ADDING LINKS, ADDING PERSONS, AND ADDING STRUCTURES:

USING SEN'S FRAMEWORKS – A RESPONSE TO QIZILBASH

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ABSTRACT

Building on the 2003 double special issue of *Feminist Economics* entitled "Amartya Sen's Work and Ideas," this paper responds to the review essay by Mozaffar Qizilbash. It identifies and illustrates various possible evaluations of a theoretical system, including that it has acknowledged strengths, unrecognized strengths, remediable gaps or failings, or structural faults. The paper then looks at Sen's system as a theoretical basis for "human development" – in particular in relation to personhood, emotions, and psychological interdependence – and argues that it points in directions required for economic and social analysis, including towards theories of care, but is not itself a sufficient treatment. The paper suggests deepening Sen's system by connecting to other important languages of analysis concerning the structuring of attitudes, emotions, felt well-being, public reasoning, and politics.

KEYWORDS

Amartya Sen, theory assessment, human development, personhood, sympathy, care ethics

JEL Codes: B59, A12, A13

INTRODUCTION

Amartya Sen's frameworks in socioeconomic and ethical analysis have been enormously helpful and influential. His critiques of utilitarianism and Arrovian social choice theory brought out realms of relevant types of information ignored by those approaches. His capability approach highlights two key types of information – functionings valued with reason, and access thereto – and applies them as criteria in evaluation, as foci and drivers in explanation, and in policy design. His entitlements analysis helps trace determinants of and impacts on the capabilities and functioning of appropriately disaggregated socioeconomic groups, including those disaggregated on gender lines. When a thinker's work has been so fruitful, the issue arises of how to connect it to other work. When a school forms around her or his work, the danger may arise in its literature of claiming that nearly all needed insights are already present in the work of the founder.

A double special issue of *Feminist Economics* in July 2003 (Vol. 9, Nos. 2/3), guest-edited by Bina Agarwal, Jane Humphries, and Ingrid Robeyns, considered aspects of Sen's contributions that are of particular interest for gender analysis and feminist economics. Mozaffar Qizilbash has added a clear and useful overview and assessment of the volume (2005). I would like to respond to Qizilbash and build on his analysis, as well as clarify some points of disagreement.

Qizilbash judiciously presents Sen's contributions as frames for work, open to improvement and supplementation, not necessarily sufficient for all types of work that are needed.

> To the degree that it is argued that some of these claims and criticisms [raised in the double issue] can be addressed within Sen's conceptual framework, this article constitutes a qualified defense of his work. However, it does not claim that Sen's framework addresses all the criticisms that are leveled at it in the volume. (Qizilbash 2005: 151)

Qizilbash then outlines a series of areas for further work, such as interpersonal interdependencies and the roles of emotions. For most of these he suggests how to use potentials in Sen's system. (Since Sen's oeuvre involves a number of linked frameworks and approaches, I will use the term "system" rather than "framework," "approach," or "work," but one can substitute those terms below if preferred.)

I would like to extend and refine Qizilbash's picture of required follow-up work. What is the range of situations: are a system's contributions fruitful and well known, or overlooked, contingently absent, inherently absent, somewhat negative, or more seriously damaging? How do such questions apply for Sen's system, with respect to emotions and psychological interdependence, in particular for the intersection of the two in caring? The overall concern will be how far Sen's system, offered as a theoretical basis for "human development" (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] 1990; Amartya Sen 1999), takes us in remedying what Mary Douglas has called the problem of "Missing Persons" in the social sciences (Mary Douglas and Steven Ney 1998). Lastly, given this theme of follow-up in a range of areas, a question to consider for a system of analysis of human development is how far it should strive for elegant unity or explicitly contain and connect to a variety of types of theoretical language and framework.

IDENTIFYING GAPS AND CONNECTING TO OTHER SYSTEMS

Let us distinguish four sets of situations concerning possible limitations or failings in an intellectual system and then illustrate them through the eyes of Qizilbash's review essay and some of the comments in the special issue.

- *Overlooked strengths.* Critics decry the system's failure to deal with issue X but have not noticed that it already provides helpful tools or even solutions in that area.
- *Interim gaps.* The system has not yet been applied to issue X but it can be readily and adequately applied.
- *Structural gaps – innocuous, unfortunate, or chronic.* The system does not cover issue X, and a) does not inhibit treatment of X – an innocuous omission; or b) does inhibit treatment, but in a way that can be counteracted – an unfortunate but non-chronic omission; or c) prevents adequate treatment – a chronic omission.
- *Unfortunate treatment – resulting in minor, substantial but remediable, or chronic damage.* The system covers issue X but in a mistaken or misleading fashion, which: a) can be easily remedied – by upgrading or connecting to a more adequate system for that issue; or b) can be remedied but with difficulty; or c) is not remediable within the system – a situation of chronic damage, at least in the issue area concerned. The seriousness of the damage to the system depends on the centrality of issue X.

Judgments could differ concerning the size of inhibitor effects or the ease of remedy, especially when we talk about real-world contexts and not idealized contexts. An intellectual system may, in a real-world context, be embedded in a scientific and political milieu that inculcates a set of habits and incentives that greatly inhibit response to weaknesses, more often than we might expect if we look at the intellectual system in isolation. The real-world milieu might also drive new work in the system in other directions, rather than for recognizing and responding to the system's more important limitations.

Qizilbash sees a structural but innocuous gap in Sen's discussion of the causes of capability failure:

> The capability approach provides a general perspective that is consistent with various different views of the causes of poverty and institutional factors. Sen's desire to avoid controversial claims about such causal factors in the formulation of the approach arises no doubt, in part, from a desire for broad endorsement of the approach. Furthermore, Sen's capability approach does not stop people from linking the capability approach with some implicit or explicit account of the underlying causes of poverty (e.g., unequal land holdings or corruption) and policy prescriptions (e.g., land reforms, civil service reforms). (Qizilbash 2005: 159).

If "a desire for broad endorsement" resulted in capability approach users staying away from controversy, then what appear to be innocuous remediable gaps could become more than that in practice. An approach could remain quiet on an issue even when predominant forces fill the space with flawed and objectionable views.

Similarly, some commentators welcome Sen's attention to the theme of human agency but are concerned that the picture given of human agency remains too thin

(Vegard Iversen 2003) and not balanced by sufficient attention to power (Marianne Hill 2003). Fabienne Peter (2003) looks at the treatment of agency and interdependence and sees a remediable weakness that can be interpreted as an interim gap resolvable by more fully working out the logic of Sen's approach. Qizilbash comments:

> Peter (2003: 23) argues that the framework of social choice theory – in which Sen's [*Lady Chatterley's Lover*] example [and much of his work] is couched – does not adequately take account of agency and personal relationships. Her point relates to what are commonly known as "agent-relative" reasons (reasons which spring from the particular relationship one has with someone). While she sees Sen's position as helpful in expanding the informational basis for social choice, she suggests that the social choice literature has been inadequate in addressing human relationships and the nature of dependence involved in these. Since this problem can be seen in terms of informational inadequacy, Peter suggests that Sen's strategy of expanding the informational basis of social choice might address it. (Qizilbash 2005: 160)

Qizilbash considers the case rather to be one of overlooked strength: Sen's system already contains, he suggests, the categories required: about various aspects of freedom (including to be free from influence of any meddlesome preferences of other people), about agency, and about agent-relative reasons (2005: 160).

> Indeed the distinctions he makes between "sympathy" and "commitment" (Sen 1977, 2005a) and between well-being freedom and agency freedom mean that his conceptual framework opens up space for a richer examination of issues relating to a concern with the interests and goals of others than is available in much of mainstream economics. (Qizilbash 2005: 161)

On the roles and significance of emotions, Qizilbash again suggests that Sen's work contains innocuous remediable omissions and overlooked strengths: "It is certainly true that Martha Nussbaum's work has engaged with the emotional dimension much more than Sen's writings have, yet there is room in Sen's intellectual framework to address these matters" (2005: 162). He also sees, though, an unfortunate treatment built in to the overlooked strengths: "While various aspects of Sen's thought may be helpful here, the tight separation of self and other (implicit in his conceptualization of 'sympathy' and 'commitment') in parts of his work may well be questioned in developing his ideas in such contexts" (Qizilbash 2005: 163). Thus, under themes for further work, Qizilbash suggests: "More work on interdependence may be fruitful" (2005: 162). Indeed it deserves priority. Sen's system is an influential tool in the world, not a genre of chess puzzle. In the absence of strong attention to people's interdependencies in emotions and identity and to similar matters, the capability approach's language of increased options for attainment by individuals can lend itself to neo-liberal and consumerist uses (John Cameron 2000).

As an approach to human development, Sen's system's main conceptual armory to date is about freedom and choice, yet it does not conceptualize the bases of personal freedom in care and attachment and does not, as yet, give balanced attention across important aspects of human personality and capabilities. That background could lead to the neglect, inhibition, or unfortunate treatment of some important areas. Whether the limitations are just interim or innocuous gaps or more severe defects, they deserve consideration. Potentially innocuous omissions and remediable defects can become

serious if not recognized. Sen's frameworks cover various aspects of explanation, evaluation, and policy design but not all; one cannot expect that a system should cover every issue and be all-purpose and omni-competent. An analytical apparatus for human development needs however to connect various intellectual frameworks and systems, and each of the component systems should see itself as part of a wider whole.

PERSONHOOD, EMOTIONS, AND CARING

Personhood

The conception of personhood in Sen's capability approach has not been fleshed out. Sen's approach has been relatively minimal here for its purpose at formation was to bring in more information to the assessment of advantage rather than to be a basis of explanation. People had reason and wishes (including the possibilities of sympathy and commitment in relation to others), and, vitally, they could reason about wishes; but little was said on meanings, emotions, will, or on skills of reasoning, valuing, operating, and cooperating. (For examples, see Iversen 2003: 98, 107–8; also Naila Kabeer 1999, cited by Iversen 2003: 103). Sen gave more attention to people as choosers than as actors (Des Gasper 2002). Qizilbash objects to this characterization:

> The concept of agency also plays an important part in Sen's work. His picture of ''agency'' is not merely of a person seen as a chooser. Rather he conceives of an agent as ''someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of external criteria'' (Sen 1999: 19, cited by Qizilbash 2005: 153).

This description of an agent mentions action but focuses especially on how it can be assessed, rather than on the nature and requirements of action, matters of perception, habit, will, and skill. It is a description more of an objectives-holder and, in that sense, of a chooser. Choices connect to actions but are not enough to describe and understand them.

Sen's conceptualization of capability as a functionings-vector-possibilities frontier stems from choice theory. The alternative, complementary conception of capabilities as human powers, skills, and capacities connects to action as well as choice and brings a stress on the qualities and faculties relevant to action, not just a primary stress on choice. This richer set of concepts connects to the social and psychological sciences and humanities.[1] The fuller picture of persons and living that it paints can give a better basis for a broad humanist rather than consumerist vision, although it is a necessary or conducive rather than sufficient condition.

Until recently identity did not receive much attention in the capability approach, though it had entered the pictures of fundamental needs essayed by various other authors. Identity security figured in the Human Development Reports from 1994 on as part of the human security concept, and Sen's elegant and welcome recent work on reason and identity (especially Amartya Sen 2005b, 2006) stresses the plurality of aspects in a

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[1] Deirdre McCloskey's *The Virtues of the Bourgeoisie* (2006) constitutes one extended conscious example.

person's identity. Can his capability approach evolve from an alternative in welfare theory to a wider rethinking of social philosophy? Some of its gaps appear interim (remediable within the system) or innocuous (open to adequate coverage by compatible other systems). Ananta Giri warns however that: "Sen is dismayed by the unreasoned identity shifts that are taking place [in India] but the reasoned deliberation that Sen is looking for requires much more than reason" (2002: 239). Giri argues that we need a richer theory of the self and the self's moral development than found yet in Sen, and concludes that Sen's ethic lacks sufficient psychological basis (Ananta Giri 2002; Des Gasper and Thanh-Dam Truong 2005a). Let us consider some of the possible areas of weakness.

Sympathy and commitment

 "Sympathy" in Sen's usage is when a person's sense of well-being is affected by the situation of other persons; "commitment" is when a person acts in support of other persons or other causes even though this does not improve his/her own felt well-being and may reduce it (Amartya Sen 1977; Gasper & Truong 2005a). For Sen, "well-being" here refers to felt well-being or gratification (Sen 1977: 92), not, for example, to unknown health externalities. Giri prefers the ordinary usages of "sympathy" (feeling with others, not just gratification that depends on others' situation) and "commitment" (dedication to others, not just in cases which give no gratification). Like Adam Smith, Giri concludes, therefore, that sympathy sustains commitment rather than the two being mutually exclusive categories as conceived by Sen. (See also Elizabeth Anderson 2003: 243.) Similarly when Bhikhu Parekh (1989) writes that unless there is already sympathetic attention to a person she is likely to be ignored or downgraded in reasoning, he refers to concern for the person's life and feelings not simply to gratification (or its reverse) derived from their condition. One may be quite capable of living with undisturbed gratification despite others' problems – there are many ways to keep occupied and preoccupied – yet one can open one's heart and consequently one's mind to consider them. Families rely on commitment in Sen's sense, but also on sympathy and commitment in these ordinary senses.

Sen (1977) coined his categories in order to show how utterly narrow discussions of "rational choice" in economics had been. In a later article (Amartya Sen 1985), he furthered this end by offering a more refined set of distinctions, between: first, self-goal choice, meaning that a person chooses exclusively according to his/her goals; second, self-welfare goals, in which a person's only goal is his/her own welfare, implying there is no "commitment" element although "sympathy" is possible since that has an impact on the person's felt well-being; and third, self-centered welfare, in which a person's welfare depends only on his or her own consumption and where felt well-being thus contains no sympathy element. He points out that these distinctions had not been consistently drawn before and are still too little recognized and learned from in so-called rational choice theory (Sen 2005a). The insistence that rational choice combines all three features is revealed as a particular, peculiar, and extreme formulation.

In pursuing this vital agenda, however, Sen's usage of the term "commitment" (see Sen 2005a) has moved far from everyday usage, to cover both one's goals that do not refer to oneself or one's own welfare and one's respect for others' goals, meaning that

one's behavior would not solely be directed by one's own goals. The term "commitment" is being used to span diverse matters that someone primarily interested in understanding behavior would not combine but that might be left grouped together when the agenda is instead to examine and refine the concept of rationality.

Sympathy and commitment are more than conceptual possibilities. They are the ubiquitous cement of social life, building blocks of human personality, and possibly even necessary elements of sanity. Not only do psychopaths have no commitment to anything except themselves, but those with no commitment to others seem likely to be psychopaths (Irene van Staveren 2001). Such issues are not emphasized in Sen's brief writings in this area, which have a different purpose. When Sen argues "Why Commitment is Important for Rationality" (Sen 2005a), he refers to a formal understanding of the concept of rational choice, rather than to the social psychological basis of sanity.

Qizilbash's suggestion that Sen's categories open up space for a rich examination of human interdependence could then mislead. The categories remain too limited for explanation, action and policy design, and the space for examination has not been heavily occupied. The gaps here in Sen's system may be counteracted by linkages to the relevant bodies of work on motivations, emotions, and subjective and psychological well-being. Sen's categories and commentary should be seen not as precursors of a self-contained elaboration but rather as pointers towards other bodies of work that handle the matters in depth.

The limitation involved here is a too thin picture of types of mental states for the purposes of explanation, action and design, rather than the posited "tight separation of self and other (implicit in his conceptualization of 'sympathy' and 'commitment')" (Qizilbash 2005: 163). In fact commitment in Sen's sense – supporting others for no return in terms of happiness, perhaps out of felt duty and "rightness" – arguably represents, or typically arises from, a considerable degree of transcendence of self. Very likely it commonly relies on sympathy in the ordinary sense: feeling alongside others. The tight separation in Sen's conceptualization lies elsewhere: in the contrast between types of mental state – feeling good (from another's good fortune) and feeling committed (despite not feeling good from it). Why did Sen conceptualize mental states in this way? Engaged in the debate with a welfare economics molded by utilitarianism, perhaps he sometimes used its notion that there is only one type of feeling good or feeling bad. But psychology confirms what the arts and humanities have always said, that this is not so.

Missing persons are more likely to be found when we look for them

We can extend this point about Sen's limitations with respect to the complexity of feelings, by comparison with other literature dealing with feelings and emotions, and by reference to care ethics. Sympathy and commitment, in both pairs of senses, are certainly centrally important, as seen in the discussion above of families and attention to others. However, social theory and practice require a much bigger vocabulary of feelings, emotions, perceptions, and other mental states, including some that may be called virtues or vices. Richard Sennett's book *Respect: The Formation of Character in an Age of Inequality* (2004), for example, has attracted much attention. It discusses a set, not always easily coexistent, of related attitudes and outcomes besides respect and self-respect: compassion, sympathy, pity, and dignity. The original and general meaning of dignity is

worth or worthiness (from the Latin *dignus*, worthy). Indignity is unworthy treatment of someone, and one responds indignantly to it. But what do people feel is unworthy treatment? Sennett suggests that one grants dignity to another person by accepting that one does not fully understand that person. Sennett's Chapter 5, "Compassion Which Wounds," warns of the tensions within a liberal social order that tries to combine and balance opportunity with compassion and charity rather than with basic guarantees. Opportunity "creams off" many of the brightest of the poor, while "charity wounds," (Mary Douglas, cited by Sennett 2004: 149) – a set-up that encapsulates parts of social policy and of international relations in the postcolonial era.

A further key emotion is (in)security. The fine work by Mahbub ul Haq, Sen, Sadako Ogata, Sabina Alkire and others on human security, understood as stable access to core goods (Commission on Human Security 2003), needs to consider also subjective security and insecurity. Actual security may not have a reliable, automatic relationship with felt security. The linkage requires other things too. Richard Ryan and Edward Deci (2001) survey literature that finds that relationships in which one feels secure are those that promote one's sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Consumerism has no such reliable impact; sometimes it does promote these, sometimes not. For example, Barry Schwartz's *The Paradox of Choice* (2005) explores how the escalating number of choices, often trivial, overloads rich-country consumers and makes them feel dissatisfied and insecure. We must be careful then in formulation and use of Sen's range-of-attainable-options criterion for well-being: the options included must only be those one has reason to favorably value. The lack of a reliable relationship between actual and felt security is one reason some theorists have expressed concern that the human security discourse of Haq, Sen, and others could be too readily hijacked by the psychic insecurities of the rich and privileged.

Jonathan Glover (2001) notes four psychological bases for moral theory. Self-interest is the basis of contractarianism, as in parts of Rawls's theory of justice. Sympathy, the readiness to give weight to other's pleasures and pains, is the basis for utilitarianism. Respect, for human dignity, underlies Kantianism. We see some echoes of each of these theoretical strands in Sen's capability ethic. We see perhaps least of the fourth base, which is a more complex picture of personhood, including notions of integrity and moral identity, as found in virtue ethics. Within virtue ethics, care ethics is most germane here: "Many women value caring and find much meaning, even part of their identity, in caring for others" (Des Gasper and Irene van Staveren 2003: 154).

A capability approach requires care ethics as one of its partners. Care ethics, notably feminist care ethics, links ethnography, social theory, ontology, and moral reflection (Des Gasper and Thanh-Dam Truong 2005b). It considers care at several levels and in many contexts: as a family of attitudes, commitments, and emotions; as skilled practice, by persons in diverse institutional settings; and as a care system, in the interconnected (and/or disconnected) set of institutions. People are understood as socially embedded actors, not as parent-less intellectuals, connoisseurs, and professional investors. The values of care that are identified from observation and argument include attentiveness, responsiveness, and responsibility. Much of Martha Nussbaum's work (e.g., 2001, 2003) makes these connections and moves between the levels of care: the worlds of the legislator, lawyer, or policy-maker and the worlds of those directly in need of care or directly involved in care-giving. Her investigations of emotions, motivations, and of

practices of care connect with her capabilities ethic and cosmopolitan global ethic.

Various care ethicists go further. They show how care and autonomy are mutually dependent, and draw implications for large-scale care organizations from the roots of care in personal relationships, including implications such as community involvement in management. Some feminist care ethicists (Joan Tronto 1993; Selma Sevenhuijzen 1998; Nancy Folbre 2001) propose that we must underline the values of attentiveness, responsiveness, and responsibility as political virtues, not only at the levels of direct care-giving. Without responsiveness and attentiveness to diversity and autonomy, then responsibility and commitment can become repressive and stifling.

Sen's work in economics and philosophy does not yet connect to this bigger vocabulary of feelings, emotions, perceptions, and other mental states. Some however of his work for wider audiences shows willingness to do so (Sen 2005b, 2006), and the work by Nussbaum and others suggests the feasibility and value of fuller such engagement. The gaps here in Sen's formal system could then be seen as unfortunate but not chronic.

RHETORICS AND STRUCTURES IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Human development – the danger of synecdoche, taking the part for the whole

In other areas Amartya Sen has drawn many necessary distinctions and connections that had not previously been widely grasped. I touched on part of his dissection of rational choice. In entitlements analysis he both distinguishes differentially vulnerable groups and unifies analysis across a range of processes, market and non-market. His gender analysis examines various determinants of women's and girl's fates, using widely graspable and applicable unifying tools. He masterfully employs generality in theorizing: "[a] general approach can be used in many different ways, depending on the context and the information that is available. It is this combination of foundational analysis and pragmatic use that gives the capability approach its extensive reach" (Sen 1999: 86, cited by Qizilbash 2005: 159).

A vague general approach cannot only be wisely and sympathetically contextually refined, as in Sen's hands; it can be inappropriately contextually interpreted in some other hands. Ingrid Robeyns (2003) insists on a very high degree of generality—"[t]he capability approach, strictly speaking, only advocates that the evaluation space should be that of capabilities" (2003: 64; see Des Gasper 2006 for a different view)—and then highlights this phenomenon of misuse, with special reference to gender analysis (2003: 67, 71). She shows how a generalized and unitary language frequently becomes applied as a language of dominant power-holders.

My concern here is linked but different; namely that for dealing with a complex terrain of experience, we need a complex terrain of ideas rather than one master theme. In *Development as Freedom,* Sen attempts to integrate ideas from a very wide range of topics in human development by using "freedom" as a connecting focus. A danger exists that a perspective – of the accumulation of options, which can be waived, as part of one's freedom – that derived originally from one sphere of life, the market economy, is extended to all of life. We reduce our awareness of the complexity of life if we describe all life as if it is like one or even two parts (synecdoche: a part is taken for the whole). A

metaphor – whether that life is like a supermarket or like a debating society – can convey great insights but we must remain aware of the danger that we blind ourselves to other aspects. Any trope is liable to overuse, so we need multiple tropes, multiple languages. A theoretical basis for human development requires a richer conceptual system, including a richer conception of persons and personhood as opposed to thinking about only one type of social relations. Without such a richer system, questionable assumptions and additions will fill the space. A rhetoric of freedom not counterbalanced by other conceptual frames typically leads in a neoliberal direction.[2]

Martha Nussbaum's paper in the special issue emphasized that freedom per se is not always good and gave examples, such as the freedom to pollute. Responding, Mozaffar Qizilbash suggests "that if the concern is that Sen's more recent work does not qualify claims in favor of 'freedom' in the context of pro-market rhetoric, this is not justified by a close reading of his work" (2005:155).The concern is not, however, with markets versus regulation but with the elevation of freedom to an apex status – a meta-language of value that encompasses other values (e.g., "the freedom to survive," "the freedom to be healthy"). This might not aid clear thinking and balanced allocation of attention. A monotonous rhetoric of freedom can direct our attention away from equally important matters. Qizilbash acknowledges: "There is, nonetheless, something new in the more frequent use of the word 'freedom' in [Sen's] recent writings. This is no doubt a result of his attempts to bring together insights from different parts of his work in his recent work, particularly in *Development as Freedom*" (Qizilbash 2005: 154).

Irene van Staveren's and my joint paper in the special issue (2003) expressed, like Nussbaum, some disquiet at this increased usage of freedom as a unifying framework. Attempted unity through a language of freedoms must not dilute the stress on the multiplicity of information types. We asked: development as freedom – and as what else? Qizilbash presents our views as: "…Gasper and van Staveren…argue that Sen's focus on freedom – understood as 'independence' – means that his approach tends to marginalize issues that arise from interdependence, such as caring for others" (Qizilbash 2005: 161).

We did not argue that Sen understands freedom simply as independence. He refers to the ability to attain reasoned values and to participation in decision-making. We argued instead that Sen's adoption of a synthetic language of "freedom" can increase a tendency to marginalize issues concerning interdependence *because* there exists a historically long prior and deeply rooted language of "freedom" as independence. We used the work of Bernard Williams, among others, to clarify and historically situate that prior language and pointed to a continued underdevelopment in the capability approach on matters such as interdependence. Sen's choice of language here does not give an irremediable bias, but it leads to too ready absorption into the earlier stream. The choice has an inhibitor effect. Van Staveren and I expressed concern both at the overextension of this freedom language and at the under-elaboration of the contents of freedom (2003: 143–8). We proposed a more differentiated, structured perspective.

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[2] Duncan Green (2003), for example, treats how neoliberalism in Latin America employed this rhetoric.

Adding structure

Inspired by the unifying power of a few master themes in the natural sciences, mainstream economics sought to extend that style into the social sciences. In the resulting perspective, there are but a few structural givens – such as individual calculation and pursuit of interests – and instead a sort of fluid mechanics of social behavior, resource flows, and substitutions that lends itself to a mathematical treatment inspired by nineteenth century physics and engineering (Philip Mirowski 1989), though this perspective is not always as constrained by reality as those disciplines were.

Amongst the dangers regarding the inheritance from this style of analysis let me mention three that may arise still in Sen's work.

One aspect or variant of the fluid mechanics of society was the utilitarian assumption that the brain has a single type of evaluative reasoning and judgment or a capacity for commensuration of all the particular types. Neuro- and brain sciences show instead different types of appreciative systems coexisting more loosely. Even the simpler forms of psychological well-being theory insist on distinguishing positive affect, negative affect, and fulfillment/contentment; these three are confirmed as distinct outcomes. Diverse emotions are at work (Jon Elster 1999; Nussbaum 2001), operating also as motives and mediators, and ensuring a multiplicity of types of impulse and sources of fulfillment. Sen has allowed for sympathy and commitment, but this does not go far. He has written also on Tibor Scitovsky's (1992) contrast of "comfort" and "stimulation" and their different neural bases, but the ideas have not been absorbed into his system.

Secondly, closely related to the utilitarians, the "rational choice" stream of thought sees a single type of calculated reasoning at work in all parts of life. In contrast, a social economist like van Staveren (2001) proposes that we must minimally distinguish three spheres: of freedom (centered in the market), justice (centered in the polity), and caring (centered in the family and community). Arjo Klamer (2005) splits up the last of these, to distinguish a sphere of civil society fraternity. Michael Walzer's *Spheres of Justice* (1983) divides in a more refined way still. Amartya Sen's work takes us in similar directions, though not yet very far. Rereading "Rational Fools" (1977), one sees Sen engaged, using the formal language that gave reassurance and respectability for his audience, in persuading skeptical mainstream economists to move in new directions, taking one step at a time from where the audience began, namely a presumption that rationality equated to self-interest maximization (1977: 104). Completely aware of the need to add more structure to theorizations of thought, preference, decision, and action (1977: 99), Sen knew that to add all important structural refinements would be neither workable with his audience nor needed for making progress on many important matters. But for us to remain at the same point on the journey, with for example his 1970s formulations of "sympathy" and "commitment," would be to betray the spirit of his endeavor.

Thirdly, a clear area for further development of Sen's system concerns the structuring of the spaces for public and private reasoning, including by procedural rights and restrictions. Let us look at this more fully, in the final section of the paper.

Structuring politics

As put by Qizilbash, Sen's famous "Impossibility of a Paretian Liberal" – the locus of the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* example that Peter (2003) reviewed – "is crucially about the conflict between the axioms of minimal liberty and the Pareto principle" (2005: 160). Sen uses the following formulation of liberalism: "For each individual *i*, there is at least one pair of alternatives, say (*x,y*), such that if this individual prefers *x* to *y,* then society should prefer *x* to *y*, and if this individual prefers *y* to *x*, then society should prefer *y* to *x*" (Amartya Sen 1982: 286). His example was that if individual *i* prefers to sleep on her stomach (*x)* rather than on her back (*y*) and she has the right to decide for herself, then society should prefer *x* to *y*. Sen added that there are various interpretations of liberalism, but that many of them would support the requirement we have just cited.

Some political theorists see here a confusion of two types of language: the language of rights and the language of social preference (Brian Barry 1986; Pieter Vanhuysse 2000). Society may clearly not prefer outcome *x* and yet accept that it must tolerate it. Barry and others warn against an understanding of the nature of rights that subsumes them to a notion of social welfare: the ranking of social states as better or worse. These authors propose that we should partition experience more than Sen and social choice theory do. They argue that rights language has its own character: rights are rights to make one's own mistakes. The political theorists' understanding of rights connects to Christian themes: God gives his human creations freedom, including the freedom to do evil because life and good deeds without freedom are deemed meaningless, without merit.

On the other hand, some rights – such as the right to equal treatment under law – are not merely to be distributed and then left open to being waived: "Oh no, don't worry, I freely and rationally choose to be treated as a slave. The right was the important thing, the freedom, the capability, above its exercise, the functioning." This has some relevance to gender issues. In the cases of voluntary slavery raised by Stanley Engerman's paper (2003), the volunteers had the "freedom" to either risk starvation or accept enslavement. Sen's capability approach shows the inadequacy of such a conception of freedom, but needs to be extended by addition of some constraints upon the waiving of fundamental rights. This is a remediable gap in the system, provided there is readiness to think seriously about power and institutional structures.

Social choice requires structuring, for reasons of both manageability and equity, rather than being left purely to the interaction of the stronger and the weaker. Manageability in large societal systems inevitably requires complex, layered structures of decision making, not only the village council. But as Marianne Hill (2003) suggests: "the theory of power most used by economists – embedded in social choice – is not designed to address institutional complexity" (2003: 124). Entrenched structures of rights are needed to counteract entrenched structures of power.

Let us take a modest example before considering a huge one. For many years the smokers' organization in the Netherlands conducted a sophisticated rearguard action against bans on smoking in public places. Their slogan was "We can solve it together," issuing a call for unrestricted public reasoning, case-by-case, among mature and reasonable adults, rather than the sledgehammer of a legal proscription that would prevent the presumed right of smokers to damage their own lungs from overriding the

rights of non-smokers to not have their lungs damaged. While sounding democratic, dialogical, and flexible – perhaps even attentive, responsive and responsible – this approach exploits the more flexible, less insistent, less informed, and weaker participants: those who cannot say no, or do not even know how to say no, or are, in practice, never included in the conversation and perhaps not even aware of it while occupied daily in the background with menial duties or infant play. Similar points apply a fortiori in trying to institutionalize the capability approach.

Consider a country like India, with huge inequalities and a fragmented, hierarchical society and social consciousness (Des Gasper 2001). Despite "The Idea of India" (Sunil Khilnani 1997), a shared national project of citizenship and provision of its requisites has remained weak. As Ambedkar warned when tabling India's draft Constitution in Parliament in 1949, an India that remained caste-ridden would not form a nation (P. Radhakrishnan 1999: 168–9); mass franchise politics has typically reinforced caste society. An "unarticulated reluctance of the [Indian] state to be a vehicle of empowerment of the suppressed sections of society" underlay decades of severe neglect of basic education and basic health (Barbara Harriss-White and S. Subramaniam 1999: 31). For, in large parts of the country, "empowerment of non-literates . . . implied . . . empowerment of the rural poor, the women and the Dalits" and threatened many powers-that-be (Venkatesh Athreya 1999: 255). Since wretchedly resourced schools for the poor offered little benefit, neglect of basic education for huge numbers of people was rationalized by the tax-averse and by policy-makers as justified by the poor's apparent lack of desire for schooling and their prior need to supplement family incomes through child labor. These rationalizations re-created the causes: the uneducated remained desperately poor and were hindered in gaining the benefits of schooling (Manabi Majumdar 1999).

Some progress in the past decade has come from India's seventy-third and seventy-fourth constitutional amendments, to revive and enforce local government institutions. The measures include obligatory female representatives comprising one third of members; this is not a matter left for local choice (Anderson 2003). A language of "We can solve it together" becomes relevant only when the basic structures of participation are in place and guaranteed: including education, enforceable rights, and freedom of speech, among others. These are preconditions for public reason, not negotiables within a rigged public arena. (Nussbaum 2003).

Such themes are reflected better in Sen's writings on India, which have their feet rather firmly on the ground, than in his generalized discussions of capability and public reason, whose limitations in the treatment of power are reviewed by Marianne Hill (2003). The language of "freedoms that we have reason to value" remains vague about "we" and about how "we" solve things together, as both Ingrid Robeyns (2005) and Severine Deneulin (2005) observe. "In Sen's case, it is not at all clear how these processes of public reasoning and democracy are going to take place . . . at present not enough work seems to have been carried out on the kind of democratic institutions that the 'capability approach in practice' would require" (Robeyns 2005: 106, 107).

Alternatively put, considerable relevant work has been done *outside* the capability approach, and people working within it must connect to this – the same situation that we remarked for the topics of well-being, attitudes, emotions, care, and, indeed, human capabilities. Sen's capability approach and overall system do not, in particular, go far

enough towards filling the 'Missing Persons' gap. They move in the right direction but must move further, to ally or merge with other relevant work.

Overall the agenda that arises is a broader version of that stated by Marianne Hill at the end of her paper. We need to sift and connect Sen's work, for example to link it to theories of personhood, power, and deliberative democracy, including with reference to structures in thinking, emotion, valuing, and politics. Gaps and limitations in the system should be remediable or compensatable if users recognize them. The relevant vision is to provide some parts in a bigger system for thinking about human development and well-being.

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