detached way. This is the thrust of for example Onora O'Neill's work which we look at later. Besides, what does globalization tend to leave in the past: universalizing categories or self-contained social and moral islands? Surely the latter more than the former.

So far I have argued that "first-level" development ethics's criticisms of economism and reference to multiple different appealing principles, such as autonomy, rights, or freedoms, are not enough. We require "second level" systematic theorizing, to refine and relate different principles and build theoretical alternatives. That too is not enough. We require a "third level", which takes the abstracted theoretical systems back to the real worlds of practice and compromise, where life's richness outstrips any single system. Each level has a permanent role: first-level reaction to new issues and experience; second-level systematization and deepening of those responses; and third-

level application and adaptation of the systems when facing real choices. Let us next investigate what the work on "culture and development" can offer here. It directly raises many ethical questions but its own handling of them has in general remained at a first-generation level. Recent work in development ethics tries to go deeper.

2. "Culture and development": sources, problems, and ethical questions

2.1. We encounter various types of concern with "culture and development" in the literature of that name. The following list starts with views of culture as peripheral and moves on to those that take it as central.

- (A1) One mainstream view, identified by Packard-Winkler (1989), takes culture as epiphenomenal, a *fully accomodating dependent variable* which does not influence (economic) development, and "so" can be ignored. This is the stance of many economists.
- (A2) An opposite mainstream view sees culture instead as often an *obstacle* to economic development; again the concern with culture is instrumental.
- (A3) A third type of mainstream instrumental stance takes culture as a *policy tool*, to be studied and then made use of. This stance arises if failures to take distinctive local culture into account contribute to policy- and project-failures (Kottak, 1991): e.g. if interventions do not work well without an understanding of motives and meanings, or without real partnership.
- (B) A stronger version of (A3): the claim that local culture is an *essential* means or modality, so that if it is not respected then nothing will succeed. Hence there must be many "roads to development" (AWOD:237); but the development goal itself can here still be viewed as universal in content.
- (C) The view that people have basic cultural *needs*. Typically an inherited societal/ group culture is seen as the major vehicle for fulfilment of these needs. (This can also link to views D1, D2, D3.)
- (D1) A *separable independent* concern: culture is accorded independent value, making it "an important part" of development.

- (D2) A *constitutive independent* concern: fulfilment of cultural needs is not only independently valued, but occurs through all the media of social activity not just through a separate "part".
- (D3) An *overriding independent concern*: inherited culture is of incomparable and absolute value, and must be preserved.
- (E) A *liberal* stance: since local culture is felt by many people to have independent value, it should be respected - though as just one criterion, not an overriding one.
- (F) A *foundational* concern: each culture is the source of criteria that define "the good life" or "development" for its members, and one can only measure development in terms of a given culture's values. Here there are various "paths of development", with their own goals. Advocates of "endogenous development" take position (F), and/or (B).
- (G) *Culture as oracle*: one should refer to "the culture" for the answers on what objectives and criteria to adopt. This can be a strong version of (F).
- (H) "Culture" not "development": the claim that the values propounded within "development" are culturally unacceptable (e.g. because deemed individualistic and materialistic) and deserve rejection.

We could add other possibilities, and mixed positions; for example a weaker version of the foundational concern (F), which would combine some universal with some locally specific criteria.

The key point to note here is that ethical claims arise in each of positions (D) through (H), and probably also (C).⁵

Sections in "A World Of Difference" (AWOD) speak instrumentally (and clumsily) of culture; for example: "Development processes should be served by being linked to cultural processes, in order to allow for sustainable development" (p.192).⁶ This matches the instrumental stance of position (A3), and perhaps position (B). Of AWOD's three geographical chapters, only that on Africa discusses culture: a turn to a new instrument for the continent perceived as in crisis. But later chapters move towards some of the later positions in our list.

2.2. While the list gives us a start, we should further specify the two parts of the couple, "culture" and "development", in order to think more clearly about the links. At least three meanings of "development" deserve attention: 1. qualitative change (in society / economy / politics /...); 2. intervention or policy; and 3. improvement. In the C&D literature different "cultural" and/or ethical issues arise for each. The following table mentions some major foci of attention.

	<u>"DEVELOPMENT"</u>	<u>"CULTURAL" ISSUES ARISING</u>
Positive meanings	1. Qualitative change	1. Culture as: engine or brake?; independent or dependent variable?...
	2. Intervention	2. a) Culture as instrument b) Culture of interveners c) Inter-cultural relations
Normative meaning	3. Improvement	3. What criteria of improvement? - Economistic, or wider? - Immanent or trans-cultural?

Much attention goes to the positive issues in area 1 on qualitative change (e.g., is a certain culture a brake on industrialization or just an accomodating variable?) and their policy versions in area 2a (e.g., how can a brake be eased by some cultural engineering?). For us the other areas are fundamental, especially inter-cultural relations and criteria of improvement, which take us directly into development ethics. Many C&D concerns are ethical or immediately raise ethical questions.

Clarification of the other partner, "culture", is notoriously difficult, which can make it a frustrating field to discuss. Sometimes in C&D literature it implicitly refers to *a residual category of whatever is marginal to economistic thought.*⁷ Behind the code-word stands a set of concerns, rather than one thing (van Nieuwenhuijze, 1983; Kloos, 1985): a huge, disparate, and hard-to-handle collection, including local knowledge, local values, local concepts and perceptions of life and the world, local institutions, "non-economic" values, needs and styles of expression, of activity, meaning, identity, dignity and beauty; and more. As a result, achieving valid useful

statements if we talk about "culture and development" as a single topic becomes problematic.

Van Nieuwenhuijze's cool and historically informed account of such concerns warned that: "The current interest in culture and development is largely a Western response, under a typically Western label, to Third World events not necessarily announced there as cultural" (1983:18). He suggested that C&D literature often remained confused and hindered by the gulf between it and culture-bearers and culture-leaders in the South.

If we look then for *the rationale of such discourse about relations between development and the non-unitary category of "culture"*, we return to the issues in the table:- interveners' questions when assessing what hinders their intervention; the rejection of interveners' economism, both for trying to understand change and for specifying what are improvements and "the good life"; the clash of different cultures, especially in situations of unequal power; and the cultural obstacles (e.g. an economic world view) on the side of the interveners, their/our ignorance and limited ability to learn. One small example of the last: five hundred years after the misnaming of inhabitants of the Americas as "Indians", the West retains the misnomer.

In a second variant in C&D literature, "culture" becomes *everything*: "By culture, therefore, is meant every aspect of life" (Verhelst, 1990:17); "Culture may be regarded as whatever characterises a community" (AWOD, p.190). It gets "left out" so often because "it" is too big to "include" -- the set of all values, norms, attitudes, habits, ways of doing, artefacts, and even institutions.⁸ Authors probably mean both more and less than this: we are looking (also) for underlying or associated patterns of values, habits, etc.; in other words, for generative factors, not just a heap of aspects. By the end of Verhelst's "No Life Without Roots - Culture and Development" (1990), "Culture is understood... as a vital process that underpins all aspects of a given community's life" (p.157; my emphases). So one should not talk of "the cultural dimension" of development. Perhaps one should not talk even of "the cultural dimensions", but rather of "the developmental dimensions of culture".

If we try to become more specific about culture, it contains at least "*values and attitudes*": a third standard C&D formulation.⁹ Variants here include "mentalities" (AWOD, p.190) and Hofstede's definition: the shared mental programming which distinguishes one group from another. Hofstede explicitly places values as culture's core. With this third formulation we often meet the when-in-Rome fallacy, the assumption that all the Romans think, feel, and behave alike, so that there are few problems about whose views, practices and interests are "the" local ones; and, a related tendency to mummify culture and not see it as fluid, ambiguous, and hence always evolving. While differences do exist in cultural orientations to change versus stability, Simson (1985) claims that in reality almost anything can be added to a culture, provided this happens via legitimizing channels.

These two fallacies in viewing cultures -- "when-in-Rome" and "when-in-the-museum" -- reflect "the dangers of a totalizing concept [applied] by the West, to others -- a mechanism for aggregating and stereotyping as a means of handling the unfamiliar" (Cheater, 1991:2). Ironically, this aggregative stereotyping can contribute to "a reactive pride in difference among those to whom it was applied" (loc.cit.). It can also bring an underestimation of the issues involved in guided social change. Culture is not some totality preserved in a museum, temple or archive, which can be controlled and modified as per the wishes of a societal development engineer. Cheater provides a suggestive example, of contradictions in the Chinese Communist Party's attempt to guide cultural change while yet still resorting to traditional cultural symbols during its struggles for power and legitimacy.

Verhelst's book exemplifies some other common features in C&D discourse. The first part gives a bleak picture of well-nigh general desolation, wrought by "development".¹⁰ Beside this stand idealizations of national pasts and anti-colonial struggles, and of how life would have been without Western impact. More worrying is a sustained over-generalization about cultural features, with all of non-Europe seen as sharing the same fundamental values (Verhelst, 1990: 24, 31), even Latin America; and sweeping remarks about Africa and "the African".¹¹ However such weaknesses are not inherent in a concern with C&D.

In contrast, in a long chapter on India, a range of protagonists from one of the most resilient and adaptive culture-areas are allowed to speak for themselves, on the great internal variety and disagreements within "Indian culture", including disagreements in the C&D sphere. Verhelst has a "flabbergasting" learning experience with forms of spirituality that feel indifferent to worldly justice or welfare (p.126), and encounters varied local criticisms of Vedanta gurus, official Gandhians, Aurobindo's followers, the (limits to the) relevance of progressive NGDOs' Latin American-derived models, and more.

Verhelst convincingly argues that alternative forms of modernity are possible, and exist, besides Westernization; and fortunately so, given Western civilizational crises. He proceeds to a useful treatment of possible actions and concrete cases; including an account of the neo-Buddhist 'Sarvodaya shramadana' in Sri Lanka, in which the labour of the poorer is mobilized for the benefit of the richer; and a discussion of projects to help cultures adapt and grow rather than be mummified.

To go beyond when-in-Rome and when-in-the-museum notions of "culture", we can think of levels and matrices. Kloos (1985) suggested three levels:- (i) individual choices and behaviour, which occur within (ii) a framework of inherited conditions and ideas; values at this second level are subject to considerable change, often rapid, but this is within constraints set by (iii) deeper values or "cultural principles"/"cultural identity", which evolve much more slowly. Goulet's (1971) model is similar.

For thinking about cultural plurality in a society and about the ethics of inequality, McGregor (1990) adds the image of a cultural matrix. A society contains "a range of overlapping possible cultural identities", not simply "a" culture (p.14). In his matrix of identities, rows represent socio-economic classes and columns indicate options in a range of other dimensions -- ethnic, religious, regional, gender, ideological, urban/rural. (So one column, in McGregor's Bangladesh case, might be tribal Christian hill-tract market-town male secessionist!) Hegemonic groups often propagate the myth of "a" single culture. Still, there will generally be some shared, integrating elements internalized in nearly all, or at least most, identities in the matrix. McGregor

thus refers to a society's (shared) culture as "an overarching code or rules and resources beyond those embodied in particular institutions, organisations and ideologies ...[and which] provides the rules and guidelines for the integration of often competing and contradictory components of the social system", and the mediation of their conflicts (1990:15). This leaves open the question: who benefit more from the particular code or rules?

We might have little need for ethics if all choices within a society were clear and consensual; in reality we face conflicts and dilemmas. And while cultures do contain ethics, these leave large areas for -- ethical and other -- discussion. Intra-culturally, existing ethics are:- incomplete, ambiguous, inconsistent, plural; in dispute; required to grow and adjust in the face of qualitatively new conditions and cases; and open to criticism, for example concerning the relations between classes and genders. One can observe this in any society, for example the Netherlands. Local culture may serve as a basis, one basis, but not as an oracle. In section 4 we see some virtues of this incompleteness.

Since "culture" is neither clear-cut nor stable, it is a problematic source of policy criteria. Much C&D literature concludes that, since culture is so complex, only locals can "include" it, because they "are" it; except when, as often lamented in the same literature, they have been decultured. Van Nieuwenhuijze's turn for optimism arrives: cultural alienation provides new opportunities and an ability to rethink (1983:29).

In its final statement, Verhelst's book responds to some of these problems by emphasizing free choices by local peoples: "For each people or local community, it is a question of preserving or reclaiming their liberty, and ultimately, their identity" (1990:161). Note a partial shift here from preserving or reclaiming identity; instead liberty has to be gained (and sustained), and through it identity may be re-made, re-created. Culture's value now lies in its free (and rational?) construction and evolution, rather than just its preservation or restoration.¹² This is an advance. Two issues we still have to face are: the reality of social heterogeneity and conflicting interests and perceptions; and how liberty can clash with culture and identity.

2.3. We would, similarly, have less need to study culture if there was only one, as economists sometimes assume. In reality we face plurality, dissensus and ethical issues of inter-cultural relations, especially between societies. The more one emphasizes the distinctiveness, persistence, centrality and value of a societal culture, the larger become the questions about inter-cultural relations. At world level some see a series of yawning gulfs, widening as parts of "the" Third World rethink direction. Each major culture area is indeed different, and allegedly even "a universe unto itself - neither equipped nor prepared to envisage the rest of mankind as anything but secondary, marginal and essentially problematic" (van Nieuwenhuijze, 1983:24). How should we handle these relations, including conflicts of cultures and ethics? What does a requirement to treat cultures with respect imply? Do cultures have rights?

When UNESCO talks of "absolute respect for" and "the equal dignity of all cultures", how should one read this? As meaning "equal worth in all respects and unconditionally", or as a diplomatic peace-treaty, or as "deemed equal in worth unless proved otherwise in certain respects"? Prince Claus argued: "If we support Amnesty International...or War on Want[’s work worldwide]... we [Europeans] are actually supporting the view that some human values and the rights flowing from them are universal... there are values which we claim to be universal and by which we do judge cultures. Indeed not to do so would be to deny the humanity of the members of the societies in question" (1985:18-19). Agnes Heller (1984) adds a subtler analysis of why total cultural relativism in ethics contradicts our (contemporary, cosmopolitan) sense of justice.

I broadly support Heller and Prince Claus; and say more in Section 4 on trans-cultural evaluation. Whatever the methodology used, Europeans and North Americans are making such evaluations, as now when applying "good governance" conditions on aid or trade. While the questions there concern also nation-state sovereignty, issues of the scope and limits to cultural sovereignty are quite similar (Gasper, 1986). Here I want to stress that these issues have two faces.

When documents like AWOD ("Een Wereld van Verschil") talk of "culture as a

basis for sustainable development", they means others' cultures. Why does one country assess others' cultures? One answer concerns its relative power and wealth. Another answer concerns perceived moral obligations to help, if one can, and hence an obligation to understand better how to help and how not to. But what about its own culture? *At least equal emphasis is required on strengthening the cultural basis in the North for sustainable development worldwide.* This includes: reducing consumerism, the throw-away society, the motor-car society; strengthening alternatives to possessive individualism; better educating the possessive consumer on his own and others' humanity; and patience, understanding, and long-term perspective in development cooperation. Across the North, too little of this can yet be seen. For example, beliefs in managerialist panaceas persist or grow in official aid work; and even the Netherlands comes nowhere near its modest targets for curbing road-traffic growth.

Regardless of one's precise views on the obligations and cultural demands on the North, the point here is that its cultural basis becomes an equal part of the agenda. Any "Decade for Culture and Development" should face this. Changes in the North are essential in themselves; and without them the chances diminish of cooperation from the South.

We concluded from Section 1 that development ethics (DE) must confront the challenge of cultural plurality and divergence. But in Section 2 we have suggested that while past work on "culture and development" (C&D) provides important materials it has often been held back by conceptual difficulties, over-idealization, and even heavy over-generalization. DE work is thus in turn a useful complement to C&D concerns. For illustration, the rest of the paper considers three linked DE areas:- (a) *theories of basic human needs* and their relation to cultural variations; (b) *theories of justice in a multi-cultural context*; and (c) *theories of ethical argument*, concerning the scope for cultures to evolve through criticism and experience.

3. Needs and cultures

Basic needs ethics may satisfy two "third level" requirements: first, to give a ground for partial alliance between different ethics, each of which requires for its own coherence a basic needs component; and second, to provide an integrative research programme that offers serious counter-attraction to the dominant economism. To fulfil this potential, they must meet a third requirement: allowing for extensive cultural variety. Recent work clarifies how this can be done.

"A World of Difference" criticized the 1970s Basic Needs Approach (BNA) as too narrow: concerned with development for people, and insufficiently of people and by people (1991:40). *The critique fits the more narrowly welfarist "Basic Material Needs" (BMN) work distinguished by Green (1978), Galtung (1978/9) or Hetme (1982). It does not apply to what they called the "Basic Human Needs" (BHN) stream.*¹³ Material needs thinking dominated the BNA of the large donor agencies, but was not the whole of basic needs analysis. BHN work draws more fully on the content of humanist theory stretching back over centuries and millenia, and is the source of the UNDP "human development" position which "A World of Difference" endorses. It stresses people's capabilities and use of their capabilities, their participation. In fact the AWOD document itself uses needs language when discussing women (p.204) -- setting the goal that "basic needs become basic rights" -- but does not integrate this with its other languages like autonomy, democracy, culture and poverty.

BHN theory goes far beyond material needs. One sees this already in Maslow's proposed five sets of basic needs, stated in 1943: physiological-, safety-, affective-, esteem-, and self-actualization needs. He later, like Goulet, added "meta-needs", where the self-extension in the previous three sets moves on further towards self-transcendence, in search of truth, meaning, and justification. The span beyond material needs is even more emphatic in Max-Neef's framework (1989, 1991).

Maslow's list of basic needs and his proposed hierarchy amongst them remains the best known needs theory and at the same time highly controversial. Many cultural

theorists find it particularly objectionable, for it can be read as claiming that people have needs which are naturally given, not culturally moulded and mediated; and even that a separate category of "cultural" needs is mainly felt at a later stage, when other needs, implicitly non-cultural, have been satisfied.

We must distinguish here *three modes of "needs" theory*. First, there are *positive theories for explaining wants and behaviour*, which posit entities called "needs" which drive our actions. Maslow's theory can be read on these lines. Such theories have been superseded in most of psychology, as too crude to adequately capture human behaviours which are both intelligent and socially embedded. For example, the anthropologist Mary Douglas attacks needs-talk that suggests the forces driving global warming are in effect givens; Douglas and her associates from across a range of disciplines use instead her "Cultural Theory".¹⁴ A second mode consists of *positive analyses to identify prerequisites for various types of capacity or functioning*, e.g. the requirements of physical and mental health. Maslow's contributions might better be read as one such attempt. (See also e.g. Argyle, 1987, and Scitovsky, 1992.) Thirdly, *ethical "needs" theories* present arguments about which prerequisites carry a priority status, i.e. constitute claims that the relevant political community should ensure are met. This is the field of Doyal & Gough, Sen, Nussbaum, and others, and is what most concerns us here.

The first and third modes (i.e., explaining behaviour, and ethics) have little direct connection, though both have connections to the second mode (identifying requirements). *Psychological and cultural-theoretical critiques of needs theories concern the first mode rather than the third, the ethical theories of "needs"*. Likewise, while the Douglas school of "Cultural Theory" may contribute in positive explanation it would have little to offer on ethical issues in global warming -- unlike ethical "needs" theories.

Basic human needs analyses can make contributions in a number of areas (see Gasper 1994b for a fuller treatment). *They help us better understand unity-in-variety, by distinguishing levels*. In positive analysis, we noted how Kloos and Goulet

distinguish levels of values, to understand continuity-in-change within a culture; positive needs theory tries to go further, to analyse variety across cultures, seeking generalizations about deeper source needs, not over-generalizations about concrete cultural features and behaviours. Whatever the strengths or weaknesses of such positive theories, distinguishing levels is certainly helpful in needs ethics. And multi-level understanding can reduce pressures to insist that concrete features are sacrosanct and must be preserved.

Extending Sen's work, Doyal & Gough (1991) specify the following ethical and policy hierarchy:

- (1) a level of universal human interests: e.g. defined as "avoidance of serious harm" or "minimally impaired functioning";
- (2) a level of "basic needs" required for the universal goal(s); these are posited as health (physical and mental) and autonomy (in action / agency and perhaps also in values / critical capacity); they match Sen's "capabilities";
- (3) "intermediate needs", i.e. certain sets of "characteristics" (e.g. shelter) necessary for fulfilment of those basic needs/capabilities; namely:- nutritional food and clean water; protective housing; a non-hazardous work environment and physical environment; appropriate health care and education; security in childhood; significant primary relationships; physical and economic security; safe birth control and child-bearing (1991:157-8); and
- (4) specific satisfier commodities that provide the more general characteristics; these vary according to culture, context, and the person concerned.

The exact content of both levels (3) and (4) is thoroughly socially and culturally relative, as will be the content of, (5), the societal preconditions for providing the satisfier commodities.

Much confusion arises in routine discussion because the label "needs" gets applied without qualification to any and all of these levels (and to other things). People then argue fruitlessly about whether "needs" in general are universal or socially relative. Whether or not they use the "needs" label, we find many theorists converging on a priority to promoting people's capabilities to achieve basic morally specified

functionings, while in general leaving them freedom to make their own choices (though not the choice of whether to be inoculated).

This type of ethical theorizing on basic human needs contributes to better justified comparisons of well-being (for example in the Human Development Reports, or Ekins & Max-Neef, 1992). Similarly, BHN theories' attention to a plurality of needs understood over a plurality of levels helps us to better understand poverty, as absolute in certain respects (the absence of basic capabilities) and at the same time in other respects inter-culturally and inter-personally relative (see e.g. O'Boyle, 1990). Analysis of the plurality and moulding of needs also helps to counter utopian visions, sometimes found in C&D writing, that the good society needs no criteria for choice.

Critics propose that needs analyses exaggerate human unities. Van Nieuwenhuijze (1983) laid a strong challenge to proponents of universal basic human needs, given the manifest variety of norms across cultures.¹⁵ Gewirth (1994) responds that observation of cultural pluralism cannot undermine the logic of fundamental ethical principles such as discussed above; instead some existing norms will be shown to be ethically deficient. Another, complementary, type of response came from Barrington Moore, who concluded that the critics exaggerate variety. He developed criteria for identifying possible moral feelings with universal status:- (i) we can share the feeling concerned; (ii) other societies besides us and its "home" also share it; and (iii) for cases where it appears absent, one can identify plausible inhibiting mechanisms. Moore concluded that he could find no society without "some definition of arbitrary cruelty on the part of those in authority" (1978:26), including the theme of violation of reciprocity. Similarly he identified other posited universals meeting his criteria.¹⁶ More generally, all societies seem to use pictures of legitimate needs, whether or not they use a single term like "needs" (Pole, 1961). Martha Nussbaum's "thick vague theory of the good" likewise proposes a set of human functionings which are universally considered desirable and taken as a normative definition of humanness. The theory is vague "in a good sense, for... it admits of much multiple specification in accordance with varied local and personal conceptions. The idea is that it is better to be vaguely right than precisely wrong" (Nussbaum, 1992:215). Vagueness is not vacuity.

BHN-type analysis can meet to a significant degree the requirements for an effective counter-attractive approach to economism. It generates a serious empirical, conceptual, and policy research programme, as in the work of Braybrooke, Doyal & Gough, Nussbaum, Scitovsky, Sen and others, through to the "Human Development Reports" and work on social indicators. First-level development ethics and some culture-and-development work forget that *there is nothing more practical than a good theory, and that a superior alternative is the best criticism*. For example longstanding powerful criticism of welfare uses of the GNP concept had little impact before alternative measures emerged. Alternatives require strength not only in theoretical terms; going beyond second-level work, they must connect well to practically applicable methods, and, given the limits of any total theory, they must provide a working basis for alliances between a range of viewpoints. Mainstream economism has combined all these strengths: theoretical attractions, practical applications, and political adaptability. Sen's research programme of the last twenty years, to replace this standard liberal and utilitarian welfare- and policy-economics by more humane and deeper alternatives, is having impact because it spans and links many concerns, including concepts, explanatory and normative theory, and policy proposals. Sen's work has lacked much cultural reference; his philosopher collaborator Nussbaum and others are partly remedying this.

Finally, *a policy priority to basic needs fulfilment can draw support from a wide range of philosophical positions* (Penz, 1991; Braybrooke, 1987). Unlike many ethical positions basic needs ethics do not try to provide a full ordering of possible actions or states of the world. They simply seek to establish a minimum level of capability to which all community members are entitled; beyond that they can hand over to other types of ethic. Further, those other ethics themselves require a basic needs ethic in order to become plausible. For example, a deserts ethic which says people should be rewarded in proportion to what they contribute, or a libertarian ethic which says that people are entitled to whatever they obtain through legal voluntary transactions, must require that people are in a position to make contributions or to transact in an informed and capable way -- which in turn implies that they have at least a basic education and the conditions for a minimum acceptable level of physical and mental health. Basic

needs ethics thus offer a vital area of potential consensus between otherwise conflicting positions.¹⁷

Is normative needs language really only a way of campaigning for wants? In fact it should prioritize between wants, by asking what things are prerequisites for doing almost anything else or things of fundamental importance; for example freedom from ignorance is a prerequisite for autonomy. Autonomy must be defined partly in terms of how wants are formed (viz. by informed choice), otherwise we have no way to distinguish it from bondage or addiction. While we similarly require criteria of rationality in the use of freedom, different cultures can have different well-reasoned orderings of goods. Aristotelian ethics recognized this: it involved reasoned ordering of the various components of "the good life for man", but full definitions of that were specific to a particular society's way of life.

Another path to prioritization is more questionable: use of Maslow's model of prepotency, where first we want food, and only after that freedom. In line with most BHN theory, AWOD rejects this (pp.55-9). Whether or not the move from a positive claim to a normative ranking is valid, the positive claim itself is dubious: passions for meaning are not restricted to the rich. The claim, that needs seen as more "cultural" are postponed until after material needs are met, unwisely treats culture as supplementary, not as central and pervasive. It reminds us that the needs analyses of some psychologists, philosophers, social planners and economists, must be complemented by the perspectives of anthropology, history, literature, art and politics.

4. Universalism and relativism; cultural critiques and ethical alliances

Basic needs ethics offer some areas of potential consensus, on common minimum requirements and on a common pattern of justification, within which the details will vary according to situation and culture. Can we say more about bounds to this culture-relative variation? And, what about beyond the level of minimum requirements? What are the respective claims of tradition, individuals' consent, and other considerations?

4.1. Onora O'Neill's work (1988, 1991) has special interest here, for she too seeks a grounding for a universalist liberalism that will set some shared requirements, beyond which cultures may differ. In her view, seeking to build agreements about what is just requires *abstraction without idealization, and context-sensitivity without pure relativism*. Justice will be blind to irrelevant differences: it should abstract from many features of particular cases. What is irrelevant depends on the case, but would nearly always include e.g. skin colour or race; also frequently irrelevant are sex or ability. But justice should not be blind to relevant differences (which again depend on the case): it must avoid idealization of the actors concerned, implicit reference or bias towards certain types of individuals, e.g. men, the well-placed or the economically independent, the healthy, or the super-intelligent. Idealization means that certain individuals are implicitly privileged in the analysis; their position is taken as normal. Instead justice should be appropriately context-sensitive and make allowance for relevant differences.

Context-sensitivity should not turn into relativism, where too many particular local features, conventions and traditions, including even prejudices and unjustified discriminations, are treated as relevant differences. This insulates each context or society from criticism, and re-endorses their prevailing powerholders. It in effect avoids questions of justice, by building acceptance of all local norms and cultural ideals into the very principles of justice; yet those norms (which could include bribery, foot-binding, bonded labour, a sex industry preying on the weak, or the "traditional" carrying of weapons of intimidation) are defined mainly by the locally dominant powers, even if accepted by the dominated (e.g. women). *We should abstract from acceptance by the dominated, if they are ill-informed, indoctrinated, powerless and subdued*. "Capacities to act [and hence to negotiate and renegotiate are] constrained both by lack of abilities and by commitments to others" (O'Neill, 1991:455), such as loyalty to one's children, especially on the part of women. Relativism abstracts too little; it abdicates from reasoning.

In Nussbaum's terms, the adoption of a relativist stance by outside observers, as currently in vogue, is the involvement of the tourist: the detached amused observer

who is not forced to seriously ask him- or herself what it is to live by a certain norm (1992:240). It serves the convenience of rich Northerners and Southern elite-members who both wish no claims against their life-styles.

O'Neill suggests that most existing views on justice suffer either from relativism, like defences of patriarchy which argue purely in terms of local cultural traditions, or from idealization, like most Western approaches and, say, defences of the position of women in Saudi Arabia that use a general format which is implicitly biased to men.

Consider two claims that Rawls's Western liberal conception of justice-- a contract between citizens who while contracting do not know their social identity--involves idealization. First, feminists see a bias against women (and children): for in Rawls's theory the contracting parties are heads of household and intra-household division is not deemed an aspect of social justice. Rawls's is then either only a theory of justice amongst household heads (who are predominantly male) or it assumes (falsely) that household heads almost invariably act equitably. Second, communitarians argue that the approach assumes actors who accept Western liberal individualism; in fact Rawls makes this point himself and does not claim universal scope for his theory.

A table here will simplify but may help:-

AN OVERVIEW OF O'NEILL'S REQUIREMENTS FOR ANY CONCEPTUALIZATION OF JUSTICE	<i>Are the relevant taken into</i>	<i>differences account?</i>
	YES (appropriately context sensitive)	NO (idealization)
<i>Are irrelevant</i> NO (relativism)	E.g. milder patriarchy	E.g. stronger patriarchy
<i>differences ignored?</i> YES (appropriate abstraction)	The desirable combination	E.g. Rawls

O'Neill aims to specify universal requirements of (human) justice that avoid both relativism and idealization. She remarks that we should make realistic universal assumptions about people, and avoid non-universal assumptions; this of course leaves

much space for argument. Some theories take up part of the challenge (see Section 3 above). More specifically she proposes that any rules of justice for a particular context must be such that they could reasonably be accepted by all those involved; i.e. the rules are or would be acceptable when discussed in conditions of no deceit, no fear of victimization, and ability by all to reject or renegotiate. It is not sufficient that they are accepted, for that may be in conditions of unjust domination.

Two implications of these more specific requirements are that cultures/groups do not have rights that outweigh the rights of individuals to choose under non-coercive conditions their own practices that respect other people's similar rights; and that any group member has the right of exit. Kukathas (1992a) rejects proposed group-level rights, because groups are mutable, change with time and context, and are not culturally uniform or homogenous in situation; and further because such rights would tend to freeze the existing patterns in and between groups. He warns that group-level rights would benefit elites who would hold the authority implied over other group members.¹⁸

4.2. How far is O'Neill's analysis still premised on a conception of people as individual choosers? Do people want so much choice? How far do people see themselves as separate from others, and how far will the analysis apply to more group- and role-oriented self-conceptions? Her account of "justice requires that institutions... allow those on the receiving end, even if frail and dependent, to refuse or renegotiate any variable aspects of the roles and tasks assigned to them" (1991:455). This is very demanding. We do not apply it to children? And some cultures seem to place many members in quasi-child status. O'Neill would reply that principles that are shared in a meaningful sense must be ones that people reasonably could and do accept, which in turn necessarily implies non-coercion, non-deception, and ability to have said no.

People will sometimes disagree over how to interpret O'Neill's requirements; but the same applies to any set of principles. We remain partly unclear as to what "could" be accepted under fair conditions of discussion, and as to what exactly the latter are. She herself noted that capacities to act and negotiate are inevitably constrained by lack

of abilities and by commitments to others. Abilities are in turn constrained by our genes and our psychic moulding from conception onwards, most of which is barely variable later. O'Neill does not claim though that her requirements will determine "the" rules of justice for particular cases, only that they set limits. And they concern only consent to rules and roles, which is a weaker and more realistic requirement than active choice.¹⁹

Consider, *some cases where women accept subordinate roles*. Case 1: they have no real alternative; so their acceptance does not satisfy O'Neill's requirements. Case 2: they have real alternatives, but without adequate awareness and information about them; this too fails to meet the requirements. Case 3: they have real alternatives, thorough awareness, and no cultural and psychic moulding into accepting subordinate roles; their acceptance of subordinate roles is then fully valid in terms of O'Neill's principles, even if unexpected. Case 3 could in turn have at least three variants: (i) the women have never been moulded into any roles -- but that is absurd; (ii) they have been moulded to not accept subordinate roles -- but this variant is inconsistent; or (iii) they have been de-moulded, by education and reflection -- this is less absurd, but still of questionable realism or relevance for most women.

More interesting therefore is Case 4: the women have real alternatives and thorough awareness of them, but are culturally and psychically moulded into accepting, and perhaps relishing, (mainly) subordinate roles. O'Neill's rules do not object to this acceptance, only require that women continually have the alternatives and a proper awareness of them -- even if this situation goes against the local culture. If such an awareness generated dissatisfaction by women with their culturally given roles, then O'Neill's rules imply that their roles are not just; that is therefore not our Case 4.²⁰

In this key fourth case, there are two conflicts: first, between (a) local culture and (b) women's posited rights to make informed and uncoerced choices; and second, between (b), accepting women's informed choices, and (c) an ultra-rationalist or ultra-feminist wish that the women could make choices without any cultural moulding. Position (c) risks incoherence, since choice without values makes little sense; but the

question remains of what sorts of cultural moulding are acceptable. I support the middle position -- (b), accepting women's informed choices -- without considering it either perfect or always clear, and with qualifications concerning basic needs and rights. These include rights to the requirements of autonomy of agency, which include the capacity and confidence to decide and act. For we should not always endorse people's acquiescence in their own exploitation, as would happen if we automatically accepted local culture. Position (b) adds requirements such as that no culture should prevent access to information; which goes some way towards allowing a critical autonomy -- the ability to make a reasoned choice of values -- but does not assume that a reasoned choice can only occur after full withdrawal from a culture, nor that there is only one reasonable choice.

Next, what is "proper awareness" of alternatives? Is information on their implications enough? Unless one has tried out the alternatives, information may not remove feelings of habit, uncertainty and fear of the unfamiliar. But one can hardly insist that people try out alternatives before they give consent. The issue rather is: can they later withdraw consent and switch to an alternative? O'Neill requires that they can; for example when they receive updated information, say on the experience of others who have adopted the alternative.

Her requirements do not fix what will be the answers by particular women in particular societies. The point is instead to ask the questions and see the balance of the answers. If rules about roles cannot be applied only to some people and not to all, one would have to ask in addition: a) what proportion of women do accept (under acceptable conditions) a certain assigned role?; and b) what is the maximum tolerable figure for the proportion of women who reject it? (1%? 5%? 20%? 49.99%?)

O'Neill has led us to central issues: what are valid universal assumptions? what are acceptable conditions and levels of consent? *She has not tried to give a total and universal theory of justice, but instead some constraints on what is acceptable cultural variation.* The room for debate in defining and interpreting even those constraints underline how hard it would be to establish as universally valid a set of principles of

justice with very extensive substantive content. Given the malleability of human nature, it may well be impossible.

4.3. We must thus move to third-level issues: rules for coexistence of various sets of principles, and identifying areas of agreement, whether they concern (1) agreement on certain principles or (2) agreement on some practical conclusions despite differences on principles. As an example of the latter, the U.N. Declarations on Human Rights largely avoid attempting agreement on theory and methodology, but try for agreement on some relatively practical conclusions. As an example of agreement on certain principles, Dower (1983, 1992) holds that fundamental (Kantian-style) points on the value of every human and of their rational and free agency are shared across many philosophies and religions. How far can those points take us? Search for areas of consensus must be both between ethical schools in the conventional literature and more widely, including with major religions. But the wider the attempted circle of consenters, the more difficult to attain consensus. Malise Ruthven and others present the Rushdie affair as a sobering clash of Enlightenment and pre- or anti-Enlightenment world views. Is compromise possible?

I offer three remarks. Firstly, the time-scales relevant to such questions are decades and generations, not months or years. Secondly, and as one reason behind the first remark, the internal evolution of views within countries is vital, and happens, as we emphasize in the rest of this section. And thirdly, basic needs ethics seem to offer a worthwhile area if limited area for consensus between a wide range of views, as I argued in Section 3.

Western self-definition involved defining "the Other". Nussbaum & Sen (1987) show how, for example, conventional pictures of traditional Indian culture seriously underemphasized rationalist components and schools. This applies even for the pictures of Indian religions and philosophy; for was not the greatest individual figure the severely rational Gautama Buddha? This sort of plurality of traditions and schools within a culture-area hinders characterization. However, as van Nieuwenhuijze, van den Hoek, Walzer and others have noted, *the range of cultural resources in a society* -

- including its ambiguities and tensions, its own rationalist traditions, its influences from other societies -- provide possibilities for internal critical reassessments, updating and growth. Ironically, some supposed post-modernists lapse into essentialism by assuming total definition, closure, and non-overlap of cultures.

Internal criticism, review from within a culture itself, permits a local awareness and sensitivity, and an argumentation that is more locally meaningful and acceptable. It uses resources in the culture, to criticize and amend other aspects, in light of new (or resurfaced or reconsidered) experience, ideas, knowledge and comparisons, and new conditions and opportunities, including new awareness of possibilities (for example about the position of women).

Nussbaum presents this style of internal ethical-cultural criticism as Aristotelian. While Plato called for strict abstraction from local traditions and particularities, in order to identify universal truths, Aristotle's approach was more socially grounded. It reflected a commitment to rationality but also an understanding of people as community members, who share a heritage and some willingness to compromise in order to live together. The self is not the pre-social "economic man", but felt as a relational, social entity. Such an approach to cultural evaluation suggests a (third-level) corrective or supplement to universalist views, one potentially useful for a plural, but interacting, evolving, world. "...no doctrine vindicated itself in so wide a variety of contexts as did Aristotelianism: Greek, Islamic, Jewish, and Christian" (MacIntyre, 1981:111). Nussbaum and others say more about its character and limits, and are trying to strengthen it to produce a neo-Aristotelianism with contemporary relevance (Nussbaum, 1992; Crocker, 1992).²¹

Summary and Conclusion

1. "First-level" development ethics (DE)'s criticisms of economism, and reference to multiple different appealing principles, such as autonomy, rights, or freedoms, are not enough. We require "second-level" systematic theorizing, to refine and relate different principles, and build theoretical alternatives; and "third-level" transference back to the worlds of practice and compromise. In doing this DE must face the challenge of cultural plurality and divergence.

2. While work on "Culture and development" (C&D) provides important materials it has often been held back by conceptual difficulties, over-idealization, and even heavy over-generalization. In some cases it has had more difficulties when faced with intra-societal variety than do needs analyses, despite the frequent criticisms of the needs approach as overly universalistic. The C in C&D literature, "Culture", is not a unity, or is everything, or all-pervasive; and tends to function in as code for anti-economism and local decision-making. Non-instrumentalist discussions of C&D (e.g. "what is the cultural content of 'development'?") make ethical claims and raise ethical questions, such as the acceptability of what appear to be practices of domination in or by some cultures. Even instrumentalist discussions ("how can 'culture' be used for 'development'?") cannot avoid ethical questions about inter-cultural relations and the obligations of would-be interveners and advisers. DE work is thus in turn an important complement to C&D concerns.

3. I illustrated the general argument from three linked areas in development ethics, each relevant to C&D:- (a) theories of basic human needs, that try to establish well-grounded prioritizations while recognizing both cultural variety and shared humanity; (b) theories of justice in a cross-cultural context, asking what is acceptable cultural variation and what are universal requirements, with reference to the position of women; the neo-Kantian work of Onora O'Neill seemed valuable here; and, briefly, (c) theories of ethical argument, looking at the scope for cultures to grow and change through internal criticism.

4. Basic needs ethics may satisfy two "third level" requirements: i) giving a basis for alliance between different world-views, each of which requires for its own coherence a basic needs component, and ii) providing an integrative research programme that offers serious counter-attraction to the dominant economism. While needs discourse is sometimes seen as explanatorily primitive and blind to cultural diversity, recent systematization distinguishes: (a) between different modes of needs theorizing, clarifying that needs ethics have no fundamental linkage to needs psychologies; and (b) between different levels (from functionings down to commodities), in a universalistic framework that yet provides great scope for legitimate cultural and contextual variation -- both in fulfilling general types of need and in life beyond basic needs. It makes clear that we should never reduce "cultural needs" to a separate category or one supposedly felt only by the well-off.

5. DE, including needs theories, must be informed by fuller cultural awareness; and can in turn make important contributions in C&D work, providing analytical deepening and examining conflicts of principles, including the relations between culture and liberty. Support should also go to such work, to strengthen the intellectual and moral foundations of action, not just to sustaining a mix of economic and technocratic fixes and populist palliatives and rhetoric. Recommendations for education and training, as well as research, directly follow from the argument.

6. More in danger of being overlooked is that the issues have two faces. The cultures of the North require equal or greater critical examination than those in the South.

NOTES

1. The term "generation" was used by David Korten in his work on NGOs to connote sequence, chronologically but also in terms of intellectual maturation. The "three generations" framework I used to discuss development ethics in previous drafts of this paper emphasized intellectual maturation. It has been adopted by Carmen (1994) but changed to become primarily chronological, with a presumption of intellectual maturation over time. Thus in his terms Max-Neef's work on Fundamental Human Needs is "third-generation". In my terms it is more "first generation/level", for despite rich insights and some third-level orientation to practical uses, it remains imprecise in important respects and has not built on or engaged in close "second-generation/level" analysis. I now adopt the more neutral term "level", because: 1. "generation" (or "stage") may have too strong a chronological connotation; 2. there are often disputes over whether an intellectual sequence represents maturation; and 3. I foresee a continuing role in development ethics for work at each of the three levels.
2. See e.g. the identity statement of the International Development Ethics Association, in the early 1990s.
3. Autonomy so defined does not necessitate economic, organizational or cultural separation or autarky.
4. See the interesting commentaries, especially by Apel and Hussein, in the special issue of UNESCO Courier, Double Issue on "Universality: A European Vision?", July/August 1992.
5. Ethical as well as cause-effect claims are implied when saying that culture is a need (in the sense of a justified priority); for X is deemed such a need if 1. it is required for achieving Y, and 2. Y is accepted as a high priority / an important aspect of humanity.
6. Original Dutch text (cited by Netherlands Commission for UNESCO) is: "Ontwikkelings processen dienen te worden gekoppeld aan culturele processen om duurzame ontwikkeling mogelijk te maken".
7. Paradoxically, in origin the term "culture" (as e.g. in "agriculture") concerns types of effective use (Williams, 1983). Williams traces its later evolution in reaction to economic thought.
8. Elsewhere Verhelst gives a longer definition similar lines, which has been adopted by the Brussels-based "Reseau Cultures": "Culture is the complex whole of answers to the challenges of the natural and social environment which groups of people have inherited (from their elders/ancestors), borrowed (from other groups of people) and invented (themselves). This again seems to cover everything, without emphasis on system; but Reseau Cultures seeks to exclude "meaningless traditions", i.e. inheritances which fail to provide answers. However they elsewhere argue that the basic function of culture is to provide security -- which is in danger of being tautologous -- and all traditions might be described as giving emotional security.
9. Certainly there are more formulations of the concept / conceptual field of "culture" than the three widespread ones discussed here, including probably better ones.
10. There is little mention of East and South-East Asia, merely one acknowledgement that South Korea and Taiwan "offer perspectives which may be somewhat more hopeful" (p.13); and another that Korea and Japan have absorbed Western culture more than been absorbed (p.53).
11. See pp.26-7, 39; or p.43: "Black Africa seems incapable of mass mobilization", likewise pp.44, 158. See also v.d. Hoek (1988:21), in an otherwise very helpful work.
12. The UNESCO Second Medium Term Plan for 1984-89 took a similar line, except that it recommended two phases: first an infant industry phase of protection of cultural identities, allowing them to regain creativity for a second phase of innovation (cited in v.d. Hoek, 1988:41).
13. The distinction is lacking too in Ilich's careless and outdated 1992 dictionary entry on needs. Also from a radical Latin American stance, Max-Neef (1989, 1991) provides a more thoughtful treatment.

14. "Cultural Theory" holds that the cultural biases in all human groups and societies can be analyzed effectively by a 2x2 matrix of cultural types, using dimensions of strength of commitment to a group and strength of behaviour regulation ("grid"). See Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky (1990) for one version. Thompson argues that all stable societies require and contain some combination of the four different cultural biases highlighted in the matrix: 1. high-grid high-group = ascribed hierarchy; 2. high-grid low-group = atomized subordination; 3. low-grid low-group = individualism; 4. low-grid high-group = factionalism.

15. For van Nieuwenhuijze the key issue was whether nearly all cultures accept a notion of basic needs. "The question how universal [basic needs] really are is by and large anathema... (1)...whether needs are basic or not in any specific situation or culture area depends (a) on whether the human collectivity concerned employs a distinct socio-cultural category referred to by the word 'needs' or its equivalent [DG: why?], and (b) on whether amongst these needs some are discerned as basic as against others that are not basic, and furthermore (2)... whether basic needs are universal depends on (a) whether all or a considerable number of human collectivities - civilizations, cultures or whatever - do recognize basic needs, (b)... and identify a number of specific ones, and (c) show significant parallelism, as between one another, as regards the ones thus specified" (1983:51-2). His questions look more manageable when we distinguish (i) between levels, and also (ii) between a general framework for justification such as Doyal & Gough's and particular specifications of that framework which vary according to the criteria of fundamental human interests used in its level 1 (see Section 3 in this paper).

16. What Moore considered are feelings in a situation of a certain type. This is the relevant focus; for if the type of situation is absent in a particular society then that feeling could not arise anyway.

17. This advantage is lost by needs ethics which try to cover all or most of life, e.g. by extending their criterion of required functionings, beyond survival or minimal decency, to cover "liberation", "human flourishing" or "human fulfilment". While possibly attractive in other ways, these extended needs ethics can no longer serve as an area of consensus between otherwise conflicting positions (Braybrooke, 1987).

18. Kukathas' grounds match our earlier criticisms of seeing cultures as fixed (the in-the-grave syndrome) or homogeneous (the when-in-Rome fallacy). See Kymlicka (1992) for an opposed view, and Kukathas's reply (1992b). Andras Krahl observes that talk of cultural rights at group level makes more sense in inter-group relations than intra-group relations.

19. Some feminists take a different line (e.g. Okin, 1989, 1994). Having criticized Rawls for ignoring relevant differences between men and women, they modify his theory to include gender roles within the ambit of rules of justice. Thus the contractors in a Rawlsian "original position" must be asked to decide on the rules governing relations between men and women without knowing whether they are or will become men or women. Here too the focus is on informed choice but now, unlike O'Neill, on a hypothetical choice where biasing information (about one's gender role) is excluded.

20. Sen (1985) and Nussbaum (1992) cite a poll in India in which widowers had many more complaints about their health status than did widows, even though the widows' health status was much worse. After some years, widows had become less reconciled to the convention that they should eat less, and a new poll found that widows expressed much more dissatisfaction than before, though their objective health status was little changed. Polls on educational status give similar results.

21. Wallach warns, first, that Aristotle is currently invoked by authors of very different and contradictory types; second, that there are pitfalls in extracting admired sections out of Aristotle's works and transposing them to very different contexts (e.g. more democratic ones); and especially, third, against claims by some neo-Aristotelians to find not merely helpful perspectives in Aristotle but the answers to our most basic contemporary ethical and political questions (1992:633-5). Fourth, while "Aristotle sanctions a vast array of invidious social, racial, and sexual prejudices and displays severe analytical and observational limitations", the very anachronism of his thought can appeal to those uneasy at "the victories of liberalism and the Enlightenment" (p.614). Or can his disagreeable prejudices be shorn from his system without eliminating its coherence? (p.618). Nussbaum argues yes; Wallach claims, but with little argument, that the "system" really is a system, closed and fundamentally linked to a particular (anti-democratic) political agenda in an ancient Greek setting.

REFERENCES

- Aman, K., ed., 1991. Ethical Principles for Development: Needs, Capacities or Rights, Upper Montclair, NJ: Institute for Critical Thinking, Montclair State University.
- Apel, K.O., 1992. The Moral Imperative. UNESCO Courier, July/August, 13-17.
- Argyle, M., 1987. The Psychology of Happiness. London: Methuen.
- Beitz, C., 1981. Political Theory and International Relations. Princeton: Princeton U.P.
- Berger, P., 1974. Pyramids of Sacrifice. New York: Basic Books.
- Braybrooke, D., 1987. Meeting Needs. Princeton: Princeton U.P.
- Cameron, J., 1992. Adjusting Structural Adjustment: Getting Beyond the UNICEF compromise. Paper to DSA meeting, LSE, London; & in P.Mosley (ed.), 1993: Development Finance and Policy Reform; Macmillan.
- Carmen, R., 1994. Development Ethics - the rediscovery and reclamation of meaning. Seminar paper, and shortened in Development, 1994(4).
- Cheater, A., 1991. Managing Culture en route to Socialism: The Problem of Culture 'Answering Back'. Inaugural lecture, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications; & in Zambezia, 16(ii), 1989.
- Claus, Prince. Speech. In Netherlands UNESCO Commission, 18-21.
- Corbridge, S., 1993. Marxisms, Modernities and Moralities: Development Praxis and the Claims of Distant Strangers. In F. Schuurman (ed.), Beyond the Impasse: New Directions in Development Theory, London: Zed Press.
- Crocker, D., 1991. Towards Development Ethics. World Development, 19(5), 457-83.
- , 1991b. Functioning and Capability... In K. Aman (ed.), pp.104-72.
- , 1992. Functioning and Capability: The Foundations of Sen's and Nussbaum's Development Ethic. Political Theory, 20(4), 584-612.
- Dower, N., 1983. World Poverty: Challenge and Response. York: Ebor.
- , 1992. The Nature and Scope of Development Ethics. Seminar paper, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Iceland, March 1992.
- Doyal, L., & Gough, I., 1991. A Theory of Need, London: Macmillan.

- Ekins, P. & Max-Neef, M., (eds.), 1992. Real-Life Economics. London: Routledge.
- Esteva, G., 1992. Development. Pp.6-25 in W. Sachs (ed.), 1992.
- Foreign Affairs, Netherlands Ministry of, 1990. Een Wereld van Verschil. Policy document. Den Haag.
- (1991). A World of Difference (AWOD). The Hague: SDU Printers.
- Galtung, J., 1978/9. The New International Economic Order and the Basic Needs Approach. Alternatives, IV, 455-76.
- Gasper, D., 1986. Distribution and Development Ethics. In R. Apthorpe & A. Krahl (eds.), Development Studies, pp.136-203. Leiden: Brill.
- , 1987. Studying Values in Education for Planning. Paper to Indian Society for Individual & Social Development, Madras conference.
- , 1993a. Policy Analysis and Evaluation - an agenda for research and education. Working Paper 140, ISS, The Hague.
- , 1994a. Development Ethics - An Emergent Field? In R. Prendergast & F. Stewart (eds.), Market Forces and World Development, pp.160-185. Macmillan: Basingstoke. Also as Working Paper 134, ISS, The Hague.
- , 1994b. Needs Theories and Needs Ethics. Seminar/conference paper.
- Gewirth, A., 1994. Is Cultural Pluralism Relevant to Moral Knowledge? Social Philosophy and Policy, 11(1), 22-43.
- Goulet, D., 1971. The Cruel Choice. New York: Athenaeum.
- Green, R.H., 1978. Basic Human Needs, IDS Bulletin, 9(4), 7-11.
- Heller, A., 1984. Can Cultural Patterns Be Compared? Dialectical Anthropology, 8, 269-76.
- Hettne, B., 1982. Development Theory and the Third World, Stockholm: SAREC.
- Hofstede, G., 1994. Cultures and Organizations. London: HarperCollins.
- Hoek, A. v.d., 1988. Cultural Diversity and the Ideology of Development, University of Leiden: LIDESCO.
- Hussein, M., 1992. The common ground of humanity. UNESCO Courier, July/August, 20-23.
- Illich, I., 1992. Needs. In W. Sachs (ed.), 1992, pp.88-101.
- Kloos, P., 1985. Culture and freedom to manouevre. In Netherlands UNESCO Commission, 64-8.

- Kottak, C.P., 1991. When People Don't Come First: some sociological lessons from completed projects. Pp.431-64 in Putting People First, ed. M. Cernea, 2nd edn., New York: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Kukathas, C., 1992a. Are There Any Cultural Rights? Political Theory, 20(1), 105-39.
- , 1992b. Cultural Rights Again - A Rejoinder to Kymlicka. Political Theory, 20(4), 674-80.
- Kymlicka, W., 1992. The Rights of Minority Cultures - Reply to Kukathas. Political Theory, 20(1), 140-46.
- MacGregor, A., 1990. Culture Blindness, Institutions, and the Analysis of Policy in Developing Countries. Paper to 1990 DSA conference, Glasgow.
- MacIntyre, A., 1981. Against Virtue. London: Duckworth.
- Maslow, A., 1973. The Farther Reaches of Human Nature, London: Penguin.
- Max-Neef, M., 1989. Human-Scale Development. Special issue of Development Dialogue. Expanded as a book: 1991, London.
- Moore, B., Jr., 1978. Injustice. London: Macmillan.
- Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO, 1985. The Cultural Dimension of Development. The Hague: Nationale Unesco Commissie.
- Nieuwenhuijze, C. van, 1983. Culture and Development - the prospects of an afterthought, Occasional Paper 97, ISS, The Hague.
- Nussbaum, M., 1990. Aristotelian Social Democracy. In R.B. Douglass et al (eds.), Liberalism and the Good, Routledge.
- , 1992. Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism. Political Theory, 20, 2, 202-246.
- , & Sen, A., 1987. Internal Criticism and Indian Rationalist Traditions. Working Paper 30, WIDER, UN University, Helsinki.
- O'Boyle, E.J., 1990. Poverty: a concept that is both absolute and relative because human beings are at once individual and social. Review of Social Economy, pp.2-17.
- Okin, S.M., 1989. Justice, Gender and the Family. New York: Basic Books.
- , 1994. Gender Inequality and Cultural Differences. Political Theory, 22(1), 5-24.
- O'Neill, O., 1986. Faces of Hunger. London: Allen & Unwin.

- , 1988. Ethical reasoning and ideological pluralism. Ethics, 98, 705-22.
- , 1991. Justice, gender, and international boundaries. British J. of Political Science, 20, 439-59; & in Nussbaum & Sen (eds.), 1992, The Quality of Life, Oxford: Clarendon.
- Packard-Winkler, M., 1989. Putting the culture back into development. The Fletcher Forum, 13(2).
- Penz, P., 1991. The Priority of Basic Needs: Toward a Consensus in Development Ethics for Political Engagement. In Aman (ed.), 1991.
- Pole, D., 1961. Conditions of Rational Inquiry, London: Athlone.
- Ruthven, M., 1991. A Satanic Affair - Salman Rushdie and the Wrath of Islam, 2nd edn. London: Hogarth Press.
- Sachs, W., 1992. Introduction. Pp.1-5 in Sachs (ed.), 1992.
- (ed.), 1992. The Development Dictionary, London: Zed.
- Scitovsky, T., 1992. The Joyless Economy, New York: OUP. 2nd edn.
- Sen, A.K., 1985. Commodities and Capabilities. Hennisman lectures.
- Simson, U., 1985. Development and culture. In Netherlands UNESCO Commission, 74-7.
- Thompson, M., Ellis, J., & Wildavsky, A., 1990. Cultural Theory. Boulder: Westview.
- UNDP, 1990 and annually, Human Development Report. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Verhelst, T., 1990. No Life Without Roots, London: Zed Press.
- Wallach, J.R., 1992. Contemporary Aristotelianism. Political Theory, 20(4), 613-41.
- Walzer, M., 1987. Interpretation and Social Criticism. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press.
- Williams, R., 1983. Keywords. Fontana.