

EMOTIONS, FEAR AND SECURITY IN SEN NUSSBAUM'S CAPABILITY APPROACH

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Abstract. Emotions, Fear and Security in Sen – Nussbaum's capability approach

This article discusses the contribution of the Capability Approach within the theoretical framework of moral philosophy, political theory and political philosophy. Starting from delineating the contours to properly interpret this contemporary political doctrine, the A. recognises its primary roots in the human emotional development, as outlined by the American political philosopher Martha Nussbaum. Then the A. offers a comparative review of the Nussbaumean conception of emotions in *Upheavals of Thought* as well as in the most recent contributions on the topic. The concepts of fear and security prompted us to the discussion, *a posteriori* from the cognitive development and the 'securisation' of human rights as promoted by education (especially in lifelong learning of children and women).

Keywords: Emotions, Capability Approach, Education, Security

1. *The Capability Approach and the aim of "expanding human capabilities"*

Since the publication of Amartya Sen's seminal contributions *Equality of What?* (1980), *Commodities and Capabilities* (1985); *Standard of Living*

(1987), an astonishingly extensive interdisciplinary debate developed around Capability Approach and Human Development Approach. In these essays of macroeconomics theory, Sen suggested for the first time the need to shift from the mainstream, narrow perspective of GDP growth approach towards a broader conception of human well being and human development¹.

The objectives of these debates among scholars from different fields of research (from economics to political theory and political philosophy) have been to re-conceptualize the notions of individual well-being and development, by shifting the focus from means/resources to ends and opportunities; to re-examine the meaning of distributive justice; and to emphasise the need for modern societies in the Global Era to enhance the living conditions of individuals, to work against the multifaceted phenomenon of deprivation and to improve people's lives by creating capabilities and expanding opportunities.

For its proponents, Sen's capability approach, and the human development paradigm in general, represents a watershed advance in the fields of welfare economics, political theory and development studies. In Chiappero-Martinetti's view, for example, the Capability Approach "brings not only a fresh perspective from which to observe and understand reality in all its complexity, but also the challenge of looking for new conceptual and analytical tools able to handle this complexity"².

I am grateful to Stefano Cavazza, Enrica Chiappero-Martinetti, Raffaella Gherardi and Giovanni Giorgini, who follow me with careful suggestions and inspiring insights in my doctoral research. I wish to thank Elisabetta Venuti for her special review of the paper, colleague Alberta Spreafico for our interesting discussions among the first steps of Capability Approach's field of research, and the two blind referees of the Journal «Governare la Paura» for their stimulating comments.

¹ See E. Chiappero-Martinetti, *Foreword*, in E. Chiappero-Martinetti (ed.), *Debating Global Society. Reach and Limits of the Capability Approach*, 2009, Milano: Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, p. 9. See also E. Chiappero Martinetti and S. Pareglio (eds.), *Sviluppo umano sostenibile e qualità della vita*, 2009, Roma: Carocci.

² See *Ibidem*.

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It is also remarkable the fact that the potential of the capability approach in dealing with development issues has not been confined to the academic sphere alone, but it has also ensnared the attention of policy-makers, governments, non-governmental organisations and international agencies. The Human Development Reports, which have been published annually since 1990, are an important example of the fallbacks of Sen's work in this area, as well as the victorious attempt to translate the complex theoretical underpinnings of the approach into clear operational policy prescriptions³. The volume of collected papers *The Quality of Life*, edited in 1993 by Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, represents the first result of the critique of utilitarianism *à la Bentham* and of political realism as embodied in a close dialogue between both moral and political philosophy and the economic thought⁴.

Following Amartya Sen, the objective of the capability approach and human development approach is an objective of "public action" informed by a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy⁵.

Sabina Alkire puts it in a very pragmatic way, saying that "the next time you are in an elevator and someone asks you what the capability approach is, find some fetching way of explaining to them the objective of expanding people's capabilities"⁶.

Both Sen and Nussbaum have stressed the importance of reason in the expansion of capabilities. On the one hand, Sen speaks of expanding real opportunities people have to enjoy "a life they have reason to value", which means that people need to scrutinize their motivations to

³ See *Ibidem*, p. 10 and M. Nussbaum, *Upbeavals of Thought. The Intelligence of Emotions*, 2001, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001 (Italian edition: *L'intelligenza delle emozioni*, 2004, edited by Giovanni Giorgini, Bologna: il Mulino): pp. 523-524.

⁴ See M. Nussbaum (2001), *op. cit.*, p. 524 and A. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 1999, New York: Anchor, pp. 290-297 *passim*.

⁵ See A. Sen (1999), *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁶ Alkire, Sabina, "The Capability Approach as a Development Paradigm", in Chiappero-Martinetti Enrica (ed.) (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 34.

value specific lifestyles. On the other hand, Nussbaum considers “practical reason” as one of the central capabilities for functioning and suggests that practical reason and affiliation have a particular importance since they both organize and let flourish all other capabilities⁷.

2. *Emotions and rationality between Self and Alterity*

In her books *Upheavals of Thought. The Intelligence of Emotions* Martha Nussbaum has tried to graft the discourse around emotions in the particular framework of the capability approach⁸.

Giovanni Giorgini portrays the Capability Approach as an attempt to overcome the problems of contemporary liberalism by appealing to “a moderate Aristotelian essentialism to identify common human capabilities (capability to live, to think, to feel emotions, to move and so on) in order to delineating human rights which have to be securised and promoted by the various governments: a common human nature which overpass the differences of every kind and which constitutes the most adequate image to implement public policies based more on the real common good rather than on the individual preferences”⁹.

In Giorgini’s reflection, Nussbaum points to a definition of human dignity where governments let their citizens decide how to realize the capabilities they value without imposing a governmental agenda. Furthermore, Giorgini emphasizes how Nussbaum studies the existence of universal feelings, like compassion and respect, common to all men at

⁷ See P. Flores-Crespo, “Situating Education in the Human Capabilities Approach”, in M. Walker and E. Unterhalter (eds.), *Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach and Social Justice in Education*, 2007, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 48.

⁸ See M. Nussbaum (2001), *op. cit.*, pp. 494-507.

⁹ G. Giorgini, “Problemi del liberalismo contemporaneo”, in R. Gherardi (ed.), *La politica e gli Stati*, 2011, Roma: Carocci, pp. 112. Translation from Italian into English is mine.

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all latitudes and in all ages, and supported the need to find them place in the public arena¹⁰.

In the years of the Globalization, emotions have received considerable philosophical attention. Many academic reflections have converged to establish a large pool of literature on the topic. In particular, Nussbaum has elaborated a theory of human emotions which conceives emotions themselves like judgements of value, i.e. intelligent reactions to the perception of things' and people's value. As Giorgini emphasizes, emotions are not always subjected to our control, but they are shaped by societies and therefore they cannot be disregarded by the political theory¹¹.

Nussbaum stresses how important it is to realize that there is no widely-accepted taxonomy of the inner life and that *Upheavals of Thought's* task is to propose a definition of emotions that helps those who think about it to make better sense of some features of their own and other people's experience and behaviour¹².

Starting from the contribution of the ancient Stoic tradition about the structure of emotions, Nussbaum's work chronicles the beliefs and practices of Western philosophy throughout history on the topic, from ancient Greece to the present day. Nussbaum, in fact – between the endorsement of a “neostoic” tradition and a “Socratic way of proceeding” – argues that emotions are construed on thoughts and cognitions. Emotions do not include only a cognitive component: they are just cognitions, nothing more. When cognitions are properly understood, in Nussbaum's view, they are necessary and sufficient to determine emotions¹³. As a matter of fact, Nussbaum says that in typical

¹⁰ See *Ibidem*.

¹¹ See G. Giorgini (2011), *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113.

¹² See D. Fritz Cates, “Conceiving Emotions: Martha Nussbaum's “Upheavals of Thought”, in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 31. No. 2, 2003, p. 327.

¹³ See M. Nussbaum (2001), *op. cit.*, pp. 56-7.

cases, emotions are experiences where the person who experiences is perfectly aware of his/her sentiments; the cases without awareness being atypical and amenable to the typical ones.

Widening her discourse to contemporary psychology, she introduces an indispensable concept of *alterity* as persons outside a person's control have great importance for the person's own flourishing. Emotions are acknowledgements of neediness and lack of self-sufficiency¹⁴. These thoughts on value and judgments mean that human mind is projected outward, like a mountain range, and does not remain inert, in a calm *self*¹⁵. Psychology and ethology are also important to describe the emotions of infants and animals and the stages of development of their deep emotions are adequately described¹⁶.

In particular, Nussbaum suggests that the child at the beginning does not feel a clear sense of boundaries between the "self" and the "other", but he only feels pain and fear because he is perfectly aware of his personal insufficiency (instead of a previously supposed omnipotence theorized by Freudian psychoanalysis) and need of assistance to live. In fact, the child expresses some rudimentary form of gratitude when he understands that the others help him to live and some rudimentary form of anger when the others are not there to help him in every moment of his primordial life¹⁷. An ambivalence of this kind between joy and frustration could be verified even in other animals, but in the child it gives rise to an emotional complexity absolutely unique.

As a matter of fact, a residue of this primordial ambivalence can be found in the adult in relation to emotions such as friendship and love,

¹⁴ See D. Fritz Cates (2003), *op. cit.*, p. 327.

¹⁵ See Nussbaum (2001), *op. cit.*, it. ed., p. 17.

¹⁶ See *Ibidem*, p. 329 and Giorgini (2011), *op. cit.*

¹⁷ See M. Nussbaum (2001), *op. cit.*, it. ed. p. 239.

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sentiments which have absolutely to be distinguished from sexual desire¹⁸.

In sum, Nussbaum sharply diverges from a Freudian account of human psychology, and she collocates her reflections among the theories of “object relations”, stating that there is no need to postulate any destructive instinct in the child behaviour¹⁹.

Nussbaum overcomes a desire-centred conception of emotions and she concludes that emotions do not necessarily include desire, because desires are not always essential in life-imagining and in conceiving a life a person values²⁰. In the same terms, even potential emotional conflicts are presented in terms of “a story of reason’s urgent struggles with itself concerning nothing less than how to imagine life”²¹. Taking into account the classical books of the Western culture (from the ancient Greeks and Latin, as we have previously said, to the modern political thought, with a prominence of Adam Smith’s and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s moral works) she discusses about compassion and empathy²².

As Fritz-Cates underlines “Nussbaum argues [...] that when one fails to acknowledge fully the relevant compassion composing beliefs, one fails to experience compassion. Nussbaum does not say much about how to distinguish a full acknowledgment (which is sufficient for compassion) from a less than full acknowledgment (which is insufficient for compassion)”²³.

The fundamental step to be accomplished to feel compassion is the waiver of self-omnipotence and the understanding that even a contingent

¹⁸ See *Ibidem*, pp. 262, 267.

¹⁹ See *Ibidem*, pp. 240.

²⁰ See M. Nussbaum (2001), *op. cit.*, pp. 136.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 86.

²² I would refer to M. Baglieri, “L’educazione nella Ricchezza delle nazioni di Adam Smith. Tema chiave per il superamento del presunto dualismo smithiano tra economia e morale”, 2011, in *Riforma della Scuola*, 12/2011.

²³ See Fritz Cates (2003), *op. cit.*, p. 335

power could be something very precarious. As Rousseau underlined in his *Emile*, back in 1762: “Everybody can be tomorrow in the same condition of the one who now he assists”²⁴. Actually, when Nussbaum illustrates the theory of compassion in Rousseau educational work, she positions herself in the wake of Wollstonecraft’s critique to Rousseau for not having considered women as objects of compassion, properly because of women’s humanity²⁵. Furthermore, the renounce to omnipotence is essential in order to feel compassion, and a general compassion for our fellow citizens as the first step of the commitment to establish a good society.

In addition, in some cases, it is possible to make a disparaging moral judgment concerning someone’s action or character and to feel compassion for him at the same time²⁶.

This theme is not distinct from the defence of mercy (leniency in assigning punishment) in the criminal law system: Nussbaum suggests that those people who are responsible for judging and punishing have to complexify their thinking about moral agency and responsibility²⁷.

3. Listing a threshold of core capabilities: emotional aspects and political fall-backs

Emotions and the overcome of the fear of not being self-sufficient towards the encounter with the “others” show several fallouts in the central capabilities of the “capabilities approach” as theorized by Martha Nussbaum. The question is connected with the question of “listing” capabilities, *i.e.* the questioning about creating or not a specific list of core capabilities, which has been long-disputed among capability

²⁴ Quoted in Nussbaum (2001), *op. cit.*, it. ed., p. 412

²⁵ See *Ibidem*, p. 412. In order to map the roots of Nussbaum in the history of political thought, see also M. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity. A Classical Defence of Reform in Liberal Education*, 1997, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

²⁶ See Fritz Cates (2003), *op. cit.*, p. 336.

²⁷ See *Ibidem*, p. 337.

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approach's scholars. In fact, unlike Sen, Nussbaum identifies a list of ten "core" (elsewhere "central") capabilities which are fundamental for the flourishing of all the others. Sen's theory is more free in identifying basic capabilities in relations to different persons, cultures, political systems. In Sen's work, in sum, there is no pre-determined lists of basic capabilities but they rather depend on the specific time, place and field of research which applies the Capability Approach²⁸.

In fact, as Nussbaum emphasizes:

Sen does not employ a threshold or a specific list of capabilities, although it is clear that he thinks some capabilities (for example, health and education) have a particular centrality.²⁹

The presentation of Nussbaum's own perspectives occurs soon after in *Creating Capabilities*, where the author outlines her specific list of a threshold of capabilities which has always to be provided for the individuals. In particular, considering the various areas of human life in which people act, the Capability Approach asks: "What does a life worthy of human dignity require?". In Nussbaum's view, at a bare minimum, a particular *complexus* of ten Central Capabilities is required. Given a widely shared understanding of the task of government (namely, that the State has the affirmative job of making people able to pursue a dignified and minimally flourishing life), it follows that a decent political order must secure to all citizens at least this threshold of ten Central Capabilities:

²⁸ On this disputed question see M. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities. The Human Development Approach*, 2011a, Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, p. 19 and A. Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, 2004, New York: Penguin: 231-247.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

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1. Life: Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length, not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
2. Bodily health: Being able to have good health [...].
3. Bodily integrity: Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence, having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
4. Senses, imagination, and thought: Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid nonbeneficial pain.
5. Emotions: Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justifies anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.).
6. Practical reason: Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life [...].
7. Affiliation: (A) Being able to live with and toward others [...]; (B) Having the social bases of self-respect and nonhumiliation [...].
8. Other species: Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
9. Play: Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

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10. Control over one's environment: (A) Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. (B) Material: Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.³⁰

Several points in Nussbaum's set of core capabilities manifest a direct connection with the problems concerning emotions and the overcome of fear. In particular point 4 (Senses, imagination, and thought), point 5 (Emotions), and point 7 (Affiliation) show a fall-back on the emotions' theory; where point 1 (Life), point 2 (Bodily health), and point 3 (Bodily integrity) show a close relation with the very fundamental principles of human rights and the overcome of the fear of insecurity in conducting a life which persons have reason to value.

Understood in this way, then, capabilities provide for a full human range both moral and practical, which contemplates the relation with Otherness (but where *alterity* has not to be understood as an ensemble of "wholes" or hypostatized as in the multicultural understanding) in order to continuously create a varicoloured and faceted Self which could be able to recognise and show concern for other human beings as well as able to be treated as a dignified being whose entitlements are equal to that of others. Naturally, this entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin, *etc.* as in the precipitate of the human rights international declarations and of the advocacy practical activities worldwide.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 33-34.

Furthermore, as Nussbaum underlines, it is possible to acknowledge that the capability approach generates consequences on contemporary political thought: in effect, the comprehension of the relation between emotions and the different human conceptions of the “good” will inform our decisions in relation to reality, especially when we will ask how politics can promote the human flourishing³¹. Hence, even compassion is useful as a motivation to let public policies and institutions deal with the citizens’ need. This motivation has to be recognised in the planning both of citizens’ political conception and civic education. Policy-making has to be inspired by the affirmative action in order to balance the different citizens’ needs, especially for those who experience relation with disabilities, misery, oldness, grief and distress³².

In few words, Nussbaum defends her vision of basic capabilities as the basis for a liberal political consensus about several core issues of social justice. Which human capabilities are really necessary to define a truly human life? The capabilities approach argues that a life deprived of the basic capabilities is not really human³³.

4. *Education: citizenship and security VS. the Clash of civilizations*

As we have already seen, Nussbaum has emphasized how also Sen perceives for the centrality of particular capabilities in which the affirmative action of the State could be observed³⁴. As we have previously said, health and education are among the capabilities the two scholars place at the core to safeguard the overcome of fear about body integrity

³¹ See M. Nussbaum (2001), *op. cit.*, it. ed. p. 19.

³² See *Ibidem*, pp. 481, 501.

³³ On this topic, see G. Giorgini, *Liberalismi eretici*, 1999, Trieste, Goliardiche: 214.

³⁴ On this topic, see M. Walker and E. Unterhalter (eds.), *Amartya Sen's Capability Approach and Social Justice in Education*, 2007, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

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as well as the reach of security of rights both at personal and at international level.

As Melanie Walker and Elaine Unterhalter underline, Sen identifies education as one of a relatively small number of centrally important beings and doings that are crucial to well-being. Nussbaum, instead has discussed the importance of education for women's empowerment and the importance of public education as crucial to democratic societies. She identifies three key capabilities associated with education: first, critical thinking or "the examined life"; second, the ideal of the world citizen; and third, the development of the narrative imagination.

In Walker's and Unterhalter's words "in both Sen's and Nussbaum's works, education is in itself a basic capability that affects the development and expansion of other capabilities"³⁵.

While Martha Nussbaum insists more on the educational power to establish a vital frame which fosters emotions and other capabilities, so to let humans become world citizens aware of the world complexity in the global era³⁶, Amartya Sen supports education as a way to fight the fear of physical insecurity and to gain a proper control of each one's life.

The Indian economist says:

Why is it so important to close the educational gaps, and to remove the enormous disparities in educational access, inclusion and achievement? One reason, among others, is the importance of this for making the world more secure as well as more fair. [...]

[S]ince the terrible events of September 11, 2001 – and what followed after that – the world has been very aware of problems of physical insecurity. But human insecurity comes in many different ways – not just through terrorism and violence. Indeed, even on the very day of

³⁵ See M. Walker and E. Unterhalter (2007), *op. cit.*, p. 8.

³⁶ See M. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit. Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, 2011b, Princeton: Princeton University Press, *passim*.

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September 11, 2001, more people died from Aids than from physical violence including the atrocity in New York. Human insecurity can develop in many different ways, and physical violence is only one of them. While it is important to fight terrorism and genocide [...], we must also recognise the plural nature of human insecurity and its diverse manifestations. As it happens, widening the coverage and effectiveness of basic education can have a powerfully preventive role in reducing human insecurity of nearly every kind.³⁷

Sen argues that illiteracy and innumeracy are themselves forms of insecurity and illustrates how not being able to read and write is a tremendous deprivation. Therefore, the first and most immediate contribution of successful school education is a direct reduction of those kinds of deprivations and insecurities which continue to affect the lives of the world's poorest population.

Formal as well as non-formal learning contributes to remove human insecurity also because education plays a key role in helping people to get jobs and gainful employment. As Sen underlines, policy-makers must make “the economic benefits of schooling clearer to all”³⁸. In addition, education is very important also in order to improve security for women and control over one's environment, as Unesco underlines in planning its Gender Equality Action Plan 2008-2013³⁹. Amartya Sen interprets this particular contribution of education in this way:

³⁷ A. Sen, “The Importance of Basic Education”, speech delivered at the Commonwealth Education Conference, Edinburgh, 28th October 2003, p. 1 (available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2003/oct/28/schools.uk4>).

³⁸ See A. Sen (2003), *op. cit.*, p. 3. Take into account also A. Sen, “Why Culture Matters?”, speech delivered at the World Bank's Tokyo Meeting, 13th December 2001.

³⁹ See M. Baglieri, “L'UNESCO e la priorità di eguaglianza di genere: il Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) 2008-2013 ed il ruolo particolare dell'educazione”, 2010, in *LabDi (Laboratorio forme della discriminazione, istituzioni e azioni positive)*.

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The educational gap [...] also has a gender connection since it can be very important issue for women's security. Women are often deprived of their due, thanks to illiteracy. Not being able to read or write is a significant barrier for underprivileged women, since this can lead to their failure to make use of the rather limited rights they may legally have (say, to own land, or other property, or to appeal against unfair judgement and unjust treatment). There are often legal rights in rulebooks that are not used because the aggrieved parties cannot read those rulebooks. Gaps in schooling can, thus, directly lead to insecurity by distancing the deprived from the ways and means of fighting against that deprivation.⁴⁰

He adds:

[E]mpirical work in recent years has brought out very clearly how the relative respect and regard for women's well-being is strongly influenced by women's literacy and educated participation in decisions within and outside the family. Even the survival disadvantage of women compared with men in many development countries (which leads to such terrible phenomenon as a hundred million of "missing women") seems to go down sharply – and may even get eliminated – with progress in women's empowerment, for which literacy is a basic ingredient. There is also considerable evidence that fertility rates tend to go down sharply with greater empowerment of women. [...] There is also much evidence that women's education and literacy tend to reduce the mortality rates of children. These and other connections between basic education of women and the power of women's agency (and its extensive reach) indicate why the gender gap in education produces heavy social penalties.⁴¹

⁴⁰ A. Sen (2003), *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

As in Nussbaum's view, education has a role in promoting political participation opportunities and in letting people express their demands and claims effectively. In Sen's vision, this can contribute directly in removing their insecurity, since the absence of a voice in politics can involve a grave reduction of influence and of the likelihood of a just treatment for those who are deprived⁴².

Education as a key capability, as we have already investigated, does not involve just an improvement in the personal living conditions of men and women, but it is directly related to achievements in international cooperation and human development on the international politics arena. Indeed, this awareness leads Sen and Nussbaum to criticise eloquently the adversarial description of international politics in the Second Millennium, as described powerfully by scholars like Samuel P. Huntington in his conception of "clash of civilisations". In fact, Sen's and Nussbaum's conception of capabilities will enhance the understanding of human rights not just in the declarations of intent given by the international community, but also in the actual functionings of each individual's as citizen real life.

As Sen significantly states:

[T]he nature of education is quite central to peace in the world. Recently the very deceptive perspective of the so-called "clash of civilisations" (championed particularly by Samuel Huntington) has gained much currency. It is important to see that what is most immediately divisive in this kind of theorising is not the silly idea of the inevitability of a clash (that too, but it comes later), but the equally shallow prior insistence on seeing human beings in terms of one dimension only, regarding them just as members of one civilisation or another (defined mostly in terms of religion), ignoring their other affiliations and involvements.⁴³

⁴² See *Ibidem*, p. 4.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

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5. *Conclusions*

In the present article we have analyzed the contribution of the Capability Approach as theorised by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum with regard to political theory and development economics. The Capability Approach – regardless of whether it is possible to provide a list of ‘core capabilities’, or whether capabilities primarily depend on the life each different person has reason to value even in relation to time, place and interpersonal differences – refers to a clear emotional element, which we have discussed starting from the theories of Nussbaum on emotions and on the rationality of human feelings.

Scholars and policy-makers still have the onerous duty of understanding how the affirmative action of national as well as international political institutions can realize policies aimed at promoting capabilities as a forefront of the practical achievement of the human rights’ *complexus*.

While “all countries are developing countries”⁴⁴, however, there is the strong need for the promotion of effective and indeed ‘practical’ functionings, to outweigh the risk of variable geometries between men and nation-States. This would allow, realistically and in an always less asymptotic manner, for the achievement of prominent goals, which as John Rawls says, we could identify with justice and freedom. In effect, as we have argued, in Sen’s and Nussbaum’s original contribution to the topic in question, the promotion of capabilities through lifelong learning and education for an examined life and a critic as well as informed citizenship is the prominent instrument to overtake the (neo)realistic rhetoric of fear between nation-states as well as men.

⁴⁴ See Nussbaum (2011a), *op. cit.*

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In conclusion, the peaceful weapons of dialogue and the pursuit of rights as shaped on the desires of every single individual are stronger than the *reductio ad unum* of cultures and identities that rely on the assumptive clash between civilisations, without recognising the plural nature of human insecurity and its diverse manifestations. As this happens, according to Sen and Nussbaum⁴⁵, widening the coverage and effectiveness of education worldwide can have a powerfully preventive role in reducing human insecurity of nearly every kind (from violence at family level to ethnic tensions and the dangers of sectarian separatism between ideological groups).

⁴⁵ See in particular A. Sen (2003), *op. cit.*, *passim*.

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