Chapter 5
Where Is the Human in Human-Centred Approaches to Development? A Critique of Amartya Sen's 'Development as Freedom'

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5.1 Introduction

In today's framings, human agency is at the heart of development discourse. This centrality of the human is often greeted as liberating and emancipatory in contrast to framings of liberal modernity, which are alleged to see economic growth as a matter of material richness. The work of Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen has been central in establishing the conceptual foundations of the human development discourse underpinning, today's dominant understanding of development and to the establishment of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) annual human development reports and the Human Development Index. Here it is the growth of human capabilities and capacities which are central: the empowerment or freedom of the individual. Development is taken out of a macro socio-economic context and seen as a question of individual inclusion and choice-making capabilities. The first annual United Nations *Human Development Report* (1990) opens with these paragraphs:

> This Report is about people – and about how development enlarges their *choices*. It is about more than GNP growth, more than income and wealth and more than producing commodities and accumulating capital. A person's access to income may be one of the *choices*, but it is not the sum total of human endeavour.
>
> Human development is a process of enlarging people's *choices*. The most critical of these wide-ranging *choices* are to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. Additional *choices* include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and personal self-respect.
>
> Development enables people to have these *choices*. No one can guarantee human happiness, and the *choices* people make are their own concern. But the process of development should at least create a conducive environment for people, individually and collectively, to develop their full potential and to have a reasonable chance of leading productive and creative lives in accord with their needs and interests.

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S. Mezzadra et al. (eds.), *The Biopolitics of Development: Reading Michel Foucault in the Postcolonial Present*, DOI 10.1007/978-81-322-1596-7_5, © Springer India 2013

> Human development thus concerns more than the formation of human capabilities, such as improved health or knowledge. It also concerns the use of these capabilities, be it for work, leisure or political and cultural activities. And if the scales of human development fail to balance the formation and use of human capabilities, much human potential will be frustrated. (UNDP 1990: 1, emphasis added)

The seven instances in which the word 'choices' is used in the first three paragraphs have been italicized in order to emphasize that human development is inextricably tied to the extension of choice-making capabilities. The key point to note is that these capabilities are disconnected from the level of material social and economic development; as the third and fourth paragraphs emphasize, choice-making capability is thereby disconnected from the external environment seen as providing inputs or resources for capabilities. There is a large internal or subjective element to the capability approach – the concern is with 'the use of these capabilities' and with the 'conducive environment' in which good choice-making can take place.

There has been a lot of academic and technical discussion over the merits and applicability of Sen's approach, which has generally sought to expand Sen's framework rather than to critically engage with it (for a good summary, see Clark 2005). When Sen has been the subject of criticism, this has generally focused on the need for collective political struggle to constitute development and freedom for the post-colonial subject or for paying too little attention to the structural constraints of the world market and capitalist social relations (see, e.g., Navarro 2000; Samaddar 2006; Chimni 2008). The human development approach has also been substantially critiqued from a traditional development perspective for the shift away from material definitions of development to a more subjective measurement (see, e.g., Pender 2001; Ben-Ami 2006; Duffield 2007; Pupavac 2007). Mark Duffield usefully highlights the problematic in his critical exploration of human development as a technology of governance *Development, Security and Unending War* (2007):

> Sustainable development is about creating diversity and choice, enabling people to manage the risks and contingencies of their existence better and, through regulatory and disciplinary interventions, helping surplus population to maintain a homeostatic condition of self-reliance. (Duffield 2007: 115)

This chapter seeks to mount a different engagement with Sen's work, instead taking seriously the claim of 'development as freedom' to explore Sen's reading of the human subject. While Duffield describes well the implications of reinterpreting development in subjective rather than material terms, in shifting to self-reliance, this chapter is less concerned with critiquing human-centred development primarily from the viewpoint of it as an economically driven policy discourse of intervention, policing, regulation and control. It seeks instead to consider Sen's work in a broader context of the understanding of the human subject itself, particularly as it is articulated at the limits of liberalism and helps to construct and shape these limits – in the problematization of the colonial and postcolonial subject. In this respect, Foucault's work on shifting liberal governing rationalities and the birth of biopolitics enables us to highlight how Sen's work poses fundamental questions in this area.

It will be suggested that Foucault, following Marx, powerfully theorizes the problematic of the shifts and transformations within liberal thought as the liberal project increasingly exhausts the emancipatory potential of the Enlightenment;[1] these shifts are incrementally reflected in the shrinking of the liberal world and in the reduction of the liberal understanding of the subject, as barriers and limits are increasingly introduced, at first as external to the liberal subject and finally, as internal to the liberal subject. For Foucault, the shifting understanding of the liberal subject was of crucial importance: his work on biopolitics and the governance of the self can be read as a critical engagement with understanding the reshaping of liberal aspirations from a concern with the knowledge of and transformation of the external world to the management of the inner world of subjects, articulated clearly in the shift from government, based upon liberal frames of representation, to biopolitical governance, the regulation of ways or modes of individual being. In this shift, our understanding of what it means to be human and of what being human means for our engagement with the world we live in has been fundamentally altered.

Foucault deals with this problematic on several occasions, most notably in his work on *The Birth of Biopolitics* (Foucault 2008) but also through analogy in his study of the decay of Greek democratic thought, especially as reflected in the work of Plato (Foucault 2010). While Foucault engaged critically with this shift, I want to suggest that in the work of Amartya Sen, this shift can be seen in its most fully articulated form: the conception of 'development as freedom' inverts classical or traditional framings of both these terms as Sen shifts the emphasis of both problematics to the inner world of the subject. For Sen, development is no longer a question of material transformation: development is no longer about the external world. In fact, development disappears – it has no external material measurement – it is deontologized, or rather assumes the ontology of the human subject itself. At the same time, freedom is also dissolved as a meaningful way of understanding the political or legal status of the subject: freedom also loses its materiality as it loses its external universalist moorings and instead becomes relocated to the interior life of the individual.

What is at stake here is no small matter and I further want to suggest that the postcolonial critique of liberal modernity needs to engage with this problematic, clearly established in the late work of Foucault, to avoid being articulated within dominant frameworks of 'late', 'advanced' or 'post-liberal' understandings and

[1] For Marx, 1830 marked the turning point, from which point onwards the science of political economy, which reached its highpoint with Ricardo, could only degenerate and become vulgarized:

> In France and England the bourgeoisie had conquered political power. Thenceforth, the class struggle, practically as well as theoretically, took on more and more outspoken and threatening forms. It sounded the knell of scientific bourgeois economy. It was thenceforth no longer a question, whether this theorem or that was true, but whether it was useful to capital or harmful, expedient or inexpedient, politically dangerous or not. In place of disinterested inquirers, there were hired prize-fighters; in place of genuine scientific research, the bad conscience and the evil intent of apologetic. (Marx 1954: 24–25)

policy practices.[2] If this reading of Foucault is relevant to today, then perhaps it is most relevant for postcolonial critical frameworks. Perhaps the introduction of difference into the discourses of freedom and development – and their removal from liberal universalist conceptions of the liberal subject, enframed within sovereign states and the formal rights of citizenship, and from liberal teleologies of progress as linear material development – may lead us to other and more problematic traps, from which it will be more difficult to extricate ourselves. Rather than take the route suggested by Duffield and others, of understanding 'development' or 'freedom' themselves as universalizing, liberal or problematic concepts, which need to be avoided, maybe we should be thinking of how to escape the metaphysics of the Enlightenment, not through the rejection of its universalist legacy but through the struggle to ground our own historically specific understandings of what the human subject is and could be.[3]

5.2 Foucault's Work on the Genealogy of the Subject

In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault drew out the implications of post-liberalism, in his terminology, 'neoliberalism', or biopolitical governmentality. He was very keen to draw out the limitation of the Left or Marxist thinking of his day, which saw in neoliberalism merely the rolling back of the state and the expansion of market forces, with the increased emphasis on the self-reliance and the responsibilization of the subject (Foucault 2008: 129–50). Foucault's focus is upon why it would be problematic to see this discourse as purely an economic discourse which assumed that its only affects were economic ones and that its contestation could be easily understood in terms of Left versus Right/state versus market. He argued that the discourses of biopolitical governmentality reflected a major shift in how politics could be understood or contested and that this shift was entirely missed in traditional Left/Right polemics (2008: 116–117).

Foucault highlighted major shifts and transformations within liberal discourse, which made this transformation in the relationship between the subject and the state very different (2008: 118). Essentially, he argued that 'neoliberalism' shrinks the understanding of human subjectivity, removing the foundational sphere of rational autonomy. In so doing, Foucault suggested that, with biopolitical approaches, the binaries of liberal thought are dissolved: that there was no longer a conceptual

[2] I prefer the term post-liberal to highlight the shrinking of the liberal world, analysed here, and to suggest that the shift from transforming the external world to work on the inner world, represents the end of the liberal problematic and the final stage of the Enlightenment project which gave birth to the human subject (see, further, Chandler 2010).

[3] Foucault argued that this was a practical as much as an intellectual project of constructing a 'critical ontology of ourselves, of present reality' (2010: 21): 'I shall thus characterize the philosophical ethos appropriate to the critical ontology of ourselves as a historico-practical test of the limits that we may go beyond, and thus as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings' (Foucault 1984: 8).

distinction between the external world and the inner world, between subject and object, between public and private, between the formal sphere of politics and law and the informal sphere of social and economic relations (Foucault 2008: 267–86). There was no longer the universal starting position of the Enlightenment subject – capable of knowing and transforming the external world: of self-realization, of self-emancipation. There was no longer a liberal teleology of progress.

Foucault suggested that these shifts inverted our understanding of the human subject, at the same time making the internal life of the subject the subject of governance. Power and agency are reduced to the level of individual decision-taking. Individual decisions construct the world which we live in and shape the context for further decisions which individuals make. This world is continually being made and remade by the human subject. But the human subject is not the classical subject of the Enlightenment: there is no assumption of growth in knowledge or understanding or progress. Effective governance can only be seen after the event on the basis of the outcomes of decisions; right or wrong choices cannot be established at the time. Government constantly needs to intervene to adapt institutions to enable better individual decisions, to work on the empowerment of the decision-making individual. This is a continual process of preventive management of society based upon the indirect shaping of the capacities and conduct of its individual members (Foucault 2008: 159–179).

Foucault spent his life working and reworking a genealogy of understanding the shifts in governmentalities and the shrinking of the human subject through the reduction of the world to the inner life of the subject. The creation and the death or decline of the human subject and its relationship to the crisis of liberalism and the forms of governing is a rich and engaging one. In *The Birth of Biopolitics* he considered whether the subjection of the subject – precisely through its capacity for subjective will – as a subject of individual choices which are both irreducible and non-transferable, was already necessarily implied in the Enlightenment understanding of the subject or whether it was a contingent product of its economic and political development (Foucault 2008: 271–273). This, of course, is a vital question for those of us interested in political alternatives which necessarily depend on a revitalized understanding of the Enlightenment subject, or at least of how Enlightenment conceptions might have led to the subjective understandings of late liberalism.

It seems to me that in *The Governance of the Self and Others*, Foucault similarly addresses this question. In going back to Immanuel Kant's *What is Enlightenment,* he suggested that despite the framework of self-emancipation, the Kantian project had an ambiguous approach to internal agency which facilitates and legitimizes the need for an external or outside agency which acts to 'free' the subject, in this case the Enlightened monarch or, later, the French revolution (Foucault 2010: 37–39). The call for self-emancipation thereby implicitly allows for the possibility that those who have not emancipated themselves can be understood to lack their own agential capacity for choosing freedom and to require development through external agency to enable them to make better choices. Of most importance for this study is that Foucault emphasizes, that for Kant, the external agency does not 'free' the subject merely by removing external barriers to freedom.

The barrier to Enlightenment is an internal one – the flaw of the subject is a matter of 'will' (Foucault 2010: 29). The lack of freedom or autonomy is not due to external oppression or material deprivation, but 'a sort of deficit in the relationship of autonomy to oneself' (2010: 33). The King of Prussia or the Revolution does not 'free' the subject in the formal terms of liberation or self-government, but in enabling the subject to act according to reason and through enabling reason to guide government. The fact that this is an inner problem means that subjugation or lack of freedom is not a natural or inevitable product but also that the subject cannot be freed merely by the action of others – of liberators (Foucault 2010: 34). Enlightenment as transformation/development is a matter of enabling the subject to free itself – to govern itself through reason – to use its faculties for reason in the correct way.

Therefore, for Foucault, the Enlightenment subject was always one which was a potential subject of/for development understood as 'freedom' in similar terms to those articulated by Sen and human development agencies today. Implicit within Enlightenment assumptions – hidden behind the autonomous subject – was a potential subject in need of governance: a subject which could establish the need for government and which could set the limits to government in its own (lack of) development, understood as internal capacities for self-governance, will or adequate choice-making.[4] This framing is of vital importance to understand the discourse of 'development as freedom', as much as of other dominant discourses, which talk of the development of autonomy, of self-realization, of empowerment and of vulnerability and resilience.

Foucault argued that while the liberal problematic always centred around the problematic of human reason and its limits, the ontology of the human subject was one which could only be understood as a historical product of human struggle, rather than as a metaphysical construct (whereby, we can stand outside or 'escape' the Enlightenment problematic, or embrace or oppose it):

> We must try to proceed with the analysis of ourselves as beings, who are historically determined, to a certain extent, by the Enlightenment. Such an analysis implies a series of historical inquiries that are as precise as possible; and these inquiries will not be oriented retrospectively toward the 'essential kernel of rationality' that can be found in the Enlightenment and that would have to be preserved in any event; they will be oriented towards the 'contemporary limits of the necessary', that is, towards what is not or is no longer indispensable for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects. (Foucault 1984: 6)

Following this reading of Foucault, I suggest that this project becomes more important under today's exhaustion and turning inwards of liberal framings of the subject. As we shall discuss, using Sen as a leading example, post-liberal approaches

[4] For Marx and Engels, the idealism of the Enlightenment perspective, which Foucault so correctly highlights, was perceived to have been overcome through the materialist analysis of social relations and the emergence of a universal class, which needed to transform these relations in order to emancipate itself: the industrial proletariat. Of course, if this collective agent of self-transformation were not to appear or if it was to suffer a historical class defeat rather than achieve its ultimate aims, then it would appear that it was the Enlightenment which both gave birth to and foretold the death of the 'human' as a self-realizing subject. The inability of humanity to give meaning to the world through the Enlightenment and therefore the shift to conceiving of itself and its meaning-creating subjectivity as the problem in need of resolution is, of course, acutely articulated by Nietzsche (see, in particular, 'Our Note of Interrogation' 2006: 159–160).

still focus on the subject, but this is a subject deemed unable to know or to transform: thus, the subject becomes the object of transformative practices of governance as development rather than the subject of development as external transformation. In the concluding section, emphasizing the stakes in this discussion, I will draw on Arendt and Althusser to suggest ways in which we can reassert the need for an understanding of the autonomous subject, without necessarily falling into the trap of Enlightenment metaphysics. If neoliberal or biopolitical approaches are to be challenged, it is vital to rescue or to reassert an understanding of the human as a transformative and emancipatory subject.

It is important to note that the post-liberal understanding of governance in terms of development as empowerment and capacity-building is very different from classical liberal attempts to 'alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals', for example, through Bentham's Panopticon methods of disciplinary surveillance over rational subjects (Foucault 1991: 203). As Foucault states, in juxtaposing sovereign power vis-à-vis biopower in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (Foucault 1990: 135–45; see also Foucault 2003: 239–263) sovereign power, operating coercively from the top-down through disciplinary mechanisms of control differs fundamentally from what could be construed as a biopolitical or 'society-centred' approach, which constitutes 'the population as a political problem' and, within this, focused on the real lives or the everyday of individuals and communities 'and their environment, the milieu in which they live… to the extent that it is not a natural environment, that it has been created by the population and therefore has effects on that population' (Foucault 2003: 245). It is this intersubjective 'milieu' which is understood to shape social and individual behavioural choices and to account 'for action at a distance of one body on another' and thereby 'appears as a field of intervention' for governance policy-making (Foucault 2007: 20–21).

In this framework, governance operates on society indirectly, through shaping the intersubjective processes of societal life itself, rather than through the direct or formal framework of disciplinary controls. In this shift, liberal understandings of both the state (as standing above the societal sphere) and the subject (as universal, rational and autonomous) are fundamentally altered. Sen's work fits squarely into this analysis. Sen critiques both the market-based liberal/neoliberal conception of the rational autonomous individual capable of assuming responsibility for its own development but also the state-based, top-down liberal/socialist conception of the subject as passive and the object of social engineering projects of modernization. For Sen, the individual is the only agent of development but the individual is a vulnerable subject needing the enabling or empowering of external agency: the individual is thereby both the ends and the means of 'development as freedom'.

5.3 Development After the Colonial/Postcolonial Problematic

At the centre of the shift from development as material progress to development as inner progress is the problematization of the inner world of the subject. Rather than the assumption of *homo oeconomicus*, the rational decision-maker, there is an emphasis on the importance of differentiated subjectivity, on superstition, culture,

ethics and irrationality to decision-making. As Sen argues, there is no evidence for the view that individuals engage in rational choice-making on the basis of the pursuit of rational self-interest. In his view, the liberal understanding that 'we live in a world of reasonably well-informed people acting intelligently in pursuit of their self-interests' is misplaced in a world where our social relations and affectivities mean that ethics need to be introduced into the analysis (Sen 1987: 17). Once there is no universal rational subject, but different rationalities, choice-making begins to open up as a sphere for understanding difference and for intervening on the basis of overcoming or ameliorating difference. As Sen notes:

> …to attach importance to the agency aspect of each person does not entail accepting whatever a person happens to value as being valuable…. Respecting the agency aspect points to the appropriateness of going beyond a person's well-being into his or her valuations, commitments, etc. but the necessity of assessing these valuations…is not eliminated.… [E]ven though 'the use of one's agency is, in an important sense, a matter for oneself to judge', the need for careful assessment of aims, objectives, allegiances, etc., and of the conception of the good, may be important and exacting. (Sen 1987: 42)

Where, for classical liberal framings of *homo œconomicus*, the inside of the human head was as out of bounds as the inside of the sovereign state in international relations theory, the apologetic critique of liberal rationalist economic assumptions, necessarily focuses on the internal life or inner life of the liberal subject. The understanding of irrational outcomes of market competition is transferred from the study of capitalist social relations to the study of irrational (non-universalist) human motivations and understandings.

The crucial facet of this approach in economic theorizing, often called 'new institutionalism' (see, e.g., North 1990, 2005), is that differences in outcomes can be understood as conscious, subjective choices, rather than as structurally imposed outcomes. The important research focus is then the individual making the decisions or choices and the subjectively created institutional frameworks (formal and informal) determining or structuring these choices. This is a social perspective which starts from the individual as a decision-maker and then works outwards to understand why 'wrong' choices are made, rather than equipping the individual with a set of universal rational capacities and understanding the differences in outcomes as products of social and economic contexts and relationships. This perspective is much more individual-focused, but the individual subject is understood in isolation from their social and economic context. 'Wrong' choices are understood firstly in terms of institutional blockages at the level of custom, ideology and ideas and then in terms of the formal institutional blockages – the incentives and opportunities available to enable other choices. This problematization of the individual shares much with therapeutic approaches, which also work at the level of the individual (attempting to remove psychological blockages to making better choices) rather than at the level of social or economic relations.

As Foucault noted, the work of these neoliberal or new institutionalist theorists was not narrowly concerned with economic theory; the institutionalist approach was closely tied to psychological and sociological framings and drew on legal and historical problematics, raising 'a whole series of problems that are more historical

and institutional than specifically economic, but which opened the way for very interesting research on the political-institutional framework of the development of capitalism, and from which the American neoliberals benefited' (Foucault 2008: 135). Of particular importance, for this chapter, is the impact of these ideas on United Nations development programmes and World Bank policy-making frameworks in the 1990s, which can be clearly traced in the influence of writers such as Douglass North and, of course, Amartya Sen.

I want to suggest that while institutionalist approaches only became dominant after the end of the Cold War, their appearance, especially in the field of international relations, can be genealogically traced through the discourse of development as a defensive understanding of the gap between the promise of freedom and economic progress under the universalist teleological framing of liberal modernity and the limits to this telos in the lack of economic, social and political progress and the failure to generalize liberal modes of government in the colonial and postcolonial world.

Colonialism was substantially politically challenged and put on the defensive only with the First World War, which led to the rise of the discourses of universal rights of self-determination, articulated both by Lenin, with the birth of the revolutionary Soviet Union, and by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, with America's rise to world power and aspiration to weaken the European colonial powers. Once brought into the universalist liberal framework of understanding, the discourse of development was used both to legitimize and to negotiate the maintenance of colonial power. Given its clearest intellectual articulation in Lord Lugard's *Dual Mandate* (1923), British colonial domination was justified on the basis that the difference between the Western subject and the colonial subject was a question of culture and values – a problem of the inner world of the subject – preventing the colonial subject from transforming the external world, from economic and social development. Lugard was the first to articulate an institutionalist understanding of development, concerned as much with the inculcation of values and understanding through the export of political institutions of integration, as through economic progress itself. Development was conceived as the barrier to self-determination as much as the achievement of development was conceived as a justification for external rule, for it was through Western 'enlightened' knowledge and experience of transforming the external world that the colonial subject could be emancipated.

The discourse of development, of the 'dual mandate' of serving both British imperial interests and the self-interest of the colonial subject, could be construed as a discourse of 'development as freedom', but one very different to that articulated three quarters of a century later by Sen. For the colonial mind, the cultural and moral incapacities of the colonial subject prevented development, and therefore it was a civilizational task of transforming the subject to create the conditions for autonomy, for the emergence of the liberal subject – for freedom as self-determination. In Lugard's own words:

> As Roman imperialism laid the foundation of modern civilisation, and led the wild barbarians of these islands [Britain] along the path of progress, so in Africa today we are repaying the debt and bringing to the dark places of the earth, the abode of barbarism and cruelty, the torch of culture and progress.… If there is unrest, and a desire for independence, as in India and Egypt, it is because we have taught the values of liberty and freedom.… Their very discontent is a measure of their progress. (1923: 618)

As Foucault reflected on Kant's 'What is Enlightenment?', the Enlightenment project of civilizing those not enlightened enough to civilize themselves was seen to be the work of external agency. In order to be freed, the subject first had to be subjected – just as the civilized Romans had to subject the barbarian Britons. Of course, it was not surprising that the denial of liberal universalist understandings of the subject – explicit in colonial rule and the denial of formal liberal freedoms of self-rule and sovereign independence – should take a civilizational focus. Social and economic difference was used to justify the denial of political and legal equality and at the same time subordinated to universality through the assumption that the colonial power was capable of assisting the colonial subject in their journey towards 'development' understood as a higher and more enlightened, 'modern' or 'liberal' existence.

The discourse of development can, of course, be critically engaged with in the manner of Edward Saïd's ground-breaking framework of *Orientalism* (1995), as presupposing 'Western superiority and Oriental inferiority' (1995: 42). There can be little doubt that the birth of the Enlightenment brought with it a Eurocentric view of the world that was universalistic in its assumptions that differences would be progressively overcome through 'development' (see also, Wolff 1994; Todorova 1997; Burgess 1997). This understanding of progress or civilization as a universal teleology demarcating those states and societies, which were more and less 'advanced', was based on the presupposition that the Enlightenment brought economic and social progress to the West and demonstrated a path which could be universally replicated through the Enlightenment of the colonial subject through the external agency of colonial power.

However, what is missing in this framework, and in many traditional postcolonial critiques of development, is the distinct difference in the discourse of development under colonialism (and in much of the early postcolonial era) and the understanding of development under today's late liberalism (e.g. Escobar 1995; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997; Ziai 2007). The colonial subject was not interpellated as a liberal subject, but a subject understood as lacking autonomy – the liberal subject had to be created in the case of the colonial 'exception', on the assumption that the subject could become a liberal and thereby an autonomous and self-governing subject. Here 'development' was separated temporally and spatially from 'freedom'. In the classical liberal modernist teleology, the liberal world would expand spatially as the external world progressed temporally towards 'freedom'. There was a liberal teleology of progress, which was expressed in both spatial and temporal terms; in terms of a liberal 'inside' and a non-liberal 'outside', seen as shrinking with the progress of development. Development was the mechanism through which the world would be universalized, through which the gap between the liberal vision of the future and the realities of the present would be bridged.

The discourse of 'the West and the Rest' (Hall 2007), of the liberal and the colonial/postcolonial world, articulated the limits of liberalism as external, thereby giving an ontological content to development in terms of both spatiality and temporality. There could only be discourses of spatial and temporal differentiation with the understanding that the limits to liberal universalist frameworks of understanding were external ones. The key point to understand with regard to today's articulation

of 'development as freedom' is that the bifurcation – both in spatial and temporal terms – between the West and the Rest, has been overcome through a universalizing framework which internalizes rather than externalizes the limits of liberalism.[5]

The internalizing of the understanding of limits, alleged to be a condition of our globalized and interconnected world, starts from the basis that we are all liberal autonomous, self-determining subjects – that the world is a liberal world – but that differences are internally generated through our internal differentiation: through the fact that individuals make decisions and choices in complex, embedded and often irrational ways. Rather than the lack of 'will' – of subjective choice-making capacity – being the exception, explaining the contingent nature of spatial and temporal limits to universalizing progress, the lack or differentiated nature of capacity is the norm, explaining the necessary or inevitable existence of difference and inequality. Here we have a very different post-liberal universalism, one which universalizes the understanding of the vulnerable subject, in need of development. In this respect, development becomes a permanent project of self-development, of freeing the subject from their inner limitations. This project is necessarily inclusive because there is no longer any 'outside'.

5.4 Sen's Framework

In Amartya Sen's 'agent-centred' world, there are no external universals and therefore there is no framework or yardstick for an external measurement of development. The transformative project of development is reduced down to that of enlarging individual agency understood as choice-making capacity. Freedom now becomes an internal process of empowerment, one with no fixed measure of comparison and no fixed end or goal. Where the colonial subject needed development for the fixed and universal goal of self-government as freedom, Sen's subject has an ongoing struggle for 'freedom' in which the inner life of the individual is both the means for freedom and the measure of freedom:

> Expansion of freedom is viewed, in this approach, both as the primary end and as the principal means of development. Development consists in the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency. (Sen 1999: xii)

Individuals have to be freed from 'unfreedoms', which can take both material and immaterial or ideological forms. Freedom here is not articulated in a classical liberal framing of the constitution of an autonomous subject. Where Sen goes

[5] Foucault has been perceived somewhat negatively by some postcolonial theorists for having neglected non-Western social arrangements and the political problematics of colonialism and Eurocentrism (see, e.g. Spivak 1999; Shani 2010; Pasha 2010). This chapter suggests that these critiques, in their focus upon the 'spatialized character of the liberal world' (Pasha 2010: 214), can miss what is new and specific about the shift from universalist teleologies, which necessarily externalize the contradictions of liberalism, to post-liberal approaches which, lacking a *telos* or assumptions of universal progress, internalize these limits.

beyond the framings of liberal modernity is that development and freedom can only be understood in relation to the inner world of the individual.

It is not so much that development is degraded to a subjective level of the material resources which are considered necessary or desirable for the sustainability of poverty, maintaining the 'bare life' of the 'uninsured' (Duffield 2007) but that the subject and object of development is entirely internalized. Development is judged on the basis of the individual's use of 'reasoned agency'. Development is the project of giving the individual the choice-making capacity necessary to adapt efficiently in today's globalized world. Development is the task of all stakeholders but can only be measured in the individual's inner achievement of 'freedom'. Freedom is thereby not autonomy, self-government, democracy – 'freedom' is no longer conceptualized in the formal liberal sense of either one is free or one is oppressed. Here, freedom is a continuum, the goal of which is never reached as barriers or 'unfreedoms' to 'reasoned agency' can always reappear and can only be known post hoc. Both development – the process of achieving freedom – and freedom itself are internal processes. This is why Sen talks of the 'expansion of freedom' never of the achievement of freedom.

The individual's 'freedom' is conceptually crucial for Sen and becomes both the starting point, the means, and the end point for understanding development:

> Societal arrangements, involving many institutions (the state, the market, the legal system, political parties, the media, public interest groups and public discussion forums, among others) are investigated in terms of their contribution to enhancing and guaranteeing the substantive freedoms of individuals, seen as active agents of change, rather than as passive recipients of dispensed benefits. (Sen 1999: xii–xiii)

If people are not exercising 'reasoned choice-making', then there is something wrong with the institutions of society and the inner world of opinions and beliefs. If choice-making is limited or unreasoned, then people lack freedom and development is necessary to act on the institutions which are blocking this process of free and reasoned choice-making.

We begin to see here that Sen's framework is doing a lot more than merely downplaying the need for material development or taking the social struggle out of the process of freeing individuals from oppression. Sen's framing takes the understanding of socio-economic and political processes out of the framing of liberal modernity. There is no teleology of progress, there is no universalist framing, and there is no longer the understanding of the liberal subject – as either a rights- or an interest-bearing rational and autonomous actor.

Here the subject is autonomous but not free. The subject is autonomous as a choice-making actor, but never truly capable of making a 'free and reasoned' choice. Freedom – choice-making capacity – has always to be expanded. This need for the expansion of freedom is as necessary for Western subjects as for postcolonial subjects. For Sen, there is no divide between the West and the Rest, no sphere of liberalism and sphere of non-liberal or a-liberalism. This is as inclusive an analysis as can be imagined and in this way completes or overcomes the immanent contradiction between the Enlightenment's metaphysical conception of the rational and reasoning transformative universal subject and the limits posed by the social relations of capitalist modernity. The contradictions of liberalism are not overcome externally – through the transformation of social relations – but internally through understanding

material difference as a product of the universal metaphysical subject, universalized precisely upon the basis of the differentiation of individuals as the irreducible choice-making agents/subjects of late liberalism.

Sen, in his work, uses this metaphysical view of the differentiated subject as irreducible agent to transform and overcome all liberal binaries based on the construction of legal or political collectivities. The starting point of the freedom of individual agency is at the centre of all his wide-ranging studies: whether it is deconstructing the idea of material equality (judged by an external measure of equal opportunities or resources or of equal outcomes) (Sen 1992); deconstructing the idea of collective identities (Sen 2006); deconstructing ideas of justice (on the basis that formal frameworks of politics and law cannot measure how individuals grow as choice-makers) (Sen 2009); or deconstructing material measures of development (Sen 1999). For Sen, there is no divide between the West and the non-West, as there are no exclusive social or economic collectivities – the level of development in terms of GDP is no longer relevant, nor is the type of political regime in itself. There is no universal external yardstick available to give content to freedom in either the economic and social or the political and legal realms. The lack of freedom can exist as much in a wealthy liberal democracy as under any other society as the concern is not with an 'exclusionary' liberal modernist understanding of freedom. Any individual can become unfree if Sen's conception of 'the more inclusive idea of capability deprivation' is taken up (1999: 20).

In this conception, political freedom and market economic competition are to be valued because they help facilitate individual choice-making capacities and enable their expression. The assumption is that without 'development' individuals will not be free, in the sense of no longer lacking the capabilities necessary to pursue their reasoned goals. Here none of us are free from the need for development. Development is the process of altering the institutions which shape our capacities and capabilities for free choices. In this understanding of freedom, there can be no assumption of originatory or universal autonomy and rationality, such as that underpinning social contract theorizing: the mainstay of the political and legal subject of liberal modernity. To this *arrangement-focused* view, Sen counterposits a '*realization-focused* understanding of justice' (2009: 10). For Sen, justice, like development, cannot be universal but only understood in terms of individual empowerment and capacity-building.

> The question to ask, then, is this: If the justice of what happens in a society depends on a combination of institutional features and actual behavioural characteristics, along with other influences that determine the social realizations, then is it possible to identify 'just' institutions for a society without making them contingent on actual behaviour? Indeed, we have good reason for recognizing that the pursuit of *justice is partly a matter of the gradual formation of behaviour patterns*… (Sen 2009: 68, emphasis added).

Justice is not a matter of liberal institutional arrangements but about empowering or capability-building individuals; there is no abstract universalism but rather the recognition that 'realization' comes first. On the basis of injustice, or 'unfreedoms', then justice (like development) becomes a process of realization 'aimed at guiding social choice towards social justice' (Sen 2009: 69). Justice aims at enlarging justice as freedom, in the same way, as development aims at enlarging development as freedom. Justice is a continuous process not a fixed and externally measurable end or goal.

5.4.1 Sen's Displacement of the External World with the Inner World

For Sen, there are no external frames of reference. It is not liberal institutions or economic development which serves to gauge the problematic of the subject but the 'realization of the individual's capabilities' – this as an ongoing process not a measurement against a fixed point. Sen, in his work on *Justice*, is keen to highlight the importance of difference over universality – the embeddedness of the human subject – and in doing so he is happy quoting Gramsci:

> In acquiring one's conception of the world one always belongs to a particular grouping which is that of all the social elements which share the same mode of thinking and acting. We are all conformists of some conformism or other, always man-in-the-mass or collective man. (Sen 2009: 119)

Sen suggests that it is our social embeddedness which restricts our capacities for transition. That we need an 'anthropological way' (2009: 120, 121) of understanding the ways in which our subjectivities may constitute a barrier to the development of public reason. He expands on how our 'local conventions of thought' (2009: 125) may limit our ability to reflect and to adapt, that individual and collective world views and understandings may be partial and one-sided. However, this is not just a call for more information or greater material equality. The key to Sen's perspective of development as freedom is capabilities. It is not instrumental outcomes per se, nor resource inputs, but the individual's 'capability to choose' (2009: 235).

It is vital to draw out that 'capability to choose' is very different from the 'freedom to choose'. The later conception is that of classical liberalism, which assumes that freedom is all that is required for the rational autonomous subject. The former is the key to understanding Sen's perspective. Sen disagrees with the liberal perspective, which assumes autonomy is freedom. For Sen, freedom is an ongoing process of empowering the individual; this empowerment is not measured in external outputs but internal processes of valuation and decision-making. It is not an outcome, not even a nonmaterial outcome, such as 'well-being' or 'happiness' (Sen 2009: 271). It is an internal outcome – it is a 'way of living' (2009: 273).

Sen's work, in fact, recaptures some of the elitist theorizing of Plato in focusing on the inner world rather than the outer world. Sen, in a footnote, states (2009: 301):

> In seeing freedom in terms of the power to bring about the outcome one wants with reasoned assessment, there is, of course, the underlying question whether the person has had an adequate opportunity to reason about what she really wants. Indeed the opportunity of *reasoned assessment* cannot but be an important part of any substantive understanding of freedom.

Sen is essentially seeking to measure the internal or moral life of the subject and arguing that this should be the actual object of policy-making and also the indirect means of measuring the extent of 'freedom'. This very much follows the pre-liberal framing of Plato in *Gorgias*, when Socrates famously argued with Polus that tyrants lacked power because they lacked a true understanding of their ends, of what would do them good (Plato 1960: 35–39). In other words, the late liberal subjects of development are not able to autonomously or rationally judge what is in their

own interests. For Sen, the subject of development is one who lacks the capacity to answer the Socratic question: 'How should one live?' (Sen 1987: 2). For Sen, development – the task of good governance – is to enable individuals to answer this question correctly. In fact, Sen turns back on Plato his assumption that there is no such thing as evil, merely ignorance, suggesting with regard to the parochial understanding of the Greeks, in their practice of infanticide, that even Plato suffered from a limited and narrow 'local' understanding of the world (Sen 2009: 404–407). People choosing to live badly – the limits of human reason – constitute the demand for and limit of governance, for 'development as freedom'.

Where does this leave the human subject in Sen? On one level the human subject is all that there is. The goal of policy-making is the enabling and the empowering of this subject – of fulfilling its capabilities and capacities. There is no goal beyond the human subject and no agent beyond the human subject and no measurement beyond the human subject. But the human subject does not set goals; the human subject has no agency and no measuring capacity itself. In capability-building the subject – the subject is denied its own capability as a subject. The human subject is the end to be achieved, through the process of development, justice, democracy, etc. – the project of humanizing is the human. For Sen, as for Plato, the project is an internal one rather than an external one. As Foucault suggests, this focus on the inner life connects Platonic thought with Christian thought, similarly denying transformative agency (Foucault 2010: 359).

This shift to work on the inner self rather than external enables us to understand development as a process of freedom. Those who most need to be freed are the poor and marginal who need 'enabling': those who lack the means to adapt; those who are vulnerable need to be empowered, capability-built and secured through resilience (WRI 2008). Wherever there is a decision to be made, this is the nexus for interventionist/regulatory nexus of 'development': How can this decision or this choice be better made? How can the institutions of governance help enable a better 'choice environment'? What capabilities do the poor and marginalized need to enable this choice? The human-centred logic of late liberalism, so well articulated by Sen, sets out a framework of understanding and of policy-making, which focuses on the internal life of individuals as shaped by the immediate context of family and child-rearing, especially the transition to the decision-making subject. The 2007 World Development Report, *Development and the Next Generation*, articulates the consequences:

> Decisions during the five youth transitions have the biggest long-term impacts on how human capital is kept safe, developed, and deployed: continuing to learn, starting to work, developing a family, and exercising citizenship… Young people and their families make the decisions – but policies and institutions also affect the risks, the opportunities, and ultimately the outcomes. (The World Bank 2006: 2)

Development as freedom means capability-building starts with the young as a way of transforming society through reshaping their internal worlds. The Report's discussion of how decision-making can be altered is quoted below:

> If death rates are the benchmark, young people are a healthy group: the average 10 year-old has a 97 percent chance to reach the age of 25. Mortality is a misleading measure of youth health, however, because it does not reflect the behaviour that puts their health at risk later

> on. Youth is when people begin smoking, consuming alcohol and drugs, engaging in sex, and having more control over their diet and physical activity – behaviours that persist and affect their future health…Because the (sometimes catastrophic) health consequences of these behaviours show up only later in life, they are much more difficult and expensive to treat than to prevent. But for many young people, the search for a stable identity, combined with short time horizons and limited information, encourages them to experiment with activities that put their health at risk.… Reducing risk-taking among youth requires that they have the information and the capacity to make and act on decisions. Policies can do much to help young people manage these risks, especially if they make young people more aware of the long-term consequences of their actions today… (The World Bank 2006: 8)

The logic of the argument is that social and economic problems are the result of poor choice-making by people who lack the capacities for good choice-making. Development no longer takes the form of economic and social transformation but of capability-building: empowering the poor and marginal to make better choices and thereby to become more resilient to external threats and pressures. The problem is not the material circumstances, but the postcolonial subject's lack of freedom: their lack of capability to respond efficiently to their circumstances.

The postcolonial subject may be at the centre of development discourse, but it is their lack of capability which is highlighted. This human-centred approach replicates that of Kant's call for Enlightenment. The lack of material development is read as evidence of the lack of the postcolonial subject's capabilities. In a globalized world, with access to information and resources, it appears that the postcolonial subject is exercising agency in choosing poorly and, in effect, is the object of its own subjection and lack of self-realization. The subject's difference or Otherness is understood and confirmed by the economic and social inequalities. The fact that we accept the universal understanding of the autonomous liberal subject now becomes an apologia for difference rather than a call for its transcendence. The source of this difference is then located in the postcolonial subject itself, in the inner world of the subject. The problems of development or the barriers to the eradication of difference are then searched for in terms of the difficulty of changing the postcolonial mind.

5.4.2 Choice and the Human Subject

The exclusion of the external world, in the subject- or agent-centred world of Sen, results in and reflects the removal of development from a transformative or 'human' project. Hannah Arendt acutely warned of just a shift to the private realm, where the emphasis is on the transformation of behaviour rather than a focus on the active transformation of the external world. She argued that this perspective would abolish the world of political contestation and reduce the state and government purely to administration (Arendt 1958: 45). Perhaps more importantly, Arendt, like Nietzsche and Althusser, powerfully challenged the ideological implication of choice-based theorization, that economic and social outcomes can be understood by reducing them to individual choices:

> Although everybody started his life by inserting himself into the human world through action and speech, nobody is the author or producer of his own life story. In other words, the stories, the results of action and speech, reveal an agent, but this agent is not an author

> or producer. Somebody began it and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely, its actor and sufferer, but nobody is its author. (1958: 184)

In the transition away from the external to the inner world, what humanity has in common is no longer the external world (which we can individually and collectively subordinate to our conscious will) but the inner world, the structure of our minds (Arendt 1958: 283). For Arendt, the essence of new institutionalist or choice-based approaches is their reduction of the public or social world to the inner world of the psychological processes. The social, collective, plural mediation of the world (as human artefact) no longer acts as a 'table', relating and separating us, enabling us to constitute the human as a collective, plural, active and transformative subject (Arendt 1958: 52–3).

The key point for a critique informed from a Foucauldian perspective is that 'freedom' and 'choice' are entirely degraded once the world is reduced to the inner life of the individual. In making choice- and decision-making the moment of understanding and of policy-intervention, that moment – the moment of decision – is taken away: its subjective sovereign freedom is denied. When Amartya Sen or human development programmes talk of 'choices', they are not referring to choices as human freedoms. They are not referring to choices as freely willed by the sovereign subject. Genuine sovereign choices are free from external judgement. Here, choice – freedom, or autonomy – is reduced to responsibility. There is no genuine freedom, merely the allocation of blame, on the basis that as we have universal inner lives, our choices are thereby open to external judgement and intervention. In this framing, it is alleged that Western subjects can understand postcolonial subjects on the basis of 'our' higher developed inner capacities compared to 'their' lower developed capacities for 'choice'. This discourse however is universal, as the same framing enables us to understand the 'poor choice-making' of our fellow citizens and neighbours, if they happen to be unemployed, to smoke, to be teenage mothers, eat fatty food, drop litter, fail to take up higher education opportunities or to properly handle their emotions. The reduction of social, economic, political and environmental questions to ones of individual choice-making capacities is so pervasive we often do not give this a second thought.

As much as Sen is happy to dismiss or minimalize the limited freedoms and choices of liberal modernity – the understanding of freedom or choice-making as superficial and limited by consumption choices or passive electoral voting – these choices are, in fact, freely made and not open to external judgement. It is only when one argues that individually and collectively humans author their own lives or their own world that the capacity for freedom or for choice disappears – as then their choices need to be reflective of their boundless and unintended consequences – choice needs to become resilient, judged on outcomes. The *telos* of tracing authorship of the world to individual choice-making removes the freedom to make choices: every point of choice-making becomes a point of potential judgement, a point of explanation and a point of governance intervention. What, for Arendt, made the human creative and transformative: the fact that our actions are unbounded as other autonomous humans react to them and others to their acts becomes an argument of apologia, an argument to explain and rationalize difference and to justify the imposition of regulatory control. For Althusser, as for Arendt:

> That human, i.e. social individuals are active in history – as agents… – that is a fact. But, considered as agents, human individuals are not 'free' and 'constitutive subjects in the philosophical sense of these terms. They work in and through the determinations of the forms of historical existence of the social relations of production and reproduction (labour process, division and organization of labour, process of production and reproduction, class struggle, etc.). (Althusser 2008: 134)

We struggle to constitute ourselves as legal and political subjects, with equal rights under the law or at the ballot box, but this does not make us sovereigns of our economic and social lives. The subject-form of the agent-individual is a constitutive feature of liberal modernity and is not problematic per se. We are held responsible for our acts in the political and legal sphere – we can be put in jail for crimes or judged by others ethically – but these judgements are based on our intentionality, in legal terms, our *mens rea*. Without intention there is no crime, in the former world of the modern liberal subject.

In essence, Sen seeks to extend the responsibility of individuals to the consequences of their unbounded actions, to the social relations in which they act and decide. Here the subject is no longer located in the external world. Althusser makes a vital point in this suggestion that for the purposes of apologia, 'the legal-ideational notion of the subject' is transformed into a 'philosophical category' which is then posed questions in relations to '*the* Subject of knowledge' and '*the* Subject of History':

> To be dialectical-materialist, Marxist philosophy must break with the idealist category of the 'Subject' as Origin, Essence and Cause, responsible in its internality for all the determinations of the external 'Object', of which it is said to be the internal 'Subject'. For Marxist philosophy there can be no Subject as Absolute-Centre, as a Radical Origin, as a Unique Cause. (Althusser 2008: 135)

It is human interaction – social relations, class struggle – which provides the context in which the action or decision of individuals becomes unbounded, but that does not mean that humans individually or collectively are the subjects (or authors) of history: How those social relations are constructed enables us to understand how social relations provide the dynamic or 'motor' of what we retrospectively narrate as history (Althusser 2008: 139). The only human author of history is the biographer or historian, someone who comes after the fact, rather than being active in it, like the chorus in a Greek tragedy (Arendt 1958: 187).

5.5 Conclusion

Sen, in describing 'development as freedom', in fact, defers freedom to the impossible future through asserting that our limited 'free choices' are constrained by our incapacities and incapabilities. His programme is based on the transformation of the inner life of the subject to facilitate better choice-making, but this denies the autonomy of the subject (within the constraints of social relations). Our freedom to autonomously decide is taken away at the same time as the constraints of our social relations become essentialized as the internal barriers of the mind. Capitalism is naturalized and normalized at the same time as human rationality is degraded and

denied. The problem is the human rather than the social relations in which the human is embedded.

While, for many critical theorists, this inversion of the human subject can be politically described or understood as apologia or an ideological discourse of power, Foucault seeks to get away from a purely contingent economic or politically opportunist understanding of the inversion of the classical liberal understanding of the human subject. For Sen, the task of governance is to transform the inner world of the subject through the indirect shaping of the context in which choices are made. Foucault, more than any other author, sought to explore this shift – to the active production of the subject as the sphere of governance. For liberal modernity, there was always an ambiguous relationship between the Enlightenment framework of the human subject as a rational creative subject and the need for apologia and discourses of individual responsibility. In his work on the *Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault suggests that the disappearance of the external world today undermines the very basis upon which liberal modernity was constructed. Once the individual as choice-maker becomes all that there is, then all the binaries upon which the liberal assumptions of the human subject enabled the subjection of the subject begin to dissolve.

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