

**DEVELOPMENT: THE WESTERN VIEW**  
**LA PERSPECTIVE OCCIDENTALE DU DEVELOPPEMENT**

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**DEVELOPMENT:  
THE WESTERN VIEW  
LA PERSPECTIVE OCCIDENTALE  
DU DEVELOPPEMENT**

*edited by / rédigé par*

**C. A. O. VAN NIEUWENHUIJZE**

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## EDITORIAL FOREWORD

This volume results from cooperation between two centres for development studies. One is the Comparative Development Studies Center, in the Graduate School for Public Affairs, State University of New York at Albany, represented for the purpose by its Director, Professor James J. Heaphy. The other is the Institute of Social Studies at The Hague, Netherlands, represented for the purpose by the undersigned. The two centres have pooled resources towards a joint effort at approaching development from a perhaps somewhat unusual but hopefully promising angle. How close the cooperation has been is perhaps best symbolized by two place names. The seminar at which most of the papers were presented and discussed was convened at the impressive SUNY campus at Albany N.Y., under ideal circumstances. The resulting volume appears at The Hague, in the growing series of publications of the Institute of Social Studies.

The choice of the theme for the seminar, which will be further elucidated in the Introduction, was inspired by the wish to mark the beginning of the second development decade in a new spirit. An exercise in introspection, on the part of those normally rating as "developed", appeared as a means to gain new and useful insights. It should help to determine what, in many cases, is the frame of reference employed in discussions on development and especially on development goals. Thus it should help to clarify relative positions and characteristics as between so-called developed and so-called developing areas or situations. Consequently, it should help to steer clear from the generally recognized danger of considering Western development achievements as paradigmatic, without-more-ado, for any needed development anywhere in the world. At the same time, however, it should clarify, more than is usually done, what are the signal features of achieved Western development and what, moreover, is their real significance for ongoing Western developments and changes of today. In short, an exercise in intro-

spection by Westerners who are fully aware that the West today is part of One World that it need not and cannot dominate, as once seemed to be the case.

This is the occasion to thank all contributors to this volume for their readiness to tune in to the rather unusual theme of the seminar: an effort that was by no means easy for them. In addition, they have not shunned the task of revising their papers — in some cases, completely rewriting them — in the light of the seminar discussions: a most unusual fact, and a telling factor for the cohesion and quality of this volume.

It remains to thank the authorities of both SUNY-Albany and ISS for the magnanimity with which they have rendered possible first the seminar and then the publication.

*The Hague, May 1970*

C. A. O. VAN NIEUWENHUIJZE



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C.A.O. VAN NIEUWENHUIJZE

## INTRODUCTION — THE ONE WORLD AND THE WESTERN PREOCCUPATION WITH DEVELOPMENT

The aim of this seminar has been to bring into the open and to spell out some things that usually remain implicit and tacitly presupposed. In a provisional and tentative summing-up, the initiators of the seminar have chosen to refer to these things as *the Western preoccupation with development*.

The purpose of the present introductory paper must necessarily be to spell out in some more detail the nature of the intended effort. In so doing, the underlying reasons will be laid bare; and some remarks will also be in order on hoped-for results and wider perspectives.

### THE CURRENT INTEREST IN DEVELOPMENT

One characteristic of the present period is a preoccupation with "development". One can trace it almost everywhere in the world, even though in some parts it is more conspicuous than in others.

The most visible, and at the same time most critical, manifestation occurs in former colonial territories. Upon achieving political independence, each and every one of these has joined the world concert of nations: as an underdeveloped nation. As a standard procedure, this makes no sense at all, but it appears inevitable nevertheless. Note, besides, that the complex of problems and phenomena that in this connection will be labeled development, may also go by the name of national revolution: the terms are virtually synonymous.

The preoccupation with development is hardly less in areas that, without having been colonised by Western powers, have a number of features in common with former colonies, such as internal and external economic patterns, social and political structure, technological development, and perhaps also expectations and orientations

of the people. Underdevelopment is not necessarily restricted to the formerly colonial parts of Asia and Africa.

In Western Europe and North America (perhaps also in Australia and New Zealand) the preoccupation with development is rather different. Very much alive to an internationally oriented elite, it does not really concern the broad majority of the population. Any time the people at large in some "Western" country become sensitised to the matter, it is not so much to the broad problem of underdevelopment as such, but rather to some specific problems of particular underdeveloped countries. Such a concern is strictly incidental; and as a rule it will be wrongly conceived, namely, in condescendingly charitable terms. For example, the people of The Netherlands are capable of bringing together in record time relatively huge sums of money to alleviate an alleged famine in India; but in the same country those in favour of levying a regular percentage of national income in the form of a development aid tax constitute a minority, and a curiously motivated one at that.

There is apparently less overstress on development in areas where communist parties are in control. This is, however, largely a matter of verbal appearance. In the Marxist style of reasoning, the word revolution will serve quite a few of the purposes for which the word development would be preferred in Western Europe and North America. This overlap between the two terms appears fully reasonable, given a fund of basic ideas and traditions of which the "capitalist bloc" represents one variant and the "communist bloc" another: the difference referring largely to ways and means of realising basically the same ideals.<sup>1</sup>

Surely, the gulf of difference is wide enough to warrant fierce, even ruthless competition between so-called capitalists and so-called communists, so-called free world and so-called totalitarianists, for the allegiance of the assumedly non-committed Third World. On the other hand, one wonders whether the competition would not be less fierce but for the underlying fund of common ideas. The very need of allegiance to others, as an intrinsic element of self-realisation, is common to the two systems. And it is on this crucial point that more will be said below.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Philip H. Mosely, "The Kremlin and the Third World", *Foreign Affairs* 46/1, October 1967, 64-77.

## PROVISIONAL BEARINGS

The current state of affairs in the matter of development should perhaps be summarily surveyed at the outset. Four kinds of consideration play a role in the connection: (1) the development syndrome as one complex of ideas and action, (2) the nature of conditions sometimes euphemistically called "developing" and sometimes irritatingly called "underdeveloped", (3) a picture of world relationships conceived in terms of developed and underdeveloped, and (4) the terminological connotations of development.

1. The speechmaking community in many parts of the world appears irresistibly drawn towards a perception and appreciation of development according to which development is something on and by itself.

Development thus conceived and perceived is (tacitly rather than explicitly) assumed to be a relatively distinct phenomenon, reasonably well-determined and fully recognisable under various circumstances and in various settings. This goes to the point that one can, without too much trouble and without too much risk of ending up in caricature, attempt a summary listing of the main features commonly ascribed to the something named development.

Among these features are the following. Development is a matter of the present period, and one that has come to attention fairly recently. It also is a relatively short-span matter: it should somehow be achieved in the foreseeable future. It refers to the relatively large — often the optimally large — human collectivities, usually organised as sovereign nation-states. Its manifestation involves the material well-being of the members of these units, and also the technological and organisational state of affairs: the point being that all these are assumed to be in need of improvement or remedy. As a more remote perspective, it also involves their entire way of life and the full range of conditions under which they live. Furthermore, development connotes that within a given developing unit — whether society, economy or state — there occurs a distinct agent of development (not seldom the government or some of its agencies) which is assumed to act in regard of the people as a whole. This agent in its turn is assumed to act according to a paradigm or model for development that it somehow has at its disposal, whether as ready knowhow or in the form of available expert advice.

Whenever and wherever development features in this more or less

reified sense, its aims or purposes tend to be taken as self-evident.

2. There is such a thing as "the moment of underdevelopment". It shows in areas that were never colonised; but its greatest dramatic impact shows in former colonies. Decolonisation, as signalled by the achievement of sovereign statehood (formal political independence plus UN membership, as a rule), proves a traumatic experience in most cases. Once it is there, the moment of ultimate fulfilment of almost millennial dreams turns out to be the bleak morning of an unknown day; and beyond the question "what now?" nothing is in sight. The glory and bliss that seemed to beckon have vanished, or at least they are shrouded by a thick mist. *Blossoms in the Dust*.<sup>2</sup> Some of the best people do not recover from this stunning experience: Soekarno is one out of many victims of this moment of truth. Those who do come to their senses find themselves back in a world that is on the one hand characterised by a deep malaise and on the other by an almost visceral urge towards self-realisation. This means that, basically, problems that one should describe as somehow ultimate will come first. Nothing less will do than the fundamentally adequate answer to the ultimate questions of human existence under given highly specific conditions. But since they are not readily available (ideologies and political and religious philosophies notwithstanding), man has no option but to make do with the commitment to achieve the answers — not so much by cogitation as through action: not figuring them out but rather living them.

This is what development means. Development is the struggle, here and now, for the ultimate answer to today's existential problem; but since the answer will not be given today, the struggle for it will have to be conducted almost blindfold. Tied to the "here and now", it is meant to realise a goal as yet unknown, to move in a direction as yet undetermined. Instead of a set of valid bearings, makeshift points of reference must be adopted. They do not make a consistent complex, they are adopted *ad hoc*: but if for these and other reasons they are fundamentally at odds with what is really desired, this cannot alter the fact that nothing more satisfactory is available. Thus, for example, the occasionally almost pathetic attempts to tie in with (a properly glorified image of) the culture of the past. Thus, the rather lame acceptance of development models

<sup>2</sup> The title of a book by Kusum Nair (New York: Praeger, 1962). The blossoms were left in the dust, having been thrown away after the celebration of Indian independence.

and formulas propounded in the developed countries: the very models and recipes whose tyranny the national revolution was meant to end for good, for the entirely valid reason that they are alien and belong to a previous period of world history.

3. In the contemporary world as a whole, one of the phenomena that meet the eye is development, writ large over most of the activities taking place in the "underdeveloped" areas of the world and even over many transactions occurring between developed and underdeveloped countries. A good deal of international relations, however chaotic basically, can thus assume a measure of intelligibility and even acceptability; and besides, the label meets the requirements of the self-view of the developed countries, both capitalist and communist. Also, a good deal of the struggle for selfhood in the newly emerged components of to-morrow's One World can be rendered intelligible, and perhaps even promoted, by the same token. Furthermore, it must be recognised in all fairness that if the application of development recipes originating in the developed countries to the underdeveloped ones does nothing to alleviate the Widening Gap, it does some good in a number of underdeveloped countries considered individually.

What one faces here is undeniably a complex of notions and practices of clearly and typically Western origin and, interestingly, of fairly recent growth. In the West proper, whether capitalist or communist, it is by and large taken for granted. But since the end of World War II it plays a vital role as the starting point for both conceptualisation and action in two most important respects. One is the omnipresent need to effectuate the One World that communications technology has given us. The other is the urge of considerable numbers of newly emerged independent states to achieve selfhood whilst achieving full participation in the One World.

In the latter respect, not all is clear and simple. If it be true that newly independent states are bound upon achieving selfhood in the framework of today's One World, it is also true that they obey an urge to seek strength in the entrenchment of ethnocentric, "sovereign" state-nationhood. With "the West" divided by an Iron Curtain into two hostile camps, this occasionally leads to the odd phenomenon of certain states showing their disgust against one variant of "the West" by rallying to its opposing variant. Hence the poignant question of a few years ago, "neutral against whom?"

In much the same manner, the pattern of world relationships

ensuing from a dichotomy between "developed" and "under-developed" parts of the world is curious if and to the extent to which it is, seemingly inevitably, conceived as development aid. The point is that such aid not merely risks underscoring, but indeed fostering, the predominance of the one category over the other. The true significance of the Widening Gap is not that it has been found to exist but that its occurrence is conform to theoretical considerations that, in retrospect, appear as ineluctable. With the consequence that by now one must begin to ask whether, if this gap seems inevitable and insoluble, there could be something wrong with the entire conceptualisation of world affairs from which it has, after all, ensued.

4. As so often upon closer consideration of a fashionable term, one feels somewhat at a loss when challenged to state clearly and succinctly what the preoccupation with development is about. If it echoes now obsolete ideologies of progressivism and evolutionism, it supposedly does so with due regard to modern corrections applied to these mechanistic creeds. In forecasting, planning and implementing development policies man is no longer a believer in a cosmos with built-in progress: rather he plays the creator's role. At times, he may do this in a ruthlessly forcible manner and at other times, in a piously observant way: the modalities constitute no primary concern and are largely conditioned by coincidences. Man the developer draws the utmost consequences of that typically Western, specifically 19th century phenomenon, the subject-object dichotomy between mind and reality, between man as subject and his *Umwelt* (sometimes including himself) as object. But in so doing he inevitably finds himself operating in a framework that denies the validity of the subject-object dichotomy and tends to substitute intersubjective interaction in its place.

It is interesting to argue the same once over again with specific reference to the element of secularisation involved. In all its vagueness, the term development has at one point in Western history been adopted to replace the term progress, which somehow had become subject to the law of diminishing returns: it had become irksome. But the shift has a meaning that one cannot miss even when accepting that either term excels in nothing so much as in vagueness. The term progress cannot be used without an implicit awareness of a *terminus ad quem*; as such, it is the already secularised presentation of a view that is eschatological even if in an



evolutionistic, that is, gradualist manner. But the term development is used, by comparison, in the intent to avoid the assumption, even if only implicit, of a *terminus ad quem*: all it asserts is a *terminus a quo*, and this in a quite particular sense, namely, so as to stress, eclectically, its inherent potentialities. Development is what happens selectively, given a particular state of affairs as representing a range of potentialities. The tension of eschatological thought is eliminated, and this whilst taking care not to fall for the temptation of a determinism that will so readily accompany the more or less mechanistic view of reality on which one has, in the last resort, to rely once one rules out all eschatology, however secularised. Clearly, it is this very mechanism that needs to be reinvigorated through reinterpretation: the point already made in the paragraph above. This is where the interactive perception of reality enters the picture.

#### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

One of the considerations ensuing from this brief conspectus is as follows. Both in the developed and the underdeveloped parts of the world, the significance of "development" is hazy — to put it mildly. In the developed countries, this does not really matter. In the underdeveloped countries, on the other hand, it is of critical, almost ominous significance. But one of the few possible ways, if not the only way, to achieve clarification of the meaning of development in the context of the underdeveloped parts of the world is a round-about one. It starts out from clarification of the development syndrome in the developed countries, that is, in the "West". From there it leads, hopefully, to an assessment of what could and what could not be relevant, in the Western meaning of development, to the conditions now prevailing in the "underdeveloped" parts of the world. If it leads towards such assessment, it could hardly be expected to lead there via a single track. If the term underdevelopment sounds categorical, the phenomena of underdevelopment are not. The assessment just suggested will have to account for the varieties of underdevelopment that occur in the world. What looks to the Westerner as much the same thing wherever you go, and what those immediately involved have labeled development regardless of what happens elsewhere, is in fact not merely complex in the sense

discussed above: in addition, it is bound to vary from one concrete situation to the next.

What this amounts to may appear somewhat curious in the light of some of the preceding remarks: namely, that clarification of development in the underdeveloped context must be sought through analysis of development in the developed context. Upon closer consideration, the odd effect disappears. The link between the two is not the usual all-too-easy assumption of analogy or parallelism. Rather it is a kind of counterpoint. If the Western development syndrome were studied with due regard for the specificity of its Western context, its very haziness and opacity could be hoped to give way to insights into a complex of crucial moments and determinant trends. These in their turn, whether separately or as variable complex(es), could prove useful as reference points for the elucidation, with due regard for their proper contexts, of development phenomena in the underdeveloped areas of the world.

There is yet another advantage to be reaped from such analysis. This is the possibility to check the validity of the development criterion as a means to distinguish certain parts of the world from certain other parts and as a means to conceive of relationships between nations or areas. The possibility, in other words, to verify and if necessary to qualify the Western self-view and the ensuing Western role in the emergent One World.

As stated previously, development is by and large taken for granted in the developed countries. If they identify as developed, it is mainly by way of contradistinction from the Third World. Insofar as development is a matter of concern, it will usually feature in piecemeal rather than categorical fashion. Accordingly, it will go by different names: a whole range of them.

This complex may here be evoked by naming three of its major appearances; namely, *welfare* (including living standards, social justice and social security), *technological* (including organizational and administrative) *betterment*, and *planning* (including forecasting and the implementation of plans). In much that is attempted in (or in regard to) developing countries, these concepts and corresponding practices are employed without much questioning, either about the predisposition in their regard on the part of those belonging to the countries concerned or, on the other hand, about the specifically Western context to which they originally and basically belong. In principle, each and everyone of these names can serve as a short-

hand indicator of the entire complex, because each and everyone is, in its own fashion, a symptom of development at large. Moreover, some of these names are more frequently used than others, following whatever preferences there may exist at a given time and place. This is not objectionable in itself, although it implies certain dangers.<sup>3</sup>

Now it should be possible to inventorise all these separate manifestations and to recompose the full breadth and width of development in the Western sense on the basis of such an inventory. This would, however, leave the problem of how to account for the Western specificity in analysing the Western development syndrome. Besides, it would beg the question in regard to the proposed recomposition proper.

It appears therefore that, perhaps with an inventory of the kind just suggested available as background information, a more promising course should be set.

#### THE WESTERN PREOCCUPATION WITH DEVELOPMENT

Recall, once again, that the concept of development is fashionable and widely used despite its major lack of definition. It is broad and uncomfortably vague. Part of its effectiveness as a preoccupation may well reside in its multivalence. It has come to embrace that entire complex commonly indicated in Western Europe by the term welfare. (In the communist countries this is practised, routine fashion, as part and parcel of collectivism; in the USA it continues to be obscured and misrepresented by the lingering impact of charitable ideas dating back to the Industrial Revolution). Welfare refers as much to material living standards as to social security as, increasingly, to cultural participation (be it, unfortunately, in a consumer's role most of the time). Another name for welfare in this sense is social justice. It sounds more programmatic than descriptive and accordingly it is heard in underdeveloped rather than in developed countries. It represents the attempt to rephrase, positively, the refusal to accept poverty, disease and ignorance as normally and

<sup>3</sup> The main danger is that certain names will be preferred to the exclusion of others, that they will be restyled as indicators (an innocent-looking change of label that yet has farreaching consequences any time the description of phenomena gives way to planning and policy making), and that a handful of preferred indicators (more or less of the same kind for the sake of easy consistency and manageability) will be manipulated as a full and adequate set of universally valid tools for purposes of development actions.

naturally part of the human condition; in addition, it stands for the effort that must necessarily follow upon such refusal. Whether welfare or social justice, the urge and effort now under discussion faces its crucial test when and where questions are raised, in its regard, that concern human happiness and the goal of human existence. This test is bound to become particularly critical in case development assumes features of a more or less ideological drive. Then, the lack of consistent answers to these ultimate questions may well end up placing development in much the same quandary as many ideologies at various times and places have met in the past.

There is ever-increasing evidence that people in the developed countries, whether communist or capitalist, are being thrown back upon these ultimate questions. On the other hand, there is hardly any evidence that this awareness is accounted for in the dealings that Westerners have either with matters of One World implementation or with the problems of the underdeveloped countries. It thus appears as if, notwithstanding all development aid given by developed to underdeveloped countries, the latter are left to their own devices in regard to the ultimate problems of development, even though it is precisely these ultimate problems that are now being faced by those who are way ahead in development and who on the strength thereof are giving aid. On the other hand, those in the underdeveloped countries who effectively think and act in terms of development are absorbed by primary, not by ultimate questions. If their ultimate prospects might be dim in any way, they are not in a position to be bothered.

What all this amounts to is very simple indeed, and almost disconcertingly so. One must seriously take into account the possibility or probability that the very ambiguity and polyvalence of "development" have indeed contributed to its usefulness. This can only mean that he who is interested in the matter risks moving along a false track were he to pursue the matter of definition of development as a crucial means toward clarification of what he is attempting. Rather, he may have to concentrate immediately on the functionality of "development" even though development itself is bound to remain an elusive matter. In other words, in which contexts does "development" typically occur, and what purposes does it serve there?

Cutting a long story short, one may perhaps say that leading Americans and also Europeans have, in the wake of World War II, resorted to the term underdeveloped as a short-hand indicator of a

number of human collectivities then entering the world stage. In especially referring to technology, the term was not so much meant to have restricted meaning as to avoid hurting anybody's feelings. Even so, this descriptive function of the term was its secondary function: its primary use being to make for a distinction that would at once imply a relationship. If these parts of the world could be styled underdeveloped, this was because there were other parts that were, by implication, developed and — what is more — that were able and ready to help them with their development.

There are thus three elements in the picture. First, a potential pattern of world relationships, to replace the fragmentary pattern eliminated by World War II. Secondly, a part in that pattern assigned to a number of human agglomerations. Thirdly, a measure of predominance in the pattern reserved to its initiators, "the West". There are also complications to the picture, but these need not be considered now. Clearly, the pattern is effectively world-wide and inevitably comprehensive: the latter in the sense that all aspects of life are involved, not exclusively the technological, economic, or other.

Under the circumstances, the predominance of the theme of development, as varied in several terms, in the contemporary world represents a Western rather than any other impact. (In the term Western as used here, the USSR is supposed to be included). And considering it in a Western rather than a world-wide frame, one can only assume that it represents a Western preoccupation that, since it so visibly affects the dealings that the West has with the world as a whole, must somehow be traceable as part of the inner stirrings of the West. Hence, the question of the seminar: what is it that makes Westerners think of — and act in — the newly emerging One World in terms of development in respect of themselves, in respect of others, and even in respect of the relationships between themselves and others? What in the internal secretion of the Western way of life results, at this moment of world history, in this preoccupation with "development"?

#### A SENSIBLE QUESTION APPROPRIATELY ASKED

There are at least two kinds of reason why this question could — and perhaps should — be asked.

One reason, seldom a satisfactory one if it comes to prompting

an effort, is academic inquisitiveness. Why should there be a resurgence of unbalanced relationships between components of humanity, under novel sounding names, at a time when there is a manifest need for relationships that should be new precisely in being, or at least becoming, balanced?

Another reason is fully empirical: the increasing dissatisfaction with development and all that pertains to it, both at the giving and at the receiving end.

Given such disconcerting developments,<sup>4</sup> it appears likely that sooner or later a tendency will arise either to drop the term altogether (but that would almost surely necessitate the hazardous effort to substitute a better term for it) or to reconsider and perhaps to overhaul it. If the latter were to happen, this tendency could steer various courses, according to which of the assorted features of the reified development concept, then necessarily appearing as objectionable, one were to select as one's starting point for the purpose of making amends.

Thus, for example, one could decide to look back and reflect upon the Western preoccupation with development: perhaps even wonder about it.

Since the two reasons listed are equally valid, the choice of the theme of this seminar does not commit anyone to an implicit judgment on the current theory and practice of development. This is definitely an advantage. In a matter like this, nothing should be as dangerous as a foregone judgment left unspoken.

It seems beyond doubt that what is involved in the matter is the Western self-view. It is for this that a new expression has been found, responding to the relatively novel world conditions under which it now occurs. Thus considered, the query concerning the Western preoccupation with development boils down to an investigation into a time-and-place conditioned, specific manifestation of the Western self-awareness. Now if there is anything specific about the spatio-temporal conditioning as such, it is mainly the drastic impairment of the use that can be made of expansiveness as a means for self-assertion, and thus of self-realisation for the human collectivities concerned. After all, the West had found a good deal of these in going out and confronting the alien. But, much

<sup>4</sup> An apology is in order for insisting on the use of the word "development" in its pedestrian common-speech meaning in a paper in which it plays a main role in its technical meaning.

as this may be a complex matter, it is not too problematic. What really remains as problematic is the Western self-view which, under the given circumstances, would culminate in such a manner that development should appear as the key concept. Self-view, to be sure, that has the usual two-sidedness of referring, on the one hand, to the West proper — perceived, so to speak, internally — and of involving, by implication, the existence of the West within the world, more and more effectively one planet.

Clearly, this self-view is a changeable thing, and there is no reason to doubt that what really makes for the present concern is that it is now subject to acute modification, along with so many other sociocultural phenomena in the world.

Clearly again, (like development!) this self-view is comprehensive, in the sense that it refers to all aspects of life. Any attempt to study it must therefore necessarily be as pluri-dimensional as possible: one is obliged to cover it from an optimal number of angles. And eventually a problem is bound to arise concerning the manner in which to produce a comprehensive picture out of a set of aspect-wise approaches.

Nor is this all the complexity there is to the matter. Inasmuch as self-view, in the sense used here, involved both thought and action, both perception and operation, it is necessary that any aspect-wise approach to the matter should account for the interaction between these two planes on which life is conducted: on the one hand the image, theory, paradigm or concept, and on the other hand the amalgamated acts of uncounted persons. Between the two, there obtains a mutuality of perspective that could at no point be overlooked without harmful results for present purposes. For example, if our development is a matter of our organisation and administration, then this means that both in our actual administration and in the ideas that we have about it, some signal features of our collective selfhood can be traced (and of course this could apply equally to public as to business administration). And it is in order to identify and name these signal features that this seminar has convened.

### TEMPTATIONS

The members of a seminar like the present one are inevitably subject to certain temptations, flowing forth from the very nature of the chosen subject matter. It may be helpful to list these temptations

briefly. This could help in order to avoid them. What is more, it could help to further clarify the chosen subject.

1. One of these temptations is to produce definitions of development and related concepts. The idea is naturally to produce clarification under circumstances of terminological vagueness, including the risk of confusion. Such an idea, however, is mistaken; and this for two reasons. One is that, as should by now be abundantly clear, much of the use and significance of terms like development is directly proportional to their very lack of definition. In other words, the lack of definition is in itself not a bad thing that can be done away with: on the contrary, were one to do away with it, the losses incurred might be considerable. Our Western urge towards formal definition is not always in keeping with the real use we make of concepts. The second reason is that even if one were to succeed in providing the intended definition, nothing would be really solved. Someone else would almost certainly come up with a competing definition, and in the variation between equally possible definitions, the very confusion would return that one's attempt at definition was meant to eliminate.

Indeed, for present purposes, it is entirely recommendable and should at the same time be fully possible, to dispense with any elaborate attempts at definition of development. All that is needed for the success of the present enterprise is a broad common understanding, first between seminar participants and then between authors and readers, as to the broad meanings of development, as a short-hand indication of quite a complex of phenomena.

2. Another temptation is to uphold the Western self-view, as expressed in the "development" complex; or alternatively to reject it. The two are variants of one position, and the position is a clear case of overshooting the present mark. Indeed, whether one decided to uphold or to reject, one does something that is not in order here, namely, to draw conclusions: whether based upon analysis carried out, or perhaps upon analysis merely assumed to have been carried out, in other words unfounded. In a sense, this is a perfectly natural thing to do. Given the Westerner's self-identification, he will naturally adopt a stand — as a rule an affirmative one — in respect of that which somehow epitomises his position in the world. Indeed one could argue that to confirm and to uphold is, in the connection, a more natural stand than to hold back and to



analyse. Even so, a distinction must be made between, on the one hand, spontaneous confirmation following upon self-recognition and, on the other hand, intellectual reflected confirmation following upon due analysis of available data, even if those refer to one's own characteristics. Those together in this seminar could not really afford the former kind of confirmation; at best they could go for the second kind; this, however, is not now asked of them. All that is asked is the analysis that might eventually lead to such confirmation (or, as the case may be, rejection), without in addition asking for such conclusion to be drawn from it. Accordingly, the real temptation here is to confuse or identify the two kinds of confirmation and in the process to lose sight of the possibility, and indeed the importance and necessity, of the analysis. And it is none other than this very analysis that is the chosen subject matter of the present seminar.

3. A further temptation is to proceed from any significance attributed — by falling for either of the two temptations just listed — to “development”, and to envisage implications further afield, whether in regard to “underdevelopment” and its remedies, or in regard to “development aid” as the bridge between “developed” and “underdeveloped” conditions. In so doing, one would implicitly take for granted a picture of world-wide reality based purely on the expressed self-view of one — *i.e.* the Western, self-styled “developed” — component of mankind. One of the reasons for undertaking the present exercise is precisely the awareness, gradually dawning upon some of us Westerners, that we cannot adopt such a picture with impunity: for the simple reason that it is inevitably at odds with so many other pictures, namely, those that other parts of mankind contribute to the same universe of communication: our planet.

#### ON THE DIFFICULTY OF THE PRESENT EXERCISE

The advantages hopefully to be reaped from this exercise in introspection can be summed up in one word: clarification. Now this word may be used with academic overtones, or with regard to fully practical and empirical connotations. It seems that, in the case at hand, neither sense need be excluded. Indeed, such practical problems as we seem to have in matters of development action are,

in the last resort, resultant from the very concepts we use in cogitating about conditions whose characteristics are summed up as — again that word — development. The reverse is also true. Given the way in which we conceive of developed and developing parts of the world, there is for us no getting away from conceiving of international relations as standing in the sign of development aid — briefly, of aid, of non-equity.

It is hard to foresee whether the enlightenment or clarification to be hoped for will be welcome at all. Both at the conceptual level and at the action level, vested interests exist that could come out the worse for such clarification as here attempted. A good deal of currently accepted social sciences theory, and of the respectability that comes from upholding and elaborating it, is staked on the validity of the developed-underdeveloped dichotomy as a fundamental inequity relationship. Likewise, a fair number of agencies and persons, whether international, governmental or private, could seem about to be pushed out of business, were development aid suddenly to be recognised as a dream, whether good or bad, that is over.

Now fears of either kind, much as they could make people stop in their tracks and put up all their defences, are not really serious. The worst that could happen to those whose vested interests would appear affected, should be that they would face the task of gradually working away from positions held hitherto, towards positions apparently more satisfactory. All that this could mean is something to an effect like the oft seen shopkeeper's sign: "business as usual whilst reconstruction in progress". Thus, if any anxiety would be warranted, it would not be the fear of being put out of business but rather the anticipation of necessary extra effort and, indeed, effort deviating from the beaten track. Such, however, are the normal conditions of social change that this could simply prove inevitable.

#### THE HUMAN UNIVERSE AND ITS CONTEXT

Hidden beneath the two kinds of possible resistance just discussed, and certainly more significant and also more powerful as a factor to be counted with, lies something very different. It was suggested above that the enlightenment to be achieved will somehow refer to non-equity as a signal characteristic of world-wide relationships between human collectivities. Now in broaching this kind of subject

matter, one inevitably and immediately touches upon one of the most central and vital operational features of the existence of human collectivities, including "our own" selfhood as a human collectivity. "Our own": regardless of who is concerned, and certainly including us Westerners with whom this volume deals exclusively. Indeed any and every sociocultural identity, whether individual human person or human collectivity, is existentially and necessarily involved here. There is no selfhood but in a context; and the very occurrence of distinct identities is a matter of mutual determination as between these two perspectives. In this respect, the crucial matter for present purposes is existential not logical. What matters is not what "is" a human collectivity, in the definitional sense of "is", but that a human collectivity will assert itself, continue itself, maintain itself. If the members share a "we" feeling, this will not be adequately expressed when they merely refer to any outsiders as "they": the discrimination implied needs to achieve a further expression, an articulation in its own right. "We", that is, man, true man, real man (witness the names with which many a "primitive" tribe refers to itself). Contrariwise, "they" are barbarians, savages, uncivilised. As long as terms such as these are employed, one ends up in a clear dichotomy between a "we" notion and a "they" notion. Together, they constitute the universe, or cosmos, that "we" have (that is create, assert, maintain) as our (that is, the one valid) frame of reference. This universe includes primarily the sociotemporal space, properly coordinated, within which the true, meaningful human life is conducted, "our" world (or society, or language group, or economy, or state or nation). It includes secondarily and as an afterthought, a rest, a left-over, where somehow things are not proper and with which "we" may come to terms in a rather ambiguous way; namely, to some extent by ignoring (in itself an ambiguous term: not knowing or refusing to know) and to another extent by "classifying"<sup>5</sup> discriminatively, more exactly by practicing any conceptual and/or practical device to render its alienness harmless for "our own" self-continuation.

At this point one sees immediately that the dichotomy is at once, and necessarily, an implicit relationship. Hence, another set of terms used to denote the "non-we": slaves, underdeveloped, in need of aid (whether technical or for the salvation of their souls, or again

<sup>5</sup> Term used to render intelligible what "primitives" will do when facing things or people alien and unknown.

differently pinpointed). No doubt, such relationships as are effectively entailed are highly variable yet at best tenuous. Somehow, the assertion of self, on the part of the "we" involved, necessitates that in the last resort the "non-we" be made to disappear as a disturbing factor on the fringe of the cosmos concerned. This can only mean annihilation, but under certain circumstances annihilation need not be complete (as in Hitler's *Endlösung* or in the Armenian or Ibo massacres), and may be deemed satisfactory in the form of assimilation *cum* absorption. Whenever and wherever this ultimate situation remains unachieved, a pattern of relationships will somehow have to be elaborated and maintained that remains bound to be tenuous precisely to the point where the very self-assertion of the "we" concerned is taken for granted: that is, assumed to be bent upon effective consummation as part and parcel of the creation and maintenance of a human universe.

The model thus far developed shows that it entails certain quite problematic issues that cannot be avoided since they are intrinsic to it. In actual fact, the matter is more confounded on account of a double complication. Between the "we" and the "they" of the model just sketched is a mutuality in consequence of which the "they" are a "we", or more than one "we", in their own right, and have perceptions of a universe in keeping with their own "we" perception. To this perception, the "we" first referred to are a mere "they", with all that this entails. This means that in principle one must envisage a universe of universes; and in this secondary universe these several prior "we-they" universes are not merely a plural phenomenon, they are competitive to boot. Under conditions of uneven power, one universe may prevail over one or several others, but that is again different from wiping them out altogether: the matter was just mentioned.

Moreover, and here comes the second complication, in the majority of cases any effective sociocultural entity, that is any identity expressing itself as a "we-they" universe, is basically a composite. What appears on one level of institutionalisation (and accordingly on one level of abstracting analysis) as one entity, is bound to appear on the next lower level or levels as being composed of a number of component entities. As between the plurality of these at any given level, the competitive implications may appear as precluded, not to say sublimated, to the extent to which each one features as a tributary to the next-higher unit with its own identity and institutionalisation. More exactly, it disappears to the extent

to which it becomes subsumed under an overriding and, if necessary, overpowering identity. The crucial point is therefore where the primacy resides: with the component or with the composite. If, and insofar as it resides with the composite, the left-over identity of the component will cause no problem of the nature described; instead, it will tend to function as a kind of riches within the encompassing whole: by being different in certain regards, composites will interact creatively rather than merely feature as one another's potentially competitive duplicates. On the other hand, if and insofar as the component retains its primacy, the composite risks disintegration at any time when it fails to exert effective predominance. Moreover, the exertion of predominance in its turn risks proving to be a matter of an unholy alliance between a number of "we" collectivities; namely, the (or some) other components of the composite concerned converging, for no purpose other than self-maintenance, for once and *ad hoc* jointly, at the expense of one particular competitive "we": competitive to each of them just as they are all competitors to each other, precisely in maintaining their primacy over the collectivity. All this may occur when and where the collectivity could not achieve a properly institutionalised identity and thus the means to assert its primacy over the components; for example, by not being able to achieve in its turn a satisfactory relationship to some "they", needed to round-off its universe through providing it with the means to identify itself: discriminatingly, as is inevitable. There will be occasions to return to this point: it is not as speculative as it may seem.

#### THE WEST AND THE WORLD

At this point, it is necessary to turn to the Western case and to study it in the light of the model just developed. Since the Renaissance, the West, functioning as a relatively uninstitutionalised composite of mutually competing (and thus related) components, has found a good part of its self-assertion and self-maintenance in the purposive effort to go out and confront people and things alien on their own ground. This represents an interesting variation upon the theme developed above which tacitly implied that a universe based on a "we-they" construct will somehow gravitate on the "we" end and account for the "they" end with relatively little fuss or stress. Here, the accent seems at times almost the reverse: there is a clear preoccupation with the "they" end of the picture, to the extent

that "they" will tend to prove instrumental towards the self-assertion and self-maintenance (also material!) of "we". Note, in the connection, that somehow the "they" function is the factor that brings about such virtual unity as the West possesses: much in the way of what was described above as the *ad hoc* converging of inevitably competitive components of a composite, in jointly dealing with an alien they happen to have in common. In this case, the "alien" is virtually all the rest of the world. This latter point deserves special mention. The reason is that a second special feature of Western development is that for the first time in human history the planet is the limit: the "they", that is "left-overs" in contradistinction to which the "we" identifies itself in creating and maintaining "our" cosmos or universe, is exactly as big as the world. It has taken some centuries and the development of a good deal of communications technology for this consequence to become effective, but between the two World Wars this point has been reached.

A third characteristic of Western ascendancy over the world as a whole is that in the process it adds more confusion to the already complicated model developed above. Part of this was already noted in passing: the West is no effective unity, yet its components, an ever-variable and occasionally expanding lot, manage to relate to one another in such a manner as to avoid that their mutual "we-they" perception should interfere too effectively with their common expansiveness. In other words, the primacy of components is dramatically obvious, yet their nature is somehow so conceived as to allow limited-purpose bans on their natural urge at mutual elimination. In this respect again, confrontation with the (common) alien was not so much a matter of a joint operation as an attempt, on the part of each separately, to gain the upper hand over the other, by seeking out a far-away alien to overwhelm in order to reinforce oneself enough to deal with the competitor next door: the simultaneity of the effort and ensuing "common-ness" of the alien being a matter of sheer coincidence if considered from the several "we" viewpoints involved. Returning to the nature of the components, one notes that the state-nation was indeed an in-between formula. On the one hand, it borrows the most outstanding feature of its predecessor, the empire: sovereignty. An empire is necessarily sovereign, being unique in its very embodiment of a civilised order of things, a truly human life. The ultimate development of the closed community, the empire, has necessarily sub-human forms of