

OUTLINE FOR TALK FOR THE JAPAN SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF SCIENCE,  
AUG. 31, 2016

[a more broadly accessible version of my Rawls and the CA]

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF A MULTIDIMENSIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN PROGRESS
  - a. Example 1: the CA, including as it is applied by the HDR.
  - b. Example 2: the IPSP's "compass"
2. QUESTION: HOW TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON THIS EVALUATIVE MULTIDIMENSIONALITY WITH REGARD TO JUSTICE?
  - a. Cf. the Sen-Nussbaum critique of Rawls's theory of justice, where the diff. principle indexes advantage rather unidimensionally, in terms of income and wealth.
  - b. This has been a long, ongoing debate between defenders of the CA and Rawlsians—a kind of counterpart, re the theory of justice, of the (now largely over) debate between defenders of the CA and the World Bank, which had favored GDP-based measures (but now, KB, former pres of HDCA, is Chief Economist at the WB, so that's over).
3. THESIS: THAT THERE IS A TEMPTATION TO SUBVERT THE RECOGNITION OF EVALUATIVE MULTIDIMENSIONALITY BY TREATING IT AS SHALLOW, AND THAT THIS CAN BE AVOIDED, IN THE DOMAIN OF JUSTICE, BY FOLLOWING RAWLS IN RECOGNIZING MULTIPLE PRINCIPLES WITH A DIVISION OF MORAL LABOR AMONG THEM.
  - a. The idea of shallowness explained:
    - i. By reference to the idea of intermediate ends
    - ii. So, the temptation is to see the multiple goods that are distinguished as being means to a single ultimate end, characterizable unidimensionally, e.g., well-being.
4. THIS TEMPTATION ILLUSTRATED
  - a. Among critics of the CA, in Vallentyne & Tungodden, who purport to show that one has to choose between rationality and a "minimal liberalism" with regard to allowing variations in what people care about (so—purportedly—in what gives them "welfare").
  - b. Among the defenders of the CA, in Sen's classic criticisms of Rawls's use of income & wealth to index advantage (not allowing for individual variation "conversion rates," and having an air of fetishism about it).

5. TO AVERT SHALLOWNNESS IN RECOGNIZING MULTIDIMENSIONALITY, WE NEED ANOTHER UNDERSTANDING OF PRACTICAL REASONING, WHICH ALLOWS RELIANCE ON PRINCIPLES
  - a. A sequence:
    - i. Dimensions: limitless n-dimensional space
    - ii. Ends: An end, as Aristotle said, has a “limit,” such that it is satisfiable.
    - iii. Principles: these add further structure, often by folding different dimensions together [evaluative origami]
  - b. But how can we avoid the pull towards a single, unidimensional bottom-line as the basis for evaluation?
  - c. Answer: by giving weight to real-world processes whereby we allow a division of moral labor among principles to work itself out. What we need to think about is not a set of principles as abstract entities, but a concrete social system that embodies or lives up to a set of principles (the “well-ordered society” that corresponds to that set of principles, in Rawls’s terms).
  - d. Rawls’s multiple principles of justice as illustrating how this can work out.
6. CONCLUSION