Abstract:
Amartya Sen's Idea of Justice builds upon his capabilities approach as the best expression of freedom for wellbeing to critique Rawls' emphasis on transcendent institutionalism and implementing welfare-based social arrangements. He argues for a realization-focused understanding of justice in contrast to an arrangement-focused understanding. In this promotion of wellbeing, Sen’s account of justice resonates with the notion of the common good, as articulated in Catholic Social Teaching.

However, because community life results from individual agency, Sen’s argument fails to fully account for a view of humanity in which communal life is constitutive of identity, rather than the result of individual agency and reason between individuals. He resisted calls to develop fundamental capabilities and attempts to outline essential capabilities for human functioning. This limitation in Sen’s work inhibits its relevance for addressing global the structural nature of the problem of poverty and the necessity for communal response. The Filipino values of pakikipagkapwa and pakiramdam provide a lens through which communitarian approaches to justice rooted in shared communal identities may be developed.
The publication and revision of John Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice* in the 1970s brought the question of justice into the forefront of public discourse. At the center of Rawls’ argument is the assumption of the “veil of ignorance” which would allow individuals to choose the fairest social arrangement since they would be unaware of where they would end up could not guarantee they would receive any special privileges written into the social arrangement. This assumption of an ideal starting point for the social contract then informs his subsequent arguments for justice as fairness.

Amartya Sen departs from this Rawlsian paradigm of justice by critiquing Rawls’ focus on a transcendental ideal of the just society. He argues for justice reasoning to focus on an accomplishment-based understanding of justice that is realized in terms of capabilities possessed by people that promote their wellbeing. In this promotion of wellbeing, Sen’s account of justice resonates with the notion of the common good, as articulated in Catholic social teaching. However, because Sen is committed to the liberal project that identifies community life resulting from individual agency, Sen’s argument fails to fully account for a view of humanity in which communal life is constitutive of identity, rather than the result of individual agency. This limitation in Sen’s work inhibits its relevance for addressing global poverty because of the structural nature of the problem of poverty and the necessity for communal response, to which the common good provides an alternative.

Beyond the macro-level critique of Sen’s account of justice ineffectiveness in responding to the structural nature of global poverty is the micro-level concern of whether Sen’s account of justice addresses the unique situation of cultures where the conception of the individual is intimately interconnected with others. The particular experience of the Filipino cultural value of *kapwa* as the “shared inner self” challenges individualistic assumptions within conceptions of justice. The common good as articulated in communitarian approaches to justice and the Catholic social teaching tradition builds upon a “shared inner self” and may be a necessary augment to Sen’s articulation of justice and the capabilities approach to development.

### Capabilities, Justice and Limits of Reason

Sen begins his *Idea of Justice* by identifying two paths of reasoning within the Enlightenment tradition, the distinction between which he finds lacking among scholars discussing justice. He describes the first path of reasoning as “transcendental institutionalism,” which focuses on “identifying just institutional arrangements for a society,” and the other as “realization-focused comparison,” which emphasizes, “comparative approaches that were concerned with social realizations.” Sen identifies transcendental institutionalism as the primary mode of reasoning concerning justice since the Enlightenment. While this approach has been fruitful in reflecting on justice, he recognizes greater value and applicability if one were to focus on the comparative approach because it brings about more different and more productive implications through its reasoning.

There are two defining characteristics of “transcendental institutionalism.” First, it begins to think about justice by reflecting upon the question, “What is a just society?” and emphasizes the idea of perfect justice that transcends feasible societies that may be compared by,

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2 Ibid., 11.
3 Ibid., 4.
5 Ibid., 5-8.
“identify[ing] social characteristics that cannot be transcended in terms of justice.” Second, it gives priority to developing and rationalizing institutions and ensuring they are rightly ordered and designed, without emphasizing what types of societies would actually develop out of these conceptions. And it is from this tradition that he argues the social contract emerges and that Rawls provides the fullest and most complete account of justice within the social contract to date.

Rather than beginning with abstract notions of an ideally just society, “realization-focused comparisons” are grounded in a number of other approaches to justice that attempt to answer, “How would justice be advanced?” Sen argues that a diverse range of authors, “were all involved in comparisons of societies that already existed or could feasibly emerge.” This necessitates focusing, “first, on assessments of social realizations, that is, on what actually happens; and second, on comparative issues of enhancement justice.” Sen states that this tradition manifests itself in social choice theory.

Sen’s application of social choice theory also grows out of his long-term commitment to capabilities as more effective and relevant for discussions of wellbeing than utility or happiness, and he argues that capabilities are more effective for providing an informational basis for justice than that provided by Rawls’ primary goods. Capabilities are closely aligned in Sen’s framework with, “The concept of functioning which has distinctly Aristotelian roots [and] reflects the various things a person may value doing or being.” Functioning thus can be understood as capabilities which are the “abilities to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being.” Sen thus sees capability as a kind of freedom, “the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations (or, less formally put, the freedom to achieve various lifestyles).”

Since capabilities are manifest through the choices people are able to make, people “have to be seen as being actively involved in shaping their own destiny.” This emphasis on active involvement by the person as a subject and actor of his or her own life undermines any emphasis on developing social welfare institutions which spoon-feed people. Sen argues the creation of welfare institutions grows out of Rawls emphasis on primary goods and an overemphasis on the “transcendent institutionalism” approach to justice which gives priority to social arrangements rather than realized development.

The capabilities approach offers a critique transcendent institutionalism and its emphasis on implementing welfare-based social arrangements which fail to account for how individuals operate within social systems and structures by focusing solely on the social arrangements. Sen proceeds to argue for a realization-focused understanding of justice in contrast to an

6 Ibid., 6.
7 Ibid., 9.
8 Ibid., 7.
9 Ibid., 410.
11 Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom (New York: Anchor Books, 1999), 75
13 Sen, Development as Freedom, 75.
14 Ibid., 53.
arrangement-focused understanding. He distinguishes these foci using the difference in the meaning of justice communicated by the Sanskrit terms *niti*, which tends to be directed toward “organizational propriety and behavioural correctness” and *nyaya*, which “stands for a comprehensive concept of realized justice.” 15 He argues for greater attention to *nyaya*, which orients all arrangement-focused understandings of justice towards the more important emphasis on the realization of justice and whether the society is actually just. Freedom to choose and the responsibility that accompanies this freedom are at the core of justice and these are made possible by social realizations being assessed in terms of capabilities people possess.

Finally, Sen consistently affirms that “The role of unrestricted public reasoning is quite central to democratic politics in general and to the pursuit of social justice in particular” 16 and provides the ultimate means for understanding and addressing the fundamental injustices that confront individuals and communities, as “Reasoning is central to the understanding of justice.” 17 While he acknowledges the place of indignation as a primary motivator for responding to injustice, he argues that it needs to be grounded and articulated through public reasoning, stating that, “Even pure expressions of discontent and disappointment can make their own contributions to public reasoning if they are followed by investigation (perhaps undertaken by others) of whatever reasonable basis there might be for the indignation.” 18 Sen constantly underscores the importance of reasoning for thinking about justice, even to point of trusting that reasoning can overcome unreason:

The pervasiveness of unreason presents good grounds for scepticism about the practical effectiveness of reasoned discussion of confused social subjects ... This particular scepticism of the reach of reasoning does not yield any ground for not using reason to the extent one can, in pursuing the idea of justice ... Unreason is mostly not the practice of doing without reasoning altogether, but of relying on a very primitive and very defective reasoning. There is hope in this since bad reasoning can be confronted by better reasoning. 19

It is ultimately the question of whether reason alone, without any judgments about the good or what constitutes the good, is able to address the complex global problems confronted by the contemporary world.

Martha Nussbaum, a collaborator with Sen in articulating and advancing the capabilities approach, extends Sen’s capabilities through a deepening account of the liberal tradition by returning to Aristotle. Contrary to the argument that the account of *telos* in Aristotle provides a stronger basis for evaluating the aims and goals of social arrangements, Nussbaum finds within Aristotle a rational justification for the liberal articulation of the social contract. 20 Nussbaum finds inadequate Sen’s trust in reason alone to discover how best to proceed. She examines limitations within Sen’s capabilities approach and shows they lack a clear articulation of the

16 Ibid., 44.  
17 Ibid., xviii.  
18 Ibid., 392.  
19 Ibid., xvi–xviii.  
context in which discussions can be help about what it means to be human. She thus argues Aristotle’s idea of telos opens up political discussions to grounding experiences, which can be drawn from a list of capabilities.

Since this is not just an Aristotelian idea, but one that corresponds to human experience, there is good reason to think that it can command a political consensus in a pluralistic society. If we begin with this conception of the person and with a suitable list of the central capabilities as primary goods, we can begin designing institutions by asking what it would take to get citizens up to an acceptable level on all these capabilities.21

Nussbaum is primarily concerned that the capabilities framework loses its power in the absence of defined content. She argues capabilities provides a powerful form to Rawls’ discussion of public goods, but fails to move beyond the form. There is, therefore the possibility to develop, “a vision of social justice that will have the requisite critical force and definiteness to direct social policy, [for which] we need to have an account, for political purposes of what the central human capabilities are, even if we know that this account will always be contested and remade.”22

Nussbaum identifies a central question to be posted to Sen’s work: Is the freedom to exercise one’s capabilities within a relatively equal playing field adequate to guarantee justice? Nussbaum argues these are necessary but insufficient to guarantee justice. She advances the capabilities approach of Sen by articulating specific capabilities which should be a starting point for discussions which provide substance to the form of freedom Sen provides.23 However, she remains firmly within the liberal tradition that ultimately the freedom and capability that matters most is that of the individual and the individual exercise of freedom.

The capabilities approach and the realization-focused approach to justice both emanate from and provide a rationalization for individualistic notions of liberty and freedom. One might reasonably ask whether or not the communal experiences and commitments within which one lives have any bearing on freedom and the exercise thereof? Do questions about the just ordering of society provide nothing more than a restriction on freedom?

**Limitations of Liberalism and Communitarian Responses**

The liberal modern project has attempted to give an account of justice without having recourse to a foundational aim or goal of a just ordered society. The central issue for many communitarians is that liberalism tends to undercut the communal interactions that define human existence. Some critics of a liberal conception of justice do not agree that rights should be given priority over the good, nor that human aims and attachments can be divorced from the process of reasoning about justice.

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22 Ibid., 56. For a fuller discussion of the specific capabilities she proposes, see Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2000).

Michael Sandel explains that, “Modern theories of justice try to separate questions of fairness and rights from arguments about honor, virtue, and moral desert.” Sandel wonders if the modern attempt to separate the question of the goods that justice says should be distributed from the purpose of the good which is being distributed ultimately impoverishes justice because it limits people from grappling with more fundamental questions of justice.

Debates about justice and rights are often, unavoidably, debates about the purpose of social institutions, the goods they allocate, and the virtues they honor and reward. Despite our best attempts to make law neutral on such questions, it may not be possible to say what’s just without arguing about the nature of the good life.

Justice, therefore, is not simply reducible to how to distribute goods or to enhance capabilities, but necessitates discussion about what living a good life actually entails. Sandel argues this requires more than simply tolerance of various perspectives, but engagement with various moral claims and traditions.

MacIntyre argues, beyond Sandel, that not only are engagement with moral claims required for more substantial understanding of justice, it is impossible to speak of justice without an understanding of the tradition within which one is discussing justice. Rival intellectual positions are always bound up with rival traditions, which means that in order to determine how one can rationally respond to any number of vexing questions of justice, one must recognize, “that will depend upon who you are and how you understand yourself.” Pursuing this argument further leads MacIntyre to a foundational Aristotelian position which he argues was lost during the modern debates about rationality. The arguments of MacIntyre and Sandel are representative of what came to be known as “communitarian” as it was seen as opposed to liberalism. One characteristic shared by many “communitarians” is a return to telos in Aristotle for discussions of the polis and justice.

Stanley Hauerwas draws out some of the distinctions between the communitarian and liberal traditions through a comparative discussion of MacIntyre and Nussbaum’s readings of Aristotle’s ethics. He applauds Nussbaum for trying “to help us discover a chastened and more profoundly complex account of the moral life necessary to sustain those institutions that have been created by our liberal ancestors but that can no longer be sustained by our ancestors’ philosophical presumptions.” He shows how Nussbaum grounds her argument in a richer account of what it means for humans to exist within society than is present in much contemporary, post-Kantian discourse. However, Hauerwas argues Nussbaum’s application of Aristotle creates a rationalization which makes Aristotle a liberal, and thereby undercuts the place of telos and eudaimonia within his ethics. Underlying this concern is a more fundamental issue with liberalism in general because of its attempt to divorce the political from the epistemological,

25 Ibid., 207.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
leading Hauerwas to ask “Can liberalism survive the acknowledgement that it is a tradition when its epistemological commitments are based on the denial of tradition?”

Sandel shares Nussbaum’s concern for the substance of freedom, but, arguing along lines similar to Hauerwas, insists upon the communal nature of freedom and lived existence which cannot simply be addressed by a list of capabilities.

I do not think freedom of choice—even freedom of choice under fair conditions—is an adequate basis for a just society. What’s more, the attempt to find neutral principles of justice seems to me misguided. It is not always possible to define our rights and duties without taking up substantive moral questions; and even when it’s possible it may not be desirable.

While Nussbaum argues for “grounding human experiences” from which we can develop a list of capabilities, Sandel argues for greater weight to be given to our communal encumbrances which allows us to “see ourselves as situated and yet free.”

Beyond the discussion of freedom and capability in relation to justice at the individual and communal level, Severine Deneulin contends Sen’s articulation of justice limits its ability to be applied to the pressing issues of injustice confronted in the contemporary global world. In her conclusion reviewing Sen’s *Idea of Justice*, she praises Sen’s nuanced and grounded approach to justice for its “generous philosophical embrace,” but finds it inadequate in the face of global structural injustice.

Assessing states of affairs in terms of individual freedoms and expecting reasoning to lead to a better state is not enough. What is required is an analysis of the justice of the economic, social and political structures constitutive of a human life lived in common with fellow human beings and the environment. These structures are to be ‘good’, enabling people to live ‘good’ lives. Freedom and reasoning are certainly excellent starting points for thinking about justice but the journey needs to continue.

Deneulin argues the primary problem with Sen’s discussion of reasoning is that, because it insists on maintaining its roots in the tradition of liberalism, reason is primarily manifest between individuals. As such, it fails to account for the structural causes and explanations of both suffering and degradation of people and the environment. Sen’s discussion of capabilities is powerful for its emphasis as an approach and not as a theory which he then extends into his

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30 Ibid., 84.
32 Ibid., 221. Ransome reaches a similar conclusion in critiquing Sen’s capabilities for wellbeing. He argues that wellbeing without recourse to *eudaimonia* leaves the capabilities approach too limited in accounting for situations in which choices are not simply about functioning, but malfunctioning from poor choices. He proposes using the idea of “thick” indicators from Williams (*Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*) to augment discussions of capabilities. See, Bill Ransome, “Sen and Aristotle on Wellbeing,” *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 45.1 (Autumn 2010): 41-52.
34 Ibid.
argument for justice. However, its lack of a structural focus and real-world examples and application, in particular with his theory of justice, leave many wondering what impact, if any it may have on its desired discussion of real situations of injustice.

This limitation within Sen’s capabilities framework may ultimately be a limitation of liberalism insistence on the individual and reason without recourse to communal criteria for judgement. It seems plausible in theory to make reason the central idea and argue for reason alone to guide discussions of what is just, reason seems impotent without commitment among and connection between those engaging in reasoning. Mutual respect may exist as encoded within rules and regulations; however, while these rules are essential and useful, they are inadequate for developing a truly common understanding of what is best for all.

Procedural rules can at most ‘remind’ citizens and political elites of the obligations and responsibilities they should live up to; but the rules cannot guarantee the practice of these virtues when reminders fall on deaf ears. If political virtues are not already internalized in actors as normative resources or dispositions, then no institutional procedure can evoke them.

The response would be to develop incentives which will encourage deaf ears to listen and take note, and thereby direct the behavior of those participating within the social and economic spheres, “However, not all of the required contributions to the common good seem to be suitable for this conversion.”

The reason for missing out on elements of a truly common general welfare is that liberalism emphasizes rules over people as the primary determinant of a just society. Sen’s articulation of justice attempts to move beyond this emphasis on rules to a realization-focused vision of justice, but it seems that he cannot move beyond the necessity of rules in providing a structural, rather than substantive freedom and procedural rather than substantive justice. This leads to procedural justice rather than substantive justice.

Sen’s capabilities and the idea of justice built upon it, thus provides a powerful descriptor of how justice is lived and present in various social arrangements thus moves towards a more substantial account of justice, it still possesses “no teleological account of the good that societies ought to promote beyond (individual) freedom is offered.” And while Nussbaum advocates for grounding the capabilities in the telos of the good life, “her vision of the capability approach, with her list of central human capabilities, continues to situate the telos of all human actions in the freedom of each individual to live a life of her choice.” The account of freedom espoused

36 Claus Offe, “Whose good is the common good?” Philosophy and Social Criticism 38 (7): 667.
37 Ibid., 666.
38 Offe argues that “The rules of the game in a pluralist democracy, in other words, and not citizens who are motivated by republican virtue and judicious insight, are what bring forth the common good as a quantity that is never finalized.” Ibid., 680.
40 Ibid.
by Sen and Nussbaum is therefore impoverished in the face of communal and global injustice and suffering.

The central question being raised is whether liberalism, within whose embrace Sen places his argument, is able to provide an adequate account of human freedom and capability for addressing the question of justice in relation to global structural inequality? The communitarian emphasis of grounding justice in communal participation and commitments brings to the forefront the question of the common good. Sandel, MacIntyre, Hauerwas and Deneulin all make claims for understanding justice in light of the common good. The concerns raised apply to a disquieting concern with liberalism identified by Offe that, “something is missing, has been lost, or remains morally and functionally inadequate, if modern societies are conceived merely as liberal constitutional democracies, without reference to categories of an obligatory ‘ethical life’ [Sittlichkeit].”

This might indicate that a concept employed by the communitarians - the common good – will provide a basis for contextualizing and grounding justice for addressing global problems, drawing from “the search for sources of civic engagement, social cohesion, a ‘social capital’ and an active citizenry.”

The Common Good: Communitarians and Catholic Social Doctrine

The Catholic Social Tradition has often found itself at odds with liberalism and its assumptions about social organization. A primary reason for this conflict is that the Catholic worldview tends to resonate more fully with the assumptions of a communitarian framework. Because of the assumption that we are not created as discrete individuals only, but as communal beings whose identity is constituted by the communal relationships into which we are born, Catholic teaching has often been fundamentally opposed to the liberal assumption of individuals as the sole basis of social arrangements. In addition, the Catholic Church operates as an institution with global reach and global operations. Thus its perspective on the common good benefits from both its existence as a global entity and its concern for justice across the institutional reach.

The Catholic tradition emphasizes an understanding of the human person as interpersonal and in which group relations are not ancillary to, but constitutive of, individual persons. The “dignity of the human person is realized in community with others” and this idea is important for resisting the individualist reductionism of contemporary liberal theory. It is a fundamental recognition that our social identity is not an add-on to our existence, but comprises that very existence.

Out of this central recognition that the human person is both individual and social grows the idea of the common good as a principle reflective of social and structural relationships. The notion of the common good traces itself through a long and interesting history, but finds its roots

42 Ibid.
in Aristotle. He does not speak of the common good directly, but rather focuses his attention on the *polis* which embodies all the goods of the community:

Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good.⁴⁶

The *polis* exists in Aristotle’s ethics as a means of allowing human beings to live towards their *telos* in community with one another. One is unable to exist outside of the practical rationality of a particular *polis* and is therefore constituted by the community to which one belongs.

Aristotle’s understanding of the *polis* informs Catholic social teaching’s understanding of the common good,⁴⁷ which it defines as the “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.”⁴⁸ The common good grounds the political community because, “The political community exists for the sake of the common good, in which it finds its full justification and significance, and the source of its inherent legitimacy.”⁴⁹

MacIntyre provides some helpful outlines for what is meant by the common good. “First, we may justifiably speak of a common good in characterizing the ends of a variety of very different types of human association.”⁵⁰ Secondly, among these there are cases in which the common good of an association is no more than the summing of the goods pursued by individuals as members of that association, just because the association itself is no more than an instrument employed by those individuals to achieve their individual ends.”⁵¹ MacIntyre thus sees in the common good an articulation of the direction and orientation of human association. The interaction of humans in a structured way orients humans towards a shared good and the common good is the shared good to which the association of humans is oriented.

Sandel argues for a more robust understanding of the common good than MacIntyre offers, because he is building upon the centrality of the good life for understanding how justice can be developed within a community. Sandel’s argument emphasizes the kinds of conflicts that arise within debates about justice. He provides some general guidelines for achieving a just society, because “we have to reason together about the meaning of the good life, and create a public culture hospitable to the disagreements that will inevitably arise. . . . Justice is not only

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⁴⁹ Ibid., 74.


⁵¹ Ibid., 239-240.
about the right way to distribute things. It is also about the right way to value things.”\(^{52}\) This necessitates a new politics of the common good for which he suggests four themes: citizenship, sacrifice and service; the moral limits of markets; inequality, solidarity, and civic virtue; and a politics of moral engagement. His emphasis on political discourse and organization attempts to move beyond the liberal emphasis on avoidance and tolerance by creating space for moral engagement, which provides a firmer basis for mutual respect.\(^ {53}\)

The commitment to the common good must lead reflection back not only to what one possesses or the extrinsic goods or happiness one should be able to acquire or pursue, but also to the relationships that are constitutive of the political community, because “positive relationships are in fact the ‘preconditions’ for the sharing of goods and commodities within society. And these relationships are as much a part of the common good as the physical, external items that we possess or utilize.”\(^ {54}\) These relationships provide the common good a richness which other accounts fail to because they overemphasize “general welfare” as an extrinsic category. As Claus Offe argues,

> It is also striking that an ‘intrinsically valuable’, i.e. moral quality, is attributed to the common good, as a political goal that synthesizes values of modernity and justice. In that respect, the common good (\textit{bonum commune}) differs from desirable aggregate conditions that result from the adroit pursuit of individual interests – that is, from the development of collective goods, positive-sum games and fair bargaining situations.\(^ {55}\)

The movement towards balancing the intrinsic value with the extrinsic manifestations of the common good provides a richer and more challenging perspective. The assumptions of relationship for the common good can help to address a limitation in the liberal approach rooted in the social contract.

As the realm of relationships expands to consider one’s role within the global community, a question arises whether or not there are fundamental goods which are not reducible to individual occurrences or individual characteristics. Deneulin uses Charles Taylor’s concept of irreducibly social goods,\(^ {56}\) which, “because these goods have an intrinsic value to human well-being, the informational basis of development needs to go beyond individual capabilities and incorporate these.”\(^ {57}\) These goods are not simply achieved by individuals, but addressed through structures of living together, through which “the languages needed for such self-interpretation are essentially social, and community is a structural precondition of human agency.”\(^ {58}\) The actions necessary to address deprivations and maximize agency are thus not simply individual choices, but brought about through, at least, “certain implicit structures of living together.”\(^ {59}\) Deneulin concludes that the importance of structures of living together necessitates that the capability

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53 Ibid., 268-269.
55 Offe, Whose good, 666
58 Ibid., 119.
59 Ibid., 121.
approach, “if its aim is to address deprivations, will have to place not individual agency as central to addressing deprivations but rather socio-historical agency (what individuals can do in the socio-historical reality in which they are living) as central.”

The connection between the common good and the socio-historical agency to which Deneulin refers are central principles within Catholic social teaching. The common good is fostered through the principles of solidarity and political participation. John Paul II, in his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, defines solidarity as “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.” This commitment is born out in the struggle together to create new ways of being together as freedom and solidarity are intricately bound up with one another, because “In order to be genuine, development must be achieved within the framework of solidarity and freedom, without ever sacrificing either of them under whatever pretext.” The commitment manifest toward the common good is not simply about one’s own capabilities, but about a larger shared relationship which is constitutive the individual and in which the individual participates as an exercise of his or her dignity.

**The Philippine Kapwa as “shared inner self”**

The struggle together in relation to the common good also challenges the assumptions of an individualistic account of justice when one is operating within societies whose values and orientations express commonality and not simply individuality. Deneulin cogently argues any viable account of justice must recognize we truly live together on the planet, which requires an account of which public goods are irreducibly social and also necessary for human existence and what it means for all of us to share the good life in common. The capabilities approach provides an important and necessary part for this discussion, but ultimately needs to be augmented by a communitarian account of what is meant by the good common global life, so that individuals do not simply exercise their own capabilities, but recognize themselves working within a structure that shapes those very capabilities they are exercising. It thus becomes important to consider whether an individualistic account of justice is potentially unjust itself when utilized in the context of communal local realities? This question is relevant to the Philippine reality, where the Tagalog *kapwa* provides a description of the social interaction found amongst Filipinos.

Filipino culture is often described and is known for its communal orientation which manifests as hospitality and other-centeredness, often seen in the welcoming of others. Filipino psychologists argue that at the core of this hospitality is a recognition of being a person-in-relation-to-others. Virgilio Enriquez refers to this as the Filipino understanding of *kapwa*. Often translated as “other” it can also be understood as “both” or “fellow being.” *Kapwa* emphasizes the “shared inner self” and possesses enough breadth to include those who are considered outsiders as well as those who are considered as one-of-us. *Kapwa* has thus been referred to as the “unity of the one-of-us-and-the-other.” Out of this concept emerges the value of

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60 Ibid., 120.
62 Ibid., 33.
64 Enriquez, “Kapwa,” 52. This definition is also given by Jose Villa Panganiban, *Diksyunaryo-Tesauro Pilipino-Ingles* (Quezon City: Manila Paz, 1972), 744-745.
pakikipagkapwa which Enriquez says can be understood as a value for Filipinos of “humanness to its highest level.”

Enriquez identifies within the value of pakikipagkapwa a radical and fundamental respect for another person, regardless of social position. While deference may be shown for the relative social or professional position, underneath is a regard for the dignity and being of each other, which reflects the notion of a “shared self” within the concept of kapwa. Enriquez argued that normative and moral implications are drawn from this value, and are threatened when western notions of individuation lead to the separation of the ako (I/self) from the kapwa (understood simply as other). The value begins to lose its inclusiveness and inherent implication for treating equally other human beings.

Agnes Brazal builds upon this Filipino value to show how it brings about not simply relationships among humans, but also among non-human creations, that opens up promotion of plurality and difference. The extension of pakikipagkapwa leads to mutuality in which each individual is respected and valued, and the interconnectedness of the entirety of creation is drawn forth. The diversity of creation is respected and valued, and commonality is drawn out through this extended sense of identity and mutual interdependency. Thus, the value challenges the idea there are fixed roles, but rather the relationality between humans and the natural world is constantly navigated through a mutual give and take.

The navigation of relationships reflects a significant dimension of kapwa - the Filipino value of pakiramdam, which is often translated as feeling but reflects more a sensitive temperament which recognizes more than simply emotion. De Guia points out that it reflects both explicit and external feelings and also the tacit or wordless ways. It could thus be understood as thinking with the heart and is sensitive to the complexity of relationships and environment. This value could ultimately be understood as a “shared inner perception” as pakikiramdam. Pakiramdams is thus a way of navigating relationships and life. It therefore nuances how reason is understood, since the truth of a given situation is best navigated given the ambiguity present in many situations.

The values of pakikipagkapwa and pakiramdam reflect the interconnectedness of Filipinos in relation to one another and their environment. They are important values for understanding the behaviors that manifest within the cultural practices and lives of Filipinos. It is important to not over-state the importance of these values as if they are prescriptive of behavior, but rather it is relevant for reflecting upon our notions of justice and public reason as universal. The communitarian challenge to liberal notions of justice may find greater resonance with communal values that inform behaviors that are oriented towards the common good and solidarity, and where development is seen as the person-in-relation-to-others, and not simply the

65 Ibid., 54
66 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 61-63.
70 Ibid., 86-87.
individual. Parallels between these values operative within Filipino culture and the common good in Catholic social teaching reveal the necessity of creating space for communal interactions and ways of reasoning that cannot simply be reduced to individuals reasoning as individuals together.

The use of the common good and integral human development, therefore, aid not only in the development of policies and procedures for the purposes of addressing injustice on a more structural level, by providing a vision and basis for confronting structural injustice by reflecting upon how our lives can be improved. They also are important at the micro-level, for describing the process of living out and thinking through relationships together within communal communities. Becoming more intentional and aware of the intersection between individuals and the force of their social arrangements for constructing their realities is given space within the communal as constitutive of identity.

**Implications for Global Justice in Response to Poverty**

The argument brought forth thus far identifies a fundamental question concerning the sources of our ideas of justice. While Sen provides a provocative framework for understanding justice and applying reason grounded in actual alternatives, it remains a theory in which individuals reason with one another without an effective analysis of the structural nature of injustice and challenges these structures present for any theory of justice to be effectively applied on a global scale. As Deneulin points out,

> The capability approach needs to be able to distinguish to what extent one is free to exercise a certain capability and to what extent this choice is constrained by social norms. But the capability approach does not seem to offer a framework to evaluate whether people have the capability to make free choices.  

The capability to make free choices, and the communal reality that informs those choices, reflects one of the key distinctions between Sen’s approach and that of Catholic social teaching: the relationship between individuals within community. As Deneulin argues, “For the capability approach, other-regarding concerns are important because they increase ‘my’ quality of life, and ‘your’ quality of life. While for Catholic Social Thinking, other-regarding concerns are important because they increase ‘our quality of life’, because ‘my’ life can only be full improved if ‘our’ lives are improved.”

The use of the common good will aid in the development of policies and procedures for the purposes of addressing injustice on a more structural level, by providing a vision and basis for confronting structural injustice by reflecting upon how our lives can be improved. Becoming more intentional and aware of the intersection between individuals and the force of their social arrangements for constructing their realities is given space within the communal as constitutive of identity.


The communitarian account finds particular resonance with the Filipino values of *pakikipagkapwa* and *pakiramdam* where value is placed upon the shared self and the shared sensitive temperament. Solidarity builds upon these shared interactions which is also framed by elements of Filipino culture. Marginalized cultures provide a location from which to reflect upon global solidarity and whether the dominant forms of reason for justice resonate with these cultures and are truly global in their form.

The key to this issue of global solidarity demands we understand whether or not we simply live with other people on the planet, or if we live together. If it is the case we truly live together on the planet, then we must give an account of which public goods are irreducibly social and also necessary for human existence, but also an account of what it means for all of us to share the good life in common. As has been argued, the capabilities approach provides an important and necessary part for this discussion, but ultimately needs to be augmented by a communitarian account of what is meant by the good common global life, so that individuals do not simply exercise their own capabilities, but recognize themselves working within a structure that shapes the very capabilities they are exercising.

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Michael Liberatore (Lib) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Theology at the Ateneo de Manila University and a doctoral student at the Loyola School of Theology. His recent publications include an article on the intersections between Karl Rahner’s thought and postcolonial theories. He has also delivered several presentations for educators and theologians on key themes and ideas in Catholic social thought, liberation theology, and Ignatian spirituality and justice. His areas of research interest concern the intersections of culture and theology in postmodernity and postcoloniality, especially as they relate to the ethical and moral challenges of globalization and the pressure placed upon the global poor and marginalized, with particular attention to the Philippine context.