

Development Ethics and Globalization

David A. Crocker

Development—conceived generally as desired or desirable social change—is the work of policy-makers, project managers, grassroots communities, and international aid donors, all of whom confront daily moral questions in their work with poor countries. Seeking explicit and reasoned answers to those questions is the particular work of development philosophers and other ethicists. Among the general questions they address are: What should be meant by “development”? In what direction and by what means should a society “develop”? Who is morally responsible for beneficial change? What are the obligations, if any, of rich societies to poor societies? How should globalization’s impact and potential be assessed ethically? The purpose of this article is to outline briefly the history of development ethics, and then discuss what the moral assessments of development reveal about globalization and its challenges.

A Brief History of Development Ethics

Development ethics traces its beginnings to the last half of the twentieth century. In the 1940s, activists and social critics—such as Mohandas Gandhi in India, Raúl Prébisch in Latin America, and Frantz Fanon in

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Africa—criticized colonialism and orthodox economic development. In the early 1960s, American Denis Goulet—influenced by French economist Louis-Joseph Lebret and social scientists such as Gunnar Myrdal—championed the view that development must be “redefined, demystified, and thrust into the arena of moral debate.” Goulet also insisted that because what is called

“development” so often increases human suffering, development can amount to “anti-development.”

In the 1970s, Peter Singer’s utilitarian arguments for famine relief and Garrett Hardin’s “lifeboat ethics” fueled debates about whether affluent nations (or their citizens) have moral obligations to aid starving people in poor countries and—if they do—to establish the basis and extent of those obligations. By the early eighties, consensus formed in arguing that financial relief and food aid only partly addressed the problems of hunger, poverty, underdevelopment and international injustice. Development ethicists began insisting on a more comprehensive, empirically informed, and policy relevant “ethics of Third World development.” These ethicists also began to recognize that ethical assessment must include sensitivity to a society’s culture, including its values.

Contemporary development ethicists—Paul Streeten and Amartya Sen are two notable examples—address such problems as global economic inequality, hunger, and underdevelopment by explicitly applying ethical principles. Building on Streeten’s work, Sen argues that development cannot be understood as economic growth, industrialization, or modernization, which are at best means, but must be viewed fundamentally as the expansion of people’s “valuable capabilities and functionings:

The valued functionings can vary from such elementary ones as avoiding mortality or preventable morbidity, or being sheltered, clothed, and nourished, to such complex achievements as taking part in the life of the community, having a joyful and stimulating life, or attaining self-respect and the respect of others.

Consensus and Disagreement

Development ethicists typically make explicit and seek systematic answers to a number of related questions: What should count as (good) development? Should one continue to speak of “development” instead of, for example, “progress,” “transformation,” “liberation,” or “post-development alternatives to



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development"? What basic economic, political, and cultural goals and strategies should a region, nation, or community pursue, and what principles should inform their selection? What moral issues emerge in development policymaking and practice, and how should they be resolved? Who (or what institutions) bear responsibility for preventing or bringing about development—a nation's government, civil society, or the market? What role—if any—should more affluent states, international institutions, and nongovernmental associations and individuals have in the self-development of poor countries? What is the role of citizens? What are the most serious local, national, and international impediments to good development? How is "globalization" to be understood, and what moral assessments can be given of its promises and risks? Who should decide these questions and by what methods? What are the roles of theoretical reflection and public deliberation?

Development ethicists aim not merely to understand the nature, causes and consequences of development, but they also promote specific conceptions. Aware that what has been called "development" has created as

many problems as it has solved, development ethicists generally agree that development projects and aid givers must aim to achieve both human well-being and a healthy environment. Economic growth, industrialization, and modernization that result in a high or improving gross domestic product may not necessarily promote "good" development. Most development ethicists would reject two models of "development": (1) economic growth as the increase of opulence without regard to an increase in human living conditions (what Sen and Jean Drèze call "unaimed opulence"), and (2) development in which physical needs are satisfied at the expense of political liberties.

Development ethicists also believe that an accurate assessment of development requires the scrutiny of ethicists of many nationalities and cultural identities in order to be culturally sensitive to the needs and concerns of different societies, and to properly determine whether efforts toward development alleviate deprivation worldwide.

Despite their many points of agreement, development ethicists also continue to consider a number of unsettled issues, one of which is the scope of develop-

ment ethics. Although development ethics originated as the “ethics of Third World Development,” and development ethicists tend to agree that the “First-Second-Third World” trichotomy should be eliminated, there exists no consensus about whether development ethics should extend beyond its central concern of assessing the development needs of poor societies. Some agree that human deprivation exists in rich countries and regions, and therefore these “underdeveloped” areas properly fall within the scope of development ethics. Others suggest that the socioeconomic model that the developed northern hemisphere has been exporting to the less developed South results in the underdevelopment of both. Still others insist that attention to pockets of deprivation within developed nations of the North or West only serves to divert attention from the world’s most destitute countries and regions.

Among other unresolved debates, development ethicists argue over whether rich countries should restrict themselves to direct assistance to a poor country, or whether more diffuse involvement—in migration and environmental treaties, for instance—are also justifiable. Also unresolved remains whether development ethics should address such topics as trade, the Internet, drug trafficking, military intervention, the conduct of war, peace keeping, and the proposed international criminal court when—or to the extent that—these topics have no causal relationship to absolute or relative poverty.

A final, but important, unresolved issue that divides development ethicists is the status of various moral norms. Among the numerous positions that have emerged, two are dominant. One group, “universalists” (who embrace such ethical approaches as utilitarianism and deontology), argue that development goals

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and principles are valid for all societies. But another group, “particularists” (who tend to favor communitarianism and postmodern relativism), commonly reply that universalism masks ethnocentrism and (Northern or Western) cultural imperialism. Particularists either reject the existence of universal principles or affirm only the *procedural* principle that each nation or society should draw on its own traditions and decide its own development ethic and path. Some approaches (including one advanced, for instance, by Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum,

Jonathan Glover, Seyla Benhabib and this author)—try to avoid the standoff between universalists and particularists by insisting that development ethics can forge a cross-cultural consensus in which a political community’s own freedom to make development choices is one among a plurality of fundamental norms.

Important areas of further work include addressing the question of *which* moral notion ought to have priority in understanding and securing human well-being and development. Among many candidates, some advocate utility or preference satisfaction as most fundamental, others suggest that income and wealth are most important, still others advocate autonomy. Capability ethicists, such as Sen and Nussbaum, emphasize valuable and valued human freedoms (capabilities) and achievements (“functionings”).

Development Ethics and Globalization

A new and pressing task faced by development ethics is the ethical evaluation of “globalization.” As with the term “development” in the 1960s, in the 1990s, “globalization” has become a cliché and buzzword celebrated by the mainstream and condemned by dissenters. Among the crucial questions development ethicists must answer are: What is globalization, and what are the salient interpretations of its possible effects? Is it likely to result in the demise, resurgence, or transformation of state power? Will it eliminate, accentuate, or transform the power inequities between the developed Northern hemisphere and the less developed Southern hemisphere? Does globalization (or some its different varieties) undermine, constrain, enable, or promote ethically defensible development? Can and should globalization be resisted, contested, modified, or transformed?

One informal, but helpful, definition of globalization has been offered by David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton:

Globalization may be thought of as the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual.

Although the effects of globalization’s interconnectedness are vigorously debated, three main interpretations have emerged, which may be labeled (i) hyperglobalism, (ii) skepticism, and (iii) transformationalism.

Hyperglobalism. Economist Jadish Bhagwati and journalist Thomas L. Friedman exemplify the hyperglobalist position, which conceives of globalization as a worldwide age of economic (capitalist) integration characterized by open trade, global financial flows, and the triumph of multinational corporations. The emergence of a single world market signals the erosion of state power and legitimacy. Hyperglobalists predict

that the Northern hemisphere/Southern hemisphere dichotomy will be supplanted by a global entrepreneurial order governed by economic “rules of the game,” such as those codified by the World Trade Organization (WTO). Hyperglobalists accept short-term winners and losers, but insist that, in the long run, the rising global tide will eventually lift all national and individual boats—except for those who resist the all-but-inevitable progress promised by globalization. As development economist Dani Rodrik observes, “global integration has become, for all practical purposes, a substitute for a development strategy.” Consequently, advocates of this view claim, governmental attention and resources should be directed toward rapid (and often painful) removal of tariffs and other devices that block access to the globalizing world. British Prime Minister Tony Blair has succinctly expressed the hyperglobalist faith:

[We] have an enormous job to do to convince the sincere and well-motivated opponents of the WTO agenda that the WTO can be, indeed is, a friend of development, and that far from impoverishing the world’s poorer countries, trade liberalization is the only sure route to the kind of economic growth needed to bring their prosperity closer to that of the major developed economies.

Skepticism. The skeptic of globalism’s promise offers another interpretation, which takes one of two forms. Skeptics such as international relations theorists Stephen Krassner and Samuel Huntington reject the hyperglobalist view that worldwide economic integration is taking place at all. Krassner argues that regional

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trading blocks and some national governments are becoming stronger. Huntington contends that resurgent fundamentalist cultures either insulate themselves from or clash with alien cultures (especially those shaped by Western consumerism).

A second brand of skepticism is characterized by the work of economist Herman Daly, who in these pages conceded that hyperglobalist trends exist but argues that states *should* remain the dominant economic and cultural force. Daly contends that states should resist economic openness and instead emphasize national and local well-being. Skeptics such as Daly insist, further, that economic integration, cross-boundary financial investment, the digital revolution, and multinational power do not extinguish the Northern hemisphere/Southern hemisphere divide. To the contrary, poor countries in the South will face even greater

poverty because, as Rodrik, has argued, poor nations focus on international integration, will “divert human resources, administrative capabilities, and political capital away from more urgent development priorities such as education, public health, industrial capacity, and social cohesions. This emphasis also undermines nascent democratic institutions by removing the choice of development strategy from public debate.”

Transformationalism. A third interpretation, transformationalism, views the phenomenon of globalization as an historically unprecedented and powerful set of processes (with multiple causes) that result in a more interconnected and organizationally multifaceted world. But, contends the transformationalist, it is too simple to say that state power is *either* eroded *or* reinforced—it is more accurate to conclude that the nation state is increasingly reconstituted as part of regional, hemispheric, and global institutions, with some nations gaining and other losing power. In particular, the old Northern hemisphere/Southern hemisphere dichotomy will be replaced. As Held and his colleagues predict:

North and South are increasingly becoming meaningless categories: under conditions of globalization distributional patterns of power and wealth no longer accord with a simple core and periphery division of the world, as in the early twentieth century, but reflect a new geography of power and privilege which transcends political borders and regions, reconfiguring established international and transnational hierarchies of social power and wealth.

According to this view, three new distributional patterns will emerge, with some individuals and institutions characterized as “elite,” others “contented,” and a third group “marginalized.”

Transformationalists are both less enthusiastic than hyperglobalists and less pessimistic than skeptics. The globalizing world exhibits neither the intrinsic good that the hyperglobalists celebrate nor the unmitigated evil that the skeptics worry about. Instead, transformationalists insist, globalization at times impedes—but at times enables—good human and communal development.

The Capabilities Approach

Relying on both empirical and normative inquiry, development ethicists should offer ethical appraisals of globalization and make suggestions for better ways of managing new and evolving global interconnectedness. Typically, globalization’s uneven, and frequently changing influences on individuals and communities can be understood by empirical disciplines and addressed by policy tools. But it is not enough to inquire how or why globalization affects human choice and institutional distribution. Understanding the significance of globalization’s consequences requires application of ethical criteria and a theory of justice.

The most promising approach to the normative

dimensions of development ethics and globalization is the capabilities perspective. The development ethicist advocating the capability perspective will scrutinize the effects different kinds of globalization have on *everyone's* capabilities for living lives that are—among other things—long, healthy, secure, autonomous, socially engaged, and politically participatory. Because these valuable capabilities are the basis for human rights and duties, this type of development ethicist also examines how globalization helps or hinders individuals and institutions as they fulfill their moral duties to respect rights. Good national and global development protects, secures, and restores an adequate level of morally basic capabilities for everyone in the world—regardless of nationality, ethnicity, age, gender, or sexual preference. Such global phenomena as worldwide networks of terrorism, money laundering, illegal drug distribution, sex tourism, and forced migrations should be resisted. On the other hand, global dispersion of human rights and democratic norms should be promoted. The ethical status of other aspects of globalization—such as open trade, foreign direct investments, and the growth of multinational corporations—is less clear. The extent to which these elements of globalization enhance, secure, or restore human capabilities will depend on context and especially on how a national polity integrates and shapes global forces.

Although the capabilities approach challenges national and regional communities to promote human capabilities, it also challenges territorial political communities and transnational agencies—the European Union, United Nations, World Trade Organization, World Bank, International Commission of Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, and the ICC, among others—to take responsibility for setting policies that improve the chances of all persons to live decent lives. Further, these overlapping political communities should themselves be civilized and democratized, allowing individuals to exercise such capabilities as political participation and democratic deliberation.

Humanizing and Democratizing Globalization: Three Projects

Development ethicists have identified three projects that respond to the normative challenges presented by globalization. If development ethics has the task, as Goulet once observed, of “keeping hope alive,” one way to do so is to identify best practices and promising projects for globalization with a human and democratic face.

(i) **Liberal-Internationalism.** One project, expressed in, among other sources, the Commission on Global Governance's *Our Global Neighbourhood*, advocates introduction of democratic practices in those sovereign

Genetics and Criminal Behavior

David Wasserman and Robert Wachbroit, Editors

This volume brings together a group of essays by leading philosophers of science, ethicists, and legal scholars, commissioned for an important and controversial conference on genetics and crime. The essays address basic conceptual, methodological, and ethical issues raised by genetic research on criminal behavior but largely ignored in the public debate. They explore the complexities in tracing any genetic influence on criminal, violent, or antisocial behavior, the varieties of interpretation to which evidence of such influences is subject, and the relevance of such influences to the moral and legal appraisal of criminal conduct. The volume provides a critical overview of the assumptions, methods, and findings of recent behavioral genetics.

Contributors: Robert Wachbroit, Elliott Sober, Kenneth F. Schaffner, Kenneth A. Taylor, Ian Hacking, Allen Gibbard, Marcia Baron, Peter Van Inwagen, Patricia S. Greenspan, Michael Slote, Jorge L.A. Garcia, and David Wasserman.

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nation-states and international organizations that lack them. To encourage democratic reform, favorable loan terms and loan forgiveness, and the help of such international judicial institutions such as the recently ratified International Criminal Court (ICC), which will have jurisdiction over war crimes and other violations of internationally-recognized human rights. It is anticipated that, with the existence of the ICC, the UN can more effectively express the will of the majority of participating states rather than that of the members of the Security Council.

(ii) **Radical republicanism**, expressed clearly in, for instance, Richard Falk's *On Humane Governance: Toward a New Global Politics*, seeks to weaken—if not dismantle—existing nation-states and international institutions in favor of self-governing *alternative* communities committed to the public good and harmony with the natural environment. Radical republicanism gives priority to those grassroots and indigenous communities that resist globalization in all its forms. This bottom-up approach advocates the use of communications technology to allow diverse grassroots or local groups to become a global “civil society” united by similar con-

[All three political projects] argue that a variety of human organizations can become platforms for democratization.

cerns and aspirations for action. If radical republicanism succeeds, one can anticipate that institutions such as the World Bank would become obsolete or decentralized, and even institutions such as the ICC, which would be seen as dominated by elites, would be dismantled in favor of national or, better, local judicial processes. The radical republican insists that indigenous communities, regardless whether they are located within only one nation-state, should govern themselves according to their own rules and traditions, and democracy should be largely direct and local and decisions should be made by consensus.

(iii) **Cosmopolitan democracy** rejects both the liberal internationalist's goal of reform and the radical republican's goal of abolition. Instead, the cosmopolitan seeks a kind of global governance that consists in a “double democratization.” The first part of double democratization advocates nation-states either initiating or further promoting popular rule, resulting in a decentralization of political power. The second part of double democratization calls for the promotion of robust public debate and democratic deliberation that extends beyond national boundaries. The cosmopolitan also anticipates that nation-states can come to share

sovereignty with transnational bodies of various sorts (regional, intercontinental, and global), and that these bodies themselves would be characterized by democratic control.

Institutional democratization requires crafting new and complex individual moral identities, and a new ideal of multiple citizenship. People would no longer view themselves as nothing more than members of a particular local, ethnic, religious, or national group; instead, they see themselves as human beings with moral responsibilities to all other humans. One can anticipate that citizenship will become multi-layered and complex—one might come to see oneself as the citizen of a neighborhood, a nation, and also accept cosmopolitan citizenship. The notion of citizenship would take seriously a commitment to human rights, including the right of democratic participation, and the duty to promote human development in all aspects of human organization. As Held and his colleagues contend:

Democracy for the new millennium must allow cosmopolitan citizens to gain access to, mediate between and render accountable the social, economic and political processes and flows that cut across and transform their traditional community boundaries. The core of this project involves reconceiving legitimate political authority in a manner which disconnects it from its traditional anchor in fixed borders and delimited territories and, instead, articulates it as an attribute of basic democratic arrangements or basic democratic law which can, in principle, be entrenched and drawn on in diverse self-regulating associations—from cities and subnational regions, to nation-states, regions and wider global networks.

Although all three political projects emphasize different normative commitments, they all argue that a variety of human organizations can become platforms for democratization. They differ most in their views of how “deep” the democratization can—or must—go and the extent to which the current world order is inimical to democratization and international justice. While liberal internationalists and cosmopolitan democrats share many democratic and participatory values with radical republicans, they judge radical republicans too utopian about grassroots reform and too pessimistic about the democratic potential of national or transnational institutions. The challenges of globalization expand—rather than narrow—the agenda of development ethics. Interdisciplinary and cross-cultural dialogue and forums of democratic deliberation allow development ethicists to *understand and secure* genuinely human development at all levels of political community and in all kinds of regional and global institutions. As Sen remarks in concluding “How to Judge Globalism:”

The central issue of contention is not globalization itself, nor is it the use of the market as an institution, but the inequity in the overall balance of institutional arrangements—which produces very unequal sharing of the benefits of globalization. The question is not just whether the poor, too, gain something

from globalization, but whether they get a fair share and a fair opportunity. There is an urgent need for reforming institutional arrangements—in addition to national ones—to overcome both the errors of omission and those of commission that tend to give the poor across the world such limited opportunities. Globalization deserves a reasoned defense, but it also needs reform.

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The New Progressive Era: Toward a Fair and Deliberative Democracy

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Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: the Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) (Nussbaum's most important statement of her version of the capabilities approach applied to women's deprivations and opportunities); *Women, Culture and Development*, edited by M. Nussbaum and J. Glover (Clarendon Press, 1995) (A valuable international collection of advanced essays explaining, assessing, and applying the capabilities ethic to the issue of gender equality in developing countries); *The Quality of Life*, edited by M. Nussbaum and A. Sen (Clarendon Press, 1993) (Advanced essays that clarify and evaluate the capabilities and other approaches to quality of life in both rich and poor countries); K. Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State* (Free Press, 1995) (This volume defends a hyperglobalist approach to globalization); O. O'Neill, "Ending World Hunger," in *Matters of Life and Death*, edited by T. Regan (Allen & Unwin, 1993) (A critique of utilitarian approaches to world hunger and an accessible statement of the author's Kantian duty-based ethic of aid and development); O. O'Neill, *Faces of Hunger: An Essay on Poverty, Justice and Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986) (O'Neill's Kantian refocusing of the ethical challenge from aid to development); D. Rodrik, "Trading in Illusions," *Foreign Policy*, (March/April 2000) (A trenchant critique of hyperglobalism's claims that global economic integration causes economic growth and democratization in poor nations); J. M. Segal, "What is Development?" in *Philosophical Dimensions of Public Policy*, edited by Verna V. Gehring and William A. Galston (Transaction Publishers, 2002) (First appearing in the mid-80s, this influential paper argues for an ethically-based concept of development and evaluates three development models: growth, growth with equity, and basic needs); A. Sen, *Resources, Values and Development*, (Harvard University Press, 1984) (Contains several of Sen's important early papers on the capabilities approach to development); A. Sen, "Development Thinking at the Beginning of the 21st Century," in *Economic and Social Development into the XXI Century*, edited by Louis Emmerij (Inter-American Development Bank, 1997); A. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (Knopf, 1999) (Sen's most recent and accessible articulation of his agency-centered capabilities approach.); A. Sen, and J. Drèze, *Hunger and Public Action*, (Oxford University Press, 1989) (An application of the capabilities approach—its normative foundations and policy implications—to famine and chronic malnutrition in poor countries); A. Sen, "How to Judge Globalism," *American Prospect* (Winter 2002); P. Streeten, P. with S. J. Burki, M. Haq, N. Hicks, and F. Stewart, *First Things First: Meeting Basic Needs in Developing Countries* (Oxford, 1981) (The classic statement of the basic-needs approach to change in poor countries); United Nations Development Programme (1998, 1999, 2000) *Human Development Report* (Oxford University Press) (These three UNDP reports operationalize the capabilities approach to appraise, respectively consumption, globalization, and human rights.)