Development Discourse: a developed society is a collective of developed individuals

Զարգացման դիսկուրս. զարգացած հասարակությունը զարգացած անհատների խումբ է

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

In essence, any society is simply a collective of interacting individuals. Considering this, a developed society is a collective of developed individuals. For this reason, this guidebook seeks to help individuals develop themselves as a way to facilitate society's development.

None of us is perfect and all of us can improve ourselves in a variety of ways. One way to improve ourselves is to learn to better understand ourselves and others. If we better understand ourselves, and better understand others, we can make better choices: better choices for ourselves and better choices about how we interact with others. In turn, better choices by all of us improves the quality of all of our collective interactions, which is society itself.

One way we learn about ourselves and others is by listening to ourselves and to others. We have all been taught to live our lives as society expects. But each of us has an inner nature that we can explore and better understand. To understand ourselves we can start by speak our thoughts aloud, because when we say something aloud it becomes real. By talking aloud and by sharing our thoughts, we can start to listen to ourselves. But this is only the beginning. Knowing ourselves better is a process, and in part we come to know ourselves by better understanding how we are the same and yet different from others: with regard to every aspect of being human, and at any time in our lives, we are both the same and different from the others with whom we share our lives. Thus, learning about ourselves requires that we learn about others, and this can only happen when we genuinely listen to them. Unless we truly listen to the other, we cannot understand the other, nor ourselves.

While many people talk, usually few people truly listen. In fact, most talking is often just an attempt to reaffirm a generalization about others so that we need not make an effort to listen to them or understand them as unique individuals. Also, talking and not listening is often what happens in debate. A debate is when each person wants to convince the other without being convinced by the other, so neither listens. In debate the idea of the person with the most power and influence wins because that idea is repeated a lot and then adopted by others who would rather be on the side

of the person most likely to "win". In contrast, sharing ideas with others, which includes talking and listening to others, comparing perspectives and trying to understand each other, is discourse. Discourse is not about winning and it is not about power; discourse is about understanding: discourse is searching for a shared, common truth about being the same and different.

Debate and discourse are extremely different. Debate — often accomplished by silencing others, talking over others, and not listening to others to be the "winner" — does not make the idea true. In fact, it makes the idea false. The idea is false because it is accepted based on power; thus, the idea cannot be genuine, because it was not truly understood and shared by others. Ideas or perspectives or understandings are valuable and reflect a greater amount of truth the more there is a shared, common understanding, which is based on reciprocity — meaning based on having listened to each other. Only then is the idea based on how we are all the same and yet each different at the same time. This is discourse.

This guidebook is called Development Discourse because it is about discourse and not debate. Debate cannot lead to development because silencing individuals instead of engaging individuals will not permit their individual development. Engaging individuals to discover how we are the same and different produces shared truths and developed individuals.

As with anything that is valuable, it may not be easy. It may be hard to achieve. But there is intrinsic value in knowing ourselves better, and in understanding others better. Development Discourse requires two things of participants: courage and mercy. It takes courage to listen to ourselves because it takes courage to speak our thoughts, to hear them outside our minds, to make them real, and then analyze those thoughts with the help of others. Also, it requires mercy to truly listen to another person, as well as to listen to ourselves. It requires mercy to respect without judging what another says and shares about their inner selves or what we learn about our own selves, and to accept in which ways the others are both the same and different from ourselves at the same time. But as past participants discovered, this is a process worth trying.

How do we start? To promote individual development and discourse, this guidebook suggests creating a safe environment for approximately 5

people to engage in genuine, honest and personal discussions, and it offers a series of discussion topics meant to facilitate individual self-reflection and self-improvement, in particular with regard to enhancing each individual's capacity to make informed and voluntary choices. The materials aim to address issues of importance within the local Armenian context and participants are invited to add to the discussion materials, as well as to share their discussions and experiences with other individuals and groups, hopefully creating in this way an ongoing, small-scale, but ever-expanding interpersonal discourse in Armenia about individual and societal development.

Why small groups? The process of individual development proposed here gives value to each individual's participation. Although individuals can learn by listening to the stories or examples of others, personal experience, achieved by doing and thinking for one's self, is of the greatest educational value. Also, as individuals know themselves in comparison to others and through interaction with others, actively participating with others in the group is key to the self-development process. Additionally, research shows that usually a conversation including 7 or more individuals quickly subdivides into conversations of smaller groups, or ceases to be conversation as a few individuals start to dominate the discourse, thus excluding the participation of others. For all of these reasons, small groups of approximately 5 persons is recommended.

How to form a group? Most often someone who has already participated in a development discourse group will choose to share their experience with others by creating a new group. But prior experience is not required because the discussion materials are self-explanatory. Thus, anyone interested in this process can decide to form a group. In inviting others to participate, however, one should consider who you know who would work well with the others you are inviting because the discussions ask each individual to share their personal thoughts and ideas. Some participants will feel safer amongst others that they already know and trust. However, a few participants have stated that they would participate only if no one else in the group knows them, thus creating anonymity. Some groups have been a mix, where a few people know each other and a few do not know each other but everyone trusts each other because of mutual

friends or because they share some common background, like all having graduated from or worked at the same institution. Creating a group means looking for a common background, trait or interest that will help the individuals connect with, and trust each other. That common factor can be anything.

How to facilitate a group? It is best to consult with the participants and to choose one specific day, time and place for the group to meet every week. Keeping to a weekly meeting at the same day and time and place promotes continuity. A few groups, however, may wish to meet twice a week. The day, time and place depends on what is best for the participants, but one person's home or garden often works best because a small, private setting makes people feel comfortable. Some groups have made their meetings more enjoyable sharing coffee, tea, pastries or even wine. Depending on conversation, meetings may last approximately 2 hours. The discussion materials are divided into a number of themes, each theme divided into a number of sections. If the group runs out of time, they can close the discussion after any section and pick up again where they left off.

What to expect? Each activity starts with instructions for the facilitator, or a reading that any participant can read to the group. There are a number of questions after each activity. The facilitator should read a question and participants should answer based on their own perceptions. Everyone should have an opportunity to answer before moving on to the next question. Often one person's answer helps another person to consider the question differently and to share a different answer. It is important to remind participants that there is not just one answer, and not just one correct answer. In fact, there may be different answers of different levels of validity depending upon the participants' past experiences. More importantly, one's answers to the questions may change as the group proceeds through the questions because the later questions help us to see the first questions differently. During the question/answer period it is best if the facilitator encourages all participants to participate and share their own ideas because it will improve the depth of the discussions. Remember, in general we are exploring in which ways we understand the question the same and yet differently and this should help us learn how we are the same and yet different overall.

Lastly, even though this process may require from us courage and mercy, it can still be fun. Learning more about ourselves and about others should not be intimidating. What should be intimidating is not knowing about ourselves and others. Past participants have enjoyed the challenge. Start the process with positive expectations. After all, neither you nor any of us are alone.

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Development Discourse 01: a developed society is a collective of developed individuals

<u>Topic</u>: The Individual and the Nature of Reality
<u>Objective</u>: Consider our individuality and how we compose our identity

<u>Suggested Introduction</u>:

The facilitator may thank participants for their interest in the project and should advise participants that these discussion sessions are still under development, being tested, such that by genuinely engaging in the process, and then providing feedback, participants will be helping to improve the discussion materials. The facilitator should ask that considering this, the participants be open to new perspectives, to trying new approaches and that hopefully the participants will be pleasantly surprised with the value of engaging in this process. After each discussion facilitators or participants may send their comments to the Development Discourse author at <u>bournazian@gmail.com</u>

<u>Part One: Introductory Thought-Experiment</u>

Instructions to the Facilitator: In the table below, a suggested script to follow is on the left, and on the right are additional instructions or objectives for the discussion. To lead the discussion, ask the questions, but also be responsive to the participants and allow the discussion to evolve based on their answers — for example, one person's answer may inspire another person to reconsider their prior answer or state a new perspective that they had not considered before. This means that the order of the questions may vary, and at the end you may need to ask follow-up questions to ensure that the discussion objectives are reached.

Facilitator's Script	*Instructions* / Objectives
"This exercise asks us to use our imagination. Let's close our eyes and clear our minds. [Everyone closes their eyes]. Take a deep breath and exhale. I am about to give you a word, and I ask you to imagine that word. The word is … Ocean. [Wait a minute after each of the following statements] • Take a moment to <u>see</u> the ocean • … to <u>hear</u> the ocean • … to <u>smell</u> the ocean • … to <u>feel</u> the ocean. • Capture your image of ocean. • Now <u>be</u> the ocean.	*Facilitators should go through this process slowly to allow participants enough time to compose their mental image of "ocean", and to potentially compose a second image with the last statement.* In this exercise participants explore 1) how each individual perceives of an objective thing in a uniquely subjective way, raising the question of individual realities versus shared realities, and 2) the human ability to create an "ideal" — a better way of living, or a better way of doing something, which is different from what we had experienced so far.
"Now open your eyes. Who would like to describe their 'ocean'?"	*Ask various participants to describe their ocean while following up with questions to draw out distinctions in color, depth, expanse, surroundings, animals, activities, and especially position of view.*
"For those of us who have seen the ocean, what is it? Should it be compared to a sea or large lake? Which ocean did you experience? In which ways yes, and which ways no?"	Humans understand reality principally through experience. Experience can also set the parameters for how we perceive of oceans, relationships, or anything else.
"For any of us who have never seen the ocean, how did we create an image; what did we use as a reference for our image?"	When lacking experience, or in addition to experience, humans understand reality by drawing on models, generalizations and definitions, and by making comparisons.
"Why was everyone's ocean different? Why is this true even for those who have experienced ocean?"	Ultimately, each of us experiences reality subjectively through the confines of individuality.

"When asked to 'be the ocean' did your perspective change? Did anyone imagine the ocean not as it should be but as they wanted it to be? Is there a difference between a memory of an experience and an ideal?"	It may be that humans differ most from other animals by the degree to which we can envision an alternative reality, or ideal. An ideal can be shared with other individuals and serve to inspire a level of cooperation that goes beyond immediate self-interest.
"For those of us who have not experienced ocean, should we accept the ocean experience of others? To what extent can that experience be transferred to another?"	Even if we trust that others really have experienced it, does that make them an authority, and to what extent considering that the degree to which experience can be communicated will always be limited.
"What are the other methods of creating an understanding of things that we have not experienced? How are definitions created and by whom?"	Definitions: From the Greek *okeanos,* meaning the "great stream encircling the earth", ocean today means a vast sea or the main areas of water divided geographically. But all oceans are also one ocean.
"What conclusions can we make about reality and how we perceive it?" "Is everyone's ocean both the same and also different? Why?"	Review the objectives listed above.

Part Two: Subjectivity, Discourse and Debate:

One premise for Development Discourse is that there is a difference between discourse and debate:

Discourse is not debate. Debates are about winning an argument. Debates are about promoting or defending a policy, practice or framework. Debates are an exercise in power. In contrast, discourse is about problem-solving. Discourse is about asking questions about ourselves as individuals and as members of our society, about exploring our underlying values and

consequential behavior, about identifying problems and creating unique solutions in our personal and cultural context.

1. Considering that reality is subjective, which method is more conducive to developing a shared reality: discourse or debate?
2. Considering that reality is subjective, which method is more conducive to developing a shared reality that is fair: discourse or debate?
3. Considering that reality is subjective, which method is more conducive to developing a shared reality that honors and values the subjective nature and reality of individuals: discourse or debate?
4. Does fairness mean valuing the subjective nature and reality of individuals?
5. Do we all agree to engage in discourse and not debate?

Part Three: Allowing Space for Alternative Realities: Մատթեոս Զարիֆեան «Կարեկցութիւն»

Activity: Below is a poem from the beginning of the last century and written in Western Armenian.

1. Have one person from the group read the full poem aloud.
2. How does each person interpret the poem?

   • For those who have heard the poem before, at what age did you first hear the poem and in what context? Does that past experience influence your interpretation of the poem today?

3. As taught in Western Armenian schools the poem is about safeguarding young girls from youthful passions. However, could their be alternative meanings? Why?
4. Read each stanza and discuss the corresponding questions per stanza, one by one, and in light of the previous stanzas and questions.

ԿԱՐԵԿՑՈՒԹԻՒՆ	Կարեկցություն	Questions
Պզտիկ աղջիկ մ'ինծի կ'ըսէ Թէ զիս խենթի պէս կը սիրէ. Պզտիկ աղջիկ մը զիս սիրէ՛…	Պզտիկ աղջիկ մ'ինծի կ'ըսե Որ զիս խենթի պես կը սիրե Պզտիկ աղջիկ մը զիս սիրե՛...	
Գիշերն անհուն իմ աչքերուն Երեւի դեռ նա չէ տեսեր. Պզտիկ աղջիկ մ'ինծի տայ սե՛ր…	Գիշերն անհուն իմ աչքերուն Երեւի դեռ նա չէ՛ տեսեր. Պզտիկ աղջիկ մ 'ինծի տա սե՛ր...	What has the girl not seen in his eyes and what is its significance?
Երեւի դեռ նա չէ նայեր Հոգւոյս խաւար անդնու նդն ի վար. Պզտիկ աղջիկ մ'ինծ սի ռահա՛ր…	Երեւի դեռ նա չէ՛ նայեր Հոգվույս խավար անդունդն ի վար. Պզտիկ աղջիկ մ'ինձ սիրահար...	Why might his soul be a dark abyss?
Եթէ լսեր թէ ո՛չ մէկ սեր Այդ անդունդին մէջ կը շ նչեր` Հեք պզտիկը չէ՛ր հառա չեր…	Եթե լսեր թե ո՛չ մեկ սեր Այդ անդունդին մեջ կշնչեր` Հեք պզտիկը չէ՛ր հառաչեր...	In Western Armenian ո՛չ negates the verb, too, so it means that no love has breathed there. What is the significance no love having breathed?
Ուստի եղբ֊օր մը պէս ըսի Թէ լուսնին տակ մարդ կը մսի. «Գնա՛, գնա՛, ննջէ՛» ըսի .	Ուստի եղբոր մը պես ըսի Որ լուսնին տակ մարդ կմսի. Գնա՛, գնա՛ ննջե՛ ըսի:	Why might one catch cold under the moon? What is the nature of the moon's light? Is the author like the moon, only a reflection of what the girl or society expects that he be?
Յետոյ գացի ` հեռուն լացի…	Հետո գացի` հեռու՛ն լացի…	For whom does he cry? Why? And why far away?

5. Does your overall interpretation of the poem change now that you have answered the questions related to each stanza?

   - In other words, can you incorporate all the language of the poem in an argument that supports your interpretation of its meaning?

   - In explaining your interpretation must you rely on generalizations about men and women, and from where do such generalizations come? Are those generalizations always true?

   - Alternatively, does your interpretation of the poem rely on your own experiences rather than on the words of the poem itself?

6. To what extent do we regularly superimpose our own experience on the experience of others in interpreting reality?

   - For example, for a person who has had to hide an unchangeable part of themselves from others, like I have had to do, the poem has a different meaning:

     - Stanza 2 is about hiding who one really is; re-read stanza 2;

     - Stanza 3 is about feeling the shame of being different; re-read stanza 3;

     - Stanza 4 is about not having experienced love because of not being free enough to allow love to have a chance; re-read stanza 4;

     - Stanza 5 is about dissimulating as someone else because the moon is a "false light" (i.e. only a reflection of sunlight), which means a light that can never warm; re-read stanza 5; and

     - Stanza 6 represents hopelessness of ever loving and needing to hide oneself in shame (last line).

     - For me, the poem is about being gay, because women have loved me and expected love from me, but it would have been a lie for me to say I loved them. This is my "ocean".

7. To what degree do we have standard interpretations of poems, or standard ideas about how men and women should act or what careers they should have? To what degree do we allow for each person to express and live an alternative interpretation of their poem or life?

   - When we insist that each individual conform to a standard interpretation or role or expectation, do we silence alternative

interpretations which reflect alternative experiences, alternative realities, alternative "oceans"?

- • Considering the uniqueness of individuals and the subjectivity of reality, doesn't conformity construct a false reality, and the greater the conformity the more false the reality?

Potential answers to these questions, as well as the process for seeking answers, will be discussed in the upcoming sessions of this program.

Part Four: Development Discourse Premise:

Another premise of Development Discourse is that a developed society is a collective of developed individuals.

In his book Development as Freedom,[1] Nobel Prize-winning economist and philosopher Amartya Sen argues that finance and economics do not define a developed society; rather, one should say that a developed society is a collective of developed individuals. Logically, as society is made up of individuals, it is the interactions between individuals and the contribution of individuals to each other, and to the whole, that dictates the quality of the society in which they live. Also, according to Sen, an individual develops through choice. Logically, the individual is in the best position to know themselves, what interests them, what talent they have and would want to develop, and even what they value. Likewise, it is in the best interest of the society to foster and encourage the individual's skills and choices about self-development, so that each individual can reach their full potential, and thereby contribute that much more to the society.

Development Discourse is a series of discussions amongst groups of approximately five (not more than seven) persons that seeks to engage individuals in conversation about our individual development and our society's development from this individualistic approach. Also, instead of complaining about public figures, public mechanisms and the public sphere, Development Discourse seeks to be introspective, and to engage participants in discussion about our own individual and shared identities, our underlying values, and our own interactions and behavior in our society.

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[1] Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom, New York: Anchor Books / Random House, 2000.

The goal is to question ourselves, and through questioning to learn how our identity, our values and our behavior either support or frustrate our society's development as per our interactions with others and our contributions to the whole. The ultimate question is how we may improve ourselves such that we contribute more, in both direct and indirect ways, to defining and constructing the society we want to live in.

1. Is it logical that the more developed an individual becomes the more that individual can contribute to others?
   - Can you give an example of this in the family context?
   - Can you give an example of this in a broader context, like village or community?
2. Considering the "ocean activity" that you started with, is it logical that the individual would best know what interests them, what types of study or work would make them happiest?
   - Should families help individuals to discover their vocation (i.e. what career suits them best)? How?
   - How can society help individuals to discover their vocation?
3. Based on the "ocean activity," we know that we are all the same and yet different. Because this is true, how important is it for individuals to choose things for themselves?
   - Do families choose for children or help children learn to make good choices?
   - Do leaders choose for citizens or offer citizens good choices?
   - Does society choose for individuals or help individuals choose for themselves?
4. Which is the more developed individual — the one who chooses for themselves or the one whose choices are made by others?

End of Discussion & Opportunity for Feedback

This is all for today. Groups and individuals can send their comments and suggestions to bournazian@gmail.com

Development Discourse 02: a developed society is a collective of developed individuals

<u>Today's Topic</u>: The Individual and the Collective and Choice
<u>Objective</u>: Recognize the cultural restrictions to individual self-construal of identity

<u>Quick Program Review</u>: So far, these are the ideas we have discussed:

- Premise — Discourse not Debate: discourse seeks to engage individuals in conversation that explores our subjective and collective reality, whereas debate is about winning and superimposing a perspective model on others. This program is about discourse.

- Premise — Development: a developed society is a collective of developed individuals; individuals develop by learning about themselves and others and by making better choices for themselves and in interacting with others. This program is about exploring development.

- Premise — Development Discourse is a pilot project and you are invited to provide feedback to improve the materials in line with the topics and objectives. Send messages to <u>bournazian@gmail.com</u>

<u>Group Name</u>: When a group sends us feedback about this program, it is good to know which group is providing the feedback. For this reason the other groups chose a name for themselves. What will be your group name? Can you think of a name that is truly representative of who you are as a collective?

<u>Discussion 01 Review</u>:

- Ocean Activity: Each individual is unique and experiences a subjective reality — their own "ocean"; our shared reality is constructed through culture and language.

- Poem: as individuals we can only interpret another's experience by comparing it to our own experience or comparing it to generalizations taught to us by culture and language. Even though this is how humans understand reality, we have to remember that everyone's "ocean" is different, and because we are all the same and different, so we must respect someone else's difference as real for them.

- Considering what we explored in the this past discussion, how can individuals explore their own identity or nature and develop themselves to their full potential, for the benefit of themselves and society? Could allowing people choices help?

Discussion 02:

As we are all the same and yet different, and as our "oceans" vary, how do we communicate about our reality? This is often called sharing a "common frame of reference".

Star Trek & the Common Frame of Reference:

Star Trek is a science fiction film series. In the scene below, one of the characters is an alien, named Spock, who died and then was brought back to life. Of course, the doctor, named McCoy, wants to know about Spock's death experience. While Spock is monitoring communication transmissions, the doctor talks to him.

Watch this video: https://youtu.be/RImwlpEfyoU — or read this script of what happens in the scene:

McCoy: Perhaps, we could cover a little philosophical ground. Life [pause] Death. [pause] Life. [pause] Things of that nature.
Spock: I did not have time on Vulcan to review the philosophical disciplines.
McCoy: C'mon, Spock, it's me, McCoy. You really have gone where no man's gone before. Can't you tell me what it felt like?
Spock: It would be impossible to discuss the subject without a common frame-of-reference.
McCoy: You're joking!

Spock: A joke [pause] is a story with a humorous climax.
McCoy: You mean I have to die to discuss your insights on death?
Spock: Forgive me, Doctor. I am receiving a number of distress calls.
McCoy: I don't doubt it.

Primary Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
1. Based on the story above, what is a "common frame of reference"?	To express our experiences to others we must compare it to something that others have also experienced or something known by them.
2. Other than a shared experience, can we approximate frames of reference? How did you approximate the ocean?	Our experiences are never exactly the same, but perhaps sometimes similar. Due to necessity we often engage in approximations: "It's like x, but different." "The ocean is like Sevan but much, much bigger."
3. Does culture provide a frame of reference?	Culture teaches us generalizations, duties and roles, metaphors, etc. which serve as common frames of reference. Whatever culture considers normal is a common frame of reference — "it is normal for men to smoke but not for women to smoke".
4. Does science provide a frame of reference?	Yes, science is a method for describing realities based on testing experiences and observation: we know that the seasons are a consequence of the earth moving around the sun. https://youtu.be/vDgUmTq4a2Q
5. When culture and science contradict each other, which one do we choose?	Usually, we choose the frameworks of which we are most aware or to which we most relate. Which would that be in Armenia, or does it depend on the topic?

Armenian Frames of Reference: Do Individuals Have Choice? Should Individuals Have Choice?

<u>Մի ամուսնության պատմություն</u>

Տատիկս սիրում էր պատմել, թե ինչպես էին հանդիպել ու ամուսնացել իր ծնողները:

Տատիկիս հայրը, Սեդրակը, շատ գեղեցիկ արտաքինով, կապուտաչյա, բարձրահասակ, կրթված, խելացի երիտասարդ է եղել, բայց ոչ մի կերպ չի կարողացել իրենց քաղաքում իր ճաշակով աղջիկ ընտրել: Նրան խորհուրդ են տվել, որ փնտրի իր քաղաքին շրջակայքի գյուղերում:

Եվ ահա Սեդրակը նստում է ձին և սկսում է գյուղերը շրջել: Տատիս մայրը, Զարդուհին, քնած է լինում և երազ է տեսնում, թե ինչպես ձիավոր մի երիտասարդ մտրակով խփում է իրեն և ասում է, որ վեր կենա: Զարդուհին զարթնում է, դուրս գալիս իրենց տնից և հենց այդ ժամանակ տեսնում է իր երազում տեսած ձիավոր երիտասարդին: Այդ Սեդրակն էր: Հենց նոր քնից արթնացած կարմրայտ աղջիկը չափազանց գեղեցիկ է թվում Սեդրակին: Նա պարզում է, թե ում աղջիկն է և վերադառնալով տուն, հայտարարում է, որ վերջապես հանդիպել է մի գեղեցիկ աղջկա և ուզում է նրա հետ ամուսնանալ:

Ծնողները ուրախանում են, որ իրենց որդին վերջապես ընդրություն է կատարել: Իսկույն գնում են աղջկա ծնողների մոտ և ստանալով նրանց համաձայնությունը, սկսում են հարսանիքի պատրաստություն տեսնել:

Եվ ահա հարսանիքի ժամանակ, իր կյանքում երկրորդ անգամ տեսնելով ցածրահասակ, թուխ հարսնացուին, Սեդրակը հայտարարում է. «Սա իմ տեսած աղջիկը չէ»: Բայց արդեն ուշ էր:

ըստ Ա.Վ. Գևորգյան

Primary Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
Is the story humorous? Why or why not?	The humor is based on the fact that at the end all of the groom's efforts were in vain. Why do we laugh? Do we laugh at tragedy?

Primary Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
In this story, what are the suggested common frames of reference? • For example, what does this story teach about men and women? • Consider how Sedrak is described compared to Zarduhi. • Who could exercise choice?	From Discussion 01 we learned that we learn by our own experience and through the experience of others, which includes stories. Stories also teach generalizations. In this story, the man is active, searching for his bride, and the women passive, dependent on her fate as revealed in a dream. As active the man has choice; as passive the woman does not have choice. • To what degree is it the same or different today with regard to choice? • What does this mean for the development of women?
In the story, what is the meaning of «Բայց արդեն ուշ էր․»? • Did Sedrak want to stop the marriage? • Despite his efforts, in the end was Sedrak able to make a choice? • What was deemed more important than choice?	• In the end, did honor make it "too late" to stop the marriage? • Is so, did the culture at the time make public honor more important than individual choice? • Is duty or honor like shame because it restricts choice; in other words does it restrict the choices of individuals? • How should we decide if and when choice should prevail?
Based on the description of the characters, what associations do we make with height, blue-eyes, or dark skin tone?	Through associations, the story teaches that valued characteristics include being tall, blue-eyed and male, while dark skin tone and female are not valued. • How does this impact on individuals? Is it fair?

Primary Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
Do Armenians tend to believe in destiny? • What is the relationship between fate and choice?	Psychological studies show that a belief in fate eases the psychological burden of making decisions; voters who found it difficult to choose between candidates chose to believe that fate would determine the election outcome. • Does belief in fate also allow individuals to accept that they have no choice?
Who is in the best position to know themselves, their talents, and to make decisions to pursue what is of the greatest interest to them? • So, what is the role of choice in individual development?	Individuals who chose things for themselves are more likely to earnestly pursue those activities. A student who chose their field of study, will study better. Individuals who learn to exercise choice are more responsible to themselves and to others.

The World Values Survey:
http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp

The World Values Survey is a survey conducted in a number of countries. Here is one question asked in all the countries with the average answer as per country.

Question: Some people feel they have completely free choice and control over their lives, while other people feel that what they do has no real effect on what happens to them. Please use this scale where 1 means "no choice at all" and 10 means "a great deal of choice" to indicate how much freedom of choice and control you feel you have over the way your life turns out:

Country	Mean Score (1 least choice; 10 greatest choice)
United States	7.73
Turkey	7.35
Azerbaijan	7.23
Germany	6.80
Iraq	6.53
Armenia	6.52
Georgia	6.24
Russian Federation	5.95
What is the relationship between choice and control over one's life? Are they the same?	
How might a different cultural frame of reference impact on the way in which individuals from different cultures respond to the question? • If someone accepts a role which dictates specific conduct, will they conceive of alternative conduct as an option, and if there are no foreseen alternatives, then are any choices denied to them?	A choice must be both knowing and voluntary. Besides being voluntary, one must know of, or conceive of alternatives, in order to exercise free will by choosing. • In which ways did Zarduhi have or not have choices? Did she recognize that she had any choices?

Subjective Reality, Shared Reality, and the Tenth Grade Armenian Social Science Textbook

• Reading on Reality:

Every individual's reality is subjective. Shared reality — meaning the extent to which we experience a common reality with each other — is

constructed. Shared reality is an approximation of what may really be, and it is communicated to us, and between us, through language and culture. As to language, words only have the meanings we each individually ascribe to them, and a shared meaning that we perceive others share with us. Such ascribed meaning is communicated to new generations through language learning and culture. New meanings can be created and ascribed through popular culture, including songs or other social conventions — like saying "google it" — but they are few. Generations of language and culture dictate a shared reality that is taught to us, whether what is being taught is still relevant or not considering new scientific discoveries about what is true.

For example, certain languages have several words for what in another language only one word is used. Eskimos have several words for "snow", each word distinguishing a specific type of snow, because distinguishing the types is important considering the Eskimo's environment. In Arabic there are distinct words for camel depending upon a camel's different characteristics. These examples also show how language reflects culture and how culture constructs language.

Additionally, linguists distinguish between high context and low context cultures and languages. In a high context setting, communication of an idea often relies on a shared understanding developed through culture but not literally expressed. Consider the following:

- «մի գործի» (means "stay near", not literally "don't get lost");

- «… մարդ ես …»

- «մարդը մարդն է»

- «ամոթ» / «ամոթ է … չէ, ոչ թէ ամոթ, բայց սիրուն չի:»
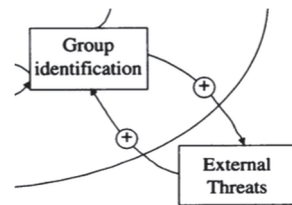
Such high context communication requires one to live in the cultural context in order to understand the linguistic communication.

In addition to such high context communication, languages and cultures also rely on metaphors to express social relations. Consider the false comparison "women are like wool; the more you beat them the softer they are." There is no logic to believing that women are like wool in any way, except for the simple assertion of the metaphor itself. Also, by its very structure the metaphor portends to prove its assertion with the false

Figure 2. The emotional algorithms form a dynamic system.
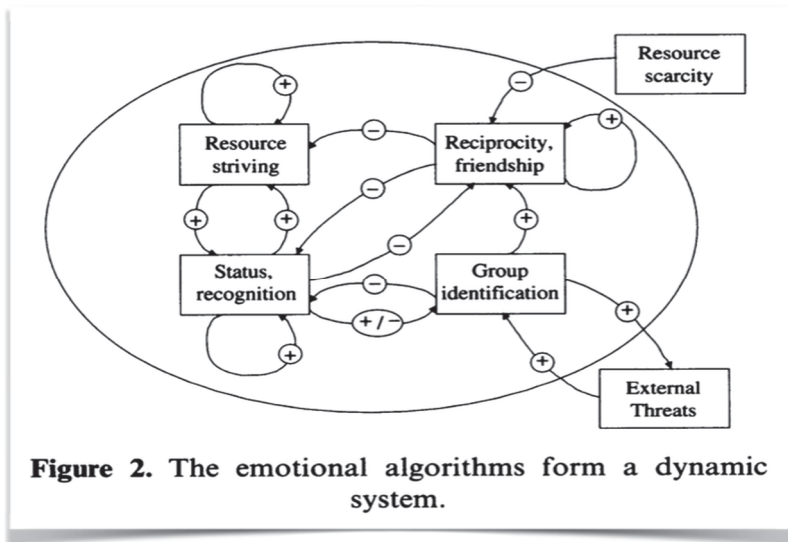
comparison that both things soften with beating. However, if things soften and people become complacent when beaten, why beat soldiers to make them strong? Moreover, even if some women were to "soften", and some men were to "harden" due to abuse, it is not the abuse per se that changes these individuals, but it is the social expectation that has been taught to such individuals regarding their experience. For example, typically it would be shameful for a man to accept a beating, but men seeking admittance to certain groups often accept a beating to prove that they can withstand abuse. The violence the individual experiences is the same, but the significance of the violence is different, in one case shameful and in another honorable, all depending on the meaning culture ascribes to the violence. Thus, it is culture that imbues meaning to any experience, constructing a

shared reality that the individual accepts because of their dependence on the cultural framework within which they live.

But who constructs such shared frameworks dictating social roles and expectations? Consider this excerpt from the Tenth Grade Armenian Social Science Textbook:

Հասարակագիտության դասագիրք, 10-րդ դասարան, 165 էջ.

«Ամերիկացի հոգեբան Ու.Ֆ.Հարլին առանձնացնում է տղամարդկանց և կանանց հինգական հիմնական պահանջմունքեր, որոնց բավարարումն ապահովում է ամուսնության կայունությունը, իսկ անբավարարվածությունը հանեցնում է կոնֆլիկտի` ընդհուպ ամուսնալուծության: Տղամարդկանց հինգ հիմնական պահանջմունքերն ամուսնության ոլորտում. 1) սեռական բավարարվածություն, 2) հանգստի ուղեկից, 3) հմայիչ կին, 4) տնային տնտեսությանվարում, 5) հիացմունք: Կանանց հինգ հիմնական պահանջմունքերն ամուսնության ոլորտում. 1) քնքշություն, 2) խոսելու, զրուցելու հնարավորություն, 3) ազնվություն ևանկեղծություն, 4) ֆինանսական աջակցություն, 5) ընտանիքինվիրվածություն:»

Interestingly, Mr. Harley never stated what is described in the excerpt above. First, Mr. Harley is not an academic, and his book is not an academic resource: it is just a self-help book for white-Christian Americans, and it has been heavily criticized for its representations. Second, Mr. Harley wrote that all individuals (both men and women) have 10 needs — not that men have 5 and women have a different 5. But according to Mr. Harley men and women *usually* prioritize their needs opposite to each other. Lastly, the 10 needs as per Mr. Harley are not adequately expressed in the Armenian textbook.

- Questions:
    - Why did the Armenian textbook cite to an American psychologist?
    - Why did the Armenian textbook misrepresent the psychologists findings?

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- What is the objective of the textbook with regard to this excerpt?
- Does the excerpt define social expectations for men and women? Is it true that men do not need the possibility to talk, and how many Armenian women contribute meaningful financial support to their families?
- Does the excerpt define a good marriage, and if so, for whom?
- To what degree does the excerpt allow for the fact that individuals are different, and couples are different, each with unique needs and interests?

What If the Rule is the Exception and the Exception is the Rule? Do Frames of Reference Match Reality or Is It the Opposite?

Excerpts from "Armenia: A Women's World in One Village", March 7, 2011
http://www.eurasianet.org/node/63019

Each year, International Women's Day arrives on March 8 in the Armenian village of Dzoragyugh amid a dark cloud of irony. Ninety-eight percent of the village's male population -- nearly half of its population of 5,000 people -- has migrated abroad in search of work. Those residents left behind jokingly call their village "a women's club," a place where women do everything – plough fields, raise children, officiate at funerals and somehow, through sheer grit, try to hold their fragmented families together.

Thirty-two-year-old Zabel Hovanian, a mother of five girls, was 16 years old and pregnant when her husband left to find work in Moscow. She has as many children as her husband's visits home. The youngest, a three-year-old, has never seen her father.

In the 16 years since he left Dzoragyugh for Russia, Hovanian's husband has found another "wife," a term used for a man's girlfriend who lives with him outside of marriage. Hovanian recalled how her enraged husband reacted when she called his Russian girlfriend to talk with her. "He

said 'I told her that you are my sister. If you dare call one more time, I'll come and kill both you and the children,'" claimed Hovanian.

Despite such threats and her husband's ongoing absence, Hovanian, whose sole income comes from 50,000-dram (about $130) monthly welfare payments, says that she still will take her husband back if he ever returns home. "I will accept him for my children's sake," she explained. "If I don't, the whole village will blame me; and I have four daughters to marry off. My disgrace would become their disgrace."

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
1. If women are passive, how do they plough fields and raise children without their husbands?	Is Zabel's husband a passive father?
4. If women can be active when they must be, for the sake of their children, why should not women be active for their own sake?	Should Zabel's husband return and should Zabel not accept him, why would the village blame her and why would she be disgraced?
5. In which ways do women in Armenia today have choices and control over their lives? In which ways is choice and control still restricted? Why?	In which ways do men in Armenia today have choices and control over their lives? In which ways is choice and control still restricted? Why?
6. How does choice and control impact on the development of the individual?	
7. Are the active and self-sufficient women of Dzoragyugh the exception or the rule?	

Are Things the Way They Are Supposed to Be?

Մարդ և ընկույզ և ձմերուկ

Մի մարդ ընկույզի ծառի տակ ձմերուկ էր ցանել: Երբ պտուղները հասունացան, եկավ ու տեսավ, որ ձմերուկները շատ մեծ էին, իսկ ընկույզը մանր: Մարդն ասաց. «Տեր աստված, ինչ որ ստեղծել ես ամենը կարգին է, իսկ այս երկու պտուղը անկարգ են: Այս փոքր թփերի վրա պիտի ընկույզը լիներ, իսկ ընկույզի փոխարեն ծառին պիտի ձմերուկը լիներ:»

Հետո նա պառկեց ծառի տակ և նայեց ծառին: Հանկարծ մի ընկույզ պոկվեց ծառից և շատ պինդ կպավ նրա ճակատին: Ճակատը պատռվեց ու սկսեց արյուն գալ: Մարդը վեր կացավ տեղից ու բացականչեց. «Տեր աստված, ինչ որ ստեղծել ես, ամենը կարգին է և կատարյալ, և ով չհավանի քո ստեղծածը, նրա ճակատը իմից վատ թող լինի, որովհետև ընկույզի տեղը եթե ձմերուկ լիներ, ինձ պիտի սպաներ:»

ըստ Վարդան Այգեկցու

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
Is this story humorous? Why or why not?	Is there humor in man's mistakes at interpreting nature?
Why did the man associate the fruit of the watermelon with the tree, and the walnut with the vine? Was the man applying a generalization?	Associations of size: the assumption is that the bigger the plant the bigger its fruit. • Is this a generalization of size?
What are other general assumptions about what is "natural" and "unnatural"? How can we know if such assumptions are correct or not?	If my "ocean" is different from your "ocean" which one is the natural one? Or are they both natural for each of us?

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
Are human emotions "natural"? • If so, when we restrain ourselves from acting on our desires because cultural norms teach us so, is this not "unnatural". • If marriage is considered "natural" isn't it "unnatural" for priests to be celibate, yet this is encouraged by the church. • How often is the natural vs. unnatural argument a misinterpretation of reality?	What is "natural" or "unnatural" is usually a generalization created and enforced by the powerful without regard to the "oceans" of others.
Why is there an association of men as active and women as passive? • Is this association defended as "natural"? • Does the story of Dzoragyugh prove the association wrong?	Although there is an assumption that it is "natural" for men to be active and women to be passive, this is a "self-fulfilling prophecy" because being active or passive is taught as part of our gender role. Outside of a cultural framework, being pro-active and making choices has no association with a person's sex.
What does սղամարդ կին mean? • If one woman's conduct is different from the norm, is she an exception to the rule? • If a village of women can live without men, are these women the exception to the norm, or is the norm wrong? • How many examples are necessary to show a generalization does not reflect reality?	In *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir (1949) this French philosopher argues that the concept of femininity (what a women is) is a social construct which denies women subjectivity, individuality and humanity because it describes women only in relation to and in contrast to men: the female role in this myth is passive because without men pursuing, seducing and marring women, women have no other reason to exist in this socially constructed reality.

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
Which methodology might be better at determining what is natural, meaning generally occurring in nature: culture or science?	

End of Discussion & Opportunity for Feedback

This is all for today. Groups and individuals can send their comments and suggestions to bournazian@gmail.com. Remember to mention your group name.

Development Discourse 03: a developed society is a collective of developed individuals

<u>Title</u>: Cooperation & Competition, Plus Defining "the Other"
<u>Objective</u>: Explore cooperative and competitive action and its underlying values and causes

<u>Development Discourse Premises</u>:

- Discourse not Debate: engage with individuals to explore our different "oceans"
- Development: a developed society is a collective of developed individuals; everyone is both the same and different, which is why individuals develop by learning about themselves and others and learning to make better choices.
- Feedback: you are invited to provide feedback to improve the materials in line with the topics and objectives.
- Language & Culture: a shared reality is constructed through generalizations embedded in language and culture; moreover, high context language and culture requires and reflects greater conformity between individuals so that meaning can be shared based on common, unarticulated notions of reality. Such conformity is at the expense of subjective reality and individualism. Consider «ամոթ է … ոչ թե ամոթ, բայց սիրուն չի:»

<u>Review</u>:

Discussion 01: Every individual is unique and reality is subjective, but we construct a shared reality through generalizations and norms via culture and language.

Discussion 02: While shared frameworks bridge the gap between subjective individuals, constructed realities are interpretations of the world

that may not reflect everyone's "ocean" or reality, and may also be mistaken or untrue when compared with understandings derived at through scientific method and experimentation.

Discussion 03: Cooperation & Competition, Plus Defining "the Other". The following is a summary of an academic article about how human emotion influences whether we compete or cooperate with each other and the need for balance between competition and cooperation. Read and then discuss.

Balancing Cooperation and Competition in Human Groups: The Role of Emotional Algorithms and Evolution
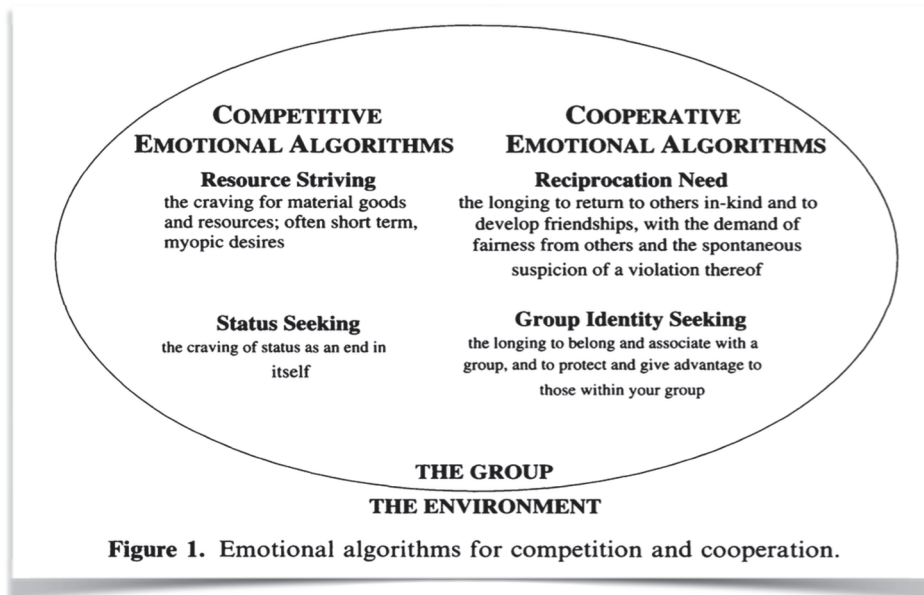*Author(s): Christoph H. Loch, D. Charles Galunic and Susan Schneider*
Source: Managerial and Decision Economics, Vol. 27, No. 2/3, Evolutionary Psychology and Management (Mar. - May, 2006), pp. 217-233

A fundamental dilemma for human groups or societies is whether individuals should take care of "me" (which results in us competing with each other) or take care of "we" (which means that we cooperate with each other). In reality, individuals do both, but the degree to which we do both differs in different collectives and under different circumstances, because — just like individuals are the same and different — collectives and societies are also the same and different, too.

Researchers in evolutionary psychology have discovered that human emotions are like computer programming and is therefore basically the same for all of us. This programming influences when we compete or cooperate. There are four basic mechanisms, two for competition (resource striving and status) and two for cooperation (reciprocity and group identity). For example, all individuals compete with each other for resources, like the necessities that we need or the things that we want, and compete for status, meaning how we are considered in comparison to others; striving for resources and status are competitive frameworks. At the same time all

individuals cooperate in reciprocal relationships, like sharing equally between friends, or sharing within groups, like within families or within a village or neighborhood; reciprocity and belonging to a group are cooperative frameworks. Research also shows that groups or collectives function best when the individuals in the group achieve a balance between competition and cooperation. Consider this image of the frameworks:

Figure 1. Emotional algorithms for competition and cooperation.

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
How can the four mechanisms of competition and cooperation be both universally common and culturally specific?	Just as individuals are the same and different, collectives are also the same and different, and because the competition/cooperation dynamic is based on human emotions, which is the general programming for all humans, these frameworks are common to all humans but manifest differently in different groups depending on circumstance.

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
How well does Armenian culture or society today balance competition and cooperation?	In the Armenian experience, what examples can you bring of imbalance between competition and cooperation?
Game Theory is a theory about interaction. It conceives of two types of transactions: win/lose, where one is the winner and the other is the loser, or win/win, where both individuals win. If a seller sells a low quality product at a high price, there is a winner and a loser. If a seller sells a guaranteed product at a fair price and the buyer is so satisfied as to recommend the seller to others, both win. Win/win transactions reflect symbiosis, a relationship that is beneficial to both parties. Which type of transaction more reflects competition and which more reflects cooperation?	Win/lose is highly competitive. But win/win is more cooperative because it is reciprocal: it is an interaction or exchange in which both individuals win; thus, reciprocity can be sharing and exchanging. Reciprocity can be a win/win exchange because the transaction is mutually beneficial.
• In comparing the win/lose and win/win perspectives, which one more reflects a short term perspective? • As between win/lose and win/win, which one more reflects a long term perspective? Why?	Generally the win/lose is short term and the win/win is long term.

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
When mutually beneficial relationships are long lasting, it's called symbiosis. Symbiosis in nature is when the bee gets the nectar from the flower and pollinates the flower in return. Are there symbiotic relationships between individuals, too?	Is the relationship between parents and children symbiosis? If yes, will the relationship be symbiotic because of the role or status of parent and child, or will the degree of symbiosis over the long term be dependent on the quality of the relationship between the two individuals?
Considering win/lose and win/win, which is the predominate perspective on transactions or interactions as between individuals in Armenian reality and why?	• In general, do Armenians think more short term or more long term? Why might this be? • In general, do Armenians trust each other? Why might this be?

The questions and discussion above have mostly explored reciprocity. Consider the general points below in relation to this graphic about how the competitive and cooperative frameworks interrelate.

• Acquiring more resources can increase one's status, and acquiring more status can increase one's resources.

• Reciprocity creates more reciprocity, unless there is a scarcity of resources.

• More reciprocity means less distinction between individuals in terms of resources and status. It is important to note that the difference between individuals will be less, but the overall resources can be more, because cooperation and symbiosis can produce more long term than competition does.

Group Identity Algorithm & External Threats

In addition to reciprocity, the other cooperative mechanism is group identity. The problem with group identity is that for there to be a group, there must be people inside the group to the exclusion of those who are outside the group. Consider the following graphic and conclusions reported by the researchers:

- a strong sense of group identity facilitates cooperation inside the group;

- the stronger the group identity is the less competition for resources and status there will be amongst the members of the group, resulting in more cooperation;

- group identity is stronger when the group perceives of those outside the group as an external threat or enemy, and such a perception makes the group more exclusive, meaning that it increasingly rejects and isolates itself from the those outside;

- thus, group identity and the perception of external threat are self-reinforcing, each making the other aspect stronger;

- this can motivate individuals but it can also make the group lose touch with their reality as they start to see more and more threats.

Finally, the researchers conclude that"

> "Excessive group identity can also exhibit extremism. A combination of devotion to the in-group and hating the out-group has motivated kamikaze pilots to crash their planes into ships and Tamil suicide-bombers to kill perceived enemies and themselves. In summary, there is evidence that all emotional algorithms may run to the extreme if not balanced by the others. Leaving aside the possibility of an environment, which selects for extreme behavior in groups, however, balance is the most likely outcome as the consequences of extremism are destructive to individuals and groups. (p. 14).

In other words, excessive group identity results in violence, which the in-group individuals perceive as justified. Also, the group's environment may either encourage or discourage such behavior. When in-group

mentality is so strong as to be out of balance with the other mechanisms, it can result in destructive consequences to the individuals in the group, and to the group itself.

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
Have you ever experienced exclusion or unfair treatment because you were not a part of a group? Can you give an example of a group from which you were excluded and how that made you feel?	
As between reciprocity and group identity, which cooperative mechanism is more common in Armenia?	Is a mafia network based on group identity and solidarity? Is a political party network based on group identity and solidarity?
Is being Armenian the same as belonging to a group from which others are excluded?	Երբ որ «օտար» ենք ասում չե՞նք հաշվում մոյսը մեր խումբից դուրս է մնում.
Is there evidence of group extremism in Armenia? What are some examples?	Does the environment encourage or discourage group extremism in Armenia? In which ways?

Groups in Contradistinction: Orientalism by Edward Said

Edward Said was a Palestinian who became a famous professor in the United States. His most famous book was *Orientalism*. This book is about how those with power create and promote a specific image of others; more specifically, it's about how people and countries are represented in cultural and academic work, and especially about how Western European thinking actually create the idea of the Orient. For Said, the term "Orient" does not refer to a concrete place or culture, but to an intellectual idea, an invented concept of a way of life that was created to be the total opposite of European civilization. Once this idea had been constructed, European colonial powers

could then define themselves in direct contrast to their colonies. It did not matter that those colonies did not consider themselves as one group, it was the power of the colonizer that made them into one group for the colonizer's convenience. Thus, Europeans defined themselves as rational and the Orient as emotional, and as the Europeans considered themselves civilized, the others had to be barbaric to play the role of the opposite. Said writes that Western academics played an important part in the creation of this Oriental stereotype, and that they helped to create a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." "European culture," he added, "gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self."

What Said reveals in his work is that any group defines itself by defining the others who are not in the group, whether the groups in question are big or small. The in-group defines itself as noble and compares itself to the out-group, which must be the opposite, so it must be ignoble. Power is used to propagate the definitions of the groups.

Apart from ethnic or cultural groups, does this same phenomena apply to other types of groups?

In his book entitled *Development as Freedom*, noble-prize winning economist and philosopher Amartya Sen reports the following about women's development:

"Traditionally women's movements have concentrated on well being of women. The focus should now be also on the agency of women — the ability of women to act. The limited agency of women seriously afflicts the lives of all people. Agency can remove the iniquities that depress the well being of women. Well-being is strongly influenced by such variables as women's ability to earn an independent income, to find employment outside the home, to have ownership rights, literacy, be educated participants in decisions within and outside the family. Perceptions of entitlement are affected by these, so is child survival, fertility reduction, too.

Thus, in his book Sen contrasts well being with agency. He states that the traditional approach was to provide for women (i.e. well being), but that the new approach is to make women actors (i.e. agency). Does a traditional development perspective focused on well being, but not on agency, reflect a

generalization or stereotype of women as non-actors, in contrast to men, who reserve to themselves the role of actor?

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
Does a traditional development perspective focused on well being, but not on agency, reflect a generalization or stereotype of women as non-actors, in contrast to men, who reserve to themselves the role of actor?	Just as European Colonialism cast the Orient as emotional and barbaric so that Europe could be described in contrast as logical and civilized, so too does culture define men as actors and women, in contrast, as passive, non-actors.
If men are the in-group and women are the out-group, or the other, does making jokes about women and telling demeaning stories about women, create solidarity amongst men?	Why don't women do the same? Is it a question of power?
Does the contrast between men and women, to some extent, create hierarchy in society in general? In some ways does that hierarchy extend to families as well?	Even though the family is a group, isn't it impacted upon by the male / female dynamic based group identity which is based on sex and gender? Sex is the anatomical or biological distinction between men and women. Gender refers to the different roles or behaviors that society expects of the different sexes.

Conclusion:

After this discussion we should be more aware of when we are competing or cooperating, and when others are competing or cooperating, and this should help us make better choices about how we interact with others. We should also start to think about how we are defined by others depending on what group they consider us to belong to, as well as whether we define others by groups as well. Is defining other individuals by grouping fair considering the "ocean" that is the individual?

Questions and comments can be sent to bournazian@gmail.com

Development Discourse 04: A developed society is a collective of developed individuals.

<u>Title</u>: Reciprocity between the Individual and Others, Individually and Collectively. When to Sacrifice and When Not to.

<u>Objective</u>: Explore reciprocity, and how individuals invest in each other and in a cause for the betterment of everyone, but question the limits of sacrifice.

<u>Development Discourse Premises</u>:

• Discourse not Debate: engage with individuals to explore our different "oceans"

• Development: a developed society is a collective of developed individuals; everyone is both the same and different, which is why individuals develop by learning about themselves and others and learning to make better choices.

• Feedback: you are invited to provide feedback to improve the materials in line with the topics and objectives.

• Language & Culture: a shared reality is constructed through generalizations embedded in language and culture; moreover, high context language and culture requires and reflects greater conformity between individuals so that meaning can be shared based on common, unarticulated notions of reality. Such conformity is at the expense of subjective reality and individualism. Consider «ամոթ է … ոչ թե ամոթ, բայց սիրուն չի:»

<u>Review</u>:

Discussion 01: Every individual is unique and reality is subjective, but we construct a shared reality through generalizations and norms via culture and language.

Discussion 02: While shared frameworks bridge the gap between subjective individuals, constructed realities are interpretations of the world but may not reflect everyone's "ocean" or reality, and may also be mistaken or untrue when compared with understandings derived at through scientific method and experimentation.

Discussion 03: All humans compete and cooperate. Individuals strive for resources and status. Individuals cooperate inside groups and individuals reciprocate in general. But thinking in groups means that we exclude others and stereotype others as the opposite of our group, which leads to extreme behavior that hurts everyone. The answer is engage with everyone on a basis of reciprocity, and without prejudice.

Discussion 04 — Altruism: Do We Invest in Each Other, Individually and Collectively?

During our prior discussions we explored individual development and individual choice. We explored competition and cooperation and their four principal mechanisms. As we saw, one mechanism for cooperation is group identity, but this mechanism also has its negative implications. In this this section we explore reciprocity. Our typical experience is reciprocity between individuals. But can there be reciprocity between the individual and the collective? Can individuals invest in others by dedicating themselves to a cause? When individuals do invest in a cause, what should be the limits to their sacrifice? Read the following story and discuss.

Cooperation Is What Makes Us Human
Kat Mcgowan, April, 2013, nautil.us

On Feb. 17, 2013, around 2:30 a.m., Garrett O'Hanlon, a U.S. Air Force Academy cadet third class, was out celebrating his 22nd birthday in New York City. He and his sister were in the subway waiting for a train when a sudden silence came over the platform, followed by a shriek. People pointed down to the tracks.

O'Hanlon turned and saw a man sprawled facedown on the tracks. "The next thing that happened, I was on the tracks, running toward him," he says. "I honestly didn't have a thought process."

O'Hanlon grabbed the unconscious man by the shoulders, lifting his upper body off the tracks, but struggled to move him. He was deadweight. According to the station clock, the train would arrive in less than two minutes. From the platform, O'Hanlon's sister was screaming at him to save himself.

Suddenly other arms were there: personal trainer Dennis Codrington Jr. and his friend Matt Foley had also jumped down to help. "We grabbed him, one by the legs, one by the shoulders, one by the chest," O'Hanlon says. They got the man to the edge of the platform, where a dozen or more people muscled him up and over. More hands seized the rescuers' arms and shoulders, helping them up to safety as well.

In the aftermath of the rescue, O'Hanlon says he has been surprised that so many people have asked him why he did it. "I get stunned by the question," he says. In his view, anybody else would've done the same thing. "I feel like it's a normal reaction," he says. "To me that's just what people do."

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
In this emergency did individuals need to consult or communicate with each other? Did any one individual organize or manage the rescue? What does this reveal about human nature?	Was this cooperation based on reciprocity or group identity? • If you answer group identity, who is the in-group and in contrast to what out-group? • If there is no out-group, was it reciprocity?
Have you ever experienced such a cooperative event? To what extent does such cooperative action emerge in Armenian society?	Are your examples of cooperative events in Armenia based in reciprocity or in-group/out-group behavior?

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
If you take risks for a family member, is it group identity cooperation? • Would you take the same risks for any family member, or does it depend on the individual? • If it depends on the individual is it reciprocity? • Is taking risk for a family member based on fulfilling a role or social expectation? Is that a cause?	Evolutionary pyschologists have shown that homo sapiens survived and evolved because humans engaged in "cooperative child care", meaning that individuals would care for the children of others, even if not genetically related. This produced an evolutionary advantage. If an individual invests in a child not their own, is this reciprocity? Is investing in children similar to investing in a cause, investing in the future?
What are the individual motivations for the type of cooperative action reported in the story above? Are such motivations universal or culturally specific?	Reciprocity is universal. Does reciprocity mean that individuals are equal? • Don't people engage in reciprocity so that others will treat them the same, help them when they need help? Doesn't this reaffirm that individuals are equal? • We each experience birth and death alone. Aren't we more equal than not?

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
Does this story have a hero? Do all stories have a hero? Why?	Reality is an experience and it is the experience of an individual. Each individual experiences her own reality. The most basic unit of a society is the individual. A story is an experience, so it is usually told as events related to one principal person. As we experience reality as individuals, we also understand a story as an experience of an individual. When we hear the story, we relate to the story by considering how we would experience it as if we were the principal character or hero.
Did the hero do it alone? • Does any hero achieve anything alone? • Is the hero aspect of the story deceiving?	Vartan Mamikonyan is one person who symbolizes the struggle and survival of a nation. But Vartan Mamikonyan was never alone and achieved nothing alone. His strength as a hero is due to the fact that he was not alone, but supported by others.
Does a hero narrative or hero culture teach cooperative action or individual action; do such narratives promote cooperation or competition?	Hero stories often misrepresent reality. Hero stories focus on the strength of one individual, and such strength is portrayed as the individual overcoming a challenge or competing against an adversary. Usually, an cooperative element is ignored. But, whether in the story above or in the story of Avarayr, any success is more likely due to cooperation based on the solidarity of multiple individuals. Cooperation is the more valuable element of success, but rarely adequately represented.

Summary of *"Does Altruism Exist,"* by
David Sloan Wilson

"Altruism is a concern for the welfare of others as an end in itself." The <u>act</u> of doing something for another costs the individual, from something as small as effort, to something as great as risking one's own life. Considering that the theory of evolution is based on the idea that natural selection gives rise to traits that benefit the survival and reproduction of the individual, natural selection seems to contradict a trait for selflessness. Also, those who deny altruism argue that while there may be altruistic acts, the motives are self-serving (i.e. for one's own ego, image, reputation, etc.). However, if we adopt a broader perspective we can see that because such motives and emotions cause altruistic acts, they are the proximate (indirect) cause for altruism, and the acts themselves are the ultimate (direct) cause, thus negating any contradiction. Moreover, a broader, collective perspective reveals that, whereas there may be a cost to the individual, there is a benefit to the whole, which is also a benefit to the individual inside the collective, and therein lies the evolutionary advantage.

In other words, <u>altruism when analyzed in terms of action is closely related to group-level functional organization — it enhances the functionality of the group.</u> The reason that people need to provide services for each other is because we are a social species and mutual assistance is required to accomplish together what we cannot accomplish alone. The list of activities that required mutual assistance before the advent of agriculture included child care, hunting and gathering, defense against predators, and defense and offense against other human groups. The advent of agriculture led to a self-increasing cycle between the production of resources and larger societies with the division of labor, leading to modern "megasocieties". Today we are so dependent upon the actions of others that we could no more survive on our own than an ant separated from its colony.

At all levels of biological or social organization there are many examples of individuals engaged in individual tasks that contribute to a collective task with a responsive or decisive effect or outcome. Insect colonies of ants, bees, wasps and termites are an example. Biologists now

know that life itself developed in this very way: single cells joined in symbiotic relationships — relationships of mutual advantage — eventually diversifying into organs carrying out specialized tasks such that from a cellular perspective <u>the human organism is a "coordinated social process among cells."</u> Likewise, humans engage with each other socially in a functional organization. Altruism is an evolutionary advantage for the collective which ensures prosperity for the most individuals.

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
Is altruism innate or cultural?	Evolutionary pyschologists have shown that homo sapiens survived and evolved because all humans engaged in "cooperative child care", meaning that individuals would care for the children of others, even if not genetically related. This produced an evolutionary advantage. If an individual invests in a child not their own, is this reciprocity? Is investing in children similar to investing in a cause because it is investing in the future?
What is the difference between altruism and cooperation?	Cooperation and altruism appear to be much the same. However, we usually say cooperation to describe interaction in which the benefit to the two or more individuals is apparent in the short term. For altruism the benefit to the individual taking a risk or making a sacrifice may not be apparent because it may be long term or indirect. It is an investment.

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
Do individuals achieve more through cooperation or competition?	Competition more directly benefits one individual, and distinctions in status and in resources divides individuals based on levels of wealth, etc. Such divisions can cause internal conflict and a weaker collective. Cooperation based on group identity can increase cooperation inside the group to the benefit one group, but at the expense of the other group(s). However, cooperation based on reciprocity benefits the interacting individuals, reaffirms equality between individuals. Also, one individual's altruism benefits one or more other individuals and benefits the entire collective; moreover, the benefit rendered to the collective may also benefit the individual taking the risk or sacrificing when considered long term, because the individual is part of the collective.

Video Clips: Star Trek Into Darkness

Star Trek is a film series about space explorers. In the following scene from "Star Trek Into Darkness", the Star Trek crew is visiting a distant, alien planet and has discovered that a volcano is about to explode. The explosion will destroy a human-like species and its developing civilization. The Star Trek "prime directive" forbids the crew from contacting or influencing any developing civilization. Despite this the crew has taken steps to use their advanced technology to freeze the volcano, unbeknownst to the natives. However, the crew's plan does not work out, and one crew member, named Spock, is now stranded inside the volcano. The spaceship

Enterprise has the technology to remotely transport the stranded crew member, but not from its current location. In order to save Spock the ship must show itself to the natives. Is it logical that the stranded crew member should be sacrificed for the good of a developing civilization? What risks to the Star Trek crew are acceptable to try to save one individual?

View the video clip, read aloud the translation of the script that is printed below and watch the video clip again as you find necessary:

Video clip: 5:45 - 9:53
http://fmovies.to/film/star-trek-into-darkness.x9zv/qkxqp3

Scene Description: Spock is inside the volcano; the volcano is starting to erupt and destroy the village of the natives.

Script:

Captain: Lieutenant, do we have an open channel to Spock?
Lieutenant: The heat is frying his communications but we still have contact.
Captain: Spock?
Spock: I have activated the device, Captain, when the count down is complete the reaction should render the volcano inert.
Doctor: And that's going to render him inert.
Captain: Do we still have use of the transporters?
Others: No. Not with these magnetic fields.
Captain: I need to beam Spock back to the ship; give me one way to do it.
Navigator: Maybe if we had a direct line of sight (i.e. were directly above the volcano)…
Engineer: Hang-on "wee" [little] man, we're talking about an active volcano; sir, if that thing erupts, I cannot guarantee we can withstand the heat…
Pilot: I don't know if we can maintain that kind of altitude.
Spock: Our shuttle was concealed by the ash cloud, but the Enterprise (i.e. the space ship), is too large; if utilized in a rescue effort it would be revealed to the indigenous species.
Captain: Spock, nobody knows the rules better than you, but there has got to be an exception.

Spock: None. Such action violates the Prime Directive.

Doctor: Shut-up, Spock, we're trying to save you, damn it.

Spock: Doctor, the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few.

Captain: Spock, we're talking about your life.

Spock: The rule cannot be broken … [communication ends]

Captain: Spock! … [Turns to lieutenant] Try to get him back online.

Navigator: 90 seconds to detonation.

Captain: If Spock were here and I were there, what would he do?

Doctor: He'd let you die.

[Action: Enterprise spaceship rises from the sea, is seen by the natives, flies over the volcano, tele-transports Spock from the interior of the volcano to the ship, and the device detonates freezing the volcano. The captain and doctor run to the tele-transporter to greet Spock.]

Captain: Spock, are you all right?

Spock: Captain, you let them see our ship.

Doctor: [With a dismissive waive of the hand] He's fine.

Lieutenant: Bridge to Captain Kirk

Captain: Yes lieutenant.

Lieutenant: Is Commander Spock on board, sir?

Captain: Safely and soundly.

Lieutenant: Please notify him that his device has successfully detonated.

Captain: [to Spock] Did you hear that? Congratulations, Spock. You just saved a world.

Spock: [with irritated voice] You violated the Prime Directive.

Captain: [with dismissive voice] Come on, Spock, they saw us; big deal.

[Action: The natives abandon the scroll symbolizing their prior religion and begin to worship a drawing of the Enterprise spaceship.]

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
In the video clip, Spock states that "the good of the many outweighs the good of the few". Is this true? Is it true in all circumstances?	In response to Spock's statement that the good of "the many outweighs the good of the few," the Captain answers "we're talking about your life." Are the two characters speaking from a different premise? What is the difference between the perspectives of each?
Ultimately the Captain uses the spaceship Enterprise to save Spock, and after seeing the spaceship the natives abandon their religion and start to worship an image of the spaceship. Considering this, should Spock have been sacrificed so as not to influence the natives, or is the "harm" done by influencing the natives justified to save Spock's life? • Does it matter that if the crew had not interfered at all Spock would not have been stranded but the volcano would have destoryed all of the natives?	In Spock's perspective are all harms the same? In the Captain's perspective are some harms worse than others? How can we know?
Although Spock said that the rule could not be broken, the Captain violated the "prime directive" to save Spock. Who was correct? How can we judge when it is just to obey the rule and when it is just to disobey the rule?	Does Altruism and reciprocity help us to understand which harms can be worse than others? Is it related to our own experience and the harms we fear the most as individuals?

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
Approaching the volcano in the spaceship to save Spock presented risks to the ship and its crew. What level of risk to the crew are acceptable to try to save one individual?	Isn't it true that the risks we are willing to take for others is based on our feelings? Considering this, in which type of society would people take more risks for each other: a competitive society with a strong distinctions between people based on wealth and status, or a cooperative society with strong reciprocity and altruism based on a sense of equality between individuals?
In saving Spock did the crew act out of group identity, reciprocity or a combination of both?	It is possible that both group identity and reciprocity influence the crew. But group identity would be a stronger factor when facing a common enemy, and in this case there is no enemy. For this reason, the crew's solidarity is probably based on reciprocity whereby they each do for Spock what they would want the others to do for them if they were in Spock's position.
In saving the natives did the crew act out of altruism?	The "prime directive" forbade the crew from interfering with the volcano to save the natives, but they took risks to do it anyway. Altruism is the only explanation. As humans the crew identified themselves with another developing species and most likely thought that if faced with the same situation humans would have wanted and needed some more advanced civilization to intervene to save us.

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
Is altruism an internal, emotional compass or guide that tells us what is just?	"Natural law" is a legal theory which teaches that because humans have reason, we can use logic to know what is just, and that we make rules to help us act with justice.
When the rule does not create what is just, is it right to disobey the rule?	According to Natural Law theory, rules are supposed to achieve just goals. If the rule does not achieve a just goal, then we should disobey the rule in order to achieve justice. For example, it is logical that the Star Trek explorers have a rule not to interfere with developing civilizations so as to protect such civilizations from human interference in their development. But when the crew realized that the rule did not create justice because without interference the volcano would destroy the natives, they acted to create justice by disobeying the rule. Initially Spock disobeyed the rule, too, because he created and deployed the device used to stop the volcano, which changed the future. But Spock opposed revealing the spaceship to the natives because this would violate the underlying goal of the rule: not to influence developing civilizations. The Captain disobeyed the rule and revealed the ship to save Spock because influencing the developing civilization was less a harm than letting even one individual die.

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
Is it correct to risk one type of harm in order to stop some other type of harm? Do we know that some harms are worse than other harms based on our values? Is the greatest of all harms loss of life?	When Spock says that "the good of the many outweighs the good of the few," does Spock distinguish between the types of harms? When the Captain says "Spock, we're talking about your life," does he prioritize loss of life as worse than interfering or influencing a developing civilization? • Whose values do you share? Spock's values or the Captain's values?
In Armenia the cultural rule is not to interfere in another person's family, especially regarding interactions between a husband and wife. But on occassion women are subjected to violence by their husbands and some of this violence results in loss of life. Should we follow this rule even though it puts an individual's life at risk?	30 WOMEN DIED DUE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING 2010-2014 http://coalitionagainstviolence.org/en/home/

A Theory of Justice, 1971, John Rawls

"Utilitarianism" is the perspective that argues that the greatest good for the greatest number of people is what is most virtuous. John Rawls criticizes this perspective stating that it ignores the wellbeing of the individual and allows for individual suffering. In place of "utilitarianism", Rawls argues that all individuals in a society can engage in discussions to define what is fair and to decide what the underlying principles of a just society are. Through a process Rawls calls "reflective equilibrium" individuals question and reevaluate the idea of justice until an equilibrium or balance is met. Such equilibrium may allow for some inequality, such as

a surgeon earning more pay than other professionals, so long as all opportunities are open to all who wish to pursue them on the basis of merit. Merit means that all individuals start any competition as equals and then distinguish themselves based on a set of criteria that everyone knows and accepts. Rawls writes that individuals can engage in such discussions honestly so long as they accept a certain condition; this condition is that the individuals discussing fairness and the rules to achieve it will not know what place or status they will have in the society that they are creating.

To review, based on the idea that each individual engaging in the discussion on a fair society does not know the status they will have, then:

8. each person must have the same and permanent claim to equality and rights, and

9. inequalities may exist so long as:

- the inequalities relate to positions that are open to all under conditions of equal opportunity (in other words, anyone can become a doctor so long as they educate themselves to meet the criteria society has set for what a doctor must be); and

- the inequalities provide the greatest benefit to the least advantaged members of the society (in other words, paying doctors more encourages more qualified individuals to become doctors and this is a benefit to the least advantaged, meaning those who cannot learn medicine themselves and cannot be their own doctors).

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
Based on the reading above, is Spock's perspective "utilitarian"? Does the Captain's perspective question "utilitarianism" the way that Rawls does?	Yes, Spock's statement that "the good of the many outweighs the good of the few" is utilitarian. Just like Rawls, the Captain questions whether the good of the many is a benefit equal to the sacrifice of the few, or in this case the one, Spock losing his life.

Questions	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
How many women believe in the "prime directive" like Spock? How many women sacrifice for others? Do these women consider whether their sacrifice creates more benefit than the sacrifice costs?	The definition of a good mother and a good women is a person who makes sacrifices for others, especially for family. But when making sacrifices do these women ask if the benefit gained by their sacrifice is greater than the sacrifice itself?
If we wrote the rules for a society in which we did not know who we would be, how much equality between individuals would we demand? How much inequality would we allow for?	If we could not know who we would be in the future, it would be logical to ensuring as much equality as possible as the best way to protect our future selves.
Would ensuring greater equality create greater well-being for women, or greater agency?	According to Rawls, a logical future society would ensure greater equality and equal opportunity so that individuals would distinguish themselves based on merit. With guarantees for equal opportunity, all individuals, including women and other minorities, would have greater agency — the opportunity to develop themselves, allowing them to produce their own well being and to produce benefits to society as well.
When we define a good woman as one who sacrifices no matter whether the benefit is more valuable than the sacrifice, do we undermine equality, and impede agency?	Yes. When women accept that they should always sacrifice they do not consider that they are inhibiting their agency, and that if they chose agency instead, they could produce more value than what their sacrifice produces.

At the end of the film Star Trek Into Darkness, the Star Trek spaceship has lost all power and is falling to earth. Unless power is restored, all will die. Despite certain death from radiation, the captain enters the radio active chamber to restore power and save the ship and its crew. When the power is restored Spock realizes that a sacrifice must have been made.

Watch the video from 1:47:00 to 1:51:30
http://fmovies.to/film/star-trek-into-darkness.x9zv/qkxqp3

Question	Discussion
How do these circumstances make the Captain's sacrifice different from the sacrifice that Spock was going to make in the first scene?	In this case the Captain would have died, along with all of the crew, if he had not taken the risk, so the cost of one life was worth saving everyone else's lives. In the first scenario the Captain did not accept that loosing Spocks life was equal to the benefit of remaining unknown to the natives.

Consider what sacrifices you make in your own life and whether those sacrifices render a benefit that is greater than the harm. If you did not make the sacrifice could you develop yourself more and make an even greater contribution to others than the contribution made by your sacrifice?

Questions or comments can be sent to bournazian@gmail.com

Development Discourse 05: a developed society is a collective of developed individuals

<u>Title</u>:   Difference, Exclusion, Power and Process
<u>Objective</u>: Consider restriction of individual development through social exclusion and the role of power and process

<u>Development Discourse Premises</u>:

- Discourse not Debate: Problematization vs. Polemic

- Development: a developed society is a collective of developed individuals

- Pilot Project: you are invited to provide feedback to improve the materials in line with the topics and objectives.

<u>Review</u>:

- Discussion 01: Every individual is unique and reality is subjective, but we construct a shared reality through generalizations and norms via culture and language.

- Discussion 02: While shared frameworks bridge the gap between subjective individuals, constructed realities are interpretations of the world that may be mistaken or untrue when compared with understandings derived at through scientific method and experimentation.

- Discussion 03: All humans compete and cooperate. When we think in terms of our group versus another group, it can facilitate cooperation for our group, but also results in stereotyping and exclusion of others, which the others also do to us. Reciprocity - mutual exchange between equals - seems to be a better answer.

- Discussion 04: Reciprocity is a cooperative exchange for the betterment of each individual, or for all individuals. Humans can cooperate to achieve long term abstract ideals, like caring for the children of others or personally investing in a common mission or cause. In this way, as humans, we can actually create our own reality by changing the

way we interact with each other, and thus making a reality that benefits all of us equally.

Discussion 05: Difference, Exclusion, Power & Process

Competing for resources and status is necessarily exclusionary. Some gain more resources than others, and by its nature status functions by distinguishing individuals according to importance or influence. In each section below, consider the introductory questions, the example provided, and then think of an example of your own.

- Have you ever been made to feel different, or to feel excluded, in a way that you felt was not fair? Was your sense of unfairness subjective? Was there an alternative or "objective" perspective whereby the circumstances could be considered "fair"?

Example: Excerpt from *Power vs. Process & Education in Armenia*,
Vahan Bournazian

After eight and a half years of excellent performance reviews, dedicated service in the faculty senate, and having held the positions of associate professor, associate dean, acting registrar (twice), and director of admissions, I was out of a job. The provost said that the dean, who had never had a performance review, could decide as he thought best. The dean said that the program no longer required full-time faculty. My contract was not renewed. Full-time faculty was hired to replace me. But what I remember most was the provost's meeting-long smile. In Armenia we have all had to face that smile.

Question	Discussion / Proposed Answer
1. In the excerpt above, what causes the author to feel excluded and why does he feel it was unfair? Is there an alternative or "objective" perspective whereby the other actors feel justified?	In the excerpt above, the author believes that not continuing his contract excludes him from the university and from employment, and that this is not fair considering his prior service and employment record. He also mentions that individuals are not treated the same because he was reviewed yearly but the dean was never reviewed. Alternatively, those who decided not to renew the contract could feel justified in their actions because the contract expired and they hired a replacement at cheaper pay.
2. In the excerpt above, why is the provost smiling; what does his smile represent?	The exercise of power.
3. Have you ever been made to feel different, or to feel excluded, in a way that you felt was not fair? Describe this occasion, event or circumstance. Was your sense of unfairness subjective? Was there an alternative or "objective" perspective whereby these circumstances would be considered "fair"? In other words, what were the others thinking?	People are subjective. In any conflict one person will feel wronged, and the other will feel justified. But there is an objective idea of what is right or wrong; there is a concept that we all share about justice — it is based in reciprocity; it is based in how we each would want to be treated by others: "what you would have done unto you, do so unto others" (Matthew 7:12). Considering this, we must understand that no wrongdoer believes that they have done wrong. The one who does wrong convinces himself that he is justified. This is a rationalization. Some rationalizations are that the victim is at fault and should have protected himself, or not allowed himself to be in a vulnerable position. An

Question	Discussion / Proposed Answer
	additional rationalization is that if the perpetrator did not do it, someone else would have done it anyway. Also, sometimes people rationalize that the same was done to them once, or that the victim would have done it to them if he could have, or that the wrong they do is done for their children, or family, or for some other greater good that only they know. <u>We must separate what is justice based on reciprocity and what is rationalization</u>.

10. What role does hierarchy, competition and power play in distinction and exclusion? What role does or should criteria and process play in distinction and exclusion?

Example: Excerpt from *Power vs. Process & Education in Armenia*, Vahan Bournazian

There are two ways that decisions can be made. One way is by the exercise of a person's power. The other way is by process. When a person decides something for himself, personal choice is valid. But institutions do not belong to a person; they belong to all of us, and mostly to those participating in them. This is why institutional decisions, whether it be about grading a student, hiring, promoting or dismissing an employee, or spending institutional funds, must be based on a transparent process based on relevant and fair criteria. Process respects the interests of the institution, the interests of the individuals affected by the decision, and the interests of the public - which translates to all of us. Power just feeds a person's ego.

Questions	Discussion
1. In the employment case described above, had there been a process relevant to making a decision about renewing the contract? What is the relationship between process and fairness?	The author's performance was reviewed yearly based on performance criteria. Theoretically, the review should dictate whether the contract should be renewed, but in this case the prior reviews were immaterial to the decision to renew or not the contract. This means that the decision not to renew was just an exercise of personal power, not the review process. Why was there a review process if it did not mean anything? Process produces fairness because individuals are treated as equals and are only distinguished or excluded based on objective factors or criteria.
2. In your personal example of distinction or exclusion, what role did hierarchy, competition and power play in distinction and exclusion?	Competing for status and resources creates hierarchy, and hierarchy is built by excluding others. Individuals use power to exclude us so as to feel better than us. Do people need to feel more powerful than others to satisfy their ego? Don't they realize that in a hierarchy there is always someone above them ready to use power against them as well? And considering this, isn't it true that the system of hierarchy never allows for anyone to be satisfied. In order to participate in hierarchy, are many individuals routinely looking for ways to exclude others? Do you have examples?

Questions	Discussion
3. In your personal example of distinction or exclusion, was there a process and was it based on criteria? Did the process and criteria produce fairness? Why or why not?	Reciprocal cooperation can allow for distinctions between individuals through fair criteria and fair process. In the example above, the criteria for the employee review and the process for reviewing employees created a system of merit, whereby the employee could show that he did good work and thus deserved a renewal of his contract. University entrance exams and university course exams can also be a process whereby students show that they have learned well. In such cases the exam topics and questions would be the criteria and how the exam is conducted would be the process. But in our university exams are the questions fair and is the method of examination fair?

11. What role does or should transparency play in process? What role does or should accountability play in process?

Example: Excerpt from *Power vs. Process & Education in Armenia*, Vahan Bournazian

The Armenia Development Strategy (ADS) adopted last year states:
"The education sector in Armenia is considered to be important as one of the preconditions for sustainable development of the country, reproduction and development of the human capital. Thus, developments in this sector are one of the development priorities of the country. Increasing the quality and effectiveness of education at all levels of the educational system, increasing the relevance of different levels to international standards and ensuring affordable/accessible education for all

groups of the population are priorities for the development of the sector. In order to achieve the mentioned goals, reforms are implemented at all levels of education." ADS paragraph 430.

In eleven pages the ADS outlines the educational reforms to be pursued, and all seem justifiable. But there are two problems. First, such reforms, and the entire ADS itself, cannot be carried out without funding, and both Armenia's budget deficit to GDP and its foreign debt to GDP have grown, meaning that funding will be difficult to get, and if got, costly. The second problem is that in these eleven pages the most serious issue gets the smallest amount of attention:

"In order to increase the efficiency and quality of the [sic.] education, it is crucial to fight the [sic.] corruption at all levels of [the] education system." ADS paragraph 461.

That one sentence is the entire paragraph; it is the shortest paragraph in the section on education and almost the shortest in the entire ADS.

Although the ADS contains a three page section on corruption, it does not address corruption in the education sector. While Armenia adopted an Anticorruption Strategy in 2009, the implementation plan formally ended in 2012. A review of the Anticorruption Strategy as it applied to education shows that the often repeated solution was to create "transparency, openness, accountability and lawfulness" in a variety of educational processes. Anticorruption Strategy, pp. 31-32.[2] Unfortunately, that has not happened.

A 2013 report by the CEU Higher Education Observatory found that:

"Despite the dominant reform rhetoric, the Armenian higher education is not on a genuine reform path. Instead, the higher education system is locked in a situation characterized by:

- *exaggerated control grip by the political regime;*
- *lack of an authentic program of reforms;*

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[2] A new 2015 Anti-Corruption Strategy contains 3 pages on corruption in education, but it only lists what reforms were made under the last strategy and states that a corruption risk assessment will be made in the future. Unfortunately, there is no plan to assess whether the reforms of the last strategy have any positive impact on the problem of corruption.

- *pervasive corruption;*
- *continuously decreasing quality standards; and*
- *massive emigration of young talent." CEU Report[3], p. 3.*

Another conclusion form this report was that:

"The Armenian higher education system serves as a model for the larger Armenian society, sometimes with negative consequences, including from the perspective of open society values. This involves the acceptance of corruption as a 'normal', everyday practice; a certain disregard for merit and work-based performance; a pervasive sense of hopelessness regarding public engagement – and in particular regarding the use of open dialogue in public affairs." CEU Report, pp. 4-5.

Question	Discussion
1. How does transparency contribute to process as a mechanism to create fairness?	Transparency means that everyone should know what is expected. The employee must know what is expected of them so that they can perform well in those tasks. The student must know what is expected of them so that they know what to study. What is expected of us is what we call criteria. We also have to know how they will be evaluated. How an employee will get their contract renewed or how a student will get their grade is the process. Transparency helps ensure that everyone is treated fairly, without ulterior motives by those managing the process.

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[3] Higher Education in Armenia Today: A Focused Review, CEU Higher Education Observatory, http://www.osf.am/reports/education-reports/

Question	Discussion
2. How does accountability contribute to process as a mechanism to create fairness?	Accountability is when the same process and the same rules apply to everyone, and there is a consequence for those who break the rules or process. This creates fairness because it makes everyone equal in terms of treatment. In the example above, the dean never had a performance review — the rule did not apply to him. Also, neither the dean nor the provost considered the employees performance review to make the decision not to renew the contract, and there was no consequence to them. When the process or rules are not applied equally, and when there are no consequences for those who do not follow the process or rules, then there is no fairness because there is no reciprocity.
3. In your own example of difference or exclusion, what role did transparency, or a lack thereof, play?	
4. In your own example of difference or exclusion, what role did accountability, or a lack thereof, play?	
5. Can you identify competitive win/lose perspectives and/or cooperative win/win perspectives related to either this author's experience or your own?	A lack of transparency and a lack of accountability meant that the provost and dean won, but the employee lost, and the institution lost, too. The institution lost a good employee, and the institution will be weaker because the other employees will not personally invest themselves in their jobs now that they know that doing good work is not considered in getting their contracts renewed.

Question	Discussion
6. With regard to this author's experience or to your own, was there a corresponding cost to the society? Was there a cost in terms of human development?	Excluding a good employee is a loss to the institution, to the students, and to the society in general because the employee will not be producing what he could have been producing: good professionals. The employee will also be more cautious in the future, and not personally invest in his work because he has been taught that it does not matter.
7. What could be a solution to prevent future costs to the society of similar exclusion?	Transparency and accountability, as well as participation of everyone in formulating the criteria for judging and participating in the process for evaluating is the best way to create and ensure a process where merit is respected. Consider what should be done to create a fair elections process.

- Whose responsibility is it to create fairness?

Example: Excerpt from *Power vs. Process & Education in Armenia*, Vahan Bournazian

I will never know why my contract was not renewed; different actors could have had various ulterior motives. At first the students protested. But then a message went out: "why doesn't he fight for himself; maybe he does not want to come back." This personalized the issue and blamed the victim for his fate based on his own inaction. What was not considered by anyone was that the issue was never about me. The real issue is how we make institutional decisions in this country - as an exercise of power or as an exercise in process - and not just in the education sector. Until we address this issue, no development strategy has a chance.

Question	Discussion objectives and follow-up questions
1. Whose responsibility is it to create fairness and for whom?	Each of us and all of us, individually and jointly.
2. Is it easier to defend someone else more than to defend your own interests?	Experiencing unfairness and exclusion is a very emotional event in any person's life. In this situation, it is hard for the victim to know how to respond. Power has just been used against the victim, making the victim feel insecure and disempowered. At this moment a victim needs the support of others, and needs to feel empowered once again before he can act. Without such support, victims cannot act for themselves, or help others.
Who loses when unfairness occurs and is not rectified?	Consider the examples and discussions above.

Conclusion:

Competition for resource and status creates hierarchy. Hierarchy is built by excluding individuals at each level. When we exclude others for our own interests and without regard to what they have or have not done, it is an exercise of power and it is unfair. This unfairness frustrates the individuals development, and thereby, the development of the whole society. As an alternative to power and exclusion, humans can create a system of merit based on fair process and fair criteria. Such a system relies on transparency, participation and accountability. When everyone knows what is expected from them, all are equal in the opportunity to achieve those expectations. When everyone participates in creating and approving the criteria and the process by which we will be judged, it will more likely be fair. When those who ignore or negate the criteria or process are required to answer or be held accountable for their actions, thesystem will be preserved and its goals achieved. Fairness is not the norm. We must create it. And we create our own fairness by these means, both individually and collectively as a society.

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Development Discourse 06: a developed society is a collective of developed individuals

<u>Title</u>:   Cooperation, Reciprocity & Trust: Social Capital
<u>Objective</u>: Consider how higher levels of trust between individuals in general fosters individual and societal development.

<u>Development Discourse Premises</u>:

- Discourse not Debate: Problematization vs. Polemic

- Development: a developed society is a collective of developed individuals

- Pilot Project: you are invited to provide feedback to improve the materials in line with the topics and objectives: bournazian@gmail.com

<u>Review</u>:

- Discussion 01: Every individual is unique and reality is subjective, but we construct a shared reality through generalizations and norms via culture and language.

- Discussion 02: While shared frameworks bridge the gap between subjective individuals, constructed realities are interpretations of the world that may be mistaken or untrue when compared with understandings derived at through scientific method and experimentation.

- Discussion 03: All humans compete and cooperate. When we think in terms of our group versus another group, it can facilitate cooperation for our group, but also results in stereotyping and exclusion of others, which the others also do to us. Reciprocity - mutual exchange between equals - seems to be a better answer.

- Discussion 04: Reciprocity is a cooperative exchange for the betterment of each individual, and for all individuals. Humans can cooperate to achieve long term abstract ideals, like caring for the children of others or personally investing in a common mission or

cause. In this way, as humans, we can actually create our own reality by changing the way we interact with each other, and thus making a reality that benefits all of us equally.

- Discussion 05: Competition for resource and status creates hierarchy. Hierarchy is built by excluding individuals at each level. When we exclude others for our own interests and without regard to what they have or have not done, it is an exercise of power, and it is unfair. This unfairness frustrates the individuals development, and thereby, the development of the whole society. As an alternative to power and exclusion, humans can create a system of merit based on fair process and fair criteria. Such a system relies on transparency, participation and accountability. When everyone knows what is expected from them, all are equal in the opportunity to achieve those expectations. When everyone participates in creating and approving the criteria and the process by which we will be judged, it will more likely be fair. When those who ignore or negate the criteria or process are required to answer or be held accountable for their actions, the system will be preserved and its goals achieved. Fairness is not the norm. We must create it. And we create our own fairness by these means, both individually and collectively as a society.

- Discussion 06: In this session we explore the issue of trust. Here are some general questions to guide our inquiry: In order to cooperate with others do we need to trust each other? How much do we trust each other? Do we only trust people who we know? Can we trust people who we do not know? Is there a general level of trust or mistrust within a society? Can the level of trust in a society be increased?

Robert Putnam and "Social Capital"

In his work academic Robert Putnam describes trust between people as "social capital." "Capital" is a resource that one uses to make more resources. For example, someone can use their money to build a store, or to start a business, in order to make more money. A university degree can also be capital because the knowledge learned while studying can help one get a better job and earn more money. For Putnam, trust between people

in general is the capital for present and future social and economic interaction, for cooperation, and for development. He calls this type of trust "social capital". Consider this excerpt from his work below.

"The central idea of social capital, in my view, is that networks and the associated norms of reciprocity have value. They have value for the people who are in them, and they have, at least in some instances, demonstrable externalities [i.e. consequences], so that there are both public and private faces [i.e. aspects] of social capital. I am focusing largely on the external returns [i.e. benefits], the public returns to social capital, but I think that is not at all inconsistent with the idea that there are also private returns.

"Some forms of social capital are highly formal, like a PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) organisation or a national organisation of any sort, or a labour union, formally organised with a chairman and a president, and membership dues and so on. Some forms of social capital, like the group of people who gather at the bar every Thursday evening, are highly informal. And yet, both of those constitute networks in which there can easily develop reciprocity, and in which there can be gains. Some forms of social capital are densely interlaced, like a group of steelworkers who work together every day at the factory, go to Catholic Church every Sunday, and go out bowling on Saturday. That is a very dense, interconnected, multiplex form of social capital. There are also very thin, almost invisible forms of social capital, meaning networks and the associated norms of reciprocity, like the nodding acquaintance you have with the person you occasionally see at the supermarket, while waiting in line.

"Don't be too dismissive of very casual forms of social connection, because there has been good experimental evidence that if you nod to people in the hall, they are more likely to come to your aid if you should have a fit or have a heart attack, than if you don't nod to them, even if you don't otherwise know them. Merely nodding to someone in the hall generates visible, measurable forms of reciprocity. So there are, as I say, these very evanescent forms and also quite regular forms of social capital, both formal and informal.

Question	Discussion
What kind of formal networks, like an institution, association, club or church, do you participate in? • Can you rely on these networks or institutions for help?	The purpose of any institution should be to serve the people who participate. After all, any institution is simply a network of individuals joined together to cooperate together in order to achieve a common goal. That common goal is the mission of the institution. Unfortunately, institutions can lose their purpose and become self-serving, where the participants are expected to serve the institution and its leadership, instead of cooperating toward their common goal, the institution's mission. Can you think of examples of institutions which serve themselves more than they serve the needs or interests of the people who participate?
If you needed help from an institution you belong to, would the help come from the institution itself, or from the other people like you who participate in the institution? Is there a difference?	Usually institutions are only as helpful or cooperative as the people who participate. The wealth of an institution is its participants. If participants contribute funds, that wealth must be used for the participants and their common goal, the institution's mission. Do the institutions you know have clear missions? Do they state their mission for you to know?

Question	Discussion
In cases where the institution serves itself more than it serves the cooperative interests of participants, why do individuals continue to participate? Is the cooperation based on reciprocity? Consider these questions with regard to your examples.	Most likely people continue to participate because the network or institution serves to provide them with in-group identity, despite low reciprocity. For example, in the diaspora, many Armenians participate in the Armenian Church in order to preserve identity. Spirituality is an after- thought. But, in-group identity is not reciprocity. What level of social capital will such networks produce? To what degree will such networks support individual development and thereby societal development?
One important question is who decides whether and how the institution acts or uses its resources for the common goal. Do the participants have a way of participating in decision making, too? If an institutional leader is making decisions without consulting participants, is there reciprocity?	Remember from Discussion 05 that reciprocal cooperation is associated with fairness, which is based on the equality of individuals, and which requires transparency, participation and accountability. If leaders make decisions without sharing information with participants (transparency) and without consulting with participants, or in other words, if participants cannot participate in institutional decisions, then there is no or low reciprocity because the participants are not equal. The cooperation is most likely based on in-group identity.

Question	Discussion
Can we separate the network or institution itself from the participants? In other words, even if the institution does not sufficiently support cooperation, are the participants in this network more likely to trust each other, even if they do not know each other very well? • If participants are more likely to trust each other, are they more likely to cooperate with each other? • Is this reciprocity? • Reconsider the examples you have discussed.	Whether the institution is a church, a school, a club or a village, the organization and its structure is not as important as the participation of the individuals. It is the degree to which participants invest in the institution as a mechanism or means of sharing with each other, or supporting each other, that creates the reciprocal cooperation. In other words, an institution can be mostly in-group identity with the possibility of some reciprocity. How could participants change it so that there is more reciprocity, more trust, and more social capital?
Would the degree of help you receive from a network of people be related to the level of your participation? Is your level of participation social capital?	Most likely, yes. People help each other based on how they perceive that the other person does or would help them.
What _informal_ networks or individual relationships do you have that you can count on for cooperation? Are these relationships based on trust?	Relationships can be inherited - like family, or chosen - like friends, or the result of coincidence - like neighbors or work colleagues. But does cooperation depend on the type of relationship or the quality of the relationship? What factors impact the quality of a relationship?
When we interact with a person we do not know, do we begin the relationship based on trust or on distrust? Does it depend on the type of interaction, or the role both individuals are playing?	For example, an interaction between buyer and seller may begin in distrust. An interaction with a friend of a friend might begin in trust. Do we rely on generalizations about a person, such as the role they are playing, when initiating interaction? To what degree is that fair?

Question	Discussion
In the case of buyers and sellers, where initially there may be distrust, how do we develop trust? In other interactions which may start with trust, how do we lose trust?	In Armenia, people beginning an interaction or exchange may refer to each other with family terms like brother, aunt, etc. Does invoking a family relationship invoke a type of relationship that implies trust? Does type of relationship substitute for quality of relationship? What are other ways to develop trust?
Isn't it true that relationships evolve? If we return again and again to the same seller, does trust grow? Can we also lose trust in a person? What examples do you have of gaining more trust or losing trust in people?	Isn't it true that at any moment that we interact with someone we can interact with more trust or with less trust based on the quality of the relationship at that moment? Are there degrees of trust and distrust? Can you give examples? What are some factors that relate to trust?
Does any cooperative relationship need both trust and reciprocity? How is trust and reciprocity interconnected?	Trust is the premise for reciprocity, which is an exchange between equals. Hierarchy, exclusion, corruption, all negatively impact on trust and reciprocity between all of us. What is the connection between social capital and corruption in society?

Reciprocity Versus Peer Pressure

Some years ago I was teaching the same law course to two different groups of students at a regional university. The exam required written analysis of legal problems and I wanted to give the same written exam to all the students. I knew that some students in the first group to take the exam would likely share the questions with some students in the second group. This would not be fair for the other students. The solution, I thought, was to have the two groups take the written exam at the same time.

Unfortunately, there was no classroom big enough for all the students, so the university administration arranged for two separate classrooms next door to each other. Thus, everyone would take the exam at the same time, but in two different places.

I could not be in two places at the same time. So I asked assistants who had worked with me teaching to serve as proctors: proctors observe students during an exam and enforce the rules against cheating. I told the proctors to take away the exams of any student who spoke or in any way communicated during the exam, and I warned the students of the consequences of having their exam taken away: they would not pass the course. I handed out the exam in one classroom and then went to the other.

You may have already guessed what happened. By the time I could start the exam in the second classroom, I could already hear through the wall talking in the first classroom. When I went back to the first classroom I saw everyone talking, the unprepared students asking questions of the well prepared students, and the well prepared students answering the questions of the unprepared students. The proctors seemed unwilling or too afraid to intervene.

Later I spoke to a friend who is a psychologist about what happened. In her opinion, what I had failed to consider is that outside of the classroom, in a small community, everyone depended upon each other. This was especially true considering the instability on the border and difficult economic conditions. Thus, the proctors did not want to risk taking action against a student who could be connected to someone else whose help they might some day need. Also, the prepared students could not risk not answering the question of an unprepared student for the same reason. The psychologist also added that in their difficult social environment the well prepared students did not conceive of helping unprepared students during the exam as cheating, but rather as cooperating.

Because of my inability to strictly control the communications between students during the exam, everyone wrote something for their exam answer, and if I remember correctly, everyone passed the course. But because the exam was analytical, the well prepared students were able to answer better, and got the best grades.

Questions	Discussion
Were the students cooperating or cheating during the exam? Does it depend on whether or not they understood the value of merit: process and criteria?	If people do not understand the value of merit, then they cannot understand the value of the rule against cheating. Every rule has a goal. The rule prohibiting communicating during the exam was to create accountability in the merit system of student evaluation. Remember that a merit system requires transparency, participation and accountability. • If people do not understand the importance of the rule, why should they obey it? • Instead of just fearing punishment for getting caught, would more people obey rules if they understood and agreed with the goal of the rules? • Does this also mean that people must participate in the deciding what the rules should be?
If you had a legal problem, which attorney would you want to help you — one of the well prepared students or one of the unprepared students? Because they all passed the course, how will you know which is which?	This question is another example of the value or importance of merit. Which doctor do you want — the medical student who payed bribes to pass courses, or the one who studied and learned in order to pass the courses? Which student develops themselves more? Which student contributes more to society's development?

Questions	Discussion
In the story above, were the prepared students helping the unprepared students based on reciprocity? • If you answered yes, then what was the reciprocity, meaning what did the prepared students get in return?	While it is true that prepared students may have an expectation of future help from the unprepared students or the influential connections of the unprepared students, was this exchange of a favor today for a potential future favor freely given — was it voluntary? According to the psychologist, the prepared students feared that they might need the connections of the unprepared students. Also, the proctors feared punishing a student who might have more important connections than they have. • Do you agree with the psychologist that it was more about not taking a risk, or fearing a consequence, than about voluntarily cooperating? • Have you had experiences like this? Explain. • What is the difference between coercion and reciprocity?
What circumstances define a choice? When is something a choice and when is it not a choice?	There are two factors which define choice. One factor is that the individual must know that there is another option other than what they are doing or going to do; they must know that there is an alternative. The other factor is that the individual must act voluntarily. Don't you agree?
Does true reciprocity require choice?	Is there a connection between choice and equality?

Questions	Discussion
Does true reciprocity require equality?	A favor out of fear, or a favor out of precaution, is not really a favor, is it? Reciprocity is a mutual exchange between equals.

Warlords, Coercion and Dependency

The following is a summary of one academic's understanding of the reconstruction of the post-Soviet states after the dissolution of the USSR: Jesse Driscoll, "Warlords and Coalition Politics in Post-Soviet States," Cambridge University Press, 2015

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union came basic insecurity and the disruption of the means of distribution of resources. Disorder was an opportunity for certain individuals to form and lead groups which took control of state assets and ruled the streets. In this context, the recomposition of the different independent states began as informal and formal contracts between these group leaders because these groups could produce either violence or order, depending on which benefited them at the time. Foreign powers and institutional inheritance — meaning the institutions established during the USSR that the new state inherited — set the framework for the new states. But power was exercised by these group leaders, who can be called "violence entrepreneurs". When the "violence entrepreneurs" understood that foreign aid to a state made it more profitable to establish a sovereign state, these "violence entrepreneurs" accepted a figurehead president, and worked together to establish order to receive the foreign aid. The figurehead president distributed the foreign aid wealth between the "violence entrepreneurs" to avoid a coup. But with time the president can also pit "violence entrepreneurs" against each other in a game of divide and rule and to secure power for himself. "Violence entrepreneurs" who did not opt into this game at the right time lost out, while those in the game could rehabilitate their reputations and become "legitimate" political actors.

Questions	Discussion & Follow Up Questions
To what extent does this description of the formation of states after the dissolution of the USSR match Armenian reality?	Most notable parliamentary deputies are known to have businesses derived from assets appropriated from the state at the end of the USSR and/or based on monopolies informally guaranteed to them. Such persons have monopolies in exchange for what, and guaranteed by who? Often referred to as oligarchs, the legitimacy of the election of such persons is often questioned.
Is Armenian society made up of competing networks or one consolidated network? Are political parties competing networks?	Would it be better to ask to what extent Armenian society is made up of competing networks and, at the same time, of one consolidated network? Is the consolidated network the Republic or the Republican Party?
In Armenia, is cooperative reciprocity based on participation in different networks or based on being a participatory citizen?	Would the better question be to what extent is cooperative reciprocity based on participating in networks or being a participatory citizen? Also, are the networks in which most people participate public or private, or to what extent public and to what extent private? To what extent is there transparency?
Is decision-making within the networks in which most Armenians participate inclusive of all participants? What is the connection between participating in decision-making and reciprocity?	It appears that many Armenians must access resources, such as jobs, by participating in networks, whether that be political parties or informal networks headed by a leader — գրիշը n°վ է. However, these networks are usually hierarchical and decisions are not made in consultation with participants. This means that the cooperation is based on in-group identity and not on reciprocity.

Questions	Discussion & Follow Up Questions
If most networks reflect in-group identity cooperation, what value is given to the individual and the individual's participation? Are participants considered equals?	Reciprocal cooperation reflects equality and equal value as between participants. In-group identity does not. Which type of cooperative network (reciprocal or in-group identity) better fosters and supports individual development, and thereby the development of the society as a whole?
Is the Republic of Armenia an institution created to serve the common interests of participants — meaning citizens? Should it be?	According to Art. 2 of the RA Constitution state power belongs to and is exercised by the people. In fact, based on international law, states only exist to serve their populations.
Considering that states only exist to serve their populations: • if a state as an institution does not sufficiently support individual and society cooperation and development, why do people participate? • also, can people create other, alternative social capital networks of reciprocity to meet their own needs?	Usually states require citizens to participate by coercion and/or by convincing citizens that they need the state for security and for public services, like utilities, even though the citizens must pay for all of this. States also control resources so that citizens can only access such resources (electricity, gas, irrigation water) through the state. However, there are alternatives, like when a community creates self-sufficiency so that it does not need the state. In Parpi village, for example, the community accessed a river to create its own irrigation system, which it manages itself, so that it is not dependent on the state irrigation system. Do you know of other examples where communities, based on reciprocity, have created self-sufficiency?

Questions	Discussion & Follow Up Questions
In Armenian villages villagers organize themselves so that they take turns taking the animals out to pasture. Is this another example of community self-sufficiency? Is this reflective of social contract?	In order for the villagers to benefit from this type of cooperation, they have to trust each other. They trust each other because they all share the same interest, and they are equals in that interest — the grazing of their animals. This reciprocal cooperation is supported by transparency, participation and accountability. This is also a system of social capital whereby the longer individuals participate, the more trust they have in the system and each other. Can villagers use this social capital to cooperate in other projects as well? If the villagers could increase their self-sufficiency, what would be the role of the state? Does the state want self-sufficient networks of citizens or not?
Vaclav Havel, the first president of an independent Czechoslovakia, said that the communist state in Czechoslovakia fell when people just stopped paying attention to it. What do you think he meant?	

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1

At the end of World War II the international community adopted a Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Based on your past review of all of the Development Discourse discussions, consider the following questions:

Question	Discussion
What is the premise of Article 1?	
When an infant is born, is that infant equal in dignity as compared to all other infants based simply on the fact that the infant is human?	
Does fairness and justice require that all individuals, no matter age or wealth, are equal in dignity?	
What is meant by acting "towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood"? Is it connected to dignity? Is it connected to equality? How so?	In other words is acting "toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood" connected to reciprocity, to cooperation, and to social capital? How so? Can you give examples?
Is it logical that we "act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood"? Would this produce fairness for each of us?	What is the connection between fairness and equality?
If people themselves create fairness, reciprocity, cooperation and self-sufficiency for themselves, what would be the role of authorities, if any?	Do state governments want individuals and communities to be self-sufficient? Why or why not?
Does the premise in Article 1 value the individual? In which ways?	Does the premise in Article 1 support the development of the individual? Does the premise in Article 1 also support the development of the society? How?

Question	Discussion
What role can human rights play in enhancing trust and encouraging reciprocity and cooperation in our society?	

Conclusion:

In this discussion we have discussed to what degree we trust each other and what mechanisms or methods we use to create more trust so that we can work with each other better. Trust is based in reciprocity and cooperation. Trust is based in equality and dignity. In our interactions with others, we either increase or decrease the level of trust and the level of equality and dignity that we share with each other, in terms of our personal relationships, as well as in our society as a whole.

Thank you for your participation in this process. Hopefully you have found these discussions interesting. Now that you have finished this discussion series, it is hoped that you will want to share your experience with others. You are encouraged to form a new group to share these discussions with others who you think would appreciate and benefit from this process. Alternatively, you are encouraged to continue to work with your current group to address together questions about cooperation, reciprocity, trust, equality and dignity that you see in your own environment: your building, your school or university, your workplace, your neighborhood, your village or city, or even your family. Take a week to think about it. Then meet again, and consider what you might want to do to make your life, and the lives of those around you, better. Because making our lives better, is the only real thing we can do.

These discussions are under development and you are invited to share your comments, questions or concerns by writing to bournazian@gmail.com.