Development of humanity

A critical perspective on the Human Development Index by reconsidering Sen and Goulet

Roline Schaink

Master thesis Humanistic Studies
Development of humanity

A critical perspective on the Human Development Index by reconsidering Sen and Goulet

Master thesis Humanistic Studies
Variant Worldview and Research Studies
(Levensbeschouwing en Onderzoeksleer (L&O))

Roline Schaink
0060041
rhschaink@gmail.com

**Supervisor:**
Drs. Saskia van Goelst Meijer
PhD researcher - nonviolence and humanization

**Co-reader:**
Prof. dr. Peter Derkx
Professor of Humanism and Worldviews

University for Humanistic Studies
Utrecht, The Netherlands
May 2013

Cover picture: *A humble gift* by Marielliott [edited]
http://marielliott.deviantart.com/art/humble-gift-80039193
# Table of contents

Summary .......................................................................................................................... iii  
Prelude............................................................................................................................ v  
Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1  
  Research problem ....................................................................................................... 2  
  Relevance for Humanistic Studies ......................................................................... 6  
  Research question ..................................................................................................... 7  
  Research method ....................................................................................................... 8  
  Preview ....................................................................................................................... 9  
Chapter 1 – The Human Development Index .............................................................. 10  
  The HDI in context .................................................................................................. 10  
  Contents of the HDI ............................................................................................... 11  
  The HDI’s purpose ................................................................................................. 12  
  Criticism on the HDI .............................................................................................. 13  
  Relation between HDI and capability approach ..................................................... 14  
Chapter 2 – Sen’s capability approach ................................................................. 15  
  Development according to Sen .............................................................................. 15  
  The goal of development according to Sen ............................................................ 20  
  Underlying values of the capability approach ......................................................... 22  
  From Sen to the HDI ............................................................................................... 24  
Chapter 3 – Goulet’s theory of authentic development .......................................... 25  
  Goulet’s view on development ................................................................................. 25  
  Goals of development according to Goulet ............................................................ 32  
  Underlying values .................................................................................................... 34  
Chapter 4 – Comparison ....................................................................................... 38  
  Views on development .............................................................................................. 38  
  Development goals ................................................................................................. 40
Summary

In this thesis, I evaluate the Human Development Index (HDI) as to contribute to recent political and social debates on development cooperation. The focus lies on the way development is usually approached. The HDI is a renown instrument to assess countries’ performance in terms of development. However, the flipside of high development is that it sometimes has inversely proportional effects on less developed countries. This is not reflected in the HDI, as the HDI only indicates countries’ level of income, longevity and knowledge.

The evaluation of the HDI is based on a comparison between Amartya Sen’s capability approach (the conceptual framework of the HDI) and Denis Goulet’s theory of authentic development. Sen on the one hand stresses the need to expand peoples capabilities to choose a life they have reason to value. Goulet, on the other hand, argues that development should lead to life-sustenance, esteem and freedom for every man and of the whole humanity. Both theories are explored according to the reflected views on development, the goals of development and the values on which the theories are based. This exploration is followed by a comparison of the two theories in order to evaluate the HDI. Eventually I will argue in line with Goulet’s ideas that the HDI should also include indicators of sustainability, solidarity and austerity, in order to assess countries’ levels of authentic development.
Preface

After nearly seven years of studying at the University for Humanistic Studies, I can finally say: I did it! I can look back at seven years of beautiful challenges, changes, inspiration and friendship. During my studies, issues of global inequality as well as politics caught my interest. This was fuelled enormously by the Kosmopolis international summer school on Human Development and Human Rights that I attended in 2010. Also my internship at Fair Politics, the advocacy programme of the Dutch development organisation Evert Vermeer Foundation, inspired me a lot. I was determined to devote my thesis to the issues I came across during my internship: issues of global inequality and political unfairness. After all: one of the pillars of humanistic studies is ‘humanization’, which practically means making the world a better, more humane place. What could be said about global unfairness and development cooperation from this idea?

There are some people I would like to thank. First of all, my supervisor Saskia van Goelst Meijer, who introduced me to the work of Denis Goulet. Thank you for the inspiration and encouragement, for the interesting conversations we had, for the time you made to give me thorough and constructive feedback and for helping me to bring this big project to a good end.

Second, I want to thank Peter Derkx, my co-reader, for his sharp eyes and his great mind. With his great knowledge of literature he has always knew how to critically read my work and strengthen my ideas.

I want to thank my parents for all the ways they have supported and encouraged me to chase my goals and dreams and to make the most of everything: without you my studies would not have been possible. I thank my sister, Corianne, for always being there for me, for lending an ear every time I needed, for setting a great example of persistence; and my brother, Herrick, for being an inspiration to always keep your head up and to be true to yourself.

A special thanks to my personal VIPs, who never ceased to look after me and to be there for me. Two of them really dragged me through the hardest bits of my thesis time. Annelieke, thank you for listening to my troubles and putting them into perspective, for taking me dancing and balancing, and of course for proof reading...
my thesis! Jorn, thank you for taking my mind of all the thesis stress every now and then, for your encouraging words, for music, movies and more!

Rachel, Zoë and Daniel, thank you for the many times you checked up on me, for always being there for me, so close not matter how far!

A big thank you to my close friends and companions in the process of ‘thesising’: Bart, Maud, Fleur and Kim. The coffees, thesis songs, complaining together and helping each other to keep going have made the thesis time a lot more pleasant.

I could go on thanking friends who have supported me. To all of those that I have not mentioned, but have been there for me: THANK YOU!

I hope you will enjoy reading this thesis.

Sincerely,
Roline Schaink

Utrecht,
May 17, 2013
Introduction

During my study at the University for Humanistic Studies, I was for six months an intern at the Evert Vermeer Foundation (EVF). The EVF is a Dutch development organization with a main focus on raising awareness for development cooperation, both at the level of citizens and at the level of politicians and policymakers. I had always had an interest in development cooperation, and always had found the immense inequality in this word unacceptable. However, I could hardly grasp the whole problem in its complexity. It was at my internship that I had the opportunity to become slightly more familiar with the current affairs in the world of development cooperation. I worked at the Fair Politics programme, the EVS’s political lobbying department, that advocates ‘policy coherence for development (PCD)’. This can be defined in two ways, depending on the strictness of the definition. It means at least that development objectives and policies should not be hindered by non-development policies (trade, agriculture, fisheries, etc.). More strongly stated, it means that non-development policies promote development objectives. Through case studies and impact assessments, I was confronted with the fact that many policies and practices of the Netherlands and the European Union that concerned foreign affairs mainly looked after the interest of our own country or union, often at the cost of development in developing countries. This made me think critically about the fairness of international relations, about the meaning of development and the responsibilities the ‘developed world’ has towards the ‘developing world’.

In recent years many political and social debates have been going on about development cooperation. These debates mainly concern the effectiveness and efficiency of development aid, reforms of the ways development aid takes place and the role of development organisations, governments and companies in this (cf. Wetenschappelijke Raad voor de Regering (WRR), 2010; ViceVersa.nl). Roughly, on the one side opponents of development aid argue that most of the development money is wasted. This is due to ineffective spending of budgets, corruption and so on. Either way, the opponents think that money spent on development does not actually make developing countries richer or better advanced, as most development countries are still poor. On the other side, the advocates of development cooperation state that development aid does in fact in many cases help developing countries to fight poverty and hunger, however not always in such visible ways. The
advocates motivate their support for development aid often with moral arguments of solidarity and responsibility. Besides that, they use arguments of self-interest in terms of economical concerns and global security (WRR, 2010).

During my internship, I have been able to follow the discussion within the development sector itself. In the discussion both development organizations, politicians and policymakers took part. I was surprised that the argument that ‘the aid doesn’t help’ was almost always opposed by simply stating that in most cases it did in fact; the only thing was that it was not always directly visible. Yet there is another point that could have been made, which is the argument from PCD: even if development aid or cooperation does help, often money that is spent on aid or development cooperation by the one hand is simultaneously taken away by the other. This happens for instance through unfair trade relations, in which developed countries try to push developing countries to abolish market restrictions to make import and export cheaper. Developing countries, however, need these restrictions to protect and strengthen their often fragile economies. Another example is the existence of tax havens in some developed countries. Due to these tax havens, many multinational corporations evade high taxes in developing countries where they are active. It is estimated that the money that leaves developing countries due to tax evasion is ten times higher than the amount of money they received as aid. Yet the income from taxes are essentially used to finance health care and education. As a consequence developing countries remain poor and underdeveloped as they do not get the change to properly build capacity (Fair Politics, 2011).¹ If the ultimate goal of development cooperation is to fight global inequality and extreme poverty, development should also be seen in relation to the way of life in developed countries and their overall policies.

**Research problem**

The overall goal of development cooperation as laid down in the United Nations’ *Millennium Declaration* still seems valid and noble: in order to realize “the principles of human dignity, equality, en equity on the global level” (United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), 2000, Art. 2) we have to “to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty” (Idem, Art. 11). The Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) that were derived from this declaration, do not only address income, but also issues like education, health and

¹ For more examples, see www.fairpolitics.eu.
gender equality. In this way, extreme poverty is interpreted in a broad sense. It seems hard to disagree with these goals: probably not many people do. Yet the support from society, scholars and politicians for development cooperation has diminished in recent years. The current economical crisis seems to have contributed to a focus on self-interest and the protection of the own economy. Yet if development cooperation is still regarded to be important, it has to regain support and to reconnect to the ideas of people outside the development sector. In order to attain this, development cooperation needs to be rethought and reformed.

Most development policies and practices of governments and development organisations are directly linked to the MDGs. Moreover they are often aimed at countries that are categorized as ‘least developed countries’ by the United Nations. The Human Development Index (HDI) is one of the instruments that is used to determine which countries fall under this label. The HDI is an instrument to measure countries’ development. It makes it possible to compare countries based on specific indicators. Every year the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) publishes the renowned Human Development Report (HDR) containing an updated HDI. The HDI explicitly approaches development as more than economic growth or material wealth. In this way, it is distinguished from many other development indicators.

The HDI is based on the capability approach by Indian economist, philosopher and winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize for Economic Science Amartya Sen (UNDP, 2007, p. 1). The main principle of his theory is that people should be enabled to choose how to live their lives and what they want to do or be. This is the condition under which they can fully flourish. The UNDP tries to measure this kind of development by means of the HDI, focusing on a long life, knowledge and decent living standards. Apart from the fact that the index makes it possible to compare countries with each other, it also promotes the distribution of development and wealth within countries. The more developed a country is, the higher it is ranked in the HDI. However, this way of indexing countries seems to imply that the more a country has, the better it is performing in terms of development. Yet what the HDI does not take account of, is that the benefits of high development sometimes have inversely proportional effects on lower developed countries. I will illustrate this by two examples. First, hardly any medicines are developed for diseases that only occur in developing countries. There are two reasons to explain this. Firstly, highly developed countries provide a better market for the pharmaceutical industry. Secondly, in many developing countries a lot of medicines are unaffordable due to patents (Lexchin, 2010). The second example of negative impact of high
development is the climate change. Even though climate change is mostly caused by developed countries, developing countries are affected the worst by its consequences such as floods, droughts and famines (World Bank, 2010). The negative effects of high development thus hinder to a certain extent the development of others by limiting the choices of those affected by the flipside of development. The HDI does not pay attention to this fact, nor does the capability approach. Consequently, the HDI seems to lead to the kind of development that only gets developing countries as high in ranking as developed countries.

A recent report from the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress by Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi (2010) shows that it is indeed important that measures of development move beyond income measure like GDP, which is still a dominant indicator for economical and social progress. Yet they say little about well-being and sustainability. The former French President Nicolas Sarkozy wrote in the foreword of the French report:

“If we give no value in our accounts to the quality of public service; if we remain locked into an index of economic progress that includes only what is created and not what is destroyed; if we look only at gross domestic production, which rises when there has been an earthquake, a fire, or an environmental disaster; if we don’t deduct from what we consume in the course of production; if we don’t include the drafts that we are drawing on the future; if we don’t take account of how innovation is accelerating capital depreciation – how can we expect to realize what we are really doing and face up to our responsibilities?” (Sarkozy, 2009, in Stiglitz, Sen & Fitoussi, 2010, p.xiii)

If all these things are necessary in the assessment of development, adding statistics of education and health to those of income, as in the case of the HDI, also seems insufficient. Developed countries should reflect on themselves, their actions, their kind of development and their effects on the rest of the world. A hypothesis of this thesis, is that the HDI falls short at this point, as does the capability approach.

A theory that does take account of the flipside of high development, is the theory of authentic development that was formulated by the American philosopher, social planner and anthropologist Denis Goulet. Goulet is renowned for his founding work in the field of development ethics. His theory provides an alternative view on development, that is suspicious of growth or expansion as end of development. I will compare Goulet’s and Sen’s theories with each other, in order to explore
whether Goulet’s theory could complement Sen’s work with respect to negative impact of high development. In his theory of authentic development, Goulet presents a view on development which considers of concepts of the good life and the good society. Furthermore, his theory contains an elaboration on the meaning of ‘human’ in development. In this way, he expanded the thoughts of his mentor, the French social scientist and Dominican friar Louis-Joseph Lebret. According to Lebret, development should be directed towards ‘being more’ instead of ‘having more’\(^2\), and moreover should be the development of humanity as a whole.

“To Lebret it was evident that underdevelopment is a byproduct of the distorted achievements of those societies which incorrectly label themselves as developed. He argued that satisfying an abundance of false needs at the expense of keeping multitudes in misery can never be authentic development.” (Goulet, 1974, p.36)

Interestingly enough, the societies or countries at which Lebret seems to aim, are the ones ranked highest in the HDI. Yet as Goulet (1973) argues, not only developing countries, but also the so-called developed countries are underdeveloped. Both developing and developed countries have to become more humanized, that is, to be freed from misery. According to Goulet, misery is in fact not only caused by poverty, i.e. lacking basic goods. Also abundance, i.e. having too much, can lead to misery: it fuels greed, addiction and alienation from ourselves, others and the world around us. Another crucial point in Goulet’s theory is that we have to move to a more reciprocal world society, in order to give everyone the opportunity to develop into being more human. This means: having enough goods to survive, enough esteem and enough freedom for self-actualization, and within people’s own context and relations (Ibid.).

In this thesis, I will examine the tension between the HDI and the theory of Goulet which appears from the contrast between ranking countries’ extent of development on the one hand and the idea that development is only authentic if the whole humanity and every person benefits from it. As the HDI is a measuring instrument that is deducted from Sen’s capability approach, it is important to explore Sen’s work as well in order to understand the underlying concepts, assumptions and values of the HDI. The works of Sen and Goulet will be primarily compared, since a comparison between one theory (Goulet’s) and an instrument (HDI) that stems

\(^2\) This distinction is derived from Erich Fromm (1978) and will be further explained in chapter 3.
from yet another theory (Sen’s) will make little sense. Moreover does the HDI not fully cover Sen’s whole theory, thus the HDI can also be critically evaluated from Sen’s own approach. The central question of this thesis then is how we can evaluate the Human Development Index, when comparing Sen’s theory with Denis Goulet’s theory of authentic development. With this thesis I hope to contribute to discussing and rethinking development thought and development cooperation.

**Relevance for Humanistic Studies**

One of the pillars of humanistic studies as well as of humanism as a worldview is ‘humanization’. Humanization is the aim for more humane relationships between people in different contexts of living (Alma, s.a.). Humanistic studies itself is inspired by humanist values, such as self-realization, human dignity, equality, freedom and solidarity (Derkx, 1993, p. 102; cf. Derkx, 2011). This corresponds with the goal of development cooperation: to free people from situations of extreme poverty, by making wealth, education and health care, among other things, more accessible. Eventually, this is supposed to realize human dignity, equality and equity for everyone. These ideals are not at all self-evident, but are based on ideas and values that in turn are embedded in views of life and worldviews. Humanistic studies seeks to uncover these often implicit values. Within humanistic studies there is quite some attention for Sen’s capability approach and even more for the further work on capabilities by Martha Nussbaum. However, hardly any attention is paid to the HDI as instrumental translation to practice of this approach. This is at least remarkable for a study that is called practice-oriented. Since the practical translation may emphasize certain values from the original theory and exclude others, it is even more interesting for humanistic studies to examine which values are expressed in the HDI.

By exploring different views on development, ethical questions are bound to occur. What do we regard as the good life, what kind of development do we want and what kind of policies would be good in a moral sense? Humanistic studies is explicitly value-laden social science can address these questions from a humanist perspective and examine the different values that are at stake. As development cooperation, although not always treated like it, is essentially ethical, it finds its roots in worldviews and values derived from them. The way in which the world is humanized by development cooperation is therefore an important subject for humanistic studies and deserves more attention within the institute. Besides, taking
the discussion on development to a more ethical level makes it possible to address more fundamental issues of development cooperation. In order to properly answer questions of what, how and why, the question ‘what for?’ should be posed.

Within humanistic studies as well as in its Kosmopolis Institute which is concerned with issues of world citizenship and global ethics, the capabilities approach of Sen and Nussbaum are currently mainly used when development is discussed. Goulet’s work on the other hand is hardly known at all, even though Goulet himself calls it explicitly a humanist approach. Through the comparison of Sen and Goulet, I aim to research the value of Sen’s theory as well as Goulet’s for a humanistic approach to development and to evaluate the HDI through this approach.

**Research question**

Considering all of the above, I have come to the following research question:

**Main question**

How can we evaluate the Human Development Index that is based on Amartya Sen’s capability theory, by comparing Sen’s theory with Denis Goulet’s theory of authentic development?

**Sub-questions**

1) What is the Human Development Index and what is its purpose?
2) How does the HDI relate to Sen’s capability approach?
3) What does Amartya Sen’s capability theory involve?
   a) How does Sen interpret the concept of development?
   b) What is the goal of development according to Sen?
   c) What are the underlying values of Sen’s theory?
4) What does Goulet’s theory of authentic development involve?
   a) How does Goulet interpret the concept of development?
   b) What is the goal of development according to Goulet?
   c) What are the underlying values of Goulet’s theory?
5) What differences and similarities can be found between Sen’s and Goulet’s theories?
6) What does this study and comparison of the two theories hold for evaluating the HDI?
Research method

This research consists of a literature study. First of all, the HDI will be outlined: the origin, development, method and goals of the HDI will be discussed as well as the main focuses of the HDI. This part will largely be based upon the first UNDP Human Development Report (1990), since the origin and development of the HDI are described in most detail in that report. Also I use the work Measuring human development: a primer (UNDP, 2007), which is meant as an introduction for people who want to know more about the HDI, or who have to work with it. I have chosen this work for it provides a clear and accessible overview of the HDI and its contents. Furthermore, I will consult the HDR 2010 (UNDP, 2010) that contains an elaborated discussion and overview of changes that have been made to the HDI as a response to criticism.

The second part discusses Sen’s capability approach and analyses it with regard to the sub-questions. The main sources used for this chapter are Equality of what? (Sen, 1979a), Commodities and capabilities (Sen, 1999a) and Development as freedom (Sen, 1999b). The first work I chose since in it Sen mentioned the notion of capability for the first time and thus sets the stage for his later works. The second work is a more technical underpinning of the capabilities approach, and is based on a lecture Sen gave in 1982. The last work then, encompasses most of Sen’s thoughts on development and seems to be a evaluation of the developments of the capability approach up to 1999. Although Sen has published yet another book that presents the capability theory in 2009, The idea of justice, I have not used this work since the HDI is based on his earlier works. Moreover, his approach as far as it concerns development does not appear to be significantly altered.

In the third chapter, Goulet’s theory of authentic development is described and discussed. The key works for this part are The cruel choice: a new concept in the theory of development (1973) and A new moral order: development ethics and liberation theology (1974). The cruel choice is probably Goulet’s most encompassing and influential work and thus is indispensable for a proper description of his idea of authentic development. A new moral order contains a detailed description of Lebret’s thoughts and work. Since Goulet draws heavily from Lebret’s thoughts, I use this work of Goulet to better understand his theory.

Besides primary sources, I have used some secondary literature as well, which I attained through a variety of search engines, such as Omega (electronic database of Utrechten University), Google Scholar and Worldcat.org. Also I drew from references in the literature that I had found already.
The comparison will take place in accordance with the sub-questions, thus on the basis of the view of development, the goals that both authors regard important for development, and the underlying values of their approaches.

**Preview**

This thesis is largely structured in accordance with the sub-questions. Only the second sub-questions on the relation between the HDI and Sen’s work is incorporated in the chapters on the HDI and Sen. Chapter 1 consists of a description of the HDI and its background. First, the context in which it developed will be outlined, followed by a discussion of the contents and purpose of the HDI. Then I will highlight some of the criticism on the HDI. The chapter will end by shortly explaining how the HDI relates to Sen’s capability approach. Chapter 2 will elaborate on the capability approach. In line with the research questions, first of all Sen’s view on development is described. After that, the goals of development as presented in the capability approach are regarded. Next, I will examine the values underlying Sen’s work. Lastly, the way in which the capability approach translates to the HDI is passed in review. In chapter 3, Goulet’s theory of authentic development will be exhibited in the same manner. Accordingly, Goulet’s view on development will be described first. Next, I will explore the underlying values of Goulet’s theory. As I have said before, no valid comparison can be made directly between the HDI and Goulet’s theory of authentic development. Chapter 4 therefore will first compare the two theoretical approaches to development. As Sen and Goulet’s theories have in this thesis been reviewed by their view on development, the goals and the underlying values, the comparison also follows that structure. In chapter 5, the HDI will be critically reviewed in the light of the comparison. The HDI will be evaluated with respect to the way it relates to the view on development, the goals and the underlying values of both theories, and especially Goulet’s theory. In the conclusion, the main points of this thesis will be recapitulated and an answer will be given to the research question. Furthermore, the outcomes of the thesis will be considered in a broader perspective. Also I will make suggestions for further research.
Chapter 1 – The Human Development Index

As I intend to evaluate the HDI, it is first of all necessary to understand what the HDI involves. This chapter provides a short overview of the HDI and its background. First of all I will describe the context in which the HDI was developed. After that, the contents and purpose of the HDI will be discussed. Then I highlight some of the criticism that has been written on the HDI. I finish this chapter by describing the relation between the HDI and Sen’s capability approach.

In 1990, the first HDR was published, which it introduced by means of the HDI a new way of measuring development. The HDI was developed by amongst others economist Mahbub ul Haq and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen. It combines indicators of both economic and social development in countries to asses development. Hence, the index does not only focus on economic growth and increase of income, but also on actual human beings and what they are able to do or to be. Opening the report with the statement “People are the real wealth of a nation” (UNDP, 1990, p.9) directly shifted the emphasis from financial and material wealth to human well-being as first priority for development. The aim of development, according to the UNDP is: “to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives” (Ibid.). As mentioned in the introduction, Sen’s capability approach was used as the conceptual framework of the HDI.

The HDI in context

Before the development of the HDI, economic growth was almost synonymously used for a country’s development and the well-being of its people. It was assumed that economic growth would trickle down to the members of society, reducing inequalities in income and social status. Economic growth was therefore believed to bring overall development. Hence, the policy objectives for development were the growth of developing countries’ Gross National Product (GNP) and industrialization (Thorbecke, 2007). In the 1970s, problems with the GNP approach to development became clear, as people became aware of the levels of joblessness, inequality of income distribution, increasing poverty and the bad international position of developing countries. Economic and social development could no longer be expected to automatically come from economic growth. Development thinking
shifted towards the basic needs approach, which although initially supposed to address a broad range of basic needs, in practice emphasised merely the need for a minimal income and access to basic material resources and public services (Idem). According to the UNDP (2007), this approach to development was also inadequate: it fails to pay sufficient attention to “important elements of life, such as the position of poor and marginalized people and their ability to voice their views, gender power relations, the freedom to choose, etc.” (p. 34). Because of these shortcomings of the basic needs approach, the development discourse started to focus on the actual lives that people lead and the possibilities that human beings have. By doing so, it drew heavily from Sen’s thoughts. Sen by that time had started to develop the capability theory, which in short focuses on the actual choices and freedoms that people have to live their lives in a way they value. In the next chapter Sen’s theory will be discussed extensively.

**Contents of the HDI**

Every year since 1990, the UNDP has published an updated HDI in the HDR in order to discuss and reflect the progress in human development worldwide. The HDI is a so-called composite index, which combines several indicators for the three dimensions that are considered to be essential for human development: living a long life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living (UNDP 1990, p.12). I will briefly explain these indicators and their importance for development.

*Longevity* is part of the HDI, because a long life is seen “as valuable in itself” (Idem, p. 12). Moreover, if people live long, it means that they have proper access to basic resources such as water, food, health care and medicines. Longevity is measured through life expectancy at birth (Ibid.).

*Knowledge* is seen as important for human development, as good education is crucial for “productive life in modern society” (Idem, p. 12). The basic indicator for this component used to be the rate of literacy in a country, as the 1990 HDR stated that literacy is basic to learning and knowledge-building (Ibid.). Currently, however, the mean years of schooling of adults as well as the expected years of schooling for children are used to indicate knowledge (UNDP, 2010).

The last element of the HDI, *decent living standards and access to necessary resources*, is the hardest to measure. Many variables should be included in such an indicator, but there is not much data on these variables. The most evident indicator is per capita income, since income figures are widely available. In the HDI the gross
domestic product (GDP), or more recently the gross national income (GNI) per capita, adjusted to the real purchasing power is used as indicator for living standards (UNDP, 1990; UNDP 2010).

One of the shortcomings of the data derived from the indicators is that it does not provide information on the distribution of longevity, knowledge or decent living standards. For that reason, in 2010 some additional measures were developed and included in the HDRs to complement the HDI. These measures are the *Inequality-adjusted* HDI (IHDI), the *Gender Inequality Index* (GII) and the *Multidimensional Poverty Index* (MPI) (UNDP, 2010). Also measures of environmental sustainability, human security, well-being and decent work have been added to the HDR in order to cover the political and social dimension of human development.

**The HDI’s purpose**

Some aims of the HDI have already been mentioned above. I will now go into further detail of the purpose of the HDI and of the purpose of the HDRs in general. Also the importance of the HDI and HDRs will be discussed.

A first goal of the HDI is to provide a composite index of the different aspects of life and well-being, bringing income and social indicators together. The aim is to stress the importance of social aspects of life for human development. The emphasis should not be on income alone, using GDP or GNP as measures as was usually done in the past and still happens nowadays (cf. Stiglitz *et al.*, 2010). Income should be seen as a means to development and not as an end in itself. Instead people and their well-being should be the end of development (UNDP, 1990). Human development has to be seen in a broader perspective, in which longevity and knowledge are to be valued as well. As the first HDR states: “Longevity and knowledge refer to the formation of human capabilities, and income is a proxy measure for the choices people have in putting their capabilities to use” (Idem, p.14).

As the HDI consists of social as well as economic indicators, countries’ progress on these dimensions of human development can be measured. This goal directly serves other goals. First, it provides data for evidence-based policymaking. Using the figures of the HDI, policymakers can design policies to fight circumstances that hinder people from reaching their full potential, in social, political or economic terms (UNDP, 2007, p. 1). Another goal served by monitoring progress is the ability to compare countries with each other. This might challenge
countries to improve their human development performances. National data are made internationally comparable through so called harmonization procedures applied by international agencies. If national data are not available, estimates are made on the basis of other relevant information (UNDP, 2010, pp. 138-139). Thanks to the comparable data and the monitoring of progress, civil society organisations have an important tool to advocate policies that promote human development. Also it is a strong instrument to hold governments accountable for their policies, which in turn would strengthen democratic governance (UNDP, 2007).

Apart from the abovementioned goals, the UNDP strives through its HDRs and HDI to gain insights from development practices. These insights can be used to share experiences between policymakers (UNDP, 1990, iii). The 1990 HDR explicitly states that it is not prescriptive, but that it is meant to contribute "to the definition, measurement and policy analysis of human development" (Ibid.).

**Criticism on the HDI**

The HDI has been subject to many critiques since the publication of the first HDR. Stanton (2007) notes that several scholars have argued that the data that was used for the HDI was poor, due to unreliable data collection or processing. Another objection to the HDI is that the wrong indicators were used to measure development. Besides, the indicators have been judged as being redundant, as they correlate too much with each other (Idem). Sagar and Najam (1998) criticized the HDI for not being concerned with equity within countries nor with sustainability matters. Moreover, they argued that an index that is composed from three rather different indicators masks possible trade-offs in the different dimensions. A country that scores low on one dimension but higher on the other two, can still be highly ranked in the HDI (Idem, p. 251).

In 2010, the HDI was reformed and new indices were added to the HDR. This has to a great extent dealt with the criticism. However, some other critiques have been rejected as incorrect by Klugman, Rodríguez and Choi (2011)³, such as the claim that the wrong measures are chosen to assess human development. Klugman et al. argue that the HDI was never supposed to reflect human development in its totality, as more issues are of importance than a long life, education and income. Instead, the HDI is meant as a partial indicator for the state of development of

---

³ The authors of the report are respectively the director, head of research and consultant of the UNDP’s Human Development Report Office.
countries (UNDP, 1990; Klugman et al., 2011). This seems a too easy way out of the criticism, as the HDI is still found to be very important to development policy and practices. Yet it has to be admitted that the scope of the HDI and the HDR is drastically broadened by the additive indices that deal with equality of distribution, basic rights and liberties and sustainability.

**Relation between HDI and capability approach**

As has been said before, the capability approach forms largely the conceptual framework on which the HDI is based. The idea that is central to Sen’s work is that development should be about enhancing the ability people have to choose the lives they value (UNDP, 2007). This thought has also become a basic thought in the HDRs and the HDI. Yet the HDI and the capability approach cannot be translated directly to each other. The HDI is an instrument that is based on the capability approach, but it does not cover this whole theory. Besides, it differs at some points from the capability approach. This can be illustrated by the fact that Sen has never formulated some kind of list of basic capabilities, while he HDI clearly does have three key points on which it focuses: longevity, knowledge and decent living standards. Although Sen would probably agree that these aspects are important for development, development would still imply more. The HDI then explicitly not fully comprehends human development, but only some basic dimensions of capabilities (Idem, p.26).

Without an elaboration of the capability approach, an invalid and irrelevant comparison would take place between one theory (Goulet’s) and an instrument (HDI) deduced from another theory (Sen’s). In order to conduct a sensible evaluation on the HDI, the comparison in this these will thus primarily be a theoretical one. To get a better understanding of the fundamental ideas of the HDI, the next chapter will examine the capability approach. This understanding is necessary to properly compare the ideas that the HDI represents to those of Goulet’s theory of authentic development that are discussed in the third chapter.
Chapter 2 – Sen’s capability approach

To get a fuller understanding of the HDI, it is important to know more about the theory on which the index is based in order to explicate the underlying assumptions and ideas. Therefore in this chapter, I will elaborate on Sen’s capability approach. First of all, I will look at the way Sen defines development. Next, the purpose of development as Sen sees it will be outlined. Finally, I will highlight some of the underlying values of the capability theory.

Development according to Sen

The from origin Indian economist and philosopher and Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen has been developing a normative approach to economics and development as of the late 1970s. He was unsatisfied with the existing utilitarian theories as well as primary goods theories like that of John Rawls to assess the well-being of people. He regarded the informational bases of these theories too shallow. According to Sen, these theories do not take into account what people are actually able to do or to be. Yet exactly that kind of information is essential to evaluate people’s well-being. This forms the basis of his capability approach to equality and justice.

Utilitarianism, primary goods and capabilities

With the capabilities approach, Sen intended to offer an alternative to utilitarianism and Rawls’ primary goods approach as theories of justice and equality (Sen, 1979a). To place Sen’s ideas in this context, both approaches and their key features will be outlined roughly now, in the way Sen has discussed them. The descriptions of both approaches are not precise and complete, as they are only meant to sketch the place of Sen’s theory in the debate.

For utilitarianism, acts are regarded as ethically right if they bring the maximum utility –which can be defined as happiness, pleasure or desire-fulfilment– to the greatest amount of people, or in other words the maximization of the sum-total of utility. According to John Stuart Mill, one of the founding fathers of utilitarianism, the ultimate end of utilitarianism is the greatest happiness, not for one individual, but “the greatest happiness altogether” (Mill, 2004). The more and the richer the enjoyments and the furthest away from pain, the greater the happiness (Idem). Sen distinguishes three elements of the ‘utilitarian evaluation’,
which are consequentialism, welfarism and sum-ranking. **Consequentialism** focuses merely on the consequences of choices and not on their intentions when evaluating the moral righteousness of choices and acts. Acts that were done with the right intentions, but that turned out with bad consequences are to be considered ethically wrong (Walter, 2012; Sen, 1999b). **Welfarism** is the view that states of affairs are to be judged only by utilities they bring forth (Sen, 1999b). **Sum-ranking** at last, is the summing up of individual utilities, regardless of their distribution. Sen himself describes this as follows: “one collection of individual utilities is at least as good as another if and only if it had at least as large a sum total” (Sen, 1979b, p. 468). All taken together, a choice is ethically good if the total of benefits that comes with the consequential state of affairs of that choice is as great as possible.

One of Sen’s main critiques on the utilitarian ethics is that it does not at all look at the distribution of utilities and well-being. Acts are seen as good if they improve the totality of well-being, seen as a “mental characteristic, viz., the pleasure or happiness generated” (Sen, 1999b, p. 58). This implies that the well-being, if not the whole being of one person could be sacrificed for the benefit of the greater good. Another point against utilitarianism that Sen makes, is that there is no attention for non-utility concerns. Examples of such concerns are rights and freedoms. Utilitarianism does not subscribe any intrinsic value to them (Idem, p. 62). A final objection to utilitarian equality from Sen’s point of view is that utilitarian ethics ignores the fact that often people mentally adapt to lower degrees of happiness than necessary. They simply accept their deprivations. If people under circumstances of poverty stop desiring better conditions, then the utilitarian calculus falls short (Ibid.).

Despite his critique on utilitarianism, Sen also points out some positive aspects of it. He recognizes the importance of the emphasis utilitarianism puts on the outcomes of choices in evaluating them. He argues that when social arrangements are made, the outcomes of those considerations should also be taken into account if a proper evaluation is to be made (Sen, 1999b, p. 60). Furthermore, the interest that utilitarianism has in well-being of people is appreciated by Sen. However, Sen sees the way in which well-being is defined as disputable. The utilitarian approach seems to seek for measures to subjective well-being, which concerns direct feelings. This is important yet inadequate to judge a person’s quality of life. Also objective well-being should be part of the evaluation of life, according to Sen. Objective well-being depends on things that are objectively judged to be required for well-being, apart from the experienced needs. Gasper (2006) notes that Sen’s concept of capability shifts more towards an objective well-
being approach, as it focuses on the options people should have. To attain these options, certain external conditions should be upheld. However, subjective well-being could still be relevant to assess individuals’ experienced level of agency achievement, which can differ from the freedom to attain agency, or agency-freedom.

John Rawls proposed an alternative libertarian approach to justice as a critique on the utilitarian view that the only good is to maximize the sum of utilities. Rawls (2005) argued that there are primary social goods that every reasonable person is supposed to want, like “rights, liberties and opportunities, income and wealth and the social bases of self-respect” (Rawls, 1971, as cited in Sen, 1979a, p. 214). A just or fair distribution of these primary goods can only be attained when people reason from the original position. The most important feature of this original position is the so called ‘veil of ignorance’. This veil covers up the social and economical position of individuals in society and enables everyone to reason as free and equal people, without self-interest playing a part (Rawls, 2005, p.23-25). Two important principles flow from this kind of reasoning: liberty equality and the difference principle. The liberty equality principle means that “each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others” (Rawls, 1971, cited in Sen, 1979a, p. 214). The difference principle means that inequalities can be tolerated only if the weakest members of society benefit from it. Nevertheless, priority should always be given to liberties, as they cannot be traded off for social or economical gains (Sen, 1979a). All people thus should have access to primary social goods, of which liberties are the most important.

Sen appreciates Rawls’ shift towards a broader scope than the level of income in order to judge people’s well-being Primary goods are necessary in everyone’s life to accomplish the life plan someone set out for himself, no matter what that life plan actually contains. At the same time, though, he stresses that a mere index of primary goods lacks important elements to evaluate peoples’ advantages. For instance, Rawls overlooks the relation between income/wealth and well-being/freedom. Due to the large diversity between people, the relations between wealth and well-being are just as diverse among different people. In short: a fixed set of primary goods relies too much on the assumption that people need the same goods and assumes too little differences among people (Sen, 1979a, p.216; 1999b, p. 72). Moreover, the priority of liberty assumes that liberties are more important for well-being than other primary social goods. According to Sen (1999b) this is not
at all evident, as people might weight their liberty not that heavily with regards to their total well-being.

Sen (1979a) argues that both approaches have some good points in judging well-being. However, even if the two would be combined, some crucial information is missing according to Sen. The missing concept is that of ‘basic capabilities’ (p. 218). *Capabilities* can be defined as what a person is actually able to do or to be, the life one can lead. On the one hand, utilitarianism takes notice of well-being and consequences of choices or arrangements. The problem, however, is that it is blind to the distribution of these consequences over individuals and leaves no room for non-utility aspects such as liberties and rights. On the other hand, Rawls’ theory of primary goods does contain the need for rights and liberties, among the other primary social goods. Yet the problem with Rawls is that he does not care about what these goods actually do to the people, even though there is great variety in what goods mean for an individual’s well-being. That is why Sen proposes a new kind of equality: ‘basic liberty equality’ (Ibid.). This equality is focused on some kind of equality of the outcomes of what the primary goods do to people, what kind of life they enable people to live. Defined in this way, equality means that people can live the life they value to the same extent as others, however different these lives may be (Sen, 1979a; 1999b).

*The capability approach*

Different from utilitarianism and Rawls’ theory of justice, Sen renders equality of ‘basic capabilities’ as the most fundamental principle for a just society. By introducing the concept of capabilities, the informational base for the evaluation of justice is shifted away from the utilitarian idea of maximization of utility or happiness on the one hand, and away from the Rawlsian equal distribution of basic goods. Instead, what a person is actually able to do or to be, the life one can lead - in other words capabilities - should be taken into account in the evaluation of justice. According to Sen, development then should be seen as the road to providing people with the capabilities and freedom to lead their life according to their own choices and values. In his own words: “Development consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency” (Sen, 1999b, p. xii) and “can be seen (...) as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (Idem, p. 3).
To grasp this notion of development, it is important to understand some of the basic concepts of Sen’s theory: functionings and capabilities. A *functioning* is something a person actually achieved to be or to do (Sen, 1999a, p. 7). A *capability* is the freedom or ability to choose and realize a certain functioning. For instance, one may have access to plenty of food and therefore have the capability to be adequately nourished (functioning). However, one might still choose not to eat and choose the function to fast, for whatever reason, instead of to eat. Starving due to a lack of food, would instead point at the lack of capability to nourish oneself adequately (Sen, 1999b, p. 76).

As Gasper (2002; 2006) has noted, the concept of capability can be interpreted in several ways and the use of the term is not always clear. Gasper himself distinguishes two kinds of capabilities. The first kind of capability is called the ‘S-capability’. This covers the more common meaning of capabilities as skills, capacities, aptitude and ability (Gasper, 2002, p. 14). A more abstract definition, which is mainly used by Sen, is capability as opportunity or options to paths of life that a person can attain, the ‘O-capability’ (Ibid.).

At the same time, the notion of functionings is multi-layered as well. It refers not only to the things one can do or be. It addresses the activities (both conscious and unconscious) required for achieving this being or doing as well as the outcomes of it (Gasper, 2002, p.16). Gasper illustrates this with the function ‘being without malaria’. First, you have to take a malaria pill (conscious action), then your body has to process it (unconscious action), then you achieve the state of being free from malaria (achieved state), which in turn may lead to a healthier and longer life (consequential outcome). From this example, it can be understood that the line between functioning and capabilities is somewhat vague. Moreover, they are highly interdependent. To achieve a certain functioning, one has to have access to goods (malaria pills) as well as S-capabilities (physical ability to process the pill). The achieved functioning (being healthy/without malaria) is at the same time also an O-capability, as it comes with the option of achieving yet other functionings (working, caring, etc.) (Idem). Figure 1 illustrates the complex relations between capabilities and functioning and their overlapping character.

However, despite this ambiguity, Sen clearly does counter utility and income by emphasizing the need for people to have different options to lead their lives. Ultimately, it is about giving people the opportunity to make their own choices. Here, another key element of Sen’s notion comes in: *agency*. In contrast to a ‘patient’, someone who undergoes whatever other people do to them or decide for them, an ‘agent’ actively shapes his or her own life and acts upon his own choices.
People should be able to choose their own way of life, choose which functionings they want to attain, based upon their own reasoned values and goals. Agency implies not only freedom, but also responsibility for one's choices and acts. Recapitulating then, Sen views development as the expansion of capabilities, that in turn enable people, as individual agents of reason, to choose a life that they value. Obstructions to choose certain functioning – in other words lack of capabilities – have to be removed, for they involve unfreedoms.

The goal of development according to Sen

The thought that used to be, and often still seems to be, dominant in the discussion about development is that economic growth and income growth would foster development and improve people's well-being. This thought, however, is of a rather utilitarian nature. Sen argues that income growth should not be the aim of development, nor should the access to primary goods, as John Rawls proposes. Instead, what matters is what these things (thus liberties, rights, income and other resources) do to people, whether they enable or disable people to make certain choices and achieve the things in life they find valuable. Hence, the ultimate goal of human development is freedom to choose the life one values (Sen, 1999b, p. xii).

In order to achieve this ultimate goal, a more concrete goal should be striven for: the abolishment of poverty, in a broad sense of the word. Sen uses the word
poverty to describe any deprivation of basic capabilities. For instance, if people lack political rights, health care, education and so on, they should be regarded as being deprived. After all, deprivations form possible obstructions to choose and achieve certain functionings.

Some clarification on the kind of freedom Sen suggests might be necessary. It is not the kind of freedom that one can do as he or she pleases according to the desires or tastes someone has. This would again be a more utilitarian definition of freedom. Individual freedom should be seen as ‘a social commitment’ (Sen, 1999b, p. xii), as agency and society cannot be seen separately from each other. As agents, people act as members of the public and participate in economic, social and political activities (Idem, p.19). In these public spheres people should be free to act upon their own values and to be able to fully participate. Yet they are also responsible for their actions and thus in a way responsible for everyone’s freedom. Sen’s ideal is to have a free society in which there is room for diversity and the flourishing of every individual.

The importance Sen attaches to plurality within societies leads him to not further specify which capabilities people should have. Sen sees this as something that the members of communities are to discuss and decide. Gasper (2002) argues, though, that not only the notion of capabilities is rather undefined. Also Sen’s concepts of agency, well-being, freedom and personhood are rather thin. In Gasper’s analysis Sen describes people in fact only as individuals who strive for freedom through rational choices. Well-being is expressed in terms of fulfilling “whatever own functionings ‘one has reason to value’, and especially the freedom to allow this” (Idem, p. 18). For such a description to make any sense, it is necessary that the concepts of reason, freedom and agency are closely examined. Moreover, the question what it means to be a human being, what is human, has to be addressed, as being human contains more than being a rational chooser. Without a proper elaboration on that kind of concepts, “‘Human Development’ conceived as ever greater [O-] capability risks becoming absorbed into the hegemony of commodity production and consumerism” (Idem, p. 30).

As from the criticism can be derived, the goal of development in Sen’s theory remains rather ambiguous. Development as expanding capabilities to enhance people’s freedom and in turn people’s well-being sounds interesting and promising. Yet if the founding concepts of this definition remain unclear, so will the eventual goals of development. Also it is not clear what capabilities exactly should be
expanded, as Sen has consciously rejected to be more specific on that point. He argues that that is up to societies to decide upon this, through public reasoning.

**Underlying values of the capability approach**

What can be said about the underlying values of Sen’s theory? Why are capabilities and freedom so important? Some of these values such as freedom and agency have already been mentioned in the above. I will therefore go into two values in more detail now: *diversity* and *equality*.

One of the things Sen found to be striking in utilitarianism as well as in the primary goods approach, is that both did not take into account *diversity* among individuals. Different people have different needs, desires, resources, values and so on. To do justice to all these differences, this diversity has to be acknowledged and respected. Equality in Sen’s theory seems to involve that pluralism: every individual has reason to value the things he or she values, given that they are rational agents. These values are crucial in the objectives people have and the kind of life they want to lead. As we have seen in the above, the emphasis on this diversity also leads to some unclarity in the capability theory. For instance, the diversity of needs or motivations people can act upon remains largely unspecified. Moreover, an important issue concerns other people. What if the life that one has reason to value hinders someone else’s values, hence depriving him in his freedom to live the life he would choose? Can people do whatever they want until their freedom clashes with the other’s freedom? Although Sen does point out that freedom comes with social responsibility and that rational choices also might encompass sympathy for and commitment to others (Sen, 1999b), his capability approach does not give much guidance on this point. It remains centralized around individuals and their freedom to choose. Besides, the expectations of people’s rationality are considerably high and might in reality turn out to be misplaced. After all, human beings are more than rational choosers, as also irrational and emotional aspects play an important part in our choices and our existence.

*Equality*, the way Sen uses it, implies that every human being and every human life is equally worthy. This in turn corresponds with the Aristotelian thought that every human being is to be treated as an end in itself. If people are treated as fully human and as ends in themselves, there must be space for this diversity amongst people. Every individual should have equal capabilities, thus equal freedom to
choose the life he or she values, instead of being forced to live a life someone else has decided for. Although Sen himself does not pervasively use the words, these statements can be seen as referring to the values of human dignity and self-determination. Still not much can be said how Sen would describe these values, apart from that people should be free agents who decide what kind of life they want to lead. As Sen’s capability approach lacks clear notions of the concept of ‘being human’ and the ‘self’, it is hard to say how he would define a dignified life that one shapes himself. Moreover, when Sen states that freedom occurs when people have the capability to choose a life they have reason to value, he takes no notice of the fact that values are shaped by interaction with other people. The aspect of shared meaning systems in which everyone is embedded is absent in Sen’s approach (Deneulin & McGregor, 2010).

The strong focus on individual people as ends in themselves has also led to accusations that the capability approach is too individualistic. However, the extent of individualism, as for instance Robeyns (2005) and Gore (1997) have noted, only applies to the ethical level. This means that the capabilities approach is only individualistic when it comes to the evaluation of states of affairs: the effects of states of affairs on individuals is what matters. Sen does not claim that every social phenomenon can be explained only by referring to individuals and their properties (methodological individualism), nor that society is nothing more than the sum of individuals (ontological individualism) (Robeyns, 2005, p. 107-108). Ontologically and methodologically speaking, the capability approach is thus not to be regarded as individualistic.

Sen’s values of diversity and equality, as well as his individualistic ethic, point to the value that seems most precious to Sen: freedom. Freedom is not only the end and means for development, but also the main justifying value. Although Sen sees freedom as coming with responsibility, it is not clear how this responsibility takes shape. The way in which responsibility plays a role in society is rather important though, for one of the concerns of this thesis is that development of the one person might negatively affect development of the other. Yet if freedom in Sen’s approach could also mean that if one finds it valuable to live a life in luxury at the expense of others, something is off. This may not be what Sen had in mind, but his approach hardly touches this point.
From Sen to the HDI

In the first chapter I have shown that the HDI is built mainly on the concepts of the capability approach, but cannot be seen as fully covering all of Sen’s thoughts. Still the HDI does represent the central idea that development is more than income growth and should also consider social aspects, in order to expand people’s capabilities. This idea translates to the HDI through the indicators of longevity and education, which indicate respectively health, access to basic goods and services, and knowledge. The strong emphasis on freedom in Sen’s approach is also represented in the HDI, as “while economic prosperity may help people lead freer and more fulfilling lives, education and health, among other factor, influence the quality of people’s freedoms” (UNDP, 2007, p.35). Income, longevity and education are thus seen as enhancing people’s freedoms, or capabilities, to choose the functionings they have reason to value.

Nevertheless, from the HDI it is not possible to see how income, longevity and education are distributed among individuals. Since the issue of distribution was one of Sen’s main objections against utilitarianism, this point has not been directly translated into the HDI. Although the inequality-adjusted HDI does deal to some extent with the distribution of development, the measure of development has move away from Sen’s approach, probably for methodological reasons. This makes it harder to say how exactly the measured development affects what individuals are actually able to do and to be, or what actual lives they lead.

Both the HDI and Sen’s theory put a great emphasis on people’s freedom, but do not deeply consider the effects of individual freedom on the lives of other people. It is mentioned that being a free agent comes with responsibility. However, it is not clear whether the priority is the individuals’ freedom to live the life they value or that they are also responsible for the freedom of others. In the next chapter, I will therefore turn to Goulet’s theory of authentic development to see what he has to offer in this regard.
Chapter 3 – Goulet’s theory of authentic development

In this chapter the theory of authentic development is presented. This theory is formulated by development ethicist Denis Goulet. First of all, the way Goulet interprets the concept of development will be outlined, including the basic principles of his notion of development. Second, the goals of development will be discussed. Finally, the underlying values of Goulet’s theory will be examined.

Goulet’s view on development

The American philosopher, social planner, anthropologist and development ethicist Denis Goulet (1931-2006) was one of the main founders of the multidisciplinary field of development ethics. This field deals with questions about ethical value choices in development theory, planning and practice. After spending one year and a half with marginalized poor groups in France, Spain and Algeria, he studied and worked three years at the research centre Économie et Humanism. At this centre the multiple dimensions of development were being studied with the aim of overcoming the gap between normative theories and practices of development. His personal mentor during that time was the French social scientist and Dominican friar Louis-Joseph Lebret (1897-1966), who had a major influence on Goulet’s thoughts (Gasper, 2008). Through his research, Lebret detected a crisis in human values: profits and economic growth had become what people sought for, instead of satisfying the needs of every human being expressed in concrete living conditions and emotional, cultural and spiritual values. Misery and exploitation had structural causes that were deeply rooted in the capitalist economy (Goulet, 1974). In line with Lebret, Goulet tried to find the answer to the question of what kind of development would be ‘human‘ and how societies could move from economic progress to an economy of (human) progression, in which people would be liberated from misery. He further developed Lebret’s thoughts into the discipline of development ethics and brought it to a broader audience.

Goulet (1973) viewed development as “a particular constellation of means for obtaining a better life” (p.94). He stressed that prior to defining what this would entail exactly, it should be determined what kind of life we consider to be a good life and what kind of society we think is good. These are basic ethical questions that
precede the question of what kind of development the society wishes for. Goulet devoted most of his efforts to find answers to these questions. His answer to the question about what kind of development we should strive for is clear: ‘authentic development’. He wrapped this concept in three principles, which will be outlined below. Development is authentic if the lives of people can be better sustained, if the esteem of societies and their members is promoted and if human beings are freed of servitudes of all forms. (Goulet, 1973; Astroulakis, 2010). Moreover, development must always mean the development of every human being. In his own words, “development is the ascent of all men and societies in their total humanity.” (Goulet 1973, p. x) The word ‘humanity’ is double-layered: it means the qualities that make human beings human, but it also means the whole human race (Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Both definitions apply to Goulet’s concept of authentic development. This is reflected in the three principles on which the idea of authentic development rests.

Being human: being more instead of having more
The fulfillment of human beings, thus to what extent people are human, depends on how free they are. To understand this mechanism, one should understand the theoretical background of ‘being human’. This is mainly inspired by the idea about human qualities of the German psychologist Erich Fromm (1978). In line with Fromm, both Lebret and Goulet judge human qualities in terms of what humans can be instead of what they have. This distinction between ‘having’ and ‘being’ is important to understand their concept of development. Fromm analyzed that material well-being has become the criterion of human fullness and of the good life in modern societies. However, this interpretation of the good life only extends to what Fromm calls ‘the mode of having’. This mode differs fundamentally from the ‘mode of being’ (Idem).

‘To have’ refers to both material and immaterial things one can possess. These things are “fixed and describable” (Fromm, 1978, p.87). ‘Having’ involves a static, dead relation between subject and object. In modern society, often people derive their identity from what they have: money, power, status, private property, etc. However, there is always a danger of losing the things one has, hence losing what one is. This implies that anxiety and insecurity are inherent to the having mode. In order to secure the self, people try to keep what they have and to attain more things. As the self itself has become a thing one can possess, people in the having mode are alienated from themselves (Idem).
'To be' refers to principally indescribable experience (Fromm, 1978, p. 87). Contrary to the having mode, the being mode is one of activity. This activity should not be seen as being occupied with something, but of expressing inner potentials and of experiencing reality as it is: enjoying it without wanting to possess it. Fromm shows that activity in the being mode can only be described by verbs, as ‘to see’, ‘to love’, etc. These experiences can be described, but never to their full extent. In the last century, though, experiences have increasingly been expressed by using the word having. Fromm uses for example the experience that formerly would have been described as ‘being troubled’, which is now expressed as ‘having a problem’. The experience is placed outside oneself, which leads to the alienation of experience (Idem, p. 21-22).

In order to achieve development that is human, a suitable hierarchy of needs is required. Goulet therefore adopts Lebret’s theory of needs, in which three kinds of human needs are categorized. In the first category are the needs of first necessities. These are the goods people should have in order to stay alive (Goulet, 1973, p. 241). Fromm calls this the function of ‘existential having’, the only form of having that does not oppose being (Fromm, 1978, p. 85). The second category of needs consists of enhancement needs. These needs enable people to express, actualize and transcend themselves (Goulet, 1973, p. 242). The category of enhancement needs relates the most directly to the mode of being. The last category of needs involves goods that make life more comfortable and easier, the so called luxury needs. Although they are especially valued in the having mode, “luxury goods can be as noble as the use to which they are put or the spirit in which they are enjoyed” (Idem, p. 245). Only if one’s identity and status is based on the possession of luxury goods, a person is deprived by ‘alienation in abundance’, which is as dehumanizing as alienation in misery. For real human development, fulfillment of the first and second category of needs should be the priority.

Development for the whole human race: solidarity

The second way to which Goulet’s definition of development applies, is related to the second meaning of humanity: the whole human race. In order to speak of authentic development, the whole of humanity should be developed and thus solidarity is required. According to Goulet, the world and humanity are indivisible. There is no real development, unless every person benefits from development. Eventually, development that can only be enjoyed by a limited group of people consequently creates underdevelopment for those who cannot benefit from
development (Goulet, 1974, p. 45). In this way, the focus on ‘having more’ that predominates modern societies obstructs the development for all. After all, the strive for optimizing profit that is central in a capitalist economy can only come at the costs of other people. Thus if authentic development is to be achieved, we have to move towards a human economy based on global solidarity and in which ‘being more’ is the key criterion.

Interpreted in this way, solidarity does not only mean some sort of equal distribution of goods. It also means sharing power, in order to establish relationships based on equality. Solidarity in this sense implies that ideals of development should not be imposed on other societies by more advanced countries, but that development should be shaped by a society itself. Respect for cultural values is demanded for authentic development. Solidarity thus means that developing societies should be given the time, space and power to organize their way of living, according to their own values (Goulet, 1973).

Development from within: participation

The last principle of authentic development is that people should be broadly involved in decision-making: participation. Non-elitist groups should be able to make their own decision, shape their own development according to their own view of what is good. In this way, it is prevented that people become mere subjects of other people’s plans, designs and decisions for the way in which their society is organized. People themselves know what they need in order to live a good life. By partaking in decision making, the esteem and freedom, two important development goals, of a group or individuals can be increased. Astroulakis (2010) summarizes the importance of participation with regard to authentic development as follows:

“To what extent populace participation should takes place is a matter for discussion, what is certain is that via participation at least three vital actions are performed: participation (i) offers to non-elites the ability to state goals independently of their social position, (ii) abolishes political patron, in a sense that ordinary people themselves become problem-solvers in their social environment, and (iii) launches individual and social formations to escape of the rationale of ‘do-it-yourself’ problems of micro level gaining access the macro arena of decision-making.” (Astroulakis, 2010, p. 10)

The principle of participation is directly linked to what Goulet calls existence rationality, the value system of a society through which people make sense of their world, experience meaning and that determines choices and actions (Goulet, 1973;
Gasper, 2008; Astroulakis, 2010). Development can only be authentic if it fits within a society’s existence rationality and is thus not to be an imposed change that threatens a society’s dignity. On the contrary, change should come from within the existence rationality. If this would not be the case, the people in a society are likely to resist development that runs counter to the values in that society. Such a development will eventually not be sustainable.

**Development – underdevelopment**

Bearing these principle in mind, we now return to Goulet’s interpretation of development. According to Goulet, the notion of *underdevelopment* has to be taken as a starting point to really understand what development is and how development should be approached. Underdevelopment can only exist in relation to development, to people who are ‘better off’. Conditions of mass deprivation were in a way accepted by the people living in those conditions, until they became conscious of development in other societies, including technical means to abolish misery. It appears then that the state of affairs can be changed for the better and deprived societies will start to strive for their development (Goulet, 1973, p. 39). However, development also makes visible certain vulnerabilities that are at the core of underdevelopment. Deprived societies often turn out to have too little power to achieve their development goals due to their economic and political vulnerability. Also cultural vulnerability arises in the quest for development as and traditional values are threatened by a too narrow view of development as technological and economical enhancement, i.e. ‘having more’.

As evident as it may seem to look only at the less technologically and economically advanced countries in this respect, Goulet stresses that vulnerability also applies to developed countries. Although Goulet’s argumentation is rather complex, his point is that the vulnerability of developed countries lies for a great part in the possibility that developed countries lose their power, due to some sort of revenge of developing countries (once they have become developed) for their domination (Goulet, 1974, p.51-57; Camacho, 2010, p. 151-152). Following Fromm (1978), the threat to developed countries would be that by losing their power, which is a source of their identity, their being, or their cultural identity, can be severely damaged. Moreover, the threat to identity has yet another component apart from power. The far-advanced technology and bureaucracy in developed countries has caused new enslavements to technology and material wealth, as well as a lack of capacity to deal with reality. Instead of freeing humanity from misery, development as we have known it, has thus created anti-development (Goulet,
1973, p. 222). Even though developed societies face rather different problems than developing societies, both have clear vulnerabilities which seem to be interlinked.

If vulnerability lies at the heart of underdevelopment, the quest for development should be aimed at reducing vulnerabilities. Although to some extent vulnerability is inherent to the human condition, for instance with regard to natural disasters, the gap between developed and developing nations should be closed and relations based on reciprocity and equality should be established. Here, the three principles of development (being more human; solidarity; participation) apply. First, people should have sufficient goods in order to be more human. The current economy, that is based on the maximization of gains, can only lead to exploitation of others and can eventually not be sustained. Goulet therefore argues that humanity should move from economic progression to a progressive economy. This means that the economy should serve the development of every human being in terms of their humanity. Solidarity is required on a global scale to make this kind of development possible. Through solidarity, vulnerability can be reduced as power relations are more equal and societies’ positions are less threatened by others. Every society and every human being should to the same degree be able to develop their human qualities. Finally, participation reduces vulnerability in the sense that people are no longer just subjects of others’ decisions. Instead they can exercise more control over the environment they live in. This means they can live a more dignified life, as decisions and the direction of changes do not oppose their existence rationality and people can be agents of their own development.

All in all, to attain authentic development both developed and underdeveloped countries need to undergo structural changes in the way they perceive and value humanity. Ultimately, Goulet (1974) defines development as: “above all, a task of forging new values and new civilizations in settings where most existing institutions contradict human aspirations” (p. 35). Both underdeveloped and developed countries should undergo some important value changes. However, this process is not as straightforward as it seems. On the contrary, it is a dialectal process that comes with conflict. New possibilities and desires to abolish misery should be fulfilled, but still old values and ways of living are also being cherished. At the same time, development can be wished for as well as being rejected, for it can destroy the old ways of living. Goulet emphasizes that the core values of a society should be untouched in order to preserve cultural diversity. Yet at the same time, some value changes can and should occur through external impulses. If new values are
incorporated in the existence rationality of society, change in societies may occur
without destroying cultural diversity (Goulet, 1973). One of the value changes
Goulet deems necessary for authentic development is the turn from greed to
austerity. The first reason for this is that it gives people in developed countries the
opportunity to free themselves from overdependence on affluence and technology
and thus to become more human. For people in developing countries, it clears a
way for a kind of development that will not lead to those kind of dependences, but
instead to authentic being. Austerity in this sense is exactly what is meant by the
principle of ‘having enough in order to be more’. A second argument for austerity is
that without it, solidarity cannot really occur. Austerity is inevitable for
underdeveloped societies, as they simply do not have the means to live an affluent
life. Developed societies can only understand this underdevelopment if they too
turn away from abundance, while at the same time they level with underdeveloped
societies. This will lead to more equality and dignity, as ‘having more’ will cease to
mean ‘being more’, i.e. being superior to those who have less. Moreover, a more
austere life reduces overconsumption, wastefulness and exploitation. Desires of
affluence will thus no longer obstruct the fulfillment of basic needs. Goulet argues
that austerity is eventually more sustainable. This is on the one hand due to a
decrease of natural exploitation and is as such related to environmental
sustainability. On the other hand, it is socially more sustainable as it would reduce
tensions between people due to inequalities. Goulet states that inequality would
lead people to be unsatisfied with their own conditions and make them feel less
worthy. This will result in conflict and thus can situations of inequality and human
exploitation not be sustained (Idem, pp. 252-262).

Although Goulet has an interesting point by advocating austerity for
sustainability, it is also rather problematic. For environmental sustainability,
austerity would no doubt be a good thing. At the same time, this is less evident for
social sustainability. We currently live in a society that highly values growth and
wealth. A change to austerity might dissatisfy people. The current Euro-crisis for
instance led many governments in the European Union to adopt austerity
measures. In Greece where the crisis hit the hardest, tough austerity measures
gave rise to social unrest and many protests. Austerity is clearly not something that
will be greeted with too much praise. It is partly due to this kind of unpopular ideas
that the impact of Goulet’s development ethics has been fairly limited (Gasper,
2008, p. 11). In the following I will show how the idea of austerity relates to the
goals of development in Goulet’s view.
Goals of development according to Goulet

Although societies can differ fundamentally from each other, Goulet (1973) states that every society has at least three basic goals in common which it seeks to serve. These goals are life sustenance, esteem and freedom. Without these three interdependent elements, a full human life cannot be achieved. The first, *life sustenance*, is the objective to keep human beings alive and refers to “men’s basic requirements for food, shelter, healing or survival” (Idem, p. 87). This goal can be linked with the notion of having enough so one can be more and refers to what Fromm calls ‘existential having’ (Fromm, 1978, p.85). Simply stated, development should first of all enable people to meet their needs of necessity. In Goulet’s view, austerity could be helpful for this goal: it is an incentive for people not to seek to have more than they need as long as there are still people starving. In turn, there will be more survival goods left for other people. At the same time, austerity will come with a lower demand for natural resources. The environment, on which people eventually depend for their survival, will be less damaged and can thus provide for more people’s life-sustenance (Goulet, 1973).

The second goal, *esteem*, refers to the sense that someone is of worth, is respected and is treated as an end in himself (Goulet, 1973, p.89). The image of what a good life should contain is essential for esteem. If materialistic and technological wealth are predominant values in judging the goodness of life, the esteem of less advanced countries can be damaged. Development can help reestablish esteem, as developing countries will become less inferior to developed countries, at least in economic and technological terms. On the other hand, however, esteem can also be a reason the reject development, as it may damage the core values of a societies identity and rejection of development comes to mean protection of esteem. Regardless whether development is rejected or accepted, esteem appears to be valuable, no matter what (Astroulakis, 2010, p.7). The importance of value change becomes clear in this context once again. As long as esteem is largely derived from material wealth and technological advancement, thus from having more instead of being more in the Frommian sense, deprived people will seek to get more material wealth too in order to gain esteem. However, this is not only dehumanizing as has been explained earlier, but it is also unsustainable on this planet of limited resources. This can be illustrated by the fact that nowadays it would take over 1.5 year for the planet to regenerate the resources that the whole humanity uses in one year. This means that we would need more than 1.5 times the capacity of our planet to sustain our current
lifestyles, even though not even everybody’s basic needs for survival have been met yet (Global Footprint Network, 2012). In fact, most highly developed countries contribute the most to the global ecological footprint (see figure 2). From this point, it can be concluded that less value should be attached to materialistic wealth. Esteem should be derived from who people are and not so much from what they are. Following Goulet (1973), austerity can contribute to esteem in two ways. First, it fosters people to being more, instead of having more. Second, it will create more equal relationships, from which people in turn can derive esteem. However, a critical counterpoint can be made: people who are used to having plenty and suddenly have to live with less, might lose some esteem. The value change from ‘having more’ to ‘being more’ has to be quite radical for people to turn to austerity.

Figure 2: Human Development Index versus Ecological Footprint, 2008 (Source: WWF, Global Footprint Network & Zoological Society of London, 2012, p. 60)

Third, Goulet sees freedom as an important goal of development, just like Sen. Yet their interpretations differ essentially, as I will show in chapter 4. Despite the multitudes of meanings of the word freedom, Goulet (1973) describes it as the emancipation from oppressive servitudes to ignorance, misery, nature, other human beings. He argues that a very broad definition of freedom entailing people’s full self-government and determination of their own destiny, also comes with feelings of insecurity and anxiety. For this reason people often try to escape their freedom and responsibility. Nevertheless, freedom can still be a means for liberation from the oppressive servitudes. When people are being freed from these oppression, their opportunities self-actualization increase. Freedom is thus at least
“a search for freedom from even if not a freedom for actualization of one’s self and group” (p.91, italics in original). The way in which self-actualization is understood by different individuals and societies may still be very diverse (Idem, p. 91, p. 94). Yet Goulet’s plea for ‘being more’ instead of ‘having more’ gives reason to also see his notion of self-actualization in the light of becoming more human in the being-mode, by enjoying and experiencing life authentically instead of in a state of alienation of oneself. After all, freedom does not only mean freedom from poverty, but also freedom from dehumanizing abundance. As for Goulet, austerity can help people to free themselves from abundance and with that become more human.

The three goals are supposed to be universally valued, as they ultimately contribute to being more. As they count for the whole of humanity, they can lead to the supreme objective of development: the ascent of all human beings, the achievement of a better life for everyone. Now on what values is Goulet’s view on development and the goals of development based?

**Underlying values**

There are several underlying values in Goulet’s theory of authentic development. Some of them (for instance solidarity, agency and freedom) can be found in the principles on which Goulet grounded his vision on development and are also clearly reflected in the goals of development. I will not go into those values again. Instead, two values that seem to underlay the whole theory will be discussed in this section: *human dignity* and *sustainability*.

*Human dignity* is without a doubt omnipresent in Goulet’s theory of development. Goulet believed that overemphasizing the importance of material wealth was dehumanizing in several respects. This is one of the reasons Goulet found it was necessary to shift the focus of development thinking from economic to human progress, i.e. from the having mode to the being mode. First of all, dignity of developed societies and of rich people is endangered, if their whole sense of dignity is based on the status derived from their wealth. In case of losing ‘all they possess’, they would lose their dignity, they would lose themselves. On the other hand, the narrow vision of ‘having more is being more’, is dehumanizing towards people who do not have a lot of material goods. For more traditional cultures, the dignity they
enjoy through their cultural and spiritual values is threatened by the dominant thought of material wealth as supreme goal.

Respect for cultural differences as well as reciprocity and solidarity are values that serve the dignity of every human being. All people should be actively enabled to shape their own development towards a dignified life, in the context of their culture and their existence rationality and in the freedom to make their decisions. This is what constitutes dignity. As dignity should be accessible for everyone, equal worth of all human beings is implied as well. After all, if one would be worth more than another person, they would not both enjoy dignity. The ultimate goal of development, the ascent of all men, should thus be understood.

Another value which can be recognized throughout Goulet’s theory is the need for sustainability. Although in his major work The cruel choice it is only a few times explicitly mentioned, this concept can be found more extensively in some of his later works. Sustainability and authentic development seem to presuppose each other: “spurious development breeds opposition, contradiction, and self-destruction: it cannot be sustained” (Goulet, 2006, p. 150). In Goulet’s theory, the term sustainability is used to express the long-term viability of circumstances. Sustainability should be established on all levels in society: “Long-term economic viability depends on a use of resources which does not deplete them irreversibly. Political viability rests on creating for all members of society a stake in its survival (...). And if development is to be socially and culturally sustainable, the foundations of community and symbolic meaning must be protected” (Idem, pp. 150-151). Furthermore, development should be environmentally sustainable. If this is not the case, the we want to keep the world a livable place (Idem). For sustainable development, it takes not only science, but also wisdom to manage our world. Only then, development can be authentic.

Both human dignity and sustainability can be understood from an ethical view that is more oriented towards human relations than towards individuals. This is clear from the fact that Goulet sees individuals as indivisible from the development of the whole of humanity. Misery and inequality are regarded to have structural roots in society. They could be understood as the consequences of distorted social relations. Goulet’s ideas connect more closely to relationalism than to individualism or holism for instance. Holism and individualism reduce the social world to respectively society as one entity or to the individuals of which the society consists. Relationalism, on the contrary, tries to understand the social world through the
relations, interactions and networks in which these individuals are embedded. Relationalism sees society (or the social world) as a web of relations that constitute individuals and in which meanings and values come to exist. Individuals are actors in this web and both are shaped by the social world and shape the social world themselves through their interaction (Crossley, 2011).

Goulet claims that development can only be understood by virtue of underdevelopment. This is based on the relationalist idea that meaning of words, gestures and action only occur within relational processes (Crossley, 2011). ‘Being developed’ thus only has a meaning in relation to ‘being underdeveloped’. Meanings and values are embedded in what Goulet calls the existence rationality of a society. This too is a rather relational concept, as existence rationality is crucial for the way people conceive reality and for the choices and actions of people in that society. In that sense, cultural diversity in relation to development is important too and not only for people’s dignity. Culture provides people with meanings, values, and facilitates relationships and interactions with the world in which someone lives. The awareness of cultural differences is essential in the communication, practices and policies for development.

The questions about the good life and about the good society that Goulet addresses, should not so much be seen in terms of individual well-being as Sen does. Rather, they should be thought of in terms of ‘living well together’, which concern the relational dimensions of being. The meaning of a good life and of well-being can differ in different societies and contexts, as they are socially constructed and thus a result of interactions (Deneulin & McGregor, 2010). Universal solidarity, which Goulet considers crucial for authentic development, can then be understood as a way to build more equal relationships among individuals, groups and societies, within the whole of humanity. Furthermore, solidarity can be seen as the relation in which respect for diversity occurs. If all human beings are of equal worth, people should also feel that they are equally worth in order to derive a sense of esteem and dignity. This can only happen through relations of solidarity that create space for equity and reciprocity.

By putting such an emphasis on solidarity, reciprocity and austerity, Goulet also seems to imply the need for humility. Theo Zweerman (2005) takes note of the decline of the word humility, even in Christian contexts in which it has played an important role. In a world that is dominated by ideas of self-definition, autonomy, emancipation and progress, the word humility seems suspicious. However, citing Iris Murdoch, Zweerman stresses that “humility is not a particular habit of self-effacement (...) it is selfless respect for reality and one of the most difficult and
central of all virtues” (Murdoch, 1970, as cited in Zweerman, 2005, p.195). In my opinion, such an attitude covers both solidarity and austerity. Whereas austerity has the connotation of a way of living that is materialistically moderate, humility also implies that oneself or one’s culture is not superior to another. Stated more strongly, the human race is not superior to the planet as a whole. Humility can be seen as an attitude of respect towards the world, nature, other people. At the same time it is opposed to an attitude of superiority, domination and exploitation. Humility in this sense may foster reciprocity among people and establish a way of life that is more sustainable.

Some differences and similarities between the capability approach and the theory of authentic development are already becoming visible. The next chapter will provide a comparison of both theories, as to evaluate in the last chapter what is missing in the HDI.
Chapter 4 – Comparison

This chapter will examine how the theories of Sen and Goulet relate to each other. Since the previous chapters were divided in sections that dealt respectively with the definition, goals and values, the comparison in this chapter will also be based on this division.

**Views on development**

The most obvious similarity between Sen and Goulet is that both want to broaden the scope of development thinking, as they both see human development as more than economic and material wealth. In Sen’s view, development should be about capabilities and functionings, i.e. what people are actually able to do or to be. Sen argues that development should be expressed in terms of well-being instead of economic growth only. People should be enabled, i.e. have the *capabilities*, to choose the *functionings* they value and hence lead a life they value. Goulet also stresses that economic and material wealth should not be the main focus of development thought, but starts from a different point of view. Following the Frommian distinction between having and being, he argues that ‘being human’ has been expressed for a long time in terms of material and economic wealth, or in his words, in terms of ‘having’. This has had an alienating effect on people from their sense of existence, from really experiencing life. Development should lead people to *being more human*, which means roughly being more connected to their natural and social/cultural environment. Living an authentic human life means for Goulet that people feel and experience these connections without trying to dominate, or to *have*, it.

Both Goulet and Sen thus stress that development should refer to what people are (or do), instead of what they have. Yet Goulet made the distinction between having and being very clear, whereas Sen does not. Moreover, what for Sen counts as ‘being’, might in Goulet’s theory belong to the ‘having mode’. As we have seen in chapter 2, Sen’s notion of what being human means has not been very thoroughly elaborated. Being human in Sen’s approach seems to come down to being a free, rational and individual agent that seeks to shape his own life according to his own values. However, people can find it valuable to do or be *something* that only gives them a certain reputation or to live a life in luxury.
Individuals’ rationality might be overrated in Sen’s theory, and choices people make might not always be that reasonable. In other words: if people have the possibility to do or be more, if they have the freedom to choose more functionings, it does not automatically mean they are more human, in the sense Goulet uses this term.

Besides the meaning of ‘being human’, there is yet another seemingly contrast between the two theories. Whereas Sen attaches the greatest importance to the development and freedom of individuals, Goulet argues that development should affect the whole of humanity. Like Sen, Goulet notes that every human being should be valued as end in themselves and are worthy in themselves. At the same time, Goulet stresses explicitly that the development of one person must mean also the development of the other. He argues that development is always the development of the whole human race. Sen’s theory, on the contrary, is more focused on the development and well-being of individual agents. Sen’s emphasis on individuality has its roots in his belief that one cannot indicate development or well-being by looking at a whole group, as the distribution of well-being cannot be derived from that. Hence, individual capabilities are for Sen the indicator of development that does justice to every human being. People are well when they can lead a life they choose, and that is shaped by themselves.

From chapter 2 and 3, it can be derived that Sen and Goulet do not share the same view of society. Sen takes the individual as the ultimate point of departure for every ethical evaluation of society, of institutions and of people’s actions. What ultimately counts is the well-being of individuals. Moreover, Sen’s view of man seems to imply that individuals, although possibly influenced by other, make their own rational decisions all by themselves. Of course, Sen makes several nuances and this point might be exaggerated, yet it does make it clear how Sen’s approach differs from Goulet’s. Whereas Sen sees the individual as fundamental for society and for development, Goulet has a more relationalist view. Goulet finds individual development important, but stresses that it cannot be separated from the development of all men. In a way, this might also be the case in Sen’s approach: if every individual has access to development, eventually everyone will be developed. Yet this is still a more atomic view of society, in which every human being is one entity. Goulet’s theory on the contrary, appears to be directed to the relations between people and structures within societies, which can turn out to be unjust. Development then comes to mean the freeing of humanity from these unjust structures, whether they consist of exploitation, suppression or enslavement. This kind of change requires more than only the provision of liberties and opportunities.
in a more institutional manner, like Sen suggests for development. It also needs a change in values and attitudes towards our own lives, that of other people and towards the whole planet. Our own as well as others’ vulnerabilities have to be recognized and a mutual protection against these vulnerabilities have to be established as much as possible. This is also why solidarity and reciprocity play such a crucial role in Goulet’s view on development.

**Development goals**

As was described in the above, the ultimate goals of development according to Sen and Goulet are respectively attaining more well-being and becoming more human. In Sen’s view, well-being means that people are freed from deprivations of basic capabilities. As these capabilities are in fact substantive freedoms to choose the life one values, freedom is what development should eventually lead to. Sen does not specify this goal much further, for he argues that it is up to individuals themselves to set their goals and to be agents of their own life. Hence, he has refused to make a specific selection of capabilities that were at least required, like Nussbaum (2000, pp. 78-80) for instance did in her version of the capabilities approach. This can be understood against the background of the critique Sen has on Rawls: providing people with primary goods will not lead to equality of choices people have to achieve the life they would value. Nevertheless, some capabilities are repeatedly mentioned in Sen’s work, like the capability to nourish oneself adequately, to be healthy, to participate in society and to have self-respect (Sen, 1999b, p. 75).

Unlike Sen, Goulet assumes that some basic and universal needs exist: survival needs, needs for human enhancement and lastly luxury needs. Goulet stresses that development should serve the first two needs. Development goals are therefore in Goulet’s theory defined more sharply than in Sen’s vision: survival, esteem, and freedom should be the aims of development practices. Yet I think it can be argued that the goals as formulated by Goulet can be seen as a more straightforward expression of Sen’s more overarching concept of capabilities.

This similarity stops at the point of what kind of freedom both men have in mind. Sen, on the one hand, clearly aims at the *freedom from poverty*, understood in the broad sense of the word. People should have the freedom to choose the life they value and thus should have the opportunity to choose from any capability set. When someone would be deprived of one or more capabilities, this person is regarded to be impoverished according to Sen’s definition. Goulet, on the other
hand, states that the goal of development is to *free people from misery*. This misery can be caused by poverty, yet also by affluence. As abundance can be alienating and dehumanizing, it is as much as poverty a source of misery.

In line with that thought, Goulet’s idea of what freedom should consist of is more limited than that of Sen. Sen states that people should be free to ‘choose the life they have reason to value’. Goulet explicitly puts a norm on what is to be valued, namely: being more human, thus attaching more value to being than to having. Moreover a life in *austerity* is required: only then one can avoid alienation from abundance, while at the same time live in solidarity with the rest of humanity. For this austerity, both developed and underdeveloped countries need to have a change of values. The focus of what is valuable should be moved away from the ‘having mode’ towards the ‘being mode’. From Sen’s perspective, however, one could wonder whether the value change towards austerity that Goulet proposes does not go right against the freedom of people to shape their own destiny and whether this value change is not something that has to be imposed in some way and hence contradicts this freedom.

**Values of development**

*Freedom*

Freedom is not only a goal of development, but also one of the fundamental reasons why development is so important according to both authors. It thus can also be seen as an underlying value that Sen and Goulet share. In turn, freedom secures some other values, such as dignity, diversity and equality. These values then play a key role in the approaches of both Sen and Goulet, however with a different accent. The difference can again be largely derived from their respectively individualistic and relational views.

*Dignity*

Although Sen does not use the word dignity as much and as explicitly as Goulet, dignity as a value can still be recognized in the capability approach. It seems that for Sen, dignity is incorporated in the notion of agency: not being subject to other people’s decisions, but actively choosing and shaping one’s own life, according to one’s own values. The capabilities are meant to strengthen this agency, this freedom to live and act upon one’s own choices. Also Goulet stresses these things as being important for dignity. Yet his notion of dignity goes one step beyond this,
by adding that dignity is not something that someone can possess. Instead it always stands in relation to other people. Dignity depends to a great extent on being respected by others, feeling equally worthy as others, and being able to live a life that is not seen as inferior compared to the lives of others.

**Diversity**
The value of (cultural) diversity correlates with dignity and can be found in both theories. Like the value of dignity, also cultural diversity is used differently by both authors. Sen considers people’s needs and values as depending on diversity: pluralism is an undeniable fact that people have to deal with. Respecting diversity is essential to warrant people’s freedom to choose a life they value. A lack of respect for differences among people would imply that the decisions of other people are forced on individuals, as they are regarded to be better. As for Goulet, respect for diversity has to be upheld. The reason for that is not so much to protect people’s freedom, but as a way of showing respect to their culture, values and way of life. Not freedom, but cultural identity and esteem are at stake in this case. Moreover, value changes that might be necessary for authentic development cannot be pressed upon people or societies, as they might consider them incompatible with their existence rationality and thus reject them. These two ways Sen and Goulet employ to value (cultural) diversity are very similar, but the difference lies in the emphasis: Sen emphasizes that respect for diversity promotes freedom, whereas Goulet stresses that respect for diversity promotes the feeling of dignity and esteem.

**Equality**
Another value that underlies both theories is equality. As every human being is worth equally, Sen argues that everyone should have the same freedom, i.e. equal capabilities, to attain the life they value. The capability approach hence seems to seek only what is minimally required to provide every individual with this freedom, mainly by institutional arrangements. In Goulet’s case, equality is more some kind of requisite of what he ultimately values: dignity. For Goulet it is most important that people live a life in human dignity and at the same time leave other people space to live in equal dignity. Goulet thus does not see equality as the desirable outcome of interpersonal comparison and as something that should be established through institutions, but rather as something that every people should strive for in his way of life. In this sense, Goulet’s theory could be seen as a call on humanity for active responsibility for humanity. All for one and one for all. In this respect, his
plea for austerity should be understood. As I have argue in the previous chapter though, humility might be a better word to express his thoughts. Austerity seems to imply mainly a materialistically moderation, while humility also implies respect towards the world, nature and other people. It is opposed to an attitude of superiority, domination and exploitation that comes with currently dominant aims for growth. Humility covers not only austerity, but also solidarity. Hence, it can create space for reciprocity and sustainability.

**Sustainability**

The last value that is predominant in Goulet’s theory is sustainability. This contrasts to Sen’s theory, in which this value is less present. Goulet makes a strong case for sustainable development as vital element of authentic development. In his approach sustainability has a broad definition and is applicable to practically every domain of life. According to Goulet, many current structures in society are highly unsustainable. For instance, the capitalist economy only seeks more and more growth and gives rise to a tendency to exploit and dominate both natural and human resources to attain this growth. Goulet argues that at some point the natural resources will be exhausted. Furthermore, the exploitation and suppression of human beings will reach its limits too, leading to uprisings, conflicts and insecurity. The vulnerabilities of human beings that are to be reduced by development, are thus only increased by these structures. Although Goulet does not have some kind of utopian conflict-free live in mind, structures that make some people even more vulnerable must be turned around. Sen does not give much guidance on this point. Instead, ‘living the life one values to lead’ could imply an unsustainable way of life, when people do not value sustainability highly.

As Gasper (2008) has noted, in contrast to human-rights based approaches, Goulet’s theory of authentic development would require a lot of time and skills to make it applicable for policies, as there are no “readymade frameworks for observation, monitoring and evaluation” (p. 12). Although Sen’s capability approach is not human-rights based, the HDI does provide to some extent in a measure for the state of capabilities. What then can be said from this comparison about the human development index? This question I will address in the following chapter.
Chapter 5 – Evaluating the HDI

In the previous chapters, I have discussed the contents of the HDI, Sen’s capability approach and Goulet’s theory of authentic development and compared the two latter with each other. I will now turn back to the HDI and to the main question of this thesis as for what a study and a comparison of the theories of Sen and Goulet implies for an evaluation of the HDI. Special attention will be paid to the system of ranking, to the subjects of the index, and to the content of the indicators.

Development

Sen and Goulet both stressed that development should be about more than economic and material wealth. Both therefore tried to take development thought beyond income growth. The HDI was developed exactly to the end of combining economic and social indicators, thus to take on a broader view of development. This has also been one of the greatest achievements of the HDI. I have mentioned in chapter 2 that the underlying vision of the HDI was, in line with Sen’s capability approach, that people should have more and greater freedoms to attain a life they value. The indicators of longevity (life-expectancy at birth), knowledge (school enrollment) and decent living standards (income by purchasing power) are to reflect these freedoms. These indicators imply that more income, a longer live, and more educations are without a doubt valuable in themselves. Yet this is problematic from both Sen’s and Goulet’s view. People might value other things that are not included in the HDI and do thus not count for the extent to which countries are developed. For instance, people might find it more valuable to spend time with their families instead of working more to earn more money. However, the choice for a functioning other than earning more money will be reflected in the HDI as being less developed. This seems contrary to Sen’s idea that development comes involves greater freedom to choose a life one values. Also it stands in contrast to Goulet’s view that being more human cannot be expressed in terms of having more. If spending more time with family and having a lower income is measured as less developed, the kind of development at stake cannot be considered authentic.

Another reason why the indicators are disputable, is that the HDI does not reflect the circumstances under which people live longer, attain more income or get educated. Moreover, the quality of schooling, of a longer life and the way income is
generated are not considered. For instance, people may have a high income, but get depressed or burnt out due to the pressure of work. A well developed health care system might give people access to medicines to cure or suppress these illnesses. Still, can one really claim to be authentically developed in this case? In this respect, the HDI reflects very well the tendency of our society to seek growth. This growth, however, is not always for the better. For as development means that people’s choices are expanded, but development is at the same time valued in terms of higher income, longer lives and more education, the choice for development must be based on these values. Otherwise, the life is one of lower development in terms of the HDI. How much freedom is left in this texture of development to choose a life that might be shorter, but of higher quality; to choose for a lower income, while spending more time with loved ones; to not send your children to school, but to teach them at home or within a community.

I do not wish to completely dismiss all the values and indicators of the HDI as irrelevant for assessing development. Yet from Goulet’s idea of being more instead of having more it should be noted that some danger lies in putting such great emphasis on only three aspects of development. This is due also to the implication that the more income, education and life you have, the better it is and the more developed one is. It is evident that income and health care are crucial for sustaining human lives. We still have to eat, have shelter and have our diseases to be cured. However, we have to ask ourselves at what costs we want growth in these areas to take place and whether we see affluence as desirable. Goulet was very clear that we should have these things to a sufficient extent, but not an affluence of it. After all, Goulet argued, affluence can also be dehumanizing and enslaving and hence make people unfree. This idea may counter the overvaluation of growth and expansion and help to fight misery in a broader sense than only poverty. A value change from growth to austerity is vital. Austerity, on the one hand, frees others from exploitation caused by the developed world’s desire for growth and overconsumption. On the other hand it may free ‘developed’ people from their enslavement to technology and abundance of goods.

In the previous chapters, I argued that Sen and Goulet have a different views on who development should be directed at. Sen clearly aims at the individual, while Goulet holds that development can only be the development of everyone. In this sense, it is interesting that the subjects of the index are countries. From Sen’s perspective, this could be regarded as insufficient to measure development, for individuals are the main target of development and development should be judged
by the increase of individual capabilities. Statistics about a whole country do not show the distribution of development. Hence, little can be said about actual individual capabilities from the HDI. On the other hand, of course, it would be hardly possible to assess the well-being or development of every single human being in a country or in the world. This part of Sen’s approach thus might be hard to apply to measurements. The Inequality-adjusted HDI does give a clearer picture of the distribution of development, as it takes account of inequality in countries and accordingly places countries lower on the index. Yet the index still provides only numbers from which not much can be concluded about the real capabilities that people have.

Goulet’s more relationalist approach towards development might be more compatible with an index that is based on countries. However, the relations between countries should in that case be considered too. Also the effects one countries’ development has on another countries development should the taken into account. After all, according to Goulet development can only be seen as authentic if it affects every man and the whole humanity. This idea puts a challenge to the ranking system applied in the HDI. Let me return for a moment to the example of access to medicines used in the introduction to illustrate this argument. Many medicines have been developed to cure minor illnesses or inconveniences in the developed world. Meanwhile, research for medicines against life-threatening diseases in the developing world has been lagging far behind. The reason for this is simply that more money can be earned in rich countries. How then can a country with a high score on the health indicator be called authentically developed? On the contrary, following Goulet, this trend could be called rather underdevelopment, a crisis in human values and the inability of dealing with reality. Imagine that at the same time people use medicines to stop their hair loss, while people elsewhere are dying from diseases that could have been prevented were there medicines. Underdevelopment in this case shows in two ways: 1) in the fact that people do not want to face the reality of getting older and perhaps even the reality of a nearing death; and 2) in the fact that more money and effort is spent on people being able to keep their hair than on survival of poorer people, which implies that rich people’s hair, and the money that can be made of that, seems more important than a poor person’s life.

The way the HDI presents countries’ developments can thus be judged as a distorted picture of the state of development in this world, from Goulet’s point of view. This has to do with the implication that the more income, more education and a longer life one has, the more developed one is. The emphasis of the index lies
thus with maximizing these components, even though this growth might have negative consequences for one’s own as well as for someone else’s life. At the same time, however, the HDI can provide an overall view of the state of development and could thus be used to direct our attention in the right way. The relational perspective should then in some way be incorporated in the HDI and attention has to be drawn to negative effects of abundance. The common way of interpreting the HDI as a ranking list on which countries seek to end as high as possible should be transformed. Rather the HDI should encourage countries that are ranked highly to take a step back and critically look at their development. A way to accomplish this might be to introduce a new category of ‘overdeveloped countries’ for instance. Another possibility would be to add indicators for sustainability, austerity or solidarity to the HDI, so that index reflects how authentically countries are developed. Measures that come to mind include numbers of waste production, carbon emissions, and perhaps indicators of fair (external) policies like policy coherence for development\(^4\). What indicators could be relevant in this light should be further investigated. At least, quite some work can still be done on the HDI in the light of Goulet’s idea of authentic development. I will leave this point now and turn to the goals of development sketched by Sen and Goulet an examine how the HDI relates to that.

**Goals**

The goals of development that Sen and Goulet have in mind are similar, but there is an important difference between the emphasis of the two. In the previous chapter, I have argued that to some extent Goulet’s goals of life-sustenance, esteem and freedom can be seen as a more concrete expression of Sen’s capabilities. Yet for Sen, freedom is the ultimate goal of development. The expansion of capabilities to choose a life one values should contribute to this freedom. Moreover, his valuation of freedom is so strong, that Sen refuses to define a set of basic capabilities, as people should be able to determine the relevant capabilities themselves. Goulet on the other hand did formulate some more or less concrete goals for development. The HDI, by the very means of indicators, holds a notion of the minimum requirements for development. The goals of development, as Goulet sees them, are to some degree reflected in the HDI indicators. Both income and longevity can be regarded to be useful information sources to asses if

\(^4\) For a short description of policy coherence for development, see the introduction
people’s lives can be or are sustained. Esteem can be to a very limited extent be found in the HDI, although this goal is probably hard to express in statistics anyway. Yet education and income are likely to contribute to esteem, as having knowledge and not to be poor usually gives people a sense of worthiness. At the same time it must be noted that this esteem might be derived from having more and is thus not necessarily authentic in Goulet’s view. Still, at least education, will also give a more authentic sense of esteem, as it gives people the opportunity to develop themselves, to become a full member of society and to establish their identity. Freedom then is fostered to some extent by all development indicators from the HDI. Income usually gives a person access to at least basic resources, living a long life means that these basic resources are available and that one is healthy, and education gives people the freedom to self-actualization. The quality of life, education and labor play, however, an important role and might constrain freedom. Furthermore, as I stated in the previous section, an abundance of the indicated aspects of human development might also be dehumanizing and can thus make people unfree again. Also the importance attached to income, a long life and education may damage the esteem of people who value other things. When they live up to their own values, and thus can be regarded developed in the conceptual sense, may in the HDI still turn out to be less developed. In this way, people might feel less free to live a life they actually value, in order to not lose dignity.

The ranking system could also have a negative effect on people’s esteem. The HDI uses a ranking system to present the developmental state of countries, which invites countries to compete with each other to increase their development. However, in competition there are always winners and losers. Ranking might be an effective tool to put poverty in dimensions of income, health and education on the political agenda, but at the same time it may stigmatize countries as being ‘higher’ or ‘lower’. This may be damaging for the esteem in poorly developed countries, as they are the losers of the race for development. Esteem is closely related to the value of dignity. What can be said about the HDI from the values that Sen and Goulet advocate?

**Values**

In the previous chapter I have argued that freedom is not only an important goal of development: it is also an important means to uphold some of the underlying values of development. From what I have stated earlier in this chapter, the HDI
may foster freedom, yet may endanger it at. This is due to the implication of the HDI that more income, more knowledge and longer lives are better, since it results in a higher ranking in the index. Countries are then regarded as more highly developed.

**Dignity, diversity and equality**
The result of the ranking based on the current indicators might lead to a decreased sense of esteem, as I have argued in the above. As a consequence, this may also result in a decreased sense of dignity. Dignity for Goulet goes further than Sen’s idea of dignity. In the capability approach, dignity is expressed mainly through individual agency, which is also held in the HDRs. Goulet argues that dignity is to a large extent dependent to their sense of worthiness in relation to other people. The HDI does seem to promote dignity to some extent, by focusing on decent standards of living, a healthy life and education. Equality is sought to be established on the grounds of these values. As I have argued earlier in this chapter though, the chosen indicators leave little space to live up to other values than income, education and a long life without being seen as less developed. Moreover, the aim of growth that the HDI implicates, would bring forth a kind of dignity that is for a great deal oriented towards ‘having more’. In this respect, the HDI hardly considers diversity of needs and values. Reforming the HDI in a way that leaves room for other values than income, knowledge and longevity would in turn promote dignity, diversity and equality. Such a reformed HDI could include a category of overdeveloped countries, in order to show that more growth is not always better. Another possibility is to include indicators of austerity, solidarity and sustainability.

**Sustainability and humility**
The emphasis on growth does not only endanger dignity, diversity and equality. Also growth will turn out to be unsustainable if it comes at the cost of other people, nature or the whole planet. The HDI does not seem to pay sufficient attention to that. Even though some HDRs have addressed sustainability, this mainly concerned environmental issues. The HDI itself does not take sustainability into account at all. Earlier, I have argued in line with Goulet that solidarity and reciprocity are also needed to make development sustainable. This sustainability concerns a more human level of establishing relationships of mutual respect and dignity. Austerity should be taken up in order to prevent the exploitation of both human and natural resources. I have argued that an even further going attitude should be adapted: one of humility. Humility as an attitude or way of life, means
respecting the world, nature and other people. It implies recognizing and respecting one’s own limits and the limits that others as well as the world set to our quest for growth. If we turn around our insatiable desire for having more, we can instead start being more human again. The HDI should incorporate indicators to assess the way in which people’s lifestyles are in accordance to such an attitude.

Considering all the above, what now can be said about the HDI? The intention of the HDI is good: it seeks to assess development in a broader way than mere income growth. However, the indicators that are added, combined with the ranking system still embody the thought that growth is good. This might be true to some extent, but efforts to achieve growth might result in abundance. Abundance then might be just as dehumanizing as poverty, as it can create new servitudes or lead to exploitation of other people or natural resources. The UNDP should reassess the HDI in order to see whether changes could be made so the HDI can promote authentic development rather than growth-directed development. It should provide a more critical view on countries that are overdeveloped and encourage them to take a step back. Equality after all can also be attained by lowering the level of development. In that way, an attitude of humility, including solidarity and austerity, can be promoted. Dignity and sustainability can then become an integrated part of development.
Conclusion and considerations

In sum

In this thesis I have sought to put the HDI in perspective of the theory of authentic development of Denis Goulet. The first chapter outlined the HDI, which is developed to measure countries’ development by income, longevity and knowledge. Although it is stressed that the HDI does not cover every aspect of development, the composite and comparative character makes it a useful and highly renowned tool for development policymaking and practice. The conceptual framework of the HDI is mainly Amartya Sen’s capability approach. Some important values and assumptions can thus be found in Sen’s work. However, the HDI is not exactly the same as the capability approach, but an instrumental deduction. To get a more comprehensive understanding of the HDI and its contents, I have examined the capability approach in chapter 2. Development in that approach is defined as the expansion of individual agents’ capabilities for people to live a life they have reason to value. The capability theory turns out to be an ethically individualist approach, as individuals, their capabilities and their freedom to define and shape their own life are the ultimate end by which development should be judged. In chapter 3, a different approach to development is presented: the theory of authentic development by David Goulet. For him, development of one person is inextricably linked to the development of the whole of humanity. Development for one must thus mean development for all, and in this respect Goulet’s theory is a relationalist approach to development. Goulet sees development ultimately as the ascent of men, in which people are freed from servitude, oppression, exploitation and domination. These things can be caused by other people, social structures or the abundance of material wealth. In Goulet’s view, both poverty and affluence can be dehumanizing. Development should therefore not be directed to ‘having more’, but to ‘being more’. This means as much as being more connected to one’s real experiences and to the world one lives in, however, without trying to possess or dominate it. Our current society that aims at the growth of materialistic and economical wealth as well as power, defines development and underdevelopment mainly in terms of ‘having more’. For Goulet, development thus implies a value change towards austerity and reciprocity. This is required to attain development that is sustainable, instead of development that creates new enslavements and exploitations. In
chapter 4, the two approaches are compared to each other. Although there are many similarities, both approaches put their emphases rather differently. To a large extent, this can be explained by the fact that Sen’s approach is more individualistic, whereas Goulet’s theory has a relationalist character. Sen values freedom as both the goal and the end of development, and regards this as enabling people’s agency and dignity. Goulet on the contrary argues that dignity has to be seen in the relations between people and that their esteem depends on their position in society. He proposes attitudes of austerity and reciprocity in order to establish equality, especially an equal sense of worth, among different people and societies. In Goulet’s view, freedom is an important goal, but mainly because it promotes people’s sense of dignity. The last chapter then puts the HDI in the light of the theory of authentic development and hence forms the ground to answer the research question:

**Conclusion**

*How can we evaluate the Human Development Index that is based on Amartya Sen’s capability theory, by comparing Sen’s theory with Denis Goulet’s theory of authentic development?*

1. The HDI’s purpose of broadening the view of development is in line with both Sen’s and Goulet’s ideas. Development is more than economic growth and material wealth. This is one of the main achievements of the HDI

2. The indicators of the HDI reflect to some extent the achievements of the goals of development as presented by both Sen and Goulet. At the same time, however, they also endanger these goals.

3. Countries in which other values than the maximization of income, longevity and knowledge are regarded more important, will automatically be ranked as less developed. This may be harmful to development goals of esteem and freedom and to the value of dignity.

4. The lives that people are actually able to lead are not really reflected in the HDI. The HDI takes no account of the quality of a longer life, the quality of education or the conditions under which more income is generated. Hence, the HDI
undermines the fundamental idea of the capability approach, as well as of the HDRs, that what ultimately counts is the actual lives that people are able to live.

5. From the perspective of Goulet’s theory of authentic development, it can be concluded that the HDI is too much growth-oriented, due to the combination of ranking and the chosen indicators. It has too little regard for the dehumanizing effects of growth and abundance on both developing and developed societies.

6. Although an index that ranks countries as higher or lower developed might be useful to direct development efforts, it should have a broader view on development than what is currently reflected in the HDI. It should provide a critical view on development, for instance through indicators of underdevelopment, such as wastefulness and dehumanizing abundance. Another possibility is the addition of a category of ‘overdeveloped countries’.

7. Humility, as an attitude of respect to the other, to nature and the planet as a whole, can counteract the endless strive for growth, exploitation and domination. Humility entails austerity, solidarity, reciprocity. The HDI should reflect and promote such an attitude of humility, in order to attain real equality, respect for diversity, human dignity and sustainability.

Discussion

By means of this thesis I have sought to contribute to the political and social discussion on development cooperation. Before there can be a proper discussion on how to carry out development exactly, first of it has to be considered what kind of life, and what kind of development we ultimately want. I have presented two different approaches to development: one that is more directed towards individual freedom, but that still relates to quite some extent to the dominant thought of growth. The other aims for the freedom and dignity of all men, and considers this impossible without an austere way of life. I have taken this last point up one level, by proposing humility as an attitude that expresses respect for the world, nature and other people and accepts the limitations of oneself and of possible growth. Humility encompasses Goulet’s notions of austerity, solidarity and reciprocity: it leaves other people space to develop themselves in a sense of dignity. Moreover it does not exploit other humans or the earth in a way that is eventually destructive.
and unsustainable. Humility in this sense can be understood as being aware of and respectful to the relations in which one is embedded and which connects one to every other human being, to nature, and to the whole planet.

Of all the values that have been addressed in this thesis, humility is one that is not so common in humanism and sometimes even rejected. Although humility is not necessarily contrasting the traditional humanist idea that ‘man is the measure of all things’, it might change its meaning. In the light of humility, ‘man’ cannot be seen as a completely independent entity. Rather, ‘man’ has to be seen within his relations and connectedness to the world, nature and other human beings. As the earlier citation of Iris Murdoch (see chapter 3) implied, humility does not refer to inferiority. Instead it is an attitude of respect for reality and the realization that that there are limits to domination of the world and of other people. Within humanism there are also cosmopolitan views that stress this interdependence of man and the world, although they do not necessarily use the word humility.

The ideas of Goulet can in a way be seen as a correction to the thoughts of Sen. Yet Sen is highly regarded by humanists and within humanistic studies for his contribution to development thinking in terms of freedom and equality. It seems to me that within humanism as well as humanistic studies, more attention should be paid to the relation of human beings to the world around them. They should be seen in this connectedness, as they are shaped by their environment and in turn shape the environment and this circle keeps going round. As this connectedness is in fact increasingly recognized, at least in humanistic studies, it seems just a small step to also coming to see humility as an important humanistic value. Humility then should not be seen as some kind of weakness or inferiority, but rather as a strength to face and deal with reality, instead of holding on to the illusion that we can dominate this reality. Only by accepting that we cannot dominate or manage everything, human beings can become what they actually are, instead of what they want to believe they are. They can actually be instead of trying to have what cannot be possessed. If development is directed towards this kind of self-realization, it can become really authentic human development.

---

Some final notes on this research might now be in place. As humility played an important role in this thesis, I have to admit that this research is humble in certain respects too. Although I did show the shortcomings of the HDI, I did not speak with anybody about the actual practical problems of the HDI. The actual opinions and experiences of stakeholders of development thus has not been taken account of in this research. This could have made my case stronger. However, as this research was a theoretical study, this was not the occasion to do so.

Another point that can be made is that the values could have been more specifically operationalized. Although this was not the aim of this research, the thesis might have remained somewhat woolly now. Yet this also shows the common difficulty with this kind of rather abstract theories.

Finally, this research has been done within the framework of humanistic studies. Humanistic studies is explicitly a value-based and value-laden multidisciplinary field in which the researcher is not seen as value-free. Hence, this thesis is not intended to be fully objective in the sense that it is free from values. This is appropriate as development cooperation is a value-laden subject and an ethical evaluation always has a normative character. By carrying out this research through a normative framework, I hope to have provided an innovative perspective on the social and political discussion on development cooperation.

Further research can be done on the practical implementation of integrating sustainability, solidarity and austerity in the HDI or in the human development approach in general. What kind of measure would be relevant and what data are available? Could a classification of overdevelopment be added?

Another question that could be addressed is how development practitioners, politicians and policymakers could incorporate the ideas of the theory of authentic development in their work and their policies.

For humanistic studies it might be interesting to undertake research to explore if austerity, and more specifically humility, can be considered humanist values or what they could contribute to humanism. Such research could be done in line with theoretical works by for instance Marius de Geus and David A. Cooper. In this way, humanistic studies and humanism seek to connect more to the values of austerity and humility. This would also be relevant in the discussion of the current economical crisis.

---

References

Alma, H. (s.a.). Humanisering en zingeving. Retrieved October 4, 2012 from Humanistische Canon:
http://humanistischecanon.nl/humanisering_en_zingeving


Fromm, E. (1978). To have or to be? London: Jonathan Cape.


