

Spirituality and International Development

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In the first place, we will refer to the current conceptions of international development and in particular to the human development approach, showing the contribution that a spiritually oriented approach to development can make especially in relation to the latter. Second, after defining the meaning of the sphere of spiritual values in relation to development as a fundamentally qualitative dimension, we will describe the capacities of reflexivity and relationality as the two main means by which the former can be accessed. Third, we will present the different actors and spheres involved in a spiritually oriented international development, emphasizing that this approach understands the sphere of spiritual values as an open domain that penetrates and influences market, government, family, society, culture and religious spheres. Fourth, we will offer some examples of current practices that seek to promote a spiritually oriented international development. Finally, we will make conclusions, including problems and challenges that today presents a spiritually oriented approach to international development.

The human development approach and the spiritual dimension

International development issues emerged especially after World War II due to the different aid, development and reform programs applied in the reconstruction of Europe, the decolonization of Africa and the entry into modern capitalism of Asian and Latin American countries. The main debates were marked by dominant theories such as modernization theory, dependency theory and world-systems theory (Grugel and Hammett 2016, 19–118). An original approach within this scenario was Joseph Lebet's (1961) and Denis Goulet's (1971) ethical vision of development, which represented an exception to a predominantly technocratic approach of international development. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, some authors even imagined a post-development era. However, the emergence of globalization reopened discussions especially due to the rapid and unexpected development of countries hitherto considered underdeveloped. To this were added problems such as the poverty, migrations, environmental harms and the growing contrast between rich and poor not only among countries but also within countries, including developed countries themselves (Currie-Alder, Kanbur, Malone and Medhora 2014).

These new issues were accompanied by a new paradigm called "human development approach" – focused not only on economic growth but also on people's capabilities (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2011). Compared with previous theories, the human development approach is a

much broader and fruitful perspective to address the problems of international development. However, the theory of human development has left unaddressed the major issue of spirituality. Besides, this approach still tends to be rather technocratic, that is to say, governed by an instrumental logic. A one-dimensional positivist interpretation of human development considers the spiritual search as a marginal, subjective or not measurable aspect of human activities. However, the spiritual dimension has an enormous influence on the quality of human development both at a micro and at a macro level.

In fact, one of the largest deficits of international development is a deficit of orientation and meaning (Hoevel 2010). The CEOs of transnational corporations, officials of international organizations, local businessmen and social entrepreneurs certainly have more sophisticated analytical models and better instruments than before. However, these models and instruments are not usually accompanied by an adequate spiritual culture and education. Therefore, what actors in the global world need most is a direction that allows them to discern the best use of these instruments both individually and collectively. Thus, a spiritual approach to development does not consist in just adding one or more variables into a model but promotes a vision and practice which can guide actors toward a meaningful end.

Reflexivity and relationality as key factors to spiritually oriented international development

While purely materialistic approaches to development are generally based only on quantitative indicators, a spiritually oriented approach to international development aims at recognizing and appreciating spiritual capacities present in individuals, communities, regions and countries that make them capable of recognizing and embodying ethical and transcendent values (Noy 2009, Astroulakis 2013). These values are crucial to orient and guide an authentically fruitful development. In this sense, a spiritual approach to international development is never purely instrumental. Although it is a means to recognize and promote spiritual values in order to reach better development results, it is also a practice aimed at enabling people to appreciate, live and enjoy these values fully.

Following many sociological, economic and management studies, we can identify reflexivity and relationality as two important capacities that a spiritually oriented approach to international development should take into account. By “reflexivity” we understand the capacity of examining, criticizing and eventually modifying our behavior or the social and cultural structures in which we live, according to truer or higher ends or values. In this sense, reflexivity implies rationality if rationality is understood as the capacity to open oneself to the ultimate ends or values of life that can be the result of a conscious exercise but also of a more or less unconscious reflection, meditation or “internal conversation” as sociologist Margaret Archer (2007) calls it.

The capacity to reflect is also close to the concept of *phronesis* (prudence), that is, the capacity to judge the ultimate meaning of a particular action in the context of a concrete situation which has been updated in contemporary social sciences by the so-called “*phronetic*” approach. Contrary to positions such as that held by Bent Flyvbjerg (2004) in which the *phronetic* dimension of development is largely understood in a Machiavellian sense as a calculus of power, a spiritually oriented approach to development understands it from an Aristotelian perspective. Severine Deneulin (2006) maintains that the *phronetic* approach to development should be understood as the capacity of analyzing and judging a concrete situation, project or plan, taking into account not only the means and instruments necessary to carry it forward, but also the ethical and spiritual values at stake.

By “relationality”, we understand the capacity of opening oneself to the others’ perspectives, interests, values and goals. It is a capacity also related to empathy which means the aptitude to feel according to the others’ feelings. Contrary to the positions that conceive development in individualistic terms, the spiritual approach conceives it as a process involving an “other”. In this sense, the development of an individual, a group or an entire community is always a relational process because it necessarily involves others, in contact and interaction with whom it is possible to unfold one’s potentialities (Donati 2014).

This opening toward another has an empirical dimension: many times it implies physical contact, exchange of material goods and even a coexistence in the same territorial space. According to the relational approach to development, even in situations where there are exchanges that involve material benefits for different parts, there may be spiritual underdevelopment or poverty. The spiritual dimension of development implies not only the existence of material exchange, but above all, an abundance of relational goods (Nussbaum 1986, Gui and Stanca 2010, Donati 2015). In the case of relational goods, what constitutes the good is the relationship between people. The importance of relational goods can be seen in services. For example, if I go to a restaurant to have dinner and the food is good but the treatment of waiters is unpleasant, the material benefit may not compensate for the poor quality of the relational good. Much more painful and serious are the situations of neglect or abuse that a nurse or caregiver can give to an elder, a child or a sick person. In these cases, relational goods become crucial to assess the degree of development of a society.

An essential characteristic of relational goods is the motivation or intention of the people involved in the “production” or “consumption” of these goods. If a manager of a company is interested in the personal and family life of his or her employees but they discover that this is simply a human resources’ motivation strategy, the relational goods will immediately collapse. In other words, the motivations or intentions that feed relational development are always gratuitous, that is to say, they are not explicitly or secretly oriented to one’s own benefit. Thus, gratuity and relationality go hand in hand (Bruni 2012). This does not mean, however, that relationality is the same as altruism. The latter is rather the characteristic of an action that is done for the benefit of other people but does not necessarily imply getting involved with them. On the contrary, relationality consists in worrying about others, opening oneself to their needs and ends, but in such a way that it establishes a more or less permanent bond. This leads to a relationship that is bidirectional or reciprocal. In actions based on reciprocity, the individuals or groups involved do not expect an immediate benefit from the action but point to a long-term relation with others (Bruni 2008). In this sense, a spiritual approach to development is never “one-sided”, that is, an action performed by a subject who actively intervenes in a situation from the outside of a group or community which receives that intervention in a purely passive manner. On the contrary, it implies the acknowledgement, involvement and active participation of different actors in spaces of reciprocity in order to promote ever wider and more fruitful circles of human relationships.

Actors and spheres involved in a spiritual approach to international development

The challenge for spiritually oriented international development is to promote not only the creation and just distribution of material wealth, the bettering of infrastructure and health conditions, the defense of human and civil rights and the increasing of capabilities of people, but also the opening of reflexive and relational spaces among the different actors of the local, national and global economy in order to help them to have a more substantial and less instrumental approach to their activities and interventions.

Taking into account the current rapid transition to an increasingly globalized world (Bruni 2015), this approach should basically include five types of actors: (1) businesspeople, employees and public officials of the big transnational companies and global organizations; (2) businesspeople, employees and public officials of small and medium-size enterprises and national states; (3) participants of global or local civil society's organizations; (4) young or poor entrepreneurs (or both) of the creative economy and of marginal areas; and (5) the millions of women, men and children excluded from the system.

Certainly, a spiritual approach to international development needs to pay especial attention to Group 5 in order to make room to reflexive and relational practices within the enormous mass of people currently outside the "system" all over the world: the huge multitude of people dispossessed of fundamental human rights and with unsatisfied basic needs. However, one of the main features of this approach is that it does not focus on a group, but rather views development as a relational dynamic that includes all groups. Precisely this relationality, by which development is understood as the reciprocal interaction in which every group can enrich all the others and can be enriched by them, is the one that gives its originality to this approach. Therefore, the spiritually oriented approach: (1) finds spiritual riches and possibilities in all sectors of society, in every country and in each actor; (2) never prioritizes individual values over community ones, "enlightened" values over "illiterate", or "modern" values over "traditional"; and (3) does not favor unilaterally economically backward individuals, communities or cultures. In a word, unlike other skewed visions, the spiritual approach to development promotes a reciprocal interaction among all groups—from the poor and excluded to the rich and influential—promoting the idea of unity in diversity that implies complete development of humans and the development of all humankind (Paul VI 1967).

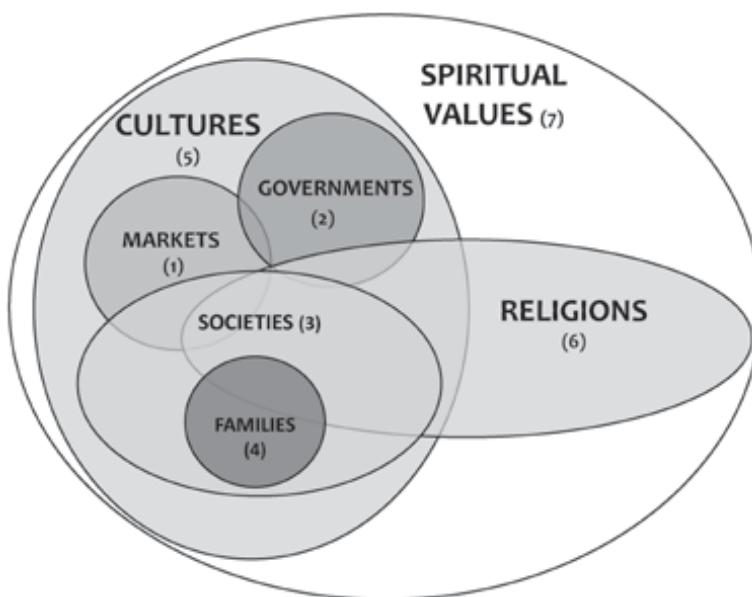
The same could be said in relation to the realm of reality that encompasses a spiritual perspective of development. In fact, this perspective assumes that spiritual values, such as Goodness, Truth, Freedom, Justice, Beauty, Sanctity, Fraternity, Friendship or Love, have their origin in a dimension transcendent to the empirical, the economical, the political and even the social and the cultural. Even with their different interpretations and modes of incarnation, these values are seen as common to all human beings going beyond the limits of a particular society or culture. However, this approach understands that spiritual values, in order to become real and relevant to the flourishing of human life, need to be recognized, valued and practiced both individually and socially in each of the spheres in which we act. Therefore, the sphere of spiritual values does not form an isolated and closed sector of reality but is a sphere that penetrates all the other spheres of life. If we conceive international development as a process involving the spheres of the markets, governments, societies, families and cultures, the sphere of spiritual values covers and surpasses all the others without neglecting or destroying their autonomy and intrinsic logic. Hence, when we speak of a spiritually oriented development, we should not confuse it with an unfolding of the "spiritual" to the detriment or forgetting of the economic, political, social, relational and cultural. On the contrary, it is a matter of developing all these spheres in themselves but taking into account—through the opening of individual and social reflexive and relational spaces—their connection with the other spheres and with the sphere of spiritual values that give all the others their orientation, meaning and harmonious display.

A particularly complex and delicate case is that of the relationship between the sphere of spiritual values and the sphere of religions. The latter could be defined as systems of beliefs and practices, generally institutionalized, that seek to bring human beings into contact with the spiritual values usually identified with a Supreme Being, Ultimate Reality or Divinity. In this sense, there is a close relationship between spirituality and religion, insofar as both seek to make contact with spiritual values. However, both spheres are not always identified and, in some cases,

they may be in conflict. Therefore, although the spiritual approach to development has one of its principal bases on the spiritual values contained in religions, this approach has to distinguish between negative and positive forms of religiosity, collaborating only with the latter. At the same time, this approach should not try to homogenize the different religious traditions in a sort of meta-religious spirituality that could destroy their particular identity and violate the right of each person to develop according to her or his religious beliefs (Deneulin and Rakodi 2010) (Figure 29.1).

Kurt Alan Ver Beek (2000) argues that spirituality was until recently a taboo in development programs. However, experiences of the last decades are showing its increasing importance. There are many cases of a spiritually oriented approach to development in national, regional and global development projects with protocols regarding respect for the spiritual values and capacities of indigenous communities and cultures (Emery and Croal 2000). In the field of civil society, there are multitude of faith-based organizations that work closely with states, international organizations and companies in multiple places around the world, giving a new spiritual profile to development projects (Clarke 2006, Deneulin and Rakodi 2010). Besides, in hundreds of important companies of global capitalism proliferate all kinds of practices that try to introduce different spiritual and religious traditions, Western and Eastern, in order to create spaces for reflection and relationality in the midst of the work's hustle (Zsolnai 2011).

A very interesting experience is developed by the economist Arjo Klammer (2016) who for several decades has worked with companies, non-profit organizations and entrepreneurs of the creative economy using what he calls the “value-based approach”. This approach is grounded on the idea that every individual or social action is always, explicitly or implicitly, supported on basic values or principles. The problems of efficiency, growth and development that are often attributed to financial or instrumental causes often come, according to Klammer, from a lack of explicitness or clear awareness of the ultimate values on which an activity is held. The point of the value-based approach to development proposed by Klammer is to look beyond prices,



Cases of Spiritually Oriented Development Practices.

incomes, salaries, financial results or other quantitative results and realize essential values. Thus, the method developed by Klammer mainly implies an intense work of making explicit substantive values or ideals together with the members of a firm, a government team, a social organization or an international aid group in areas of extreme poverty. “What is important to us?” or “What is it that we are doing good for?” are usually the initial questions. The approach includes, in addition, a quality impact monitor by which the effective realization of values is evaluated in conjunction with the leaders and stakeholders of organizations (Klammer 2016, 198–200).

Another interesting practice in the line of a spiritually oriented international development is the Economy of Communion, which combines a strong spiritual commitment with modern and innovative entrepreneurial methods. According to Luigino Bruni (2012), member and advisor of the association, one of the main causes of development problems of globalization is what he calls the “autoimmune disease” of large corporations and global organizations. This organizational pathology leads its managers to focus solely on their instrumental objectives—especially financial—and to become indifferent to the problems of their environment. This has very negative economic consequences since the different rings that make up the global economy are absorbed by the homogenizing and instrumentalist criteria of these organizations, thus losing enormous possibilities for innovation and wealth creation. But the worst consequences are human, social and spiritual. The lives of young corporate managers are sacrificed many times, workers are ignored and the dominant mentality becomes many times technocratic and cynical. According to Bruni, the way out from this organizational and human disease lies in turning to sources of spiritual creativity still alive in other sectors of global society. A place to which the members of Economy of Communion pay special attention is what Bruni (2015) calls the “fourth economy”, formed by creative, enterprising and innovative young or poor people. However, these generally lack both financial and community support, so their potential often remains at the level of pure projects. One of the Economy of Communion’s aims is to create a bridge between the tired and unmotivated but very well-funded people of large transnational corporations and banks and the world of the fourth economy in order to re-inject creativity, innovation and spirituality into globalization. As a means of establishing this bridge, the Economy of Communion has created thousands of “ideal-driven business organizations” all over the world. These new kinds of businesses produce goods and services which are competitive in the market. However, their main objective is not to obtain profits but to encourage strong processes of reflection on their spiritual values and of relations of reciprocity among the stakeholders—for example, through distribution of profits, inclusive employment policies, responsible environmental practices, etc.—in order to combine economic prosperity with the production of relational goods.

Conclusions and challenges

Although there are new ways of understanding international development, such as the theory of human development, these require an expansion and a change of focus to include the sphere of spiritual values. The spiritual approach offers international development an ultimate direction and orientation, threatened today by an excess of an instrumentalist and short-term perspective. Moreover, such an approach also looks for achieving a free and harmonious interaction among the different individuals, communities and cultures that avoids the imposition of forced homogeneity to a world fragmented by wars and interests of every kind.

Reflexivity and relationality appear as the two main capacities to achieve a spiritually oriented approach to development. While the spiritual values we can achieve through reflexive and relational capacities transcend the merely empirical, at the same time, they need to be embodied

by concrete actors and in concrete activities in order to be able to influence development in a relevant way. A spiritually oriented conception of development should thus include global entrepreneurs and officials, middle entrepreneurs, civil society actors, creative and innovative people in the fourth economy and also the poor and excluded from the system. All of them are important as active agents and co-participants in a reflexive and relational approach to international development. In addition, a spiritual approach to development is by no means equivalent to spiritualism: it must penetrate the internal logic and concrete institutions of the market, government, society, family, culture and religion.

Religion is certainly a crucial area for spiritually oriented development. An extremely complex challenge is to avoid violent religious positions but also aggressive anti-religious attitudes by promoting an intercultural or spiritual dialogue between religious and non-religious people that, without leaving aside the particular convictions of each one, can create, in the middle of a pluralistic global society, a common space of values that can guide development for all. In this sense, the increasingly mutual collaboration between religious-based associations with states and global secular organizations dedicated to development, especially in the poorest and conflictive regions of the world, is indeed very promising.

Business and the market sector try to link with the civil and social sector, having as a means reflexive and relational actions. These actions are taking different forms: practices of reflection and meditation in companies, study programs for spiritually focused managers, development projects with strict norms of respect for aboriginal spiritual values, actions of religiously based organizations in cooperation with governments and international organizations, among many other initiatives. No one could have thought 20 or 30 years ago that large global corporations or organizations such as the World Bank (Marshall and Van Saanen 2007) would devote part of their time and money to spiritual affairs. Anyway, there is still much to be done. Let us hope that the little seed will grow, as in the Gospel's parable, and a big tree of spiritually oriented international development will emerge.

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