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Human Development – Friend or Foe to Environmental Ethics?

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ABSTRACT

This article is premised on the assumption that in order for us adequately to protect our environment, significant adjustments need to be made to the ways we pursue and think about development – adjustments not merely to technologies but also to life-styles. In this respect the emphasis in much recent development literature on *human* development is to be welcomed as a useful corrective to definitions of development in terms of economic growth, though there is still a danger of anthropocentric assumptions. It is argued that, given suitable interpretations or conceptions of development and environment, environmental care can be, and should be, integrated into authentic human development. Proposals for such conceptual alignment stem both from seeing the relevant community in which development qua *desirable change* is to take place as the biotic community, and from seeing development as desirable change in the total environment, both natural and artificial, regarded as a social *field of significance*. Such conceptual adjustments are a significant part, but of course only a part, of what needs to be done to bring public policy more into line with proper care for the environment.

KEYWORDS

Community, development, environment, evaluation, field of significance, growth, human, rationality, sustainability

1. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

1.1. The challenge

The main purpose of this paper is programmatic – to show how care for the environment can be integrated into the pursuit of authentic human development,

not merely at the practical level but at a conceptual level as well. Such conceptual alignment is a significant part, but only a part, of what needs to be done to bring public policy more into line with proper care for the environment.¹ That is, an important element in the realignment of development goals and in the consequent changes in life-styles necessary for adequate protection of the environment is a willingness to reflect on the key concepts and to rethink many of the assumptions we have made about them.² I assume that such realignment is necessary and do not argue for it here. Of course optimists or pessimists may reject this assumption as, respectively, unnecessary or futile/impossible, as I explain below.

The paper proceeds with this reflection at two levels. First, at the *analytic/conceptual* level, it argues for the *possibility* or conceptual coherence of extending/revising the ideas of development and caring for the environment; secondly, at the *normative* level, it indicates the reasons why such extensions/revisions are desirable – both in themselves and as contributions towards the more effective care for the environment. I approach this issue via the idea of *human development*. Does it help in the rethinking or hinder it? I shall argue that it does help, but only once certain dangers have been identified and addressed.

I need to forestall a possible misunderstanding. The proposed conceptual realignment is a realignment relative to common modes of thought; it is not presented as something *de novo* as though no one had thought of it before. Indeed in many ways, many environmentalists have gone further in questioning the distinction between development and environment than I do. My attempt to integrate environment into development may seem less satisfactory than taking a bolder view of the human-environment relationship in recognising that it is human development that has to be integrated into environmental processes.³ My paper is partly pragmatic: given where most people are at in their thinking about development and quality of life, what kinds of consideration may help them to take on the environmental perspective? The dualism of thought about development and environment is well established (however unacceptable to some thinkers), and it is from this starting point that I proceed.

1.2. The importance of human development for development thinking

In recent years there has been an increasing interest in what is called 'human development'. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) adopted it as the title of its influential *Human Development Reports* which have come out since the beginning of the '90s. At the very least the stress on human development brings out, as have many other critiques of conventional thinking about development, that we should not forget that the rationale for economic growth is the increase in human well-being; that economic growth is not an end in itself; and that it is justified, when it is justified, by the fact that it enables people to

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achieve a better quality of life, better that is in terms of criteria of well-being other than more wealth. Such criteria include health, literacy, life expectancy, community, rule of law, liberty, and so on. Of course one obvious criterion of well-being is the exercise of choice or 'control' over one's life for which certain levels of material well-being are, either absolutely or relative to conditions within one's own society, essential. The reminder, then, that it is these things which contribute to well-being and that economic activity is justified by reference to them, does not of itself imply any less commitment to economic growth, since it may be felt that sustained economic growth is a *precondition* of people enjoying more and more well-being.

On the other hand, it is not at all obvious that continued economic growth is necessary for many improvements in human well-being, or that, other things being equal and once a certain level of material well-being has been achieved, more wealth leads to more well-being (or 'happiness', as it has often been taken to be). For example, the effective exercise of choice or control only requires so much wealth and does not increase beyond that.⁴ If this is so, the effect of an emphasis on the 'human' aspects of development is to place somewhat less emphasis on economic growth. It is therefore possible that commitment to human development, as a corrective to overly narrow conceptions of development, will contribute to better care for the environment.

1.3. Is human development good news for the environment?

That such a corrective is both necessary and important depends on the assumption that, other things being equal, economic growth puts pressures on the environment, both in terms of resources usage and in terms of the effect of industrial activity through pollution, etc.

This assumption is disputed by many thinkers committed to sustainable development. What it is necessary to change, they argue, is not the commitment to growth itself but the manner in which growth is pursued. Human adaptability and the use of new technologies will open up ways of harmonising the continued pursuit of material affluence with adequate protection of the environment.⁵ 'Sustainable development' combines the two without any real adjustments to our pursuit of economic growth, and there would be no need for the proposals I recommend.

Even the *Human Development Reports* reflect the belief that economic growth is necessary to environmental protection and vice versa, as does the *Business Charter for Sustainable Development* of the International Chamber of Commerce, which states that sustainable development as defined in the famous Brundtland Report definition *requires* economic growth (I.C.C., 1991: Introduction). On this view referring to 'human' development may be useful as a reminder of the rationale of development qua growth but it does not itself give

us reason not to pursue growth, since growth can be pursued sustainably in conjunction with adequate protection of the environment. On this view, emphasis on the human-ness of development is beside the point, so far as environmental care is concerned, though it may be significant for other reasons.

Like many environmentalists, whether inspired by biocentric considerations or indeed inspired by enlightened anthropocentric reasons, I simply do not accept the above analysis. Some growth may indeed be necessary and consistent with environmental care. It is certainly necessary for the very poor (and for them growth would not only be a good itself but one of the causes of less destruction to local environments). But the relentless pursuit of growth in the North, most of whose beneficiaries are people already well off or very well off by material standards, is another story and is unacceptable.

If then we make the claim that it is unacceptable (a claim not fully argued for in this paper), the emphasis on 'human' development may well be an important part of the array of arguments needed to support it. This is both because increases in human well-being, measured in terms of things like health, community, knowledge or social order, do not necessarily correlate with economic growth (at least beyond certain levels of material affluence), and because, as we shall see, there is scope for including care for the environment in the account of human well-being. Care for the environment enters directly into the account of well-being as a constituent of it (a non-moral good such as the appreciation of nature). It also enters indirectly through the sense of self-satisfaction in acting in morally appropriate ways, i.e. the satisfaction which we can have insofar as we count our own satisfactory exercise of moral agency as one of our goods. Thus if we are committed ethically to development, and development includes care for the environment, then care for the environment is *reinforced* as an object of moral satisfaction. (It may of course be so for other reasons as well.)

1.4. Why human development is problematic

Nevertheless, even if we assume that in practice an emphasis on human development is helpful for those who care for the environment, there remain theoretical problems about the idea of human development. Human development like human rights, is Janus-faced; that is, it faces in two directions, one acceptable, the other perhaps less acceptable. In one direction 'human' in human development points to the acceptable claim that it is *human* values as opposed to more restricted economic values that are important; just as with human rights what is stressed is the *universality* of well-being as opposed to some relativistic conception of rights or goods. But in the other direction both of these phrases in stressing 'human-ness' also point to an anthropocentric perspective.

First, the very human-ness of development may be seen as part of a deeper discourse in which it is human well-being which is the locus of attention, rather

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than the well-being of other things living in the environment. Similarly it is the very human-ness of rights which may be seen as part of the problem. The discourse of human rights seems to sit uneasily with ecological values (Aiken 1992); rights discourse can, for instance, be seen as part of a way of thinking about ethics in the 'contract' tradition that makes the sphere of ethics limited to human well-being (Midgley 1983).

Second, this bias is confirmed when we look at the nature of development discourse itself. Development is seen as change for *humans*, since it is about changes in human society: 'human-ness' simply says that it is more complex than merely economic or even 'socio-economic' change. On this reading, development is something which happens in human societies. The changes in society are quite different from those that occur in the natural world. The main difference is that development, at least as it has been understood in socio-political contexts in the last hundred years, is seen as an object of public policy. As such it is something *pursued* intentionally, generally with the official rationale of improving the life-situations of people living in the society whose development is at issue. The environment itself is not something pursued, nor *a fortiori* is it pursued in order to improve it as such. Of course human development does change the environment in many ways, which is why we have our environmental problems. But these changes (generally for the worse) are premised on seeing the environment as something to be used for human development, or as Heidegger put it, a 'standing reserve' (Heidegger, 1952). On this view, there is a deep divide between development and environment as foreground and background, as intentional object and limiting context.

Third, development is a part of the 'Enlightenment' way of looking at the world; it is after all the 20th Century equivalent of what used to be called 'progress'.⁶ Part of the Enlightenment assumption was that humans as rational choosers can plan change for the future, and thus exercise control over nature which is set apart in contrast to the culture of human activity. Although we have to a large extent abandoned the dualistic metaphysics of the 'rational soul' lying behind this separation, it still pervades much of our practical understanding, not least in our public commitment to things like development, which, it is usually assumed, is simply human development.

Since development has become, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century, the dominant theme in the formation of public policy, the three intellectual assumptions mentioned above which surround development thinking militate against serious consideration of the environment as a direct object of public policy. The main way it enters public policy is as something that needs to be protected *as a means* to sustainable human development. Since the latter is generally taken to include economic growth, the focus on sustainability or human-ness does not as such question the growth paradigm or the assumption that the environment is there for human use.

2. DEVELOPMENT AS EVALUATIVE: CONCEPT AND CONCEPTIONS

Whilst the above picture represents the dominant tendencies in development discourse, these tendencies are not inevitable. They can be resisted. But to resist them, it is helpful to engage in some conceptual remapping. One reason why this remapping is possible is because the idea of 'development' is in fact highly flexible. I have argued elsewhere that what we count as development depends on our value system (Dower 1988). Briefly we can distinguish between a formal or 'thin' definition (the concept) of development as a 'process of socio-economic change which ought to happen' and various substantive or 'thick' definitions (conceptions) which, in terms of the values of the proponents, represents what they think ought to happen.⁷ Thus a defender of economic growth will, when pressed, claim that economic growth is both possible and desirable, whereas defenders of other conceptions will put more emphasis upon other human goods. Qualifying words like 'sustainable', 'human', 'eco-', 'authentic' may be added and go some way towards signalling the values proposed, but still leave much to be clarified. One of the key points which any thinker needs to say more about, if he or she proposes values, norms or goods which are not in themselves economic, is how far the promotion of these values presuppose economic growth in some form as a condition in the background, and how far they can be promoted without it or at least without as much of it as is generally assumed in the economic model.

Ever since the publication of *Our Common Future* (WCED, 1987), it has been fashionable to suppose that the additional feature which would make development normatively satisfactory is 'sustainability', as the capacity to be sustained into the indefinite future. Sustainability is nowadays generally assumed to be *the* characteristic which makes any development good. But we should note two things about sustainability, taken in its literal sense above (whatever other connotations may be added by its advocates in practice).⁸ First, it is not as such sufficient to make development appropriate, even if it is necessary. A form of development might be sustainable while being undemocratic, socially unjust or cruel to animals. Sustainability might be realised without satisfying the full range of criteria which for instance an advocate of human development would insist on.⁹ Secondly, sustainability should not be seen as *the* primary means through which environmental concerns themselves are transmitted into development thinking. This would be serious mistake, since it focuses only on the *future* dimension and not what is done to the environment *now*. A policy of development might be sustainable in terms of, say, its use of resources, but it might be for all that very inadequate in terms of a society's current attitudes towards the environment in which people in it lived. There might still be little respect for nature or appreciation of it, or proper care for other life-forms. Indeed a sub-text of this article is that the philosophical connections

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between development and environmental care are numerous and too complex to be captured by the idea of 'sustainability', and that the excessive focus on sustainability in the literature has been a serious distraction from this area of interest.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AS CONSTRAINT TO DEVELOPMENT OR AS INDEPENDENT GOAL

Two points need to be made, both for intellectual completeness and in order to make clear how my suggestions later differ from the standard ways in which environmental considerations affect development. Even if development is human development, understood in a fairly standard way as providing for the increasing satisfaction of human interests, care for the environment as an object of public pursuit is perfectly possible. This already does happen to some extent, in two different ways, either as a *constraint* imposed upon the pursuit of development or as a separate *positive* moral goal and object of public policy (alongside but separate from development). That is, even if development as an object of public policy (and of course private commitment of individuals as part of it) is not *directed* to protection of or improvement to the environment as a goal, that does not mean that caring for the environment is ruled out as something to be pursued for moral reasons as an object of public policy.

First, environmental considerations may affect the pursuit of development, and set certain kinds of constraints on the manner in which development is pursued, in two different ways. It does so either as a pragmatic limitation and necessary means to the most effective pursuit of development, or as a moral side-constraint setting limits on the morally acceptable ways of pursuing development. It should be noted that these distinctions apply quite generally to the structure of any intentional action or policy pursued. That is, there is generally a pattern of 'goal-directed, pragmatically modified, norm-following behaviour'. In any action some things are the direct object of pursuit – what is aimed at – and other factors are either the necessary means to be taken (or more exactly, means which are selected from a set of alternatives one of which is necessary) or the observance of norms such as moral rules. These factors are not what is aimed at but what constrains the pursuit of the goals in question.¹⁰ The former constitute conditions which are dictated by the agent's circumstances, either determined by natural necessities or imposed by the will of others, the latter constitute the voluntary limitations we impose on ourselves individually or collectively in the light of the values we accept.¹¹ Thus, with regard to the former, protection of the environment may set practical limits on the way development is pursued, because such protection is seen as necessary means toward the sustaining of development itself. But if we were not interested in pursuing development, we would have no reasons for these actions vis à vis the environment. But in the latter

case, either alternatively or additionally, if a strong moral argument is accepted for, say, not treating animals in certain ways (e.g. in factory farming), then this sets voluntary limits on how development (e.g. the production of food from animals) should be pursued.

From the point of view of committed environmentalists for whom certain environmental outcomes – protection, restoration, etc. – are goals in the full sense, it may be unclear whether regarding the protection of the environment as a constraint on other goals can ever give adequate expression to their concerns, either practically or ethically. This is another matter. What is important though is that environmental goals can be put into development plans as constraints, and that in terms of public policy this is how as a matter of fact they often do appear.

A second scenario is possible: as part of public policy there are positive environmental goals to be pursued. These goals then compete with development goals (and no doubt other goals in the public policy arena such as defence or the maintenance of law and order) and therefore limit or shape these development goals, not merely as constraints, but because these are seen as particularly important in their own right. No doubt a strong public commitment to environmental objectives, side-by-side with human development goals, constitutes a step forward in terms of effective environmental protection. Development then could be understood exclusively in anthropocentric terms *without* ethics generally or the justification of public policy being exclusively anthropocentric. That is, what is pursued under this umbrella is wholly justified in terms of human interests (present and future), and environmental measures only enter the development picture as *means* towards *these* ends; but at the same time there may be further environmental *goals* directly pursued, and these have nothing to do with development.

But we can go further that this, and argue that environmental measures need not be thought of as either *constraints* internal to the pursuit of development or as *external*, competing goals, but amount to *positive* goals *internal* to development. I must repeat though my earlier point. Effective and adequate measures to protect the environment might well be achieved in one or both of the ways indicated above – to some extent they already affect public policy in both ways, as practical or moral limits and as independent goals. It might be fully achieved but I think it is far more likely to be achieved if we further integrate environment and development by the following conceptual adjustments. That is, the *internalisation* of environmental values *within* development would greatly facilitate the process. The exploration of possibilities is in any case of theoretical interest.

4. NEED DEVELOPMENT BE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ONLY?

First, if development is desirable change in society, why can it not be change in the wider society of life or the biotic community? This will no doubt sound like

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an incredible suggestion, since development as an object of public policy is not at all like commitment to change in the non-human biotic community. That is true, so far as most people's current intuitions go. But given the kinds of concepts which 'development', 'environment' and 'community' are, it becomes a real logical possibility. First, development is assumed to be desirable change in society. Second, most environmentalists accept quite readily the idea of a society or community of living things. If we put these two points together, the idea of development as something pertaining to the wider society of living things seems a natural possibility which might commend itself, however initially startling.

There is no formal inference here. Development might be about one kind of society (human society organised within a political community) and environment might be seen as another kind of society, one based on ecological interdependence, that is a biotic community. The difference is not so much between 'society' and 'community' as between two sufficiently distinct senses of both terms that no conclusions can be drawn about the scope of development. Nevertheless the onus is now on those who would deny the extension. This is because it seems plausible to say that development is about changes to a social group which can be influenced by human decisions, individually and collectively; and also that changes in the environment, to living things and their life-conditions, are clearly amongst those things which we can influence and indeed have necessarily to influence, by living in an environment at all. It is also worth noting that there is nothing new in this line of thought, since the worldview of many so-called traditional societies, such as the North American Indians, has been one in which humans see themselves as more integrally part of the wider community of life.

This account can be fleshed out by considering three lines of objection: first, my account of the scope of development is too broad; second, 'community' really does mean different things in the two cases; third, environmental care is generally directed to *checking* or reversing our negative impacts, and is thus quite different from development as the pursuit of *positive* change.

4.1. First objection: development as mediated by political control

The standard view has been that the primary social unit of development discourse has been the nation-state or political community, and that governments have the power (including the authority) to pursue development on behalf of the people whom they represent. The idea of 'power' here suggests the capacity to control or at least decisively influence the process, but more particularly the authority or right to exercise this dominant role in respect to the way things go for the people in their political community. However, the objection continues, the situation vis à vis the environment is not the same, whatever the temptations to think otherwise: governments, and indeed people as such, have neither the same kind of control over the environment nor the right to exercise such control as they have

attempted. Though human beings have attempted to control at least aspects of their environment – the transformation of wilderness into organised farms, cities and so on is just that – yet there is a kind of arrogance in supposing that we could ‘manage’ or control the environment as a whole, as well as moral arrogance in supposing that it is right to do so. Part of our problem vis à vis the environment has precisely stemmed from treating the environment as something that we controlled and had a right to control.¹² So the idea of extending development to include the environment as what we try to control is precisely part of the problem.

If that is what is being proposed then indeed we would have a problem. But the idea I am putting forward involves a conception of influence rather than of control of the environment, coupled with a claim that we have duties or responsibilities towards it rather than a right to use it as we will. If we accept these suggestions then the extension of the scope of development to include desirable changes in the environment as part of what development is about, becomes attractive rather than dangerous. This is because it does not involve control, and because the environment is a direct object of moral concern.

This extension will seem all the more natural if we recognise that the *general* conception of development relating to human beings and their welfare needs to be understood in similar terms as well. The model of ‘control’ by the governments of a nation-state is increasingly seen as ethically problematic as well as factually anachronistic. Various processes of globalisation – in the global economy, international institutions, and the extension of people’s identities through the global communications revolution – are all weakening the role of the one body that was meant to be able to exercise some kind of control, namely the nation-state.

In any case the kind of power which, I would argue, it is legitimate to exercise is one of influence rather than of control, one of *facilitating or enabling* things to be done by others which they might not otherwise have done for the lack of either the motivation, resources or opportunity, rather than one of *making* things happen.¹³ If development is about facilitating changes which there is good moral reason to bring about, and there is good moral reason to protect, restore or modify the environment, then there is no reason why the latter concerns cannot be part of development. Whether they are seen as such depends upon what the people whose development is at issue take to be good moral reasons.

4.2. Second objection: different senses of community

A related reason for rejecting the extension is that, whatever the resonances between biotic community and human society, there is nevertheless an irredeemable nature-culture divide here. Whatever else it is, a human society is made up of agents who interact with one another as moral agents, negotiate with one another and accept public policy as in some sense the expression of their collective will. We do not interact with the rest of the living world in these ways.

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Development as an expression of public policy is what it is because it is seen as something pursued in a society and on behalf of members of a society, defined in this stronger sense.

However, though the agents of development are human (qua rational choosers who are sensitive to prescriptions), the objects/patients of development need not be. This point is standardly accepted in environmental ethics. Humans can act on behalf of non-humans, and insofar as they feel this is a moral obligation, they may assert that they are part of a wider moral community – a community of course in which there are many who are not currently interacting agents. (The same can be said of other communities which include babies, the dead, and future generations.) What is perhaps novel is the extension of this point – that humans can act on behalf of non-humans – into development discourse itself. To be sure, development as public policy has to reflect, if it is to be democratic, the interests of humans. In this sense development is bound to be about human interests, as expressed in their voting preferences. But if these interests which are reflected in practical policies were to include the intention of the majority of humans in that society that the non-human values in the natural world are to be protected, development would in effect be *about* those non-human interests. I am not saying it is, here and now. But there seems no crucial reason why it could not be.

The objection might be restated as a concern that if we provide a strong conception of the biotic community as an appropriate domain for development, we will be in danger of undermining distinctively human values which remain important. Whether or not the adoption of this conception would lead to an ethical framework in which we were, in Leopold's phrase, no more than 'plain citizens', would depend on the way the theory of environmental values was developed (Leopold 1949). The programmatic suggestion here takes no particular line on the respective importance of human and non-human values. It would be more accurate to expand my proposed account of development as pertaining to the 'social and biotic community' (where 'social' referred to inter-human relationships). How the two elements are related and integrated is not pursued here. It is enough to show that 'biotic' can be *included* in the domain that development is about.

4.3. *Third objection: can there be desirable change in the environment?*

A third difficulty about the proposal might be this: can we make sense of the idea of desirable change in the society of living things? What would desirable change in ecosystems amount to? Is not in any case environmental care either protecting the status quo or rectifying damage already done, whereas development is about positive changes for the better?

There are two stages to replying to this difficulty. First, can a change in the environment be a good thing? On the face of it, we can certainly make changes to an environment which might be seen as good. Can we not plan positive

ecological change? Surely we can 'restore' a wilderness and thus undo a negative impact from the past? My point does not depend on whether we can really restore a wilderness (perhaps not, if a wilderness is by definition something never modified by human activity), since what matters is the restoration of an area of land in which species interact again without human management, perhaps the very species which flourished before human intervention. More generally, it would be odd to say that we are able to destroy or protect what is valuable in an environment but not able to restore it. But more mundanely and commonly, we are modifying environments all the time with gardens, farms, etc., and it is not self-evident that all such modifications are either neutral or negative in impact; some may increase bio-diversity and/or create less polluted ecological niches, in which (more) species flourish, etc. Certainly, caring for the environment is not the same as either conserving or preserving it.

Second, it may still be felt that whilst human activity *can* be directed to improving the environment, this is a *minor* part of our active relationship to it, whereas the primary emphasis in development is upon improvement. However even here we are in danger of making too much of the contrast. Even without thinking of environmental issues, development as an object of public policy is as much about keeping or preserving what is to be kept or preserved as it is about changing what is to be changed. The maintenance of the legal infrastructure, the economic institutions underlying successful economic activity, the educational system, the provision of health care are all part of what governments are about; such elements are maintained insofar as they are working well, changed where they are not. It is not as though the maintenance and the change either do or ought to belong to separate parts of public policy. So the fact that much or most environmental action is either protection or stopping what is damaging does not in itself render it different from development, seen in the round. It is worth noting that 'environmental sustainability' itself needs to be seen in a similar way. If sustaining an environment is not the same as 'keeping it in *exactly the same state*' (an impossibility since living in an environment is necessarily a dynamic interaction), advocates of sustainability must be able to identify just what can (or should) be sustained, and what can (or should) be modified. These discriminations presuppose a value theory, just as they do in the case of development.

It is important to note in any case that the values in the natural environment need not be thought of as static or relating to a particular time-slice. We cannot simply say that a good environment is an unchanging one. Ecosystems are dynamic and evolve over time. The idea that human interactions with their environments may be part of evolutionary change or at least consonant with evolutionary change needs to be considered seriously. But if it is, the over-simple 'development qua change vs. environmental conservation qua lack of change' model cannot be accepted. Indeed, the very idea of 'development' has its roots in the idea of evolution anyway, and one does not have to be an Hegelian to

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recognise that human social development is as much a process of historical evolution as one of deliberate change aimed at according to conceptions of 'progress'.

5. THE ENVIRONMENT AS A FIELD OF SIGNIFICANCE

Whether or not we are persuaded by the suggested conceptual revision above, there is another line of argument, this time about the idea of 'environment' itself, which may also persuade us to adopt a rather different way of talking about development from what we are accustomed to. This is to think of development as desirable change for humans-in-their-environment. The suggestion here is that the relationship which human beings have with their natural environment is so intimate and central to human identity that any account of development must incorporate this relationship. The model to which we are accustomed, of a division between humans and nature, between the artificial and the natural, needs to be resisted. But it is a model in which development as progress of human interests is seen to fall clearly on the human side of the human/nature divide. There are various ways of questioning this divide.

First, the metaphysical conception of the rational soul and its self-contained identity can be questioned. The continuity of humans with other life-forms is, since Darwin, generally recognised. More particularly, the whole notion of identity is seen to depend not merely on social relations with fellow human beings but also on our relations, qua embodied beings, with the natural world. It is no accident that we value the natural world, since such valuing is a dimension of the value for us which we have in relating to it in various ways.

Second, if we recognise the complex interconnections between natural and social/cultural environments, there is no temptation to make a neat divide. Few would dispute that we can talk of social environments as well as natural environments. Accepting this though is consistent with seeing a significant divide, since it might be argued that social environments depend on the social meanings conferred on them by human beings, whereas the natural environment is quite different in that it exists 'out there' and has the character it has, independent of human cognition or interests. But this way of distinguishing them would be a serious mistake. As Cooper has shown, the natural or physical environment is to be seen too as a 'field of significance', an ambience or milieu which is charged with meaning and significance. Natural and social environments are no different in this respect. Furthermore the natural/artificial divide does not mark off two separate spheres of things which we perceive; most things in our surroundings are complex fusions of the two, such as farms, parks, houses, cities, etc. Even what we call 'nature' (as something separate from what we have changed through culture) is in many ways a social construct. On the other hand,

as I have argued in comment on Cooper's position (Cooper 1993 and Dower 1994), both natural and artificial environments are *also* systems of causes and effects which have impacts on our lives, whether or not we recognise them. But the point remains that our relationship to them is mediated by culture and the kind of society we live in with its priorities, agendas and values. In this sense the environment is as much our 'home' (oikos) as our house, and development is about improvement in our extended 'home'.¹⁴

Thus, as a further possible conceptual suggestion, we might see development as change in the environment in the widest sense for a given people/group. Development, to be sure, is obviously about quantitative improvements in certain identified goods such as nutrition, housing, health and the like, but it is also about qualitative changes in society, which are as much about the general character of the social order as anything else. If the social order is in one sense part of the environment, and there is no clear dividing line between the various elements of the environment, then again we can see how development concerns slide into environmental concerns, and can see development as desirable change, social and natural, for humans-in-their-environment.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The conceptual shifts discussed above, both concerning a widening of the conception of society and concerning the linkage between environment and development as fields of social significance, are possible, but not easy. Here is the challenge. I am not saying that the acceptance of either of them is either necessary or sufficient for adequate environmental care. The latter could occur without them, and by themselves they would be ineffective because too abstract. But such shifts would, I think, be appropriate and helpful. Nor am I saying that they would resolve all the dilemmas of environment versus development that occur in the real world. They would not. But a framework of greater integration at the theoretical level would seem to be a step forwards.

If the acceptance of these is neither necessary nor sufficient for adequate environmental care, it might be thought that I had rendered my proposals rather unimportant. The brief answer is that the adoption of them will make the outcome of adequate environmental care *more likely*. However it needs to be noted that it is not important that all people, or even all environmental thinkers and activists, adopt them, since there may be many different bases upon which appropriate action rests. This general thesis about the relation between theory and practice is of course another issue, and it is only necessary to observe here that its truth does not undermine the importance of my thesis.¹⁵

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

NOTES

¹ The ideas in this paper grew out of a brief presentation made at the seminar in April, 1997, University of Keele, organised by the managers of *Environmental Values*. My thanks to both my referees for many useful comments, most of which I have tried to incorporate, however inadequately.

² For a more complex analysis of the various possible positions, see Dower 1997. In a sense the current article takes up where the above article leaves off, in that it explores further ways in which environmental and developmental concerns may be harmonised.

³ I am grateful to Bryan Norton, one of my referees, for pointing this out to me. In a longer version of this paper (see note 15) I explore the importance of allowing many different theoretical perspectives to converge on policies/agreed norms (cf. Norton 1994).

⁴ On the other hand the kind of poverty experienced mainly in poorer countries is such as to deprive the poor of their effective exercise of choice and control and indeed many other elements of well-being.

⁵ See for instance Julian Simon's work (Simon, 1981).

⁶ For a sustained critique of development, see *The Development Dictionary* (Sachs, 1992).

⁷ I am adapting the distinction which Rawls introduced (Rawls, 1971).

⁸ See note 9.

⁹ If it is argued that in the long run, sustainability cannot be achieved unless these other values are achieved – liberty, democracy, lack of discrimination, fair treatment of animals and so on, then the point still needs to be made that, if this empirical claim is made, the development and sustaining of these values is an important part of what is to be sustained. This confirms in another way my general point: sustainability is not merely about environmental conditions anyway. That these values also need sustaining is important, though whether the empirical causal connections can be demonstrated seems more dubious. Of course much of the sustainability literature since the Brundtland Report has attempted to incorporate these values into what is called 'sustainable development' (see e.g. *Caring for the Earth* [IUCN, 1991]). My point is that if 'sustainable' is taken in its basis meaning of 'capable of being sustained', much more needs to be said.

¹⁰ Taking necessary means and observing rules are not aimed at in the sense that they would not be pursued in the absence of the other goals; but in another sense they are of course aimed at intentionally insofar as they are part of the whole activity or policy intentionally pursued.

¹¹ Environmental law operates in both ways. A business which only complied with a law because of its sanctions would see compliance as an externally imposed necessity, but one which saw the law as expressing its moral commitment would see it as morally acceptable (and voluntary in the sense that it would see reason to follow the norm even in the absence of the law).

¹² This is part of the legacy of Bacon's 'knowledge is power' and Kant's conception of what exists in nature as merely 'things' to be used by rational beings.

¹³ For exploration of different accounts of power see e.g. Lukes 1986 and Elsworth 1996.

¹⁴ The resonances of 'oikos' are also present in the related concept of 'economy'.

¹⁵ An exploration of these and related issues to do with adequate motivation for implementation are explored in a longer version of this paper, available from the author, and also in Dower 1998.

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