THREE MODES OF APPROACHING SOCIAL GOALS

By Johan Galtung,

Goals, Processes and Indicators of Development Project,
Institut Universitaire d'études du développment, Genève

This short paper is about an important problem in the general theory and methodology of elaborating social goals. The problem is as follows. Imagine that we want to give a description of a desirable society. One approach, the atomistic approach, would be to proceed by establishing a list of desiderata. For the sake of simplicity let us imagine that the list has four elements, for instance

Needs theory:	SURVIVAL	WELL-BEING	IDENTITY	FREEDOM
Hindu theory:	DHARMA	ARTHA	KAMA	MOKSHA

The problem now is how these elements relate to each other. And at this point another approach appears, the holistic approach, trying to grasp the totality in one powerful intuition - eg "democratic society", "socialist society". My general view is that such total views are less than useful except as an etiquette, a label - it is only when it is unpackaged that it becomes useful. But that does not mean that what is inside the package with a holistic label on it necessarily is an atomistic list of unrelated items. I had almost said like a shopping list, but that is usually a list of related items: Fish, salt and potatoes are related in constituting something holistic, a meal [Norwegian] - one alone does not make so much sense.

So, the general problem of this paper is as follows: what kind of relations can there be between elements of a list of goals. What are we, in fact, doing when we try to set up such lists, what kind of problems do they lead to? How do we think that the world is packed? And that actually splits into three questions:

Empirically: How is the world, in fact, put together?

Theoretically: How do we think the world is put together?

Normatively: How do we think the world ought to be put together?

The simplest and least presupposing approach to the idea of "relate to each other", "hanging together", "being packed" would be a measure of correlation. And the three modes would be no correlation, positive correlation and negative correlation; although this reflects empirical language better than theoretical and normative language.

If we put all of this together, we get:

	EMPIRICAL	THEORETICAL	NORMATIVE
MODE I: atomistic, liberal	no correlation	mutually detachable	no or any priorities
MODE II: holistic, radical	positive correlation	mutually indivisible	all or nothing
MODE III: realistic, managerial	negative correlation	mutually contradictory	priorities, trade-offs

Let us spell it out a little, mode by mode.

In the atomistic, liberal mode the world is very loosely packed, as in aristotelian, cartesian epistemologies. One element can be picked out and implemented without appreciable effects on other aspects of the social goals. The consequence will be sectorial politics. Some will start with one sector leaving the others untouched, some will start with an other. As a result no correlation will be produced; choices will be individual, even indivudalistic, in all directions.

In the holistic, radical mode the world is seen as very densely packed. Elements hang together: since we are working with goal-dimensions one either gets a completely good society or a completely bad one. If one pursues only one goal one will not even get that one. The consequence will be class politics in order to bring about the conditions under which a positive holistic package can be realized, and/or populist poli-

tics dealing with total societies, usually smaller units than countries such as villages, small districts, etc. so that holism can make more sense. Both the utopian and the dystopian traditions are clearly in this category or mode. Empirically it shows up as very high positive correlation, normatively as an "all or nothing" injunction, in other words as fundamentalism, left or right.

In the realistic, managerial mode there is no denial that things in the world hang together, only a denial that all good things come together and that all bad things hang together. The world is seen, typically, as mixed, ambivalent, contradictory in the sense that good and bad things tend to come together. As this is the general rule one can neither pick what one wants nor aim for one perfect package. Something bad will always accompany the good. Development, in the sense of realization of social goals will always be a mixed thing. Consequently priorities, linear or partial, are indispensable: if development is at the expense of something or somebody then there have to be trade-offs. One can only push in the direction of a high priority goal to the point where a lower priority goal touches a lower limit below which one cannot go. For this reason there is a limit to how good a society can become: where the radical approach presupposes that one can just move on once one is set on the course towards ever higher levels of simultaneous goal-realization the managerial approach presupposes steering between highs and lows, maxima and minima, so as to adjust to external and internal circumstances. Precisely because of this steering aspect we have referred to it here as the"managerial approach", or the planners' approach: you cannot have the cake and eat it too.

Which one is the correct approach or mode? A badly formulated question, of course - a better question would be: What kind of mix of these approaches would make sense? Obviously they all touch on social reality, all of them may be adequate or inadequate, depending on the historical situation. For that reason it

would seem better to be mentally prepared for all three and then try to see which mode or combination of modes would be more appropriate in a given situation. This reasoning, however, has to be tempered by at least two important considerations.

First, there is an obvious dialectic between social reality and the mode of approaching social goals. The mode may be a reflection, but it is also a basis of operation, of transforming society. In other words, it may become a self-fulfilling prophecy by being enacted upon. The managerial mode, for instance, may build a machinery for compromises, trade-offs and occasional debate on how to set the priorities. But that machinery for trade-offs between things and between people may itself, in turn, become a factor in producing the negative correlation world: a vast, highly complicated society filled with division of labor and division of things where it becomes impossible to satisfy even a limitied number of social goals. Correspondingly, the liberal approach may create a very detached society, sectorially, socially, geographically; and the radical approach may create a dense society more like a monastery where things do come densely packed.

Second, it all depends on which goals are picked. If the mode has been decided upon <u>a priori</u>, consciously or not, then it may influence the choice of social goals so that the mode approach is already fulfilled - at least theoretically (empirically it may show up differently due to factors not foreseen). And this is where the hermeneutic aspect of holism enters: the goals suggest a social order, but a basic principle of that social order can also be given (such as "small is beautiful") from which a number of social goals can be derived as logical satellites - as members of a "family of things". Indivisibility, then, becomes close to a tautology, not a theoretical or empirical proposition as it is usually held to be.

More important, however, is the question of how these approaches relate to each other <u>in concreto</u>, meaning how their carriers in concrete social life relate to each other. In concrete life this is not an abstract clash between ideas, but, to mention some ways of looking at it:

- the clash between the proponents of liberal (including conservative), radical (including both progressive and reactionary, socialist/communist and fascist) and managerial political action groups
- the clash between entire social cosmologies that lean more in one direction or the other - many Occidental social cosmologies being of the radical type, but also of the liberal type - Oriental cosmologies with their higher level of emphasis on eclecticism being
- the clash between different intellectual styles, the Saxonic being more in the direction of the liberal mode with their high emphasis on data and low on theory, the Gallic and Teutonic approaches leaning more towards the radical mode - left wing or right wing as case may be. The managerial mode constitutes a meeting point between the two and is also well suited to the Nipponic intellectual style among other reasons because of the point made just above about Oriental cosmologies.

Thus, on a global level the relations will become quite complex.