



29 Ethics of Development

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter introduces some of the major areas in ethics of national and global development: asking what is the nature of well-being and ill-being and what should be meant by desirable “development”; considering ideas about equitable distribution of the costs and benefits from change; assessing debates around what are ethically legitimate rights and the responsibilities in relation to infringement of those rights; and underlying all these, examining how concepts of development typically contain and depend on values and on conceptions of the elements of living as a human being. It discusses examples that reflect central development themes, including: appropriation of valuable natural resources, as in the colonization of the Americas; displacement of resident populations, as in major infrastructure investments and mining projects; and the global operations of huge businesses and their associated human rights obligations. It presents also some tools for value-sensitive observation and critical analysis and for connecting such concerns to practical action.

VIDEO RESOURCES

Civil and Political Rights

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLaUR7PajAM>

Time 13:07

Civil and political rights have a long tradition, but we are still on our way to realizing them for all members of society. This video talks a little bit about civil and political rights and why they are so important.

“Are freedom, peace, and justice incompatible agendas?” Inaugural Berger Lecture

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQpMPwiqn3I>

Time 1:03:17

The Inaugural Berger Lecture in Human Rights and Human Dignity was given by Mme Justice Louise Arbour. President and CEO of the International Crisis Group (Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada and Chief Prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal on Yugoslavia.) The event was hosted at the T.S. Eliot Theatre, Merton College, Oxford on Monday, 17 February 2014. The lecture is held in honour of Roland Berger Strategy Consultants who support five Weidenfeld Scholars to study at the University of Oxford each year.

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Human Security, Gary Lewis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWdg35jvNLA>

Time 17:19

We should focus on Human Security. In this powerful talk, Gary Lewis shares how the essential point about human security is that it shifts focus away from the traditional preoccupation of “national security”—which is the state—and places it on people—on individuals. Gary Lewis, a native of Barbados, has served with the United Nations for over 27 years in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Europe and the Caribbean. He is currently the UN Resident Coordinator in Iran. In this capacity he is responsible for the UN’s work in the priority areas of poverty, health, environment, disaster mitigation, drug control and refugees.

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Louise Arbour: Mixing Security Development Human Rights

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bY7Pq9-k29I>

Time 52:04

Louise Arbour, the former High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations, lays out a strategy for integrating security, development and human rights around the world in this talk to the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice at the University of San Diego. Series: Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice Distinguished Lecture Series

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Introduction to Natural Law Ethics

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLx8RIwMCjI>

Time 10:20

Why and how did natural law ethics arise in the Middle Ages? In this video, the Rev. Dr. Jayme Mathias, pastor of Holy Family Catholic Church in Austin, Texas, begins to explore the ethical thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, the man whose ideas would shape the Catholic Church in the West for some 700 years.

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Utilitarian Ethics

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgz6qzu2Zic>

Time 9:57

Utilitarian/Consequentialist Ethics, Description, Hedonic Calculus, Pros and Cons, Personal Conclusion

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Briefly discuss natural law ethics.
2. What is utilitarianism about? Briefly explain it.
3. What are the main assumptions of social contract theory?
4. What does Adjudicating Development-forced Displacement mean? Briefly explain.
5. What is the relevance of development ethics and human rights?
6. What are the main components of the unilinear model of development?
7. What has been involving in hiding the choices of priorities and the choices between alternative paths to ethical development?

ANSWER KEY: REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Natural law assumes that ethical implications are proposed based on the nature of human beings and their environment. There are various such ethics, according to how human nature and “the human condition” are interpreted, as we saw above. Las Casas, Grotius, and Locke all reasoned partly in this way, but making different interpretations. Human rights thinking comes from this tradition, in the line of Las Casas: humans are seen as a single species, with a common worth and common necessities, and they are both deserving and capable of mutual respect and sympathy. (p. 559)
2. Utilitarianism grew out of the type of rational calculation fostered by business and markets: costs and benefits should be calculated, summed, and compared. Predominant now in business-dominated societies is an economic variant of utilitarianism we can call “money-tarianism”: costs and benefits are assessed in terms of monetized market values. This tends to lead to the following: only monetized effects are included; a rich person’s well-being becomes considered more important, because greater purchasing power brings greater monetary impact; interpersonal distribution is sometimes treated as unimportant, so that gains for the rich can outweigh costs for the poor, even the deaths of the poor because those have little or no monetary weight. Saving some minutes of businessmen’s time can be used to justify ever more air travel that, through its impact on greenhouse gases and climate change, may cost lives of some of the poorest and most vulnerable people around the world, especially infants. (p. 559)
3. Social contract theory essentially asks: what do or would participants freely agree? It treats the participants, in important respects, as free, equal, and intelligent; everyone seeks his/her own advantage and together they negotiate a contract that supposedly gives advantage to all. This bargaining may be specified as being between all households within a nation-state, as outlined in John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice*; or only between full citizens (in John Locke’s context, white male property holders); or between states, as in Rawls’s *The Law of Peoples*; or, instead, between all human beings seen as members of a global society. Social contract theory sometimes ignores the record of history, by assuming that countries are self-enclosed and have engaged in free and equal inter-country negotiation; and even when formulated in the context of such an immigrant nation as the United States, it can ignore migration (as Rawls did in *A Theory of Justice*) or rule it out as irregular (as he did in *The Law of Peoples*). (p. 559)
4. Core development processes—expansion of cities, construction of irrigation and transport systems, generation and distribution of energy, mining projects, and so on—often physically displace many people. An estimated 10–15 million people each year are directly displaced. For centuries, displacement frequently has occurred with little or no consultation with, compensation to, or benefit for the displaced people, and in many contemporary cases this continues. Such displacement often mainly involves people who are relatively or absolutely poor, for the sake of bringing benefits mainly to people who are already better off. It removes livelihoods and can bring massive cultural and psychological disruption. In their book *Displacement by Development*, Canadian scholars Peter Penz, Jay Drydyk, and Pablo Bose propose a detailed ethical approach for balancing the potential benefits from development investments with the rights and interests of people liable to suffer through displacement. It deepens ideas in the report of the World Commission on Dams (p. 562)
5. Human rights thinking and practice comprise the biggest stream of development ethics. The human rights movement that was consolidated under the new United Nations in the 1940s chose to focus not on underlying doctrine but on consensual commitments. Such commitments can be supported on the basis of different ethical traditions, religious or secular. We will not go further into human rights approaches, for which there is a huge literature. Note, though, that

broader development ethics work exists partly because human rights approaches, while essential, are not sufficient. Human rights thinking tends to represent values in a rigid format: definite rights to which correspond definite duties of definite duty-holders. This rigidity is its strength, helping to make the claims enforceable, but is also its limitation. It leads, for example, to difficulties when values clash, as they inevitably do. Even the Christian theological language of “indivisibility” that is used in human rights conventions cannot resolve such clashes. Additional discourses for thinking about values and threats to values are necessary. (p. 563)

6. There are three ideas in this model. (1) Progress—fundamental improvement—has a universal meaning, content, and destination, though there can be local variation in details. (2) In broad terms, there is a universally necessary path to this progress—involving science, investment, economic growth, urbanization, etc.—though again there can be local variation in details. (3) Given the belief in a universal path to a universal destination, there is a lack of sensitivity to alternative paths and alternative destinations and to how development paths differently affect different groups and values. (p. 564)
7. The main idea to be discussed is that national economic product is the central measure of progress—has contributed to hiding the choices of priorities and the choices between alternative paths. National economic product measures volume of monetized activity. So, first, it is a measure of activity rather than of valuable achievement; it includes, for example, the costs of medical bills, not the length and healthiness of people’s lives. Second, besides inappropriately including costs, it excludes many types of major value, such as friendship, justice, peace, dignity, identity, and so on. Third, national economic product ignores how costs and benefits are distributed across different people and across generations; for example, much monetized activity can occur at the expense of exhausting resources and bequeathing problems to future generations. Unfortunately, business leaders and political leaders have frequently acted as if all important values are subsumed within gross national product (GNP), and as if any other values should be sacrificed for the sake of GNP growth. Development became equated to GNP. (pp. 564–565)