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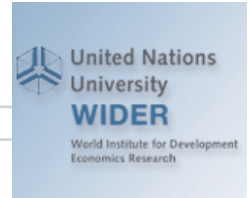
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Conceptualizing Human Needs and Well-Being

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CONCEPTUALIZING HUMAN NEEDS AND WELL-BEING
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1. Needs and Well-Being: Issues and Themes

What are the relationships between human needs and human well-being? I will address the question by considering the conceptual linkages between these two umbrella categories, which requires investigation of the nature of each of them as a family of concepts, as attempted in Sections 3 and 4 of the paper. I briefly point to the further topic of their empirical connections in Section 5. Bracketing these discussions, the opening and closing parts of the paper consider and compare human needs and human well-being as research programmes. How far is the well-being programme a continuation or successor to the tradition of thinking and investigation on human needs, and what lessons may arise from the somewhat troubled history of research on needs?

The rise of well-being as an important, if not yet major, research focus in development studies and policy and more widely is extremely welcome and long overdue. As recently as 1994, Routledge's *The Social Science Encyclopedia* (Kuper and Kuper eds) could appear without an entry on well-being, or quality of life, or happiness. Even in two excellent late 1980s textbooks on the emergent field of economic psychology (Furnham & Lewis, 1986; Lea et al., 1987) well-being remained a minor theme: Lea et al. in over 500 pages did not discuss it as a separate topic; Furnham and Lewis devoted just four pages to the relationship between wealth and happiness. Often well-being was considered no topic for science; or income and wealth remained largely taken for granted as the synthetic concerns which would reflect or provide opportunity for every other value.

Quality-of-Life research has it is true been active since the 1960s, but it has been a delimited specialist interest, largely confined to and within rich countries. The attention in the 1970s to the Physical Quality of Life Index did not produce much impact or endure. Only during the 1990s with the Human Development school centred in UNDP can we say that a broader quality-of-life focus became common in studies of low-income countries. Importantly, UNDP's work has treated both income-poor and income-rich countries in the same frame. Subjective Well-Being (SWB) research too has been a partly separate specialist interest amongst some psychologists, largely limited again to and within rich countries. Only with the large scale entry of participatory methods of

investigation into development studies in the 1990s has attention to SWB become substantial worldwide, sometimes even challenging the dominance of income measures.

While applauding the rise of well-being research, and its present appearance in development studies, we should remember that this is overall still rather little, rather late. We should diagnose old and new resistances that this research stream may face, and its internal limitations and problem-areas, in order to avoid or at least mitigate a subsequent phase of decline and even rejection such as occurred for work on basic human needs. The substantial 1970s wave of work on needs, the PQLI etc., was strongly criticised, opposed and to a large extent set aside in the 1980s and early 90s. The opposition came from multiple sources, including for example radical Greens like Ivan Illich, not only from true believers in markets and economic growth. What warnings and lessons for tactics and strategy can we draw from the 'rise and fall' of basic human needs research and policy in the 1960s to 1980s?

The startpoint for this paper is the hypothesis that conceptual clarification, wherever possible, is essential in these cases and not a luxury pastime. The needs movement for long foundered in a mire of messy conceptualization. The work on well-being has a basic armoury of concepts from psychology, ethics and welfare economics (seen in the work of for example Ed Diemer, Derek Parfit, and Amartya Sen), but may require more standardization of a shared, integrative and tested set of terms. While no set of terms can be more than an imperfect set of working simplifications, not all sets are equally adequate. Better terminology can smooth communication between and within scientific communities, and influence and educate communication in wider arenas. Simplified concepts are an inevitable requirement in domains of social policy where research must interface with politics, politicians, planning, planners, public debate and debating publics. The difficulty is that each area of research and each forum of public debate tends to establish its own set of working simplifications for its context-specific concerns; even if internally adequate, the set may fail to match the sets of terms created in other contexts. But continuing with inconsistent and often unconsidered usages has a price. Careful attention is required then to which simplified schema or linked set of schemas will be relevant and workable, rather than risk that the well-being programme sinks into the mire or becomes pushed into the denigration zone as 'old politics', 'old thinking', like needs approaches were. Is such a conceptual framework attainable?

The paper's main focus is on concepts, as a basis for refining models of well-being and needs and their relations. We will address the following misconceptualizations:
- That 'needs' is a single category; we must distinguish at least descriptive, instrumental and normative modes, and within each between several different levels;
- That 'well-being' (WB) is a single unified category or just SWB (itself presumed to be unitary), or just either 'objective well-being' (OWB) or SWB; we must instead distinguish again between several levels and related categories.

More refined conceptualization serves to establish needs approaches and well-being research as methodologies or frameworks in investigation, sets of questions rather than packages of answers, in other words as research programmes.

The WeD project, with its multidisciplinary base and use of Doyal and Gough's complex theory of need, has a good start in conceptualization. This paper looks for complementary insights. I make no attempt to cover all important aspects of needs discourse, and focus instead on its possible interrelations with well-being discourse.

2. The Fall and Rise of Needs Theory

The Nadir and The Fall

In 1989 *The Economic Journal*, journal of the UK Royal Economic Society, published a 90 page commissioned survey of development economics by Nick Stern, later the Chief Economist and Senior Vice President of the World Bank (2000-2003), and now head of the Government Economic Service in the UK Treasury. The World Bank of the 1970s had espoused and to some degree pursued a policy priority to basic needs, largely interpreted as basic material needs that were to be conceptualized and specified by government planners, especially economists. The approach was familiar from much earlier planning in, for example, wartime, state socialist countries, the Government of India, and provision for refugees. Stern, the commissioned voice of late 1980s establishment development economics, expressed that mainstream's rejection and expulsion of the alien conceptual body: "…the basic needs ideas [of 'the so-called "basic needs" approach'; p.644] have real problems. What needs are basic and more worryingly what levels are held to be essential minima? What if these levels are infeasible…? Who decides which needs are basic and the appropriate level? In what sense are they basic if people who can afford to attain them do not choose to do so?… Is the targeting and attempted delivery of basic needs a productive way of organising limited government resources…? [The questions] are not easy to answer in a satisfactory way and one is left with a certain scepticism about the approach" (Stern, 1989: 645).

Ironically, during his recent tenure as World Bank Chief Economist, Stern inherited and formally endorsed the late 1990s commitments to the Millennium Development Goals, a programme of priority to basic needs fulfilment (even if only slow and partial) that represented proposed answers to all his late 1980s questions. Some needs, such as for life of a reasonable duration, freedom from easily controlled diseases, literacy and numeracy, freedom from physical violence, are specifiable in ways that can satisfy the demands of "a certain scepticism"; as was apparent in 1989 to those ready to see. However the style of setting criteria of perfection for other approaches eliminates them from consideration before proceeding with one's own imperfect approach.

How did the basic needs approach fall from favour? In addition to political economy and political circumstance, the following weaknesses contributed: first, lack of clarity in the approach on its diverse sources and their distinct and sometimes competing characters; second, lack of a technical language that was both sufficiently refined and systematized yet sufficiently vivid, memorable and thus usable; and third, lack of a political language that was sufficiently flexible and appealing. …… [To be extended]

The Revival

How did the basic needs approach revive and evolve into more robust forms or successors after late 1970s and 1980s denigration? First, I suggest, by better distinguishing diverse modes of needs theorizing; second, by much stronger conceptualization; and third, by engaging more savvily in the politics of ideas.

With reference to modes, normative and instrumental needs theorizing were explicitly distanced from fixed commitments in psychological theory, as we will see in section 3. In conceptualization, relevant distinctions were introduced or standardized:

o between needs (as priority functionings) and satisfiers (things which could allow those functionings); chains of satisfiers often span several levels not just one, and satisfiers vary enormously, whereas the needs they serve can be shared and stable; we can thus distinguish levels of generality and distinguish stages in causal sequences;

o between 1. attaining or attainment and 2. being able to attain, positive freedom (i.e. between functionings and capabilities); and between strengthening capabilities and guaranteeing attainments;

o between orders of priority; thus, for example and whether rightly or wrongly, education and health and security are often given highest priority, above even employment and housing;

o between various different, separable activities: setting a policy framework for ends, versus prioritizing, versus setting targets, versus attempted public sector delivery.

Sadly the work on these lines by Johan Galtung, Carlos Mallmann and others in the late 1970s (see e.g. Lederer ed. 1980) was too late and too incomplete to save the BNA from the antagonistic forces that then arrived in power. The subsequent period out of favour was used by some determined and creative theorists of needs or (in Sen's case, post-needs), such as Penz, Braybrooke and Sen, to systematize various conceptual and theoretical insights. Len Doyal and Ian Gough took this much improved toolbox to integrate the wealth of relevant work from the diverse sciences of well-being.

Peter Penz, for example, in a 1986 book that influenced Doyal and Gough, had patiently deconstructed the mainstream economics principle of consumer sovereignty: that our criterion of assessment should simply be what consumers choose or would choose. The principle proves to be massively under-defined (since preferences are in part endogenous and for many other reasons), and only defensibly operationalizable by large-scale supplementation by normative principles of a quite different character, that grow out of thinking about the substance of human interests. Penz was led back first to happiness as a criterion, abandoned long earlier by economists but much more measurable nowadays; but that too is weakened by endogeneity and many of the same problems as face preference-fulfilment. He concluded instead for basic needs, as the requirements of physical and mental health and other basic human interests (a modicum of security and social inclusion, etc.); as giving a conception that could rationally command the support of diverse political viewpoints, by ensuring the conditions needed for each of their diverse principles to acquire relevance (Penz 1991).

Thus besides better conceptualization, needs approaches became more effectively located in wider intellectual and political space. More appealing and more ethically charged labels were found – 'human development' and 'human security' (St. Clair 2003) – and connected with the powerfully focusing and motivating theme of human rights. Attention-catching, thought-provoking indices were devised: the Human Development Index and its siblings. And an insulated, influential organizational niche was found in 1989: the Human Development Report Office was created with intellectual independence yet public access and influence. In all three respects – labels, indices and niche – Mahbub ul Haq's contribution was vital.

The next two sections concentrate on the clarification of modes and the refinement and systematization of concepts. We will return in the final section to the politics of ideas, and consider possible implications for the strategy of the present-day well-being research programme.

3. **Conceptualizing Human Needs**

Despite extensive criticism in forms far more intense and hostile than Stern's, the term 'need' continued and continues in massive, daily use in many fields of social policy (e.g. Witkin & Altschuld 1995), management and marketing (Jackson et al. 2004), including in the international social policy areas of the Millennium Development Goals and humanitarian aid. It seems to be a language that caters to various extremely widespread functional requirements – to make analyses of motivation thicker and more realistic; and to indicate instrumental roles, typically towards priority objectives – but a language that is hard to sensibly order, precisely because of how widespread and varied such roles are.

Meanings and obscurities

A recent study of needs assessment in humanitarian emergencies reported that the term 'need' is a source of confusion, given, it proposed, at least three substantially different meanings in the humanitarian context.
1. Basic human needs ('food is a basic human need')
2. A lack of basic human needs ('these people need food')
3. A need for relief assistance or some other humanitarian intervention ('these people need food aid') (Darcy & Hofmann 2003: 16).

The first and second meanings are not dramatically different: one is a noun, about what is needed; the second is a verb, about the needing of the noun. Darcy and Hofmann warn that a noun-language of need is sometimes misleading. '…discussion of the *need* for protection tends to "commodify" a concept that cannot be reduced to these terms' (ibid.: 17). The more important distinction is between the first two meanings and the third, a particular method or satisfier (e.g. food aid) for fulfilling the more basic need (food). '..needs assessment is often conflated with the formulation of responses, in ways than can lead to resource-led intervention and close down other (perhaps more appropriate) forms of intervention' (ibid.: 2003: 16), for example monetary aid or employment provision.

The study later implicitly adds perhaps other meanings of need: 4. the requirements for reducing the lack of basic human needs, and 5. the requirements for providing relief assistance or whatever other policy response. Each of these requirements will then have its own requirements.

Darcy and Hofmann propose to drop and replace the term 'need' and replace it by other terms, including 'risk', particularly 'acute risk'. In addition to the ubiquity and endlessness of chains of implied requirements (or, to use a less ambiguous term, requisites), and the noun-verb ambiguity, they hold that use of the term 'risk' is less likely to lead to the conflation of problem assessment and response formulation. In contrast to the word 'need', the word 'risk' will not be applied to response formulation too. Yet, in practice, like the rest of us, Darcy and Hofmann's report continues using the concepts of need and needs intensively. So although needs language can be a source of confusion at present in humanitarian assistance, perhaps the route indicated is to upgrade rather than avoid it. We can go far further in clarification than do Darcy and Hofmann. It is sobering to consider though that longstanding clarifications remain so little known. One asks whether they will suffice.

Modes of Needs Discourse

   Philosophers like Paul Taylor (1959), Brian Barry (1965, 1990) and David Wiggins (1985) consolidated a number of important insights about needs language, including into the 'relational formula': A needs S, if S is a necessary condition for A to achieve N, and N is either directly an approved priority or is a necessary condition for achievement of the accepted approved priority P. Policy-oriented scholars took further steps, adding knowledge drawn from the complexities of practical use and policy debate. David Braybrooke's *Meeting Needs* (1987) and Doyal and Gough's *A Theory of Need* (1991), in particular, highlighted that:

- The chains of instrumental linkage can be long, they definitely do not have to contain only two or three links; therefore more complex vocabulary is required
- The discourse of instrumental linkages towards priority objectives must be distinguished from the discourse of species-wide behavioural potentials and propensities. The distinction had been obscured by much optimistic evolutionary ideology, from both left and right.

Doyal and Gough's chapter 'The Grammar of "Need"' distinguished thus between:

   (1) "a drive or some inner state that initiates a drive…. Here 'need' refers to a *motivational force* instigated by a state of disequilibrium or tension set up in an organism because of a particular lack (Thompson [*sic*], 1987, p.13)" (p.35); and
   (2) 'a particular category of goals which are believed to be universalisable' (p.39), because they are necessary conditions of avoidance of serious harm.

   This distinction is not consistently respected even in social science usage, I realised during a 1993-95 UK ESRC research project on human needs and wants, part of a multi-project programme on social science analyses and interpretations of global climate change sponsored by the Battelle Foundation. The programme resulted in a four-volume study edited by Steve Rayner and Elizabeth Malone (1998), which included an extensive chapter on needs and wants. During a workshop in the needs-wants project it became evident that the participants – psychologists, economists, philosophers, and others – held to no consistent usage of 'need'. Yet most of us had read and thought about needs since the 1960s or 1970s. We jumped between different usages almost from one sentence to the next: between the variants identified by Darcy and Hofmann – more basic needs versus satisfiers; verbs versus nouns – and also between needs as explanatory forces and factors, needs as (pre)requisites, and needs as particular sorts of moral priority claims.

   Reference after the workshop to a range of literature confirmed that pervasively inconsistent usage existed not simply between different disciplines but was ingrained in the usages within disciplines. Sometimes need was referred to as an inbuilt (whether inborn or inculcated) drive, sometimes as the implied requirement of a given objective, sometimes as a normative priority, sometimes as presumptively all three at once – rarely with any explication, or apparently even awareness, of this complex and fluctuating usage. Very likely something in the nature of the discursive field impelled such jumps, but better understanding of the field and its impulsions rests on distinguishing modes and consciously examining such proposed linkages and jumps. We should be able to identify when jumps occur, and assess when they are acceptable and when not.

   The prevalence of not only multiple usages but unannounced and even undetected mid-paragraph leaps between meanings suggested that a more emphatic and elaborate

statement of grammar was required than in Braybrooke or Doyal & Gough. I outlined a fuller grammar for the field in the chapter which emerged for the Battelle project and especially in a 1996 paper. The main ideas appear in an updated version in Gasper (2004a). Here I will outline part of that understanding, and then in Section 4 relate it to ideas concerning well-being.

We can usefully distinguish three modes. In mode A, 'need' is a term used in evaluatively neutral description or explanation: a want or a drive or a potential. In mode B, a 'need' is a requisite for doing or achieving an objective. Thus the requisite's normative necessity depends on the status of the objective, and on how essential it is for reaching that objective. In mode C, a 'need' establishes a strong normative claim since the objective is a normative priority, and the requisite is indeed essential. In all modes there is an ambiguity inasmuch as 'need' is sometimes applied to the requisite and sometimes to the objective. Further, whereas in mode A 'need' typically figures as a noun, a presence, in mode B it can often appear as a verb, a lack.

Within these modes, there are dozens of different specific concepts of need, as illustrated in Figure 1. Some are worth grouping further and keeping separate from others. For example, in mode A, needs which are expected to explain wants might be contrasted with needs that are expected to explain satisfactions; likewise, inborn needs against inculcated needs.

What are the relations of the modes? First, mode C is a subset of mode B; but we might sometimes then encounter references to mode B as containing only the instrumental usages which are not in mode C. Second, mode A often overlaps with the other two, in the sense that fulfilment of some mode A need, some want or drive or potential, is seen as necessary for achievement of a specified objective (mode B), which may be a normative priority (mode C). Figure 2 illustrates these interrelations, showing five possible cases. We examine them further in Section 4, which will explain the numerical sequence of cases.

Figure 2: A modal analysis of five types of 'need'		MODE B		NOT MODE B
		MODE B ONLY	MODE C	
MODE A?	MODE A	2	3	1
	NOT MODE A	5	4	-

The threefold division of modes is an extension and generalization of Doyal and Gough's contrast between a motivational force and a universalisable value or goal. Mode A covers proposed more types of descriptive entity than only types of motivational force, and covers more motivational forces than only drives; mode C might cover more types of normative claimant than universalisable goals; and we have added mode B.

Why should we distinguish mode B in addition? It is widespread in social science and everyday usage; it is correspondingly highlighted in Taylor (1959)'s classic semantic dissection; and, most relevant, it helps us understand why and how the common conceptual slippage between modes A and C occurs.

Figure 1: DIFFERENT MEANINGS GIVEN TO 'NEED(S)' AS A NOUN
      (From Gasper 2004a, based on: Gasper 1996)

A. IN DESCRIPTIVE AND EXPLANATORY ANALYSES OF WANTS/ DESIRES/ BEHAVIOUR (Taylor 1959: #3)	B. IN INSTRUMENTAL ANALYSES:- REQUISITES FOR MEETING A GIVEN END (Taylor 1959: #2)	C. IN NORMATIVE ANALYSES:- JUSTIFIED/ PRIORITY REQUISITES (Taylor 1959: #4)
A1. Wants, desires	B1. Requisites for meeting wants	C1. Requisites for approved wants
A2. Those wants which are felt earlier than others	B2. Requisites for survival B2*. Requisites for 'maintenance of human capital' (Pyatt 1995)	C2. Requisites for survival, when justified (e.g. high cost prolong-ation of the life of a critically ill 100-year old might not be)
A3. Wants whose non-fulfilment results in (significant) suffering A3*. Strong wants (Friedmann 1992:61)	B3. Requisites for avoiding suffering B3*. Requisites for lowering of tension	C3. Requisites for avoiding excessive / unjustified suffering
		C4. Requisites for avoiding harm (a different and broader category than suffering) C4*. Requisites for minimal decency
A5. A behaviour tendency whose fulfilment results in satisfaction A5*. A behaviour tendency whose continued denial results in pathological responses (Bay 1968; however, some criteria for pathology are culturally relative)	B5. Requisites for satisfaction, fulfilment B5*. Requisites for avoidance of pathology (subject to a similar comment as for A5*)	C5. Justified requisites of desirable satisfactions C5*. Requisites for 'flourishing' (whose meaning depends on norms which will be in part culturally relative or otherwise open to dispute; this is close to C7)
	B6. Requisites for participating in a given way of life	C6. Justified requisites of a way of life C6*. Requisites of a justifiable way of life
A7. Human potentials (not all are desirable)	B7. Requisites for fulfilling (a conception of) the human essence (Springborg 1981:109)	C7. Justified requisites for fulfilment of desirable human potentials
	B8 (& B8*). Requisites for pursuing very many (or even any) other ends, or many (or even any) ways of life	C8 (& C8*). Justified requisites for pursuing very many (or even any) other ends, or many (or even any) ways of life (cf. Ramsay 1992:6)
A9. A political claim for priority use of publicly managed resources (Friedmann 1992)	B9. Requisites for meeting a law (Taylor 1959: #1)	C9. Requisites that should be ensured by state action C9*. Normatively agreed entitlements (Friedmann 1992) C10. Basic rights
A10. Factors ('drives'/ instincts) that (are claimed to) underlie and generate wants		

If we check our framework across a series of dictionary definitions of need we find all modes in use, but no discipline that refers regularly to all three (see Fig. 3). One – unfortunately perhaps the social science discipline with the greatest resources and political influence – has largely abandoned the term altogether. Fortunately it remains the exception, so far.

Fig.3: A comparison of the modes employed in definitions of need

	ECONOMICS DICTIONARY	SOCIOLOGY DICTIONARY	PSYCHOLOGY DICTIONARY	POLITICS DICTIONARY	PHILOSOPHY COMPANION	DOYAL & GOUGH
MODE A	-	X	X			X
MODE B	-	X		X	X	
MODE C	-	-	(X)	(X)		X

- The Penguin Dictionary of Economics (1992 edition) ignores the term 'need' (and 'basic need'). This is not an outlier case. Mainstream economics systematically and on principle shuns needs-theorizing, partly due to a confusion of modes. (Powerful examples of both shunning and confusion, over several decades, are collected in Jackson et al. 2004.) Resistance to mode C discourse of ethically/publicly reasoned priorities as opposed to reliance on individual preferences alone, and objection further to claims that the State should then provide such priority items, contributes irrationally to rejection of mode A and mode B discourses too, as if the three were inseparable. Most of economics remains primitive or totally deficient both in explanation of wants, as if this would impugn the sovereign consumer, and in investigation of human requisites, which too can be politically embarrassing. (Dasgupta 1993 is a noble exception in the latter area; he endorsed the N-word.)
- The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology (1994 edition) records two meanings. 1) A need as a factor that motivates individuals – this fits our mode A. 2) A functional prerequisite – this fits mode B.
- The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (2001 edition) records what it considers two main meanings and some subsidiary (more problematic or less common) ones. 1) 'Some thing or state of affairs which, if present would improve the well-being of an organism.' This fits mode C, if we take well-being as a normative category, as implied by the name. However, the lack of specification of which type of organism (a bacterium?) leaves the ethical status of the needs in doubt. 2) 'The internal state of an organism that is in need of such a thing or state of affairs' – this concerns a lack, as compared to the first meaning, which concerned what would remedy a lack. In addition: 3a) a need as a drive – a mode A meaning, which the dictionary correctly warns is not valid for many mode C needs; 3b) a need as a motive or incentive, wish, desire or craving – in other words, other mode A meanings.
- The Oxford Dictionary of Politics (2003 edition) adopts mode B: 'what is required in order to do something or achieve some state of being.' It continues: "Human needs" for example have been taken to describe requirements which must be satisfied if harm to an agent is to be avoided'. If we deem 'harm' a morally charged term then we have perhaps moved into mode C; likewise when, later in the entry, purported needs are the proposed 'requirements of human flourishing'. However, the language here is

evaluative, indicating what is desirable, rather than prescriptive, indicating what is proposed for action in the light of all relevant factors.

- The Oxford Companion to Philosophy (1995 edition) sits in the same way near the border of modes B and C, but within mode B: 'what an organism requires to live the normal life of its kind', with 'normal' promptly clarified as 'flourishing rather than merely surviving'. Absence of the need is a cause of harm. But the definition speaks of any organism, not specifically human beings, which much weakens any presumption that the flourishing involved (of say a mosquito) carries normative significance in a moral universe of humans.

Definition of only modes A and C leaves them apparently quite different and evokes no modal caution. The incoherent pattern of usage across disciplines can be better understood and remedied by delineation of mode B in addition to modes A and C. We can then see how mode B usage and mode A usage are too easily slid into each other, since both are positive, normatively neutral. And we can see how mode B and mode C usages are too easily fused: both use an instrumental logic and there is ambiguity often over whose are the objectives referred to (e.g., 'the organization's objectives', 'the policy's objectives', 'society's objectives'). Thus usage across the whole field slides into an often incoherent, undifferentiated mire.

Doyal and Gough's theory can effortlessly absorb a specified mode B. They in fact clarify the content of mode B needs with reference to the requirements of being a competent member of one's society and of avoiding fundamental harm, yet do not seem to explicitly identify and define the mode as an addition to the two that they identified earlier (pp. 35 & 39). And they raise 'the moral issue of whether people's needs *should* be met' (p.91; italics in the original), in other words whether the mode B needs have a justified claim to be mode C needs.

Elements of normative needs discourse

Within mode C discourse a number of further elements must be distinguished. One could similarly investigate and elaborate within mode A, as psychologists and phenomenologists do; but we focus here on normative needs discourse, as prelude to a discussion of *well*-being. Braybrooke identified the following constituent elements:

1. implicitly, a particular decision-making group deciding for a particular target population within a particular political community (the three can be identical but might not be);
2. a criterion for determining need – for example, health or autonomy or a conception of human flourishing;
3. a set of types of need, derived as proposed logical implications of that criterion;
4. a set of levels, such as illustrated in Figure 6, at each of which satisfiers contributing towards the chosen criterion can be specified;
5. at each level, for each of the types of need, where relevant a specified indicator and a specified provision target.

A satisfier can contribute to fulfilling several needs, a need/lack can be served by many alternative satisfiers, and not all the proposed satisfiers that are used are effective.

Dynamics of need definition

Hamilton (2003) laments the divorce between, in my terms, mode A analyses of needs and mode C analysis of need, and the neglect, in his view, of the former. While showing limited insight into work in modes B and C, and exaggerating the difference between his conceptual framework and that of Doyal & Gough, his book interestingly tackles dynamics in mode A, interactions between formulations of needs in the three modes, and the processes of emergence of some felt needs as approved priorities. Hamilton notes that drives are not only instinctual in origin but are continually newly generated and also dissipated. He investigates the dynamics of transformation, including for the move from space I to space II in Fig.4: from pure wants to felt needs; and how mode-A need generation and transformation affects also what are instrumental requirements and agreed priorities.

Fig.4: From wants to felt needs, to approved needs?
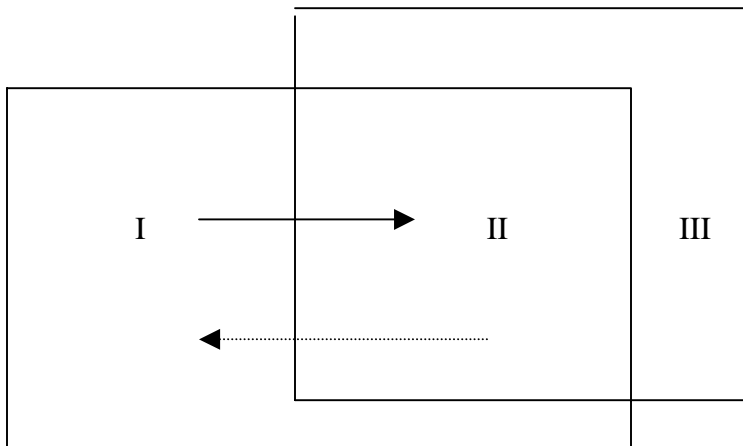
Wants = space I and space II. Needs = space II and space III.
Space II = wanted needs (which in mode C is a subset of mode A's 'felt needs': not all strong wants are approved priorities).

Besides showing the moves from pure wants to wanted or felt needs, and perhaps on to approved needs, and moves sometimes in the reverse direction, in other words besides indicating the traffic between spaces I and II, this simple diagram arouses our curiosity concerning space III: needs which are not felt needs. In needs-mode A this concerns unconscious drives; in mode B it concerns for example requirements for professional success which are not part of a person's desires-system and are sometimes even inconsistent with it; and in mode C it concerns for example requirements for approved goals such as health which are also not part of the desire-system. To be part of a person's system of wants and desires is not sufficient for ensuring need fulfilment; in commodity-based societies, for example, law-abiding members who have no money are unable to fulfil many or most of their wants or needs. However, for needs to be not part of the wants-system adds further problems, which a well-being oriented needs approach will investigate. Are there ways of modifying wants-systems to diminish space III, the sphere

of priority needs that are divorced from wants? – by developing wants corresponding to those needs, or conceivably by dis-engineering some needs? What are the mechanisms of influence on whether a want is felt as a need, or not, or no longer? Illich (1978) and others have had things to say here.

4. Concepts of Well-Being and their Interrelations with Concepts of Need

Having somewhat clarified the notion of need, we must essay the same for well-being. We should again distinguish several variants and several levels. In this case the variants correspond primarily to the levels. The contrast between modes is less central, for well-being is more consistently a normative concept than is need. But conceptual confusion is widespread here too. One factor has been that mainstream economics has fled from the empirical and conceptual investigation of well-being, abandoning it to other disciplines, shielded and satisfied by its doctrine of people's wants/preferences as the only acceptable normative criterion.

Perhaps ironically, the normative concept of well-being includes a major branch known as 'objective well-being' (OWB), in contrast to so-called 'subjective wellbeing' (SWB). OWB centrally considers externally approved, and thereby normatively endorsed, non-feeling features of a person's life, matters such as mobility or morbidity. SWB centrally refers to feelings of the person whose well-being is estimated.

Even this minimal distinction between subjective and objective well-being significantly complicates the discussion of needs-WB relations. If the approver is the person herself, and if feeling good is an approved feature, indeed even the overriding approved feature, then we have a case where the categories overlap. In general however the approved features concern non-feelings aspects: such as health, longevity, autonomy, and access to desired or approved opportunities. Insofar as health covers mental health then the concepts overlap there, for example with reference to depression or its absence.

There are large grey zones. The 'subjective' and 'objective' labels are often unsatisfactory. First, feelings can still be 'objectively' studied, by externals, as in case II in Figure 5. Second, even in case IV, self-reports on feelings are sometimes valid and reliable measures. As Veenhoven among others stresses, the ambiguity in the meanings of OWB and SWB causes confusion and is pernicious yet soluble. The figure indicates that we need at least four categories not two. Indeed, from decades of research, Veenhoven (2003) advises that we should use a 3x3 rather than 2x2 matrix of categories, with nine possibilities rather than four, while recognizing that we face a spectrum of possibilities along each axis rather than clearcut divides.

Figure 5: The scope for confusion in usage of 'subjective / objective well-being'		THE FOCUS OF MEASUREMENT / ESTIMATION (main criterion)	
		'Objective', as focused on externally approved non-feelings	*'Subjective', as focused on feelings*
METHOD OF MEASUREMENT / ESTIMATION (subsidiary criterion)	*'Objective', as external measurement / estimation*	Case I: Focus on externally approved and estimated non-feelings: clearly 'OWB'	Case II
	'Subjective', as using subject's self-report	Case III	Case IV: clearly 'SWB'

Derek Parfit (1984)'s influential list went one step further than an SWB/OWB division and contained the following:

- o Hedonism: well-being as pleasure
- o Desire theories: well-being as the fulfilment of preferences/desires
- o Objective list theories: well-being as the attainment of the elements of a list of what makes a life well-lived.

Hedonism represents a crude version of the SWB conceptualization, crude because psychologists identify other aspects of feelings besides pleasure. Objective list theories correspond to OWB. Influenced by the practice of economics, Parfit adds preference fulfilment to the list. It is a distinct conception because preference fulfilment does not necessarily give pleasure. When we ask what the preferences are for or about, we get a hint that we may have to go further than a list of three. Are the preferences for commodities, for characteristics, for satisfaction, for (in Sen's terms) other-oriented agency objectives, or what?

Seven concepts of well-being, or rather seven families of concepts

If we take the categories added to micro- and welfare economics by Kelvin Lancaster, Sen and others, and connect them to traditional categories in economics and ethics, we obtain an extended narrative sequence of how control over resources connects through to human fulfilment, as outlined in Figure 6. The role of the table is not to insist that this is how well-being should be conceived. Many of the main determinants of well-being, such as family life and friendship, religion and other belief systems, culture and role designations, do not fit into this economics-derived perspective. However the extended sequence indicates how many different conceptions of the content (rather than sources of) well-being can be seen as focusing on different levels in this sequence. It helps us to grasp the plurality of well-being conceptions.

The table's first column presents the following seven well-being concepts, some of which have variants.

1. To judge well-being in practice, economists have traditionally focused on level 1A: control over or power to acquire commodities, as indicated by income and wealth; and 1B, the acquisition of commodities. In Sen's terms this focus on control over things is a focus on opulence.
2. Economists have also used the concept of revealed preference, the presumption that choices fully reflect preferences. There are two associated conceptions of well-being that focus neither on things nor on further outcomes. First, since the presumption that choices fully reflect preferences is empirically mistaken, the implied or sometimes explicit stance is that well-being lies in making choices, whether or not these prove to fulfil ex ante preferences or promote other results. Second is the stance that well-being consists in the fulfilment of (ex ante) preferences, regardless of the real outcomes they bring. Since preferences can be formulated and focused upon for outcomes at various levels/stages – commodities, characteristics, functionings, and so on – the conception of WB as preference fulfilment in fact emerges at several levels. Two are indicated in the table: 6A – fulfilment of preferences for obtaining certain goods, and 6B – fulfilment of preferences for attaining certain functionings.

3. Somewhat outside economists' categories is a third broad conception of well-being – as activity *per se*. It perhaps spans aspects of choice, purchase and consumption, but also includes some functionings, and the stages of activity that precede and lead up to income and resources. In face of the accumulated evidence of a hedonic treadmill, where ever more activity leads to no or very few hedonic gains (and perhaps far smaller gains than if they were not pursued via the path of commodity production, acquisition, bonding and discarding), this activist conception of well-being adopts a Promethean defiance. Henry Bruton's *The Search for Well-Being* (1997) gives a clear statement of the stance, by one of the most clear thinking development economists of the 1960s through 1990s.

4. A series of stages in the narrative correspond to different 'objective-list' conceptions of well-being, or different sorts of component in 'objective lists': certain characteristics acquired through consumption (this is the level of 'intermediate needs' stressed by Doyal & Gough); certain capabilities, i.e. skills and abilities; certain functionings (such as long and healthy life); and value fulfilment, eudaimonia. I have grouped them here as variant conceptions of OWB, but one might wish to treat some or all of them separately.

5. Treated separately in the classification is Sen's category of capability. It too could be treated as an objective-list conception, but has achieved independent prominence. Arguably the prominence is more than it deserves. A plausible conception of well-being will span a number of aspects, as Sen too points out periodically.

6. Preference fulfilment is purportedly central in economists' treatment of well-being. Having retreated from any direct attention to utility (ophelimity) as felt well-being, unlike psychologists -- let alone from attention to utility as possession of useful characteristics or performance of useful functionings, unlike by many sociologists, psychologists, designers, engineers and planners -- economists came to focus in theory on preference fulfilment. In practice however this reduced to conceptions 2 and 3, well-being as choice or as sheer activity.

7. Lastly, our old friend, well-being as pleasure or satisfaction – SWB, or at least one version of it – is never studied in practice by economists. It is left to other disciplines, whose findings most of economics then ignores or disputes.

The final column of Figure 6 presents key components of Doyal and Gough's theory of need, in the same levels/stages format applied to the concepts of well-being. Doyal & Gough themselves did not do this or make precise links to either the capability approach or well-being discourse. In the more modest version of their theory, the 'universal goal' is 'Avoidance of serious harm: minimally disabled social participation' (p.170), which corresponds to the level or narrative-stage of 'functionings'. in Sen's sense, what people are and do. The implied basic needs of physical health and autonomy of agency correspond to a level of concrete capabilities, not to Sen's abstracted general notion of capability. (Mental health needs enter as requirements of autonomy of agency.) Oddly, Doyal and Gough discussed 'capabilities/functionings' as a package notion (p.156) and thus did not make the precise links (they instead tried to link their 'basic needs' to the level of functionings – p.156); nor did they use the distinction between capability (Sen) and capabilities (Nussbaum).

CONCEPT OF WELL-BEING (based on Gasper 2004c)	ALTERNATIVE LEVELS OF FOCUS IN STUDIES OF WELL-BEING: PUTATIVE NARRATIVE SEQUENCE (from bottom to top) (source: Gasper 2004b)	DOYAL & GOUGH'S LEVELS IN 'A THEORY OF NEED' (with some contents of the more modest variant on their p.170, and rough equivalences to the narrative sequence levels)
Fig. 6: Relating concepts of well-being to the stages in Sen's enriched narrative of consumer choice, consumption and functioning		
4D: Objective list IV	HUMAN FULFILMENT as value fulfilment	
7: Pleasure/satisfaction = SWB (if we presume a very crude mental model)	'Utility' – as HAPPINESS &/OR SATISFACTION (this is, clearly, not a unitary category; different aspects can be distinguished)	
6B. Preference fulfilment II	'Utility' – as DESIRE FULFILMENT	
4C. Objective list III (the central OWB focus)	FUNCTIONINGS (other than satisfaction)	'UNIVERSAL GOAL' = avoidance of serious harm to persons (incl. social exclusion),
5. Capability / positive freedom	CAPABILITY (the range of lives which a person could attain)	
4B. Objective list II	CAPABILITIES (people's skill and capacities); and other characteristics of people	'BASIC NEEDS' = an 'optimum' of physical health and autonomy of agency
4A. Objective list I	CHARACTERISTICS OF GOODS, which are acquired through consumption.	'INTERMEDIATE NEEDS' = adequate nourishment, shelter, education, environment, security, personal relationships, etc.
3. Activity	CONSUMPTION proper – viz., actual *use* of purchases / acquisitions.	
1B. Opulence II	PURCHASES and other acquisitions	SPECIFIC SATISFIERS
6A.. Preference fulfilment I 2. Choice	'Utility' as CHOICE, which is typically assumed to reflect preference, and (as default case) weighted according to purchasing power.	
1A. Opulence I	INCOME AND RESOURCES / POWER TO ACQUIRE GOODS/ COMMODITIES	SOCIETAL PRECONDITIONS FOR NEED SATISFACTION (placed at closest comparable level)

Interrelations between concepts of need and concepts of well-being

To help us probe the relations between the conceptual fields of needs and well-being, Figure 7 reformats the modal analysis of types of need, as a Venn diagram.

o The uppermost rectangle represents needs which are behavioural drives, and consists of areas 1 + 2 + 3.

o The middle rectangle represents needs which are requirements for a given objective, and consists of areas 2 + 3 + 4 + 5.
o The third rectangle is a subset of the middle one, and represents needs as normative priority requirements, and consists of areas 3 + 4. This normative concept of need corresponds -- ironically, as we noted -- to the concept of objective well-being.

Area/case 3 indicates behavioural drives which do fulfil ethical priority requirements. In a humanist/welfarist conception the ethical priority is human well-being, typically interpreted as SWB or OWB. A common presumption apparently is that we do not have to be careful with the term 'need' because all drives do fulfil ethical priorities. Behind this lies an exceptionally rosy theory of human nature: that evolution or Providence have selected for us only those drives which lead to the promotion of ethical priorities, and no ethical priorities which are not targeted by behavioural drives.

Fig. 7: Venn diagram of the three modal usages of 'needs'
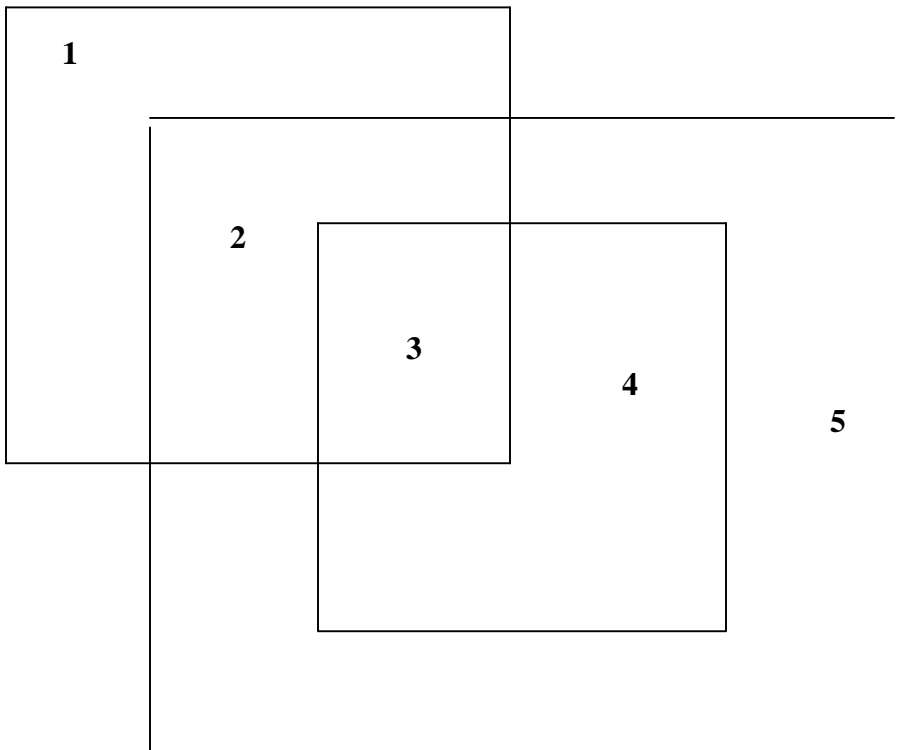
A more realistic assessment is that many drives do not do promote ethical priorities, some being dangerous and some indifferent; many functional requirements are not drive-based; and many of these are in turn not ethical priorities.

• Some drives fulfil no objective - case 1 in Fig.7; they are non-functional, perhaps outmoded relics from prehistory. In the case of well-being interpreted as activity, however, this category might be null: all activity is deemed good.
• Some drives fulfil an objective but not one that is an ethical priority - case 2. This could be the case for some drives that promote SWB that is not considered OWB;

possibly the drives of the addict. Some drives are even dys-functional, leading to undesirable outcomes. They might be evolutionary experiments that failed but have not been eliminated, perhaps because too deeply wired-in, or, again, that may once have been functional but become outmoded.

- Many requisites for particular objectives are not drive-based (cases 4 and 5), and, unfortunately, some of these are ethical priorities (case 4). Some case 4 instances may be examples that promote OWB but not SWB.
- Case 5 instances concern a requisite that serves some function but one that is not of ethical priority, and hence perhaps fortunately has no behavioural drive behind it.

In sum, case 3 is the ideal, but is not the only case, contrary to those who treat the term 'need' in a way that does not distinguish modes. The danger case is case 2, where drives fulfil non-priority objectives, even anti-objectives. The other problem case is case 4, where ethical priority objectives lack a behavioural motor behind them; a need's sheer lack does not itself 'serve to motivate or mobilise the subject' (Jackson et al., 2004: 11). Case 1 too might be problematic: drives that fulfil no objective instead divert us. Case 5 appears innocuous and irrelevant: undriven objectives of no significance.

We learn something interesting from this further step in modal analysis. Case 3 is not the only important case; the value of needs discourse is not limited to or by the occurrence of case 3. Cases 1, 2 and 4, none of which matches the classical conception of needs, are all important cases for thinking about the promotion of well-being. Fulfilment of mode A needs is not the sole and guaranteed route to well-being. Further, even if we take well-being as the criterion for determining mode C needs, well-being is not a consensually defined category, as we saw. Needs discourse offers then one valuable framework in the study of well-being, provided it is treated as a complex frame that gives space for our minds to work – a tool in a research programme – and not as a quasi-religious package-deal that has no questions, only answers.

5. Methodological and Programmatic Reflections

Needs theory for well-being research?

To reflect on whether well-being research can benefit from needs theory, let us consider what needs theory is for, then ask in what ways if any it might serve well-being research, and well-being research in low-income countries in particular.

What is the goal of needs theory? First, it has an explanatory branch and purpose: to extend our explanatory repertoire beyond 'economic man' and other overly crude models. Second, it has a normative task: to structure, rationalize and humanize policy prioritization, to extend our evaluative repertoire beyond the criterion of per capita income, and also beyond what is now embodied in PRSPs. Thirdly, in both cases it has a communicative function: to further the explanatory and normative tasks by frameworks that are simple enough yet robust enough to be both usable and not too misleading in routine professional and political discourse.

The post-fall revival in the 1990s of needs theory in both branches, sometimes under new names and in more advanced versions, suggests that it may contribute helpfully in these roles. We can note important explanatory work, such as that of Ryan and Deci, and normative and policy work on the HDI, Human Development Reports, humanitarian intervention, Millennium Development Goals, and – insofar as human

rights must often rest on claims about human needs (Galtung 1994; Gasper 2004d) – much of the work on rights-based approaches.

Is needs theory useful for well-being research? Specifically, how far is Doyal and Gough's theory, a normative theory constructed for ethics and planning, with primary reference to high-income countries, relevant for the study of well-being in low-income countries? Needs discourse has a role in critiquing income measures as very insufficient and often misleading, yet most evidence suggests that income remains one significant contributor to subjective well-being until upper middle-income status (perhaps in the region of $8,000 per capita p.a., suggested the World Values Survey; Dutt 2001). What Doyal and Gough's sort of approach, the spirit of which we discussed in Section 3, certainly does contribute is intellectual clarity and a refined framework for instrumental and normative analyses. It helps us think about modes, levels, indicators, the choices of normative priority criterion, and the use together with practical reason of available theory and evidence from many fields, to specify the factors influencing key elements in real people's lives. At the same time, clearly it is not itself a complex explanatory framework, and should be complemented by good explanatory analyses from within mode A. Arguably, the revival of needs approaches might only be sustainable if backed and guided by such deeper explanatory research. Effective conceptualizations, albeit working simplifications, will be informed by sustained investigation of the empirics.

Research on substantive interconnections between well-being and need fulfilment

In mode A discourse, 'real needs' are drivers of behaviour; in mode C discourse, they are those 'needs' whose fulfilment brings well-being. Not all need fulfilment leads to well-being, whatever our interpretation of the latter – except perhaps in the bizarre yet influential interpretation of well-being as sheer activity. Using Manfred Max-Neef's style of language we can speak of 'pseudo-needs': behavioral drives which fail to bring mature reflective satisfaction. Max-Neef's typology of needs and satisfiers is extremely thought-provoking and hopefully also research-provoking. 'Pseudo satisfiers' give only fleeting fulfilment; 'violators' completely fail to satisfy, but one may be habituated to them; 'inhibiting satisfiers' satisfy one need (often a short-term one) but at the cost of reducing satisfaction of other needs; 'synergistic satisfiers' fulfil several needs at once, unlike singular satisfiers. Indeed we typically seek to fulfil several needs at once, as cultural theorists demonstrate -- but whether the satisfiers we choose do this well requires empirical evaluation, the answer from which is frequently no. Modern market society may drive us onto commercialized hedonic treadmills which bring no enduring values but which destroy others, and our habitats (Jackson et al. 2004).

The Venn diagrams in Figure 4 and especially Figure 7 illustrated the sort of research agendas that arise thus in mode C discourse. These agendas are partly empirical, drawing from investigations in mode B: what leads to what, under which circumstances? and partly ethical, in arguments about the normative status of the outcomes and processes, as seen for example in the discussion of different interpretations of 'well-being'. The empirical agenda has been insightfully pursued by for example Deci & Ryan, Diemer, Fromm, Galtung, Illich, Robert Lane, Maslow, Theodore Roszak, Tibor Scitovsky and others. The ethical agenda is pursued by philosophers. The deepest insights may come from authors who connect and cross-fertilize the two, such as Giri, Nussbaum, and again Fromm and Galtung. Philosophizing alone can wander fruitlessly.

Politics of discourse

The agendas of needs- and well-being research are of fundamental importance. How can these linked research programmes proceed effectively in political-intellectual-organizational space, aware of the politics of discourse, not only of its precision, logic and empirical reference ? How can they cross and link different worlds, notably of research and policy, and yet remain honest and meaningful? Asuncion St. Clair's work on intellectual 'boundary objects' which embody an ethical agenda is suggestive here.

I have suggested that one lesson from the rise and fall of the basic needs approach in the 1960s to 1980s is the importance of clarifying concepts. One also has to keep on monitoring them. Language in such territories is slippery and not stable, even if it appears stabilized in the short run. The word 'want' for example has evolved from meaning lack or need, to now mean desire.

A second lesson is that is essential to invest not only in cross-disciplinary alliances but to build trans-disciplinary cooperation. The basic human needs work remained, despite the valiant efforts of thinkers such as Galtung, the weakly integrated product of a series of weakly cooperating intellectual communities, from economics, philosophy, psychology, health and nutrition. The economists involved felt apparently that they could do nearly the whole job, or at least the job of synthesis, but failed to build in time a structure with the depth and sophistication required to withstand the scepticism and even hostility of diverse stakeholders and other intellectual and political traditions. An admirable feature of the WeD work is the close long-term cooperation between researchers from psychology, health, economics, anthropology and social policy. Outreach to others, in philosophy, politics, sociology, planning, education and social work, will also be important. At present, the well-being and human development streams of work seem insufficiently connected. The UNDP-related Human Development work remains dominated by economists, who are only recently and tentatively opening to the riches of research on well-being and needs.

In trying to build cooperation, both workable compromises and inspiring common themes are important. Illustrating both of these strategies is Sen's popular 'development as freedom' formulation. Indeed, a perspective on need or well-being must provide emphatically for freedom and cultural expression, to accommodate human diversity and exploration. Some 1970s work on basic human needs outside the economistic mainstream tried to do this (e.g. Galtung, Rajni Kothari, Reg Green), both in the specification of which are priority needs, derived from conceptualizations of being human, and in the conscious stress on *basic* needs that provide a foundation and then leave space for varied concretizations and subsequent diverse activities. Sen's capability approach and conceptualization of 'development as freedom' does the same, and so does Doyal and Gough's theory of need with its focus on ensuring autonomy of agency and critical autonomy. Many doubts arise however concerning Sen's formulation; he has probably sacrificed too much for popular appeal on this occasion. The 'satisfier'/label may be an inhibiting satisfier that undermines the achievement of other values (Gasper & van Staveren 2003). But clearly, 'basic needs' was also a problematic label, unappealing to many. How robust, we should consider and check, is 'well-being' as a label?

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