

Integral human development

Development of every person and of the whole person

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Integral human development is a human-centered development perspective that originated from Catholic social teaching. The perspective holds that authentic development is development that makes every person “more human.” Although it is seldom named in the literature, integral human development has had considerable influence on notions of authentic development, and in turn, development ethics. In this short chapter, I provide a brief explanation of the origins and implications of the conceptual foundations of integral human development both within and beyond the Catholic Church. I argue that integral human development offers a truly radical participatory approach to human development. I briefly raise and respond to some concerns about agency, civic liberty, and integral human development’s connection to the Catholic Church. I conclude with a short explanation of integral human development in practice.

Lebret and the origins and implications of integral human development

The first place we see the phrase “integral human development” is in Pope Paul VI’s very influential 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, or the *Development of Peoples*. But much of the thought found in this encyclical, and therefore the conceptual foundations of integral human development, can be traced back even earlier to the work of French economist, social activist and Dominican priest Louis-Joseph Lebret. Lebret’s work with sea fisheries in France in the 1930s and decades of work in grass roots mobilization in Latin America, led him to the realization that the traditional economic schemes that focus only on growth and wealth accumulation were inadequate to address human needs. In response, Lebret introduced the significant idea of *human economy*, which goes beyond the mere “integration of the human element into the social sciences” to be “an economy whose very functioning . . . would be favourable to human development” which offers “the greatest possible number of people, a fully human life” (Lebret 1954). Lebret’s understanding of a fully human life was grounded in human dignity and involves cultural, economic, political, social and spiritual dimensions.

This idea that development must be human centered, and that to be human is to be much more than a consumer or human capital in an economic system, is both at the heart of integral human development and a central feature of authentic development for contemporary

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development ethicists. Denis Goulet, who was Lebrez's student and is often called the "father" of development ethics (Dower 2008, 184; Wilber et al. 2010), reflects this understanding as he writes: "Societies are more human, or more developed, not when men and women 'have more' but when they are enabled to 'be more.' The main criterion of development is not increased production or material well being but qualitative human enrichment" (1995, 6–7).

In his lifetime, Lebrez worked with scholars, politicians, religious, fishermen, farmers and many others to promote integrated human-centered development across several continents. He gave several very visible and influential talks, for example, at the United Nations in 1964 (Cosmao 1970; Chamedes 2015), and established at least two significant organizations *Economie et humanisme* (1941) and IRFED, the *Institut international de recherche et de formation en vue du développement harmonisé* or the International Institute of Research and Training toward Integrating Development (1958) (Chamedes 2015). Yet, there remains a sense in which *integral human development* was not actually brought into being until after Lebrez's death (in 1966) with the dissemination of *Populorum Progressio* (1967), for which Lebrez was the principle investigator. This encyclical is considered to be the foundational document of integral human development. It has inspired subsequent Popes to write encyclicals that consider integral human development in the context of their times (Pope John Paul II's *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987, and Pope Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate*, 2007), and grounds what the international development aid organization Catholic Relief Services calls the *Integral Human Development Concept and Framework* (Heinrich 2009), which strives to put the theory of integral human development into practice.

Promoting the good of every person and of the whole person

Populorum Progressio explains the sense in which truly authentic human development must be *integral*: "Development cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic, it must be complete: integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every person and of the whole person" (14). Thus, authentic development must be *integral* in at least two ways. First, authentic development must be the development of the whole person, not just the narrowly understood development of economic growth or monetary income. A person's truly human needs in such realms as health, learning, emotional, social and political interaction, spiritual life, creativity and self-determination are also essential concerns from the integral human development perspective. Although the approach is human centered, its realm of concern is not limited to human persons but also involves non-human animals and the environment (Heinrich 2009; Francis 2015, 2017). This is not unlike other human-centered, multidimensional approaches to development, for example, the capability approach (see Chapter 7 in this *Handbook*).

The second way in which integral human development is integral is less discussed yet more radical. It is the idea that authentic development is the development of *every* person. On this view, "every person" does not mean every person below a certain threshold of income, well-being, or functioning. Integral human development is concerned with the development of *every single person*, whether they are marginalized peasants, powerful elites, or someone in between. The philosophical underpinnings of integral human development hold that truly authentic development requires not only that the poor be relieved of poverty but also that *every* person – rich or poor – stands together with others in a relationship of solidarity as members of the human family.

The idea that development involves the rich giving up wealth so that others may have a better standard of living is by itself not unfamiliar within the literature of development or of distributive justice. John Rawls (2009), Martha Nussbaum (2009, 2011), Amartya Sen (1981) and many others, have argued this point. What is so radical about integral human development is that on this view development is never simply a process in which monetary or other "sacrifices" by

the rich are used to aid the poor. Within integral human development standing in relationships of solidarity enriches *all* who participate regardless of their initial holdings or wealth. Thus, the poor *and the rich* are beneficiaries of authentic development.

The position that *every* person benefits from participation in authentic development is inevitable when we recall that integral human development is concerned with development of the *whole person* in such a way that enables people to *be* more human where *being* more is distinct from *having* more. When this notion is taken seriously, it follows that economic and material resources are not the only benefits that emerge during authentic development. When we add to this idea that standing in relationships of solidarity with others is an inherently human and a humanizing process, it becomes clear that *all* people who engage in processes of authentic human development are made more human and, therefore, benefit from their engagement in the process. It is in this way that integral human development is concerned with the complete development of every person.

This understanding of development radically shifts the development paradigm away from one in which aid, charity, or service, flows one way: from the rich “givers” to the poor “beneficiaries” or “takers.” Instead, within the integral human development perspective, authentic development integrates each and every person in a humanizing process of standing in relationships of solidarity as we strive together towards promoting the common good. The recognition of the human dignity of each and every person is both the means and the end of this process.

This humanizing process has been called the *human ascent* (Lebret 1954, 1955, 1959; Goulet 1971, 1995, 1997, 2006). It is the transformation of human values toward recognition of universal human dignity and a commitment to promoting the common good in all spheres of life. Human ascent – not the redistribution of wealth – is the primary goal of integral human development. This is because, according to integral human development, a failure to recognize and respect universal human dignity is the real cause of poverty. As damaging as they are, inequalities of wealth and power are mere symptoms of this problem. If we address the symptoms without addressing the cause, other damaging symptoms will emerge. Thus, only through authentic human ascent can we achieve authentic human development.

Human ascent is grounded in an understanding that every human has inherently valuable and inalienable human dignity and all have it equally (whether or not that dignity is being recognized and respected). If we accept this understanding, then we recognize that we are equal bearers of *the same* human dignity as every other human being. Within integral human development, this recognition of our personal and equal human dignity leads both to (1) an understanding that each one of us is deserving of all that is required for human flourishing, and to (2) an attitude of solidarity. According to John Paul II this attitude of solidarity is not merely a “feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress,” but a “firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good . . . the good of all and each individual” (1987, 38). Attitudes of solidarity lead to relationships of solidarity, which are the foundations of *more human* societies in which those who have greater share of the goods and power are ready to share all they possess with the disadvantaged, while the disadvantaged claim their legitimate rights and do what they can to promote the common good (*ibid.*, 39). Thus, by striving to promote the good of every person and of the whole person, integral human development brings about the qualitative human enrichment that Goulet and other development ethicists identify as authentic development.

Some concerns

Some may worry that the inherently social notions of “solidarity” and “common good” entailed by integral human development undermine agency. Human ascent requires promoting authentic

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agency. We cannot mandate that people adopt the attitudes and social virtues involved in authentic respect for human dignity and solidarity. Moreover, from the integral human development perspective, each person has a legitimate and equal claim to all that is required for human flourishing and is never a merely passive recipient of aid. All are encouraged to act as agents who take up the shared task of promoting the common good. The common good is not an aggregate of the good of all members of society; the deprivation of some cannot be offset by luxuries enjoyed by others. Instead, the common good reflects the good of the whole person (including agency) and every person and the relationships they share.

Although integral human development seeks to promote agency, it may do so by re-thinking institutional liberties with regards to wealth accumulation. As Lebrét told the United Nations in 1964:

We must explore new ways which would respect basic liberties as much as possible, while subjecting them to strict disciplines which are indispensable at the international level in order to stop the growing disparity in standards of living between privileged peoples and peoples scientifically and technically less developed.

He suggests that

the distribution of goods produced by all may be carried out in such a manner that all those who do not yet enjoy a dignified standard of life, or those who . . . cannot hope to escape extreme poverty, may have their essential needs satisfied and reach a level of living that is consistent with human dignity.

(Lebrét, as cited by Cosmao 1970, 66)

The upshot is that institutionalized liberties must be respected as much as possible but may be limited so that every person can achieve a standard of living consistent with human dignity. So, although we cannot mandate authentic human ascent, we can and should structure institutions in a way that are most likely to promote the development of the whole person consistent with human dignity.

A related concern one might have about integral human development is its connection to the corpus of Catholic theology. There are historical and logical reasons to believe that integral human development follows from Catholic social teaching. (Indeed, Benedict XVI says *all* the work of the Church is engaged in promoting integral human development (2007, 11).) However, the connection does not necessarily go the other way: one can adopt the integral human development perspective without practicing Catholicism, or any other religion. (Ludovic Bertina (2013) purports to show that integral human development *cannot* be fully captured by non-religious development theory, but as I read it, the article shows only that it has not been so captured by certain non-religious organizations.)

John Paul II affirms this position as he expresses his hope that “men and women without an explicit faith would be convinced that the obstacles to integral development are not only economic, but rest on more profound attitudes which human beings can make into absolute values” and that “whether or not they are inspired by a religious faith” people will work to promote “the full development ‘of the whole individual and of all people’” (1987, 37). Thus, one need not be Catholic, or religious, to engage the integral human development perspective, even if one does need “profound attitudes” about human dignity and solidarity.

Moreover, respecting religious liberty is an essential part of the perspective. Paul VI characterizes integral human development as “building a world where every man, no matter his race,

religion or nationality can live a fully human life” (1967, 47). John Paul II proclaims: “People or nations too have a right to their own full development. . . . Not even the need for development can be used as an excuse for imposing on others one’s way of life or own religious belief” (1987, 32). Thus, it is abundantly clear that one need not be Catholic or even religious to participate in integral human development. Finally, it must be noted that integral human development and both Catholic social teaching are both living traditions that grow and change.

Yet, there are many specific and nuanced versions of this general concern that seeks to establish *exactly* how Catholic thought is, or should be, reflected in the necessary “profound attitudes” of integral human development. Many of these questions have the form “Is X consistent with human dignity?” Discussion of such specific questions is beyond the scope of this chapter. But perhaps it is enough to say that such a discussion would closely resemble other discussions about human dignity in a development context among *and beyond* Catholic scholars in that it would include various positions. Integral human development is not limited to Catholics, so there is no reason to think that discussions of human dignity would or should be so limited. (For more on religion and development see Marshall’s Chapter 28 in this *Handbook*. For more on the relationship between largely secular development ethics and traditionally Catholic integral human development, see Keleher, 2017.)

Operationalizing integral human development

Catholic Relief Services is an international humanitarian agency that is grounded in and guided by integral human development (Catholic Relief Services 2007, 2011; Heinrich et al. 2009). Accordingly, they embrace the “IHD Concept” which “promotes the good of every person and the whole person; it is cultural, economic, political, social and spiritual” and the “IHD process” which “enables individuals and communities to protect and expand the choices they have to improve their lives, meet their basic human needs, free themselves from oppression and realize their full human potential” (Heinrich 2009, 52). The organization’s vision is that the people “increasingly realize their full human potential in solidarity with others and in the context of a just and peaceful society that respects the dignity of every person and the integrity of creation” (*ibid.*). To this end, the organization has developed several tools including the Integral Human Development framework, which is a diagrammatic representation designed to help people think about situations in a holistic way that promotes integral human development (*ibid.*, 4–8).

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