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# The Development of Unity\*

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**ABSTRACT** *Martha Nussbaum's list of the 10 central capabilities contains the most plausible account of valuable functionings that we have. In this lecture, I explore how Nussbaum's account converges with the deepest explanation of what is intrinsically valuable—what is good in itself. This exploration shows how Nussbaum's account tracks the same logic of value that we find in many of the world's great philosophical traditions. What all of these philosophers are telling us is that goodness is unity: unity with the world, with each other, and within ourselves.*

**KEYWORDS** Nussbaum, Capabilities, Philosophy, Intrinsic value, Desire

Why do we wish for the expansion of human capabilities? If we say that development enables people to live better lives, the phrase “better lives” bursts open. What makes a life better? Which functionings are truly valuable?

On the question of valuable functionings, let me offer you the thought that the wisdom of our everyday lives may be a better guide than most of today's philosophy books. In our real lives, where we take responsibility for our actions and strive to make good judgments, we consult an inner encyclopedia of experience when we consider which functionings matter. From caring for our children, our partners and our parents, from our engaged concern with the suffering and the sick, from sudden flashes of insight into where we find delight and where we feel safe, we each have developed a highly sophisticated understanding of what is genuinely valuable.

If you and I were to make explicit our understandings of what makes life better, I believe we would agree a great deal on which functionings are truly good. Indeed, I believe that there is a deep common logic to human judgments about what is intrinsically valuable. There is a logic to value, as there is a logic to geometry, a logic that allows for great diversity across persons and cultures while explaining why pain and deprivation and disorientation are bad in themselves, and why health and care and integrity are intrinsically good. There is a logic that structures our lived experience of what is good, and this is a logic of unity. What explains the value in all human lives is unity: unity with the world, unity with each other, and unity within ourselves.

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Now it's reasonable to ask "If value has this logic of unity, why haven't others seen it? Why aren't philosophers talking about unity already?" And yet others have seen it, in many times and places. The Confucian ideal of harmony, the African philosophy of ubuntu, the Buddhist practice of compassion are all based on the value in unity (see e.g., Li 2006; Hoffmann and Metz 2017; Goodman 2009). The reason that most of our philosophers today miss what these traditions have seen is that their gaze has been drawn toward the black hole of modernity, which is self-interest.

When the ancients took up the question of a good life, they asked, "What will make my life valuable, how can I live a better life, what is it that's really good?" But when modern philosophers take up the question of well-being, they ask very different questions: "What is in my interest, what will make my life better for me, what is it that's really good for me?" (see, e.g., Kraut 2016, 20–28). Most theories of well-being today are theories of self-interest, and this fixation on self-interest keeps most philosophers from capturing our lived experience of what functionings are truly valuable.

Let me offer two illustrations of how a fixation on self-interest will miss what we know about what makes for a good life.

The first example comes from Bhutan, and the index of happiness that was created in consultation with the Bhutanese and formalised with the multi-dimensional poverty methodology developed by Sabina Alkire and her coauthors (see, e.g., Alkire and Jahan 2018). The Bhutanese index of happiness is impressive in many ways and I want to focus on one specific functioning within it, which is the functioning of compassion. According to Bhutan's official metric, the more compassionate people are, the better their lives are (Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH 2010).

Now Bhutan is a Buddhist country, and in Buddhism "compassion" has a special meaning. Buddhist compassion is a desire selflessly to alleviate the suffering of all sentient creatures. The twelfth-century master Geshe Chekawa developed a famous practice to cultivate this compassion, which is to meditate on these two lines:

Give all profit and gain to others.

Take all loss and defeat on yourself. (Rinpoche and Gaffney 2002, 197)

The more one can live by these lines, the more one alleviates the suffering of others by taking their suffering on oneself, the closer one will come to enlightenment, and so the better one will live. Becoming more compassionate can make one's life more valuable.

Do you think that Buddhist compassion can be part of a valuable life? I think we might be open to this, yet a philosophy of self-interest rejects it. Perhaps remember some occasion when you've wholeheartedly given of yourself for the sake of another. If some philosopher said that you were really pursuing your self-interest, you'd likely stay centred on what you know. Compassion is not a strategy of self-love; it is selfless action in the service of another. And action in service of another can, I think we believe, bring goodness into our lives.

This example of compassion suggests how philosophers' fixation on self-interest can miss valuable functionings. And now let's take a second example, which shows how more self-interest can mean fewer valuable functionings.

To set up this example, we need a bit more detail on what today's philosophers say self-interest is. Derek Parfit (1984, Appendix I) gave the canonical description of the three leading contemporary theories of self-interest. Hedonist theories say that self-interest is getting more pleasure, desire-satisfaction theories say that self-interest is getting more of what one desires, and objective list theories say that self-interest is different things like

self-esteem and having children and success at challenging work. According to these theories, the more you get these things into your life, the better your life is for you.

Now let me introduce to you a fictional character who represents a type of person that I'm afraid is familiar to many who work in international aid. I'll call him Mr Development Set.

Mr Development Set is the head of a large overseas aid charity. He was promoted to CEO because he grew the budget of this charity through an extravagantly misleading mass-marketing campaign. On being offered his promotion, Mr Development Set bargained hard to maximise his salary, which now funds his expensive hobbies and holidays. Now that he's in the top job, he styles himself as a wise humanitarian at prestigious meetings worldwide—while at the same time he enjoys dominating and belittling his own office staff. When he's in the field, he spends his days having photos taken of himself embracing poor people, while at night he takes advantage of the sexual vulnerability of poor women who receive his charity's aid.

According to all three philosophies of self-interest, this man's life is going well. Whatever theory we choose, Mr Development Set will score high. His days are full of pleasures, he is certainly satisfying his desires, and as for things like self-esteem, having children, and success at challenging work he's got everything on the list. When it comes to getting what's good for himself, this man is at the top of all the scales. Yet when we're looking for truly valuable functionings, will we take him as an exemplar? If development is about enabling people to live better lives, will we want to help people to become more like him? If not, then we see again that self-interest is the wrong frame for finding which functionings are genuinely good.

A life of compassionate service to others can be a valuable life, a life of self-interest can be of little value. What we're looking for is a deeper understanding of what makes life valuable, how we can live better lives, what it is that's really good. We're looking for a philosophical account of the elements of a valuable life, and this is where we come to the work of Martha Nussbaum.

Nussbaum is one of the few contemporary philosophers who does not offer a theory of well-being that is merely a theory of self-interest and let me speculate why this is so. Most philosophers today have been drawn into theorising self-interest because of the gravitational pull of utilitarianism in philosophy and economics, which emanates from a market ideology that's so strong in rich countries that self-interest can seem inescapable. By contrast, Nussbaum started her study of well-being with the ancient world, and her close work especially on Aristotle protected her from the intellectual deformations of other philosophers. From her early work onwards, Nussbaum has studied well-being not as self-interest, but as *eudaimonia*, as flourishing, as what makes for a more choiceworthy, valuable life (see, e.g., Nussbaum 1980).

I believe that Nussbaum's (2011, 17–45) list of the 10 central capabilities contains the most plausible account of valuable functionings that we have. In genuine Aristotelian fashion, Nussbaum has synthesised her own convictions with the views of the many and the wise to produce a list of functionings that tracks the logic of human judgments of value better than any other modern theory. This is a priceless achievement.

Yet still more can be done. The vulnerability of Nussbaum's list of capabilities is that it's a list: like Rawls's list of primary goods, it comes with no formal method for determining what's on the list and what's not. And this means that Nussbaum's list will be challenged when there is variability in judgments about what functionings are truly valuable. As you know, judgments about what functionings are valuable do vary across individuals and cultures and eras. Faced with this diversity, an account like Nussbaum's may welcome more theoretical resources for defending its list. Let me illustrate this variation in judgments about functionings with an example about sex not from an exotic foreign culture, but from British culture a century ago.

G. E. Moore was a founder of analytic philosophy. He was an interlocutor of Russell and Wittgenstein, and he had great influence on the Bloomsbury Group that included Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster, and John Maynard Keynes. Moore's ([1903] 1959, 209) views on sex were Victorian, and in his most famous work on ethics, he wrote this: "With regard to the pleasures of lust, the nature of the cognition ... appears to include both cognitions of organic sensations and perceptions of states of the body, of which the enjoyment is certainly an evil in itself."

Moore's language reveals how repulsed he is by what he calls the "organic sensations" and "perceptions of states of the body" involved in sex. And Moore's verdict is that enjoying these is "certainly evil in itself." Nussbaum takes the opposite view; opportunities for sexual satisfaction are on her list of central capabilities. And our question is what else can be said in this dispute over whether sexual satisfaction is bad or good.

Moore was as prominent a philosopher in his day as Nussbaum is in ours. I doubt that Nussbaum would simply dismiss Moore's judgment as a product of his time, but if she did so one can hear Moore replying acidly that in fact it is Nussbaum's judgment that is a product of her times, and one can hear G.E. Moore judging our own times rather harshly.

Notice here that Nussbaum can't reply to Moore by saying that her claim is about the *capability* for sexual satisfaction instead of the functioning itself. For Moore rejects the value of the capability. Moore is not like a celibate who values sexual freedom for all and chooses not to have sex himself. Moore's view is that sexual satisfaction is evil, and so the freedom to have sex is at best be a necessary evil. For Moore, the ability to have sex seems like the ability to vomit—one does it if one must, but to enjoy the activity would be perverse. For Moore, the capability for sexual satisfaction cannot be good, it can only be a freedom to choose what is bad in itself.<sup>1</sup>

What are we to do with the differing views of these two outstanding philosophers, Nussbaum and Moore? I propose that nothing can be done, except to go deeper into a systematic exploration of value. There is a logic to our complex and inchoate understandings of what is genuinely good and bad in life. There is a logic that explains how both Nussbaum and Moore can be partly right about sexual satisfaction—and indeed this logic explains both the diversity and convergence that we observe in human judgments about valuable functionings.

To see this logic, we return to the origins of philosophy. To understand what functionings are truly valuable, we turn to the most venerable question of all, which is the nature of intrinsic value—to what is good in itself.

What is it that is good *in itself*? What is bad *in itself*? Love can lead to ruin, but in itself, love is good. Agony can lead to clarity, but in itself, agony is bad. And why? Can we go deeper, can we be systematic, can we analyse good and bad as we would chemical compounds, to find the atoms of value? What could be so elemental, what could be so fundamental, what could be the rudiment of the universe that is so basic that it defines what is good and what is bad in itself?

What is deep enough, what is primitive enough, to explain value is desire. Desire a primary force in the universe, and a singular ontological type. Think of real desire: of yearning, of craving, of needing, of hungering. Your desires began in the womb, before you were a self, and you haven't stopped desiring for a moment since. Your desire is a miracle of nature: in this cosmos of quarks and fields, your desire is the only inherently teleological thing. Your desire outstrips the laws of physics as it reaches the far side of the galaxy before the speed of light. Our desires transcend our tiny bodies to embrace all of nature, when we hope that the universe will endure.

Desires are the atoms of value. Yet it's too simple to say that the satisfaction of any desire is good—for clearly the satisfaction of cruel desires is not good at all. Desires have a logic

that determines the value of their satisfaction. It's not the objects of desire out there that are good and bad. It is rather how desires fit with the world, and with each other, that determines whether their satisfaction is good or bad. Desires have a logic—or if you like a geometry—that generates all of the values that we know.

What I'm saying is that the substance of value comes from formal relations of desires. Kant ([1785] 2002) came close to seeing this when he framed his Categorical Imperative, which detects incompatible desires (within his system, roughly, these are maxims that are not universalizable). But Kant's mistake was to think that formal relations of desires define what's right, instead of defining what's good. The real logic of desires yields not Kant's Categorical Imperative, but rather a Categorical Evaluative, which shows what formal relations make the satisfaction of a desire good or bad. And the most basic relation of value is unity—unity with the world, unity with each other, and unity within ourselves.

What we're going to do now is to see how the formal logic of desires systematically confirms our everyday judgments of what's good and bad in itself. The building blocks of this logic are desires and aversions—desires are what one wants to happen, and aversions are what one wants not to happen. All of the logic is built on that.

Let's start by with the first dimension of intrinsic value, which is unity with the world. And let's start by analysing the simplest example, which is physical pleasure. Pleasure is good in itself—and why? What indeed is pleasure?

Physical pleasure is getting sensations that one desires. If you want the sensation of eating coffee ice cream, then this sensation gives pleasure and it's good in itself for that desire to be satisfied.

On the other end of the value spectrum we find physical pain. Here the person has sensations that he wants not to have. It is bad to have sensations that one is averse to.

With this simple account of pleasure and pain we find an explanation of the variation between G.E. Moore's views on sex and those that are more common today. Recall what Moore called the "organic sensations" of sex. The theory of value so far says that for people who want these sexual sensations, it is good in itself to feel them. But for people who are averse to such sensations, as Moore himself was, it is bad in itself to feel them. Sexual sensations are good when they're the objects of desire, and bad when they're the objects of aversion. Value pluralism about sex tracks this diversity between what different people want.

Pleasures are part of a larger class of world-oriented desires with this simple logic that their satisfaction is intrinsically good. Whatever world-oriented desires one has, it's good if they're satisfied. If one wants to read a book, or to eat Marmite, or to see the paintings in the National Gallery, then it's good when one does so. And if one has a world-oriented aversion—if wants the Great Barrier Reef not to die off, then it's bad if it does die off. What we find on this first dimension of value is that it's good in itself when what you want happens, and bad in itself when what you want not to happen does happen. If we grant ourselves a poetic license for a moment, the theory so far says that what's valuable is unity between one's will and the world.

Let's look at Nussbaum's (2011, 33–34) list of central capabilities, and see how this first dimension of intrinsic value explains some elements on it. Pleasure and avoiding pain are on Nussbaum's list, of course, so the formal account explains those elements. The list includes preconditions for experiencing many kinds of pleasures, such as being able to use one's senses and imagination, being able to laugh and to play—and it includes conditions for avoiding many kinds of suffering, such as having adequate food and housing, and bodily health. Nussbaum's list also includes capabilities useful for achieving many world-oriented ends such as literacy and education. And it includes the most basic condition for desiring, which is life itself. The simple formal logic of desires so far confirms and

explains several elements of Nussbaum's list, in terms of different ways we can be in unity with the world.

For world-oriented desires, it's good when desires are satisfied. Yet this logic is too simple for the second class of desires, which have as their objects the desires of others. This is the second dimension of value, which is unity with each other. The logic of value for these interpersonal desires is intriguingly different. For desires about the desires of others, getting what one wants can sometimes be very good, but it can sometimes be very bad. Let's see why.

The logic of interpersonal desires is structured by what we can call the Recursive Principle. The Recursive Principle says that wanting the good is good, and wanting the bad is bad. We can take a simple two-person example to illustrate this Recursive Principle.

Say that P wants a certain sensation, like the rich taste of eating coffee ice cream. As we've seen from the first dimension of value, it will be good in itself if P's desire is satisfied—it will be good if P gets this pleasure. Now, say that A also wants P to have this pleasure—A benevolently wants P to get what he wants. Then A is wanting the good, and by recursion the satisfaction of her other-directed desire will also be good. When P tastes the ice cream, the world gets better in two ways. On P's side, it is good when his world-directed desire is satisfied. And on A's side, it is good when her benevolent desire is satisfied. On the interpersonal dimension, when what one wants is good, then getting what one wants is also good. Here A's will is unified with P's will, and that's why the satisfaction of A's desire is good in itself.

Now let's use recursion to see negative interpersonal value. Say that P has an aversion to certain sensations, like feeling electric shocks. It will then be bad when P gets the experiences he's averse to—as we saw on the first dimension of value, physical pain is intrinsically bad. Now say that A wants P to have the sensations that he's averse to—A wants P to feel pain. Then A is wanting the bad, and by recursion, the satisfaction of her desire is also bad. When P gets electro-shocked, this is doubly bad. On P's side, it's bad when he experiences what he is averse to. And on A's side, it's bad when her malevolent desire is satisfied. On the interpersonal dimension, when what one wants is bad, then getting what one wants is also bad. Here A's will is disunified with P's will, and that's why the satisfaction of A's desire is separately, intrinsically bad.

This recursive logic of desires explains a wide range of human judgments about intrinsic value. Let's take cases where the patient P has any world-oriented desire at all, and agent A wants the patient's desire to be satisfied or not. The more disunified the agent's desire is with the patient's desire, the worse we think the satisfaction of the agent's desire is—and the more unified their ends are, the better. Many of our everyday judgments of value are explained by this analysis.

Starting at the negative end of the spectrum of value, we find disunified desires, where the patient is averse to something occurring, and the agent wants it to happen. To be cruel is to aim for what the other person is averse to. Torture is a species of cruelty where the agent aims at giving the patient experiences that he can't help wanting not to have. Molestation and harassment and abuse all give the other person what he doesn't want, in specific interpersonal contexts.

Just as recursion says that loving the bad is good, it also says hating the good is bad. Consider a patient who is satisfying a world-oriented desire like a desire to walk to Trafalgar Square. If the agent injures the patient, this is bad in itself—not only because it will cause the patient pain, but because it will prevent the patient from achieving his end. Deceiving the patient is similarly bad—because it imparts beliefs that will thwart his achieving his ends. And coercing the patient is bad, as it will change his choice situation so that he can only achieve what he desires less. With all of these acts, the agent aims at



thwarting the patient's world-oriented desire, which is to say that with all these acts the agent is wanting the bad. So all of these acts are bad on the agent's side, over and above the badness of their impacts on the patient's side.

The Recursive Principle yields the correct analysis of value in these simple two-person cases, and also in more complex situations too. Take the classic case of the Christian being tortured by a gladiator in the Roman coliseum (see, e.g., Bomgardner 2002, 142–143). On the first level, the analysis says that the pain of the Christian is bad in itself. On the second level, the gladiator who tortured the Christian was wanting the bad, so his act of torture is also bad in itself. And on the third level, the Roman spectators who wanted the gladiator to torture the Christian were also wanting the bad, so it was bad when the spectators got what they wanted. And we can add that the more Romans came to enjoy this terrible spectacle, the worse the world was on that day. These are all intuitively correct results, all explained by unity and the Recursive Principle.

Let's turn now to the positive end of the spectrum of interpersonal value. Here the agent desires what the patient desires: the agent wants the good. What we've been looking at so far are unities of will that we can call the "caring" ends. Here the agent's will is unified with the patient's will because the agent aims at what the patient wants. In the caring ends, we find the opposite of torture: here the agent benevolently gives the patient pleasure or alleviates his pain. We also find aid and altruism and generosity, where the agent helps the patient to get what he wants. Advising is the opposite of deceiving because advising imparts to the patient beliefs that will help his achieving his ends. And offering is the opposite of coercing because it changes the patient's choice situation so that he can achieve what he wants more.

Also at the positive end of the spectrum of value we find the second type of unified ends, the "sharing" ends. Here people want to act together, like when they want to sing or dance or do philosophy together. In desires to act together, we find positive two-person relations like cooperation and intimacy, and also positive relations in larger groups like reciprocity and solidarity.

The most valuable human relations blend ends together of both the caring and the sharing types of unity. Here we find healthy family and community relations and also, of course, love itself. Love is good, in formal terms, because love involves people wanting to care for each other and to share their lives. Love is good in itself because love creates an interwoven unity of ends.

Now this has already been a quick tour of a complex theory, so let's review a bit by analysing some examples that might have occurred to you. So far, we've taken cases where the patient's end is good, like eating ice cream or walking to Trafalgar Square. In these cases, recursion says that thwarting the patient is bad, while aiding him is good. But if the patient's end is bad, then recursion says that aiding him is bad, while thwarting him is good.

Here we get a better solution than Kant ([1797] 1996) himself did to his most famous example: the murderer at the door. When the murderer comes to your door asking whether his victim is inside, his murderous aim is bad, so helping him to find his victim would be bad, and deceiving him about where his victim is will be good. And the same structure holds when several people join together: cooperation toward good ends is good, while cooperation toward bad ends is bad. The death squads of the SS were cooperating toward bad ends, so by recursion, thwarting their bad aims was good.

Now we can go back to Nussbaum's list of capabilities—this time, to show that this second dimension of unity theory confirms and explains more elements on her list.

On the negative side of the value spectrum, unity theory explains why Nussbaum puts security against violent assault on her list, including security against sexual assault and domestic violence. On the positive side of the spectrum, Nussbaum includes on her list



the caring type of unity, when she includes showing concern for other humans. She also refers to many types of sharing unity, for example when she speaks of social interaction, and being able to live with others, and freedom of association and assembly, and being able to participate in political choices that govern one's life. Finally, for the combined caring and sharing ends, her list includes loving those who love and care for us. In all of these interpersonal elements, we can see the recursive logic of unity generating Nussbaum's list of valuable functionings. Unity with each other is good in itself.

Unity with the world, unity with each other—the third dimension of intrinsic value is unity within oneself. This is the intrapersonal dimension of value, and it is easy to see because it has the same recursive logic as the interpersonal dimension. The intrapersonal analysis again explains many everyday beliefs and illuminates the remainder Nussbaum's list of capabilities.

The intrapersonal dimension of value has the same recursive logic within a life as the interpersonal dimension has between people. Just as one can be cruel or kind to others right now, by thwarting or satisfying their desires, so one can be cruel to oneself right now, say by self-harming. Or one can be kind to oneself right now, say by self-caring. And what's really interesting about the intrapersonal realm is one's relation to one's own desires over time. What's really interesting about the intrapersonal realm is one's unity with one's past and future selves.

So, for example, you can save money now to help satisfy your desires in the future, which is prudence. On the negative side of the value spectrum, you can get drunk the night before the interview, which is self-sabotage.

In this intrapersonal realm we are especially concerned with your plans and your projects, and over longer times with your career and even your identity. Over time you act together with your past and future selves as if you were an intertemporal joint agent. If your will is unified with itself over time, then we say you are determined, resolute, committed. If you often start one thing then another, then you may be impulsive, fickle, or unstable. If you're always pursuing different desires from one moment to the next, you may become deranged. If your desires are highly unified over time, you achieve self-mastery and integrity.

When you plan projects and carry them through, it's as though you act in solidarity with yourself over time, and this kind of intrapersonal unity is central to several elements of Nussbaum's list. One intrapersonal capability that Nussbaum emphasises is being able autonomously to form and critically reflect on one's plans for life. Another capability is not having one's emotional growth blighted by fear and anxiety. Another is to have the social bases of self-respect, which allows one to pursue one's plans with confidence. All of these are capabilities of a person who is more unified with herself over time.

Unity with the world, with each other, within oneself—these are the three logics of desire, which we use to judge what's good and bad in itself. As you can see, what's structuring our judgments of value is the formal relations that our desires have, to the world, to the desires of others, and to our own desires over time. All humans judge good and bad according to these geometries of desire, and these geometries explain both the diversity and the commonality of human judgments of value. Let me say a few words about value pluralism, before turning to what Nussbaum calls a fully human life and then to what the theory might mean for development practice.

On diversity, unity theory is highly value-pluralistic, within sensible limits. Some people want to eat hotdogs and play baseball, others like curry and cricket. On unity theory, value tracks the satisfaction of such world-oriented and other-oriented desires—we can survey the huge diversity in tastes and lifestyles and cultural activities, and judge that all of them are good. More critically, when people want to dance or pray or love together in a distinctive

way, then it's good when they do—and by recursion it's bad when others are intolerant and try to stop them.

By the logics of unity theory, an enormous range of life plans and social practices can be good in themselves. Yet notice that by the Recursive Principle, actions can't be good if they're bullying or racist or self-destructive. An infinite diversity of personal and interpersonal pursuits can be valuable, but anti-social and self-harming acts must be bad in themselves. To return to the start, your compassion in the Buddhist sense adds a great deal of value to your life—while the life of Mr Development Set is devalued by his deception and his domination and his exploitation of others. Unity theory is maximally value-pluralistic, within the constraints of decency and prudence.

Unity theory also confirms and deepens Nussbaum's account of the central capabilities in a further way, and in fact, this is the convergence of our two lines of thought that encourages me most. To show this convergence, let me introduce the idea of multi-dimensional value.

As we've seen, activities can be good when they create unity with the world, and also unity with other people, and also unity within oneself. Now we can see that some activities are especially valuable because they create more than one type of unity. Human beings are special because they can fulfil more than one desire at once—and when they do, the value of their activities multiplies.

Here's an example of how multi-dimensional value appears in Nussbaum's work. Nussbaum (2000, 71) writes that,

A starving person doesn't use food in a fully human way ... a way infused by practical reasoning and sociability. He or she just grabs at the food in order to survive, and the many *social* and *rational* ingredients of human [eating] can't make their appearance ... The core idea is that of the human being as a dignified free being who *shapes his or her own life in cooperation and reciprocity* with others. (My emphasis)

These deep ideas map so well onto unity theory and multi-dimensional value. In unity theory, for a hungry person to eat is good—this is good on a single dimension, it creates a unity between the person's will and the world. Yet unity theory says that eating is even better when it also registers on more dimensions of value.

Say that you're hungry and you invite a friend over to enjoy a meal with you. Now your act of eating unifies you with the world and also with your friend. And you can add the third dimension of value as well if the meal that you serve is a recipe that you've been perfecting for weeks. Here the meal simultaneously unifies you with the world, with others, and with yourself over time. Your eating is now so much more valuable because you're sharing your pleasure with others in a way that also connects you to yourself. This meal is now registering on all three dimensions of value at once—as Nussbaum would say, you're now eating in a fully human way.

Nussbaum (2000, 82) says that the capabilities of affiliation and practical reason “stand out as of special importance, since they both organize and suffuse all the others.” Multi-dimensional value explains why. In the language of unity theory, affiliation and practical reason register on the interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions of value. Nussbaum's idea of a fully human life can be explained by saying the most valuable world-oriented activities are those that one enjoys with others and that flow with one's skills and commitments. Satisfying our world-oriented desires in ways that unify us with others and with ourselves expands the value of what we do. What both theories are saying is that multi-dimensional value is the richness of a fully human life.

We're also now in a position to respond to an objection of Amartya Sen, that a desire-satisfaction approach to well-being must be mistaken because of the phenomena of

impoverished desires and adaptive preferences. Many women in highly sexist cultures, Sen (1999, 62–63) says, have a very limited range of desires because of their oppressive upbringing and daily life—and in fact their desires may have adapted to expect the deprivation and abuse that they suffer. Sen rightly says that the satisfaction of the few desires that they have is not enough to give these women good lives. And he draws the conclusion that desire-satisfaction approaches to well-being must be wrong.

But Sen's dismissal of desire-satisfaction is too quick. Sen says that desires can be impoverished and adaptive—so change the theory of well-being. We should instead say that desires can be impoverished and adaptive—so change the desires. Changing desires is exactly the goal of the consciousness-raising self-help groups that Nussbaum has celebrated for years, and we can see the power of desire-change in the real stories of the protagonists of her book *Women and Human Development*.

As you recall, when we first meet these Indian women, their lives are quite bad in unity terms. Some of their natural desires for food and rest are not satisfied, often their days are filled with pain and exhaustion to which they are of course averse. Yet they do not complain much, or dream of better lives, because their husbands and their communities tell them that this is the life that they must accept.

The great change in these women's lives comes when they join consciousness-raising self-help groups. As they learn, discuss, and support each other, their desires are expanded and transformed. Look at how Nussbaum (2000, 161; c.f. 113) describes these women afterwards, and notice especially the role of the new desires in improving their lives:

By focusing on the stories of women in self-help groups of various types, we have given an optimistic slant to the issue of preference-deformation. In case after case, we see women quickly dropping habituated preferences and adjusting their aspirations in accordance with a new sense of their dignity and equality. When we see that in just a few weeks women learn to want employment rights, property rights, clean water, and many of the other items on the list.

Nussbaum's examples show that there's nothing wrong with desire-satisfaction theories. What's wrong in many parts of the world, including our own, is that people's desires are unfairly distorted and thwarted. The expansion and fulfilment of desires for multi-dimensional activities should be the primary goals of development, as this is what will enable people to live better, richer, more fully human lives.

As you can tell, I'm encouraged by the convergence between unity theory and Nussbaum's work. Unity theory gives a more rigorous derivation of many elements on Nussbaum's list of central capabilities, it explains her emphasis on sociability and practical reason as overarching capabilities, and it makes sense of her account of fully human life. If unity theory can contribute to Nussbaum's capability approach spreading still further into development practice, this will be gratifying.

Can we say more? Can unity theory contribute anything to development practice in its own right? Let me offer you a few last thoughts on how unity theory might enhance our development indicators, drawing on the idea of multi-dimensionality.

When I look at the scholars of the HDCA doing the hard work of building metrics to measure development, what always strikes me is that these scholars need not only good theory but good data. Even a perfect theory won't tell us what we want to know if the data aren't there, and as you know for many countries the data are quite poor (see e.g., Alkire and Jahan 2018, 4–5). Unity theory might help to enhance existing metrics, by adding indicators of development where relatively good data do exist.

We've seen that events can be multi-dimensionally good when they register on more than one dimension of value. The mirror point is that events can be multi-dimensionally bad when they register on more than one dimension of disvalue. Accidentally injuring oneself can be painful, but being injured by another person adds an extra dimension of interpersonal badness. A death can be bad, but a murder is worse. The genocidal campaign of ISIS against the Yazidis that killed 5000 was worse than an earthquake would have been that killed the same Yazidis. These multi-dimensional bads register in the data on violence, and we do have decent cross-country data on violence—not only on battle deaths and genocides but also on homicides and rapes and domestic abuse. So we might consider whether we should add indicators of violence to our metrics of development.

We can also detect multi-dimensional bads in the data on what Case and Deaton (2017) call deaths of despair. When people lose opportunities for meaningful work, when their families break down and when their communities don't support them, they can turn to short-term relief for their pain, and we see spikes in alcohol abuse, drug overdose, and suicide. Again, we have decent data on these tragedies, and we might consider adding these indicators of multi-dimensional bads to our metrics of development.

Finally, on a positive note, trust. Trust is essential for our living well together, in our personal lives and in our communities and in our countries. And we have good data on trust, from sources like the World Values Survey. When asked whether most people can be trusted, for example, only 18% of Algerians responded positively, while 74% Norwegians expressed trust in each other (Our World in Data 2020). (And perhaps I might mention that Britain and America are closer to Algeria than to Norway on measures of trust.) When we lack trust, nothing works for us; when we trust each other, we can accomplish everything together. If we want to measure true human development, we might look to measures of trust.

Abuse and suicide, trust and love—the logic of value is the logic of unity. We recognise the suffering and the struggles and the joy and the dreams of people the world over because all human judgments follow this same geometry. We understand the Hebrew scriptures and the Bhagavad Gita because these are logics of value that all humans share. When we look to the greatest traditions of human reflection, we see that they all celebrate the value that is unity: we see compassion in Buddhism, harmony in Confucianism, ubuntu in Africa, heaven in Christianity and Islam. No tradition celebrates self-interest, all traditions show us ideals of unity, where the self is constituted, or even transcended, with an enduring love for others.

Linguists tell us that the root of the word “good” is an Indo-European word that means, “to unite.”<sup>2</sup> We lead our most valuable lives, our most fully human lives, when our lives are with others and for others, as the sages of many ages have said. Goodness is unity—unity with the world, with each other, and within ourselves.

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## Notes

1. One might attempt the objection that Moore’s view of sex is unreasonable, yet then we will need to know what sense of “unreasonable” is meant. Moore is not likely to have been “unreasonable” in Rawls’s sense: Rawls’s sense turns on a citizen’s unwillingness to propose and abide by fair terms of cooperation. On Rawls’s understanding of the reasonable, see Wenar (1995).
2. Online Etymology Dictionary (2020) (referring to the proto-Indo-European root “ghedh”).

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